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Curricular Agency: Contemplating Curriculum as a Process to Empower Teachers

Abstract

Using the qualitative method of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism (Eisner, 1991) and an interview structure based on the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969), this study involved working with four exemplary teacher educators to externalize their internal process of curricular decision-making. Contemplating their own curricula as a dynamic process rather than a finished product, the study identifies where in that process their curricular agency—their educational agency, and their human agency (Bandura, 2006)—is found. This operationalization of curricular agency within curricular theory provides an empowering perspective of teacher-centered education as a response to teacher burnout.

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Doctor of Philosophy

by

Matthew L. Spurlin

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ABSTRACT

Using the qualitative method of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism (Eisner, 1991) and an interview structure based on the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969), this study involved working with four exemplary teacher educators to externalize their internal process of curricular decision-making. Contemplating their own curricula as a dynamic process rather than a finished product, the study identifies where in that process their curricular agency—their educational agency, and their human agency (Bandura, 2006)—is found. This operationalization of curricular agency within curricular theory provides an empowering perspective of teacher-centered education as a response to teacher burnout.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In Japan, approximately 75 percent of teachers use the chalkboard as the primary medium for the presentation of lesson content (Ermeling, 2015). Contrast this with the almost manic adoption of technology in U.S. education. In a country known for technological innovation, why would three out of four teachers still be using such a “primitive” educational tool? Because Japanese educators know that a chalkboard allows a teacher to preserve the narrative of a lesson as it is taught, to record key principles and attempted solutions, and to facilitate collaboration (Ermeling, 2015). Instead of focusing on a single problem or concept at a time (as with a slide in a PowerPoint presentation), a chalkboard allows students to see connections among problems, theoretical concepts, and their relationships. In other words, a chalkboard allows students to see their thinking—individually and collectively—as it is happening. This continued use of chalkboards is not merely a delayed reaction to adopting new technology. The modern utility of the chalkboard demonstrates how critical it is for educators to be mindful of the fundamental elements of the educational process—of the educational process itself—that, conceptually, educators themselves often take for granted. It takes tremendous discipline and skill to pay consistent attention to anything that is always present, such as the sun rising or the educational process. However, there are benefits to paying attention, especially to what we do every day as educators, like making a curricular decision.

Tangentially, when did such “older” technology cease to be technology? Technology is defined as both “the practical application of knowledge” and “the materials and techniques used for a practical end” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2015). There is nothing in the definition of technology that indicates it must be *new*. Rather, the essence of technology is that it must be practical. One of the oldest and most overlooked educational technologies—even older than the chalkboard—is the technology of curriculum. Western educators may currently focus on the content of various curricula, but content is only one aspect, just as lettuce is only one ingredient of a salad. Both curricula and salads offer an infinite variety of combinations, however, both require knowledge of the individual elements and understanding of their relationships.

Educators rarely attend to the form—the deliberate structuring and delivery—of curriculum and attend even less to the relationship between the content and the form. When educators stop seeing curriculum as educational technology, we stop looking at its utility in creating meaningful learning opportunities. Thus, the conceptual product of “curriculum” robs educators of its usefulness as a conceptual process and it denies us, educators, our curricular agency. In other words, because we think we know what curriculum is for students, we fail to pay attention to what curriculum does for teachers. As educators, we limit ourselves by limiting our perspective, which in turn, potentially limits the experiences of our students.

In conjunction, perhaps the only educational technology more neglected than curriculum is the practice of instruction. Just as a chalkboard is deemed too archaic to be useful in education, the concept that human beings rely on someone else to teach them

content or a process they would otherwise have to learn on their own seems too ancient to be worthy of our attention as educators and researchers. Yet these two concepts of curriculum and instruction are so essential to education that they represent it as an academic field, despite the fact that neither possess universally accepted definitions. Especially within teacher education, then, instruction should be as curricular as curriculum should be instructive.

William James (1890) once wrote:

The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will...An education which should improve this faculty would be the education *par excellence*. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about (p. 424).

This is a study of a curriculum *of* instruction, an attempt to provide some of those practical directions for bringing about an “education *par excellence*.” Viewing the educational process and the fundamental elements that make it up through a curricular lens allows teachers to voluntarily bring back their wandering attention. I suggest that the directions for bringing about an education *par excellence* involve identifying the curricular agency present within the curricular decision-making process. The directions of which, James writes, are as simple and as difficult as attending to what we do, as teachers, specifically within the realm of the curricular decision-making process. This study was a qualitative inquiry that externalized the internal process of curricular decision-making to focus teacher educators’ attention on their own cycle of curricular deliberation. The process helped educators to view their instruction as their curriculum—it transformed an individual’s teaching into that same individual’s learning. Then,

through its articulation as the manifestation of a learning experience, it benefits students as well. The general aim was to pay attention. The more specific aim of this study was to pay attention to how four teacher educators perceive learning experiences generally and re-present them as the curricula that facilitate specific learning experiences of their students. Teacher educators paid attention to the curriculum as a dynamic process rather than as a finished product to identify where in that process their curricular agency—their educational agency, and their human agency—was found.

Rationale

Don't just do something, sit there! –Sylvia Boorstein (1996)

Teachers—regardless of subject matter, grade level, or experience—must seemingly teach everything (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). At the same time, an increasingly standardized curriculum, a rise in the number of testing mandates, the use of student test scores to evaluate teacher performance, and the ascendance of parent control through the privatization of public education, can all quickly make a teacher feel helpless (Ravitch, 2013).

In addition, the approach to an educational problem is to look elsewhere for a solution. Looking everywhere else makes it difficult to see what is here to begin with. In other words, the sustainable solution to the problem often involves paying attention to the problem itself. If educators learned to really see the problem—to pay attention to the subtle complexities of its dynamic nature—it could cease to be a problem. An example within the curricular process may be more illustrative, and pragmatic.

Hypothetically, a ninth grade English Language Arts teacher is required to teach the concept of hyperbole. Is there any usefulness to the term, especially for ninth graders? However, this question represents only one impractical approach, and a hyperbolic one at that. The teacher could consider the fact that she does not have the problem of teaching the concept of hyperbole, but rather, students have the task of learning it. Already, this would provide a major shift in her internal curricular deliberation. She could also consider that these ninth graders are actually teenagers, not just students, providing another change in perspective. She might continue this contemplation by surmising that teenagers immerse themselves in social media. Perhaps she could provide a lesson entitled, “The Hyperbole of Twitter” and support it with a curriculum exploring intentional exaggeration in the students’ own portrayals of themselves and others on social media, using their personal devices to find school-appropriate examples.

Thus, by contemplating the aspects of the curricular problem itself, that problem became an engaging learning experience for both students and teacher alike. None of the elements of the problem changed—she was still a ninth grade English teacher, the students were still ninth graders, the required content was still the concept of hyperbole, and the classroom was still the context in which the learning experience would occur. Only her perspective changed. However, because her perspective changed, the students’ learning experience changed as well. Now she would be learning about real examples of exaggeration from the world of teenagers, and they would be learning the prescribed content of the curriculum in a way that is both engaging and memorable because it is

integral to who they are as human beings. This contemplation is an example of what education generally—and the curricular decision-making process specifically—can entail.

The topic of contemplative education is important to teaching and learning for four reasons. First, who we are as human beings will always be at the center of the educational process (Palmer, 1997). Second, although one approach among many, contemplative education differs in its aim to make teaching and learning sustainable by privileging the intrinsic domains of both (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Third, contemplative education privileges the intrinsic domain by attending to the interconnectedness of the elements of the educational process (Miller, 2007). Finally, contemplative education posits change in individual perspective rather than change in institutional systems to address burnout (Ingersoll, 2012); this last reason provides the individual teachers and their students with the agency necessary to transform the world by transforming themselves (Langer, 1989).

This study of the curricular decision-making process is important to teaching and learning for four reasons. First, it provides an empowering perspective of teacher-centered education. Second, it demonstrates the utility of a contemplative approach for increasing awareness among teacher educators of their own process of curriculum development as a means of enhancing it. Third, this study operationalizes curricular agency within curriculum theory. Finally, it demonstrates this agency of educators and their students by means of empathizing and collaborating with one another.

Research Questions

- (1) How do these teacher educators describe their own curricula in light of Joseph Schwab's commonplaces?
- (2) How does this process of curricular contemplation influence their curricula, if at all?
- (3) What are the benefits (and potential hindrances) of curricular contemplation?
- (4) What are the educational implications of curricular agency as a manifestation of curricular contemplation?

The first research question seeks a description of the curricular decision-making process of each participant. Interviewing teacher educators about their intentions and educational backgrounds and then observing them in their classrooms provides the relevant data for analysis. It should be noted that this is not necessarily a description, in the traditional sense of describing an observed learning experience. Instead, the term "description" in this context means that the teacher educators themselves provide descriptions of their curricula as data.

The second research question provides an interpretation of how those curricular decisions manifest in their teaching. Observing teacher educators in their classrooms and then interviewing them about what they perceive as occurring provides additional data. To reiterate, the observation played a role in the data in that it serves as an experience to further the participants' own curricular deliberations. In this study, dialogue among researcher and participants as the primary source of data for analysis.

The third research question proposes an evaluation to explore the value of articulating the curricular decision-making process for both the teacher educators and their students. This evaluation is ultimately my analysis, primarily of interviews with minimal corroborative observation data. However, it also includes a fourth collaborative interview in which the teacher educators reflect on the process of articulating their curricular deliberation to identify their curricular agency and its implications for them as teacher educators.

The fourth research question explores the utility of curricular agency, which emerges (Eisner, 1991) from viewing curriculum as a unique and dynamic process, for students and educators beyond the scope of the study. It explores the potential benefits of curricular agency within the larger educational context by analyzing the themes of the study through relevant literature of the field.

Alignment of the Method and the Conceptual Frameworks

Theories of curriculum and of teaching and learning cannot, alone, tell us what and how to teach, because questions of what and how to teach arise in concrete situations loaded with concrete particulars of time, place, person, and circumstance. —Joseph Schwab (1969)

Indeed, experience—our consciousness of some aspect of the world—is an achievement and, to my mind, it is a cognitive achievement. —Elliot Eisner (1991)

In one contemplative philosophical tradition, all experiences are experiences of the mind (Lusthaus, 2014). Experience is the interpretation of bodily sensations understood only after humans focus upon them and cognize them. In other words,

experience is not what is happening but what humans think about what is happening. Again, a practical example helps illustrate. The traffic on the street outside of a building actually creates a continuous vibration inside of one's inner ear. One is aware of the physical sensation, but it is only when paying attention to the sensory input and designating it to be "cars driving by" that it becomes experience. This involves consciousness, which is different from awareness. Humans are continuously aware of aspects of the world around them long before focusing on them and bringing those sensations into consciousness to be named—that is, qualified and understood. This is not to discount the occurrences in the world, or that humans interact with them physically and subconsciously, but it is to state that the experiences of those interactions are all cognitive conceptualizations occurring within one's consciousness.

Humans can also have an experience without a simultaneous corresponding physical interaction. One can merely imagine "cars driving by" without any cars actually driving by and still have the experience because of previous interactions with traffic and the naming of those interactions. This ability, to create an experience without a simultaneous corresponding physical interaction, is very helpful in developing learning experiences. Teachers have the capability to conceptualize the elements of a learning experience—teacher, students, content, and context—that must be taken into account when developing curriculum. Teachers can and should experience conceptual versions of the qualities of these aspects after interacting with them and before, or, more precisely, while contemplating curriculum.

This study was to be a practical one. Therefore, its design relied on the work of both Joseph Schwab and Elliot Eisner, two prominent figures in the philosophical school of American Pragmatism. Schwab's (1973) commonplaces—teacher, student, subject matter, and *milieu*—are a conceptualization of the complete set of factors to be taken into account when making curricular decisions. Eisner's (1991) Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism is an arts-based research method of qualitative inquiry with the aim of improving educational practice.

Each element of each classroom has its own unique quality; viewed through a curricular lens, these qualities become curricula *for the teacher*. Consequently, curriculum development becomes a qualitative inquiry. Teachers know their classrooms better than anyone else (connoisseurship), and teachers are responsible for the final version of the curriculum presented to their students as the day's lesson (criticism). Within this study, Schwab's "curriculum specialist" (1973) becomes Eisner's curriculum "connoisseur" (1991), and both roles are embodied in the individual teacher educator who conceptualizes curriculum through these lenses. Curriculum became educational criticism through this contemplative process and revealed the agency of the curricular decision-making process that empowers teachers to teach.

Eisner (1991) provided a method and Schwab (1973) provided a framework for designing the interview questions and sequencing, but this was only one element of the conceptual framework. The second element of the conceptual framework included the perspective of contemplative education discussed at length in the literature review, specifically relying on the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Elizabeth Langer

(1989), Jack Miller (2007), and Parker Palmer (1997) as representative of an important but sometimes hidden educational perspective. As the data manifested, the study took on an emergent focus (Eisner 1991). It became clear that Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1995) generally, and human agency (2006) specifically, were central to data analysis and thus represent the third philosophical lens within the conceptual framework. The inclusion and alignment of the three lenses and their roles in understanding the data will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Implications

Do not intend or expect one outcome or one cluster of outcomes but any one of several, a plurality. –Joseph Schwab (1971)

Curriculum does not control learning. However, teachers can increase their agency through the curriculum by understanding it as a dynamic process as well as a finished product. We educators should not attempt to negate the plurality of received curricula, but to embrace it and appreciate the fact that a single intended curriculum can create an infinite number of received curricula merely through its implementation. A truly sophisticated tool is a tool simple enough that anyone and everyone can use to improve their respective situations. The analysis of curricular deliberation demonstrates that the concept of curricular agency itself is such a tool.

For teacher educators.

Paying attention to the development of one's own curricular deliberation enhances the process and the resulting product—a curriculum of instruction that becomes a tool for teaching other educators to do the same. To perceive educational experiences as a

curriculum for teachers, as well as for students, has the potential to transform one's entire approach to teaching and learning. The field of teacher education is unique in that the subject matter (of instruction) and its presentation (through instruction) are one in the same. This alignment of content and form places teacher educators in an ideal situation for studying their own teaching style as a means of instruction. Contemplating the curricular decision-making process and identifying one's agency in that process has the potential to be a curriculum for teacher educators and teachers alike.

For teachers.

Teachers—regardless of subject matter, grade level, or experience—must seemingly teach everything (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). At the same time, an increasingly standardized curriculum, a rise in the number of testing mandates, the use of student test scores to evaluate teacher performance, and the ascendance of parent control through the privatization of public education, can all quickly make a teacher feel helpless (Ravitch, 2013). Despite this situation, teachers in the current system will always maintain control over at least two integral aspects of the educational process: their perspective and their curricular choices. That is, teachers cannot control the context in which they teach, but they are always in control of how they view that context. In the same way, teachers cannot control the curriculum provided to them, but they are always in control of the curriculum they provide to their students, and more importantly, the process by which that occurs. To view curriculum as a process creates an empowering perspective of education that highlights the agency of the teacher for the teacher by providing a more accurate understanding of how the educational process works.

For students.

In education, the current focus on curricular and instructional standardization and its high-stakes quantitative assessment inadvertently produces gaps in overall student development (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Headden, 2014). This lack of holistic teaching practices results in limited and limiting learning experiences that are less engaging—and consequently less beneficial—for students (Hurley, 2011; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Working backward from what is known about authentic and engaging learning experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), educators can develop curricula that engage the whole student to create more beneficial learning that results in better overall student development and increased academic achievement (Burke, 2010). By demonstrating how curriculum functions, contemplating curriculum as a process provides an empowering awareness to students of the fact that they are in control of the curriculum they accept. Much as it does for teachers, that awareness transforms students' understanding of their learning processes from passive to active. Students are no longer merely receiving curriculum from their teachers, they are creating curriculum for themselves.

By learning to pay attention to what they do while teaching, teacher educators cannot help but teach their students to do the same while learning (how to teach). The concept of curricular agency takes advantage of the efficiency of the educational process already in place to transform the curriculum by transforming the perception of curriculum from product to process. Because of the interconnected nature of the process of curricular deliberation, exploring curricular agency within the curricular decision-making

process at the level of teacher educator allows that concept to transfer to the other levels of the educational process. In addition, because the educational process exceeds the boundaries of the schools meant to facilitate it, the practice of paying attention—and the benefits of that practice—have an overall effect on society in new, exciting, and researchable ways. Paying attention enhances the learning experience. Enhancing the learning experience enhances one’s quality of life.

About the Researcher

Know thyself. –Greek Maxim

To understand a child we have to watch him at play, study him in his different moods; we cannot project upon him our own prejudices, hopes and fears, or mold him to fit the pattern of our desires. –J. Krishnamurti (1981)

In the ancient Greek world, the Oracle at Delphi was “the navel of the universe” (Scott, 2014). Someone inscribed the maxim, “Know thyself” above its entrance. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the Oracle at Delphi in the worldview of the ancient Greeks. Consequently, it is difficult to overstate the importance of the inscription. What does it mean in an educational context? More importantly, what does it mean in my educational context?

In college, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Greece and Turkey. We traveled with our books, and our professors traveled with us. Our classrooms were the archeological sites we visited. Much like the *polis* of the ancient Greeks of the *Iliad* we studied, our school was wherever we were. That particular curricular manifestation emphasized learning through experience, or more precisely, through our own

experiences. As much as we learned about ancient Greece from walking into the Parthenon and climbing Mt. Olympus, we learned even more about ourselves. My time in Greece and Turkey taught me that the content is a medium through which we learn about ourselves, and I was enthralled.

However, in modern society, one can only be a traditional student for so long before one must sit on the other side of the desk. This was an imposing proposition, as I am naturally shy and rather uncomfortable in front of an audience of more than one. Despite a Masters in Education at a traditional university in Colorado, I struggled to find myself as a teacher during my two years of teaching English Language Learners in Japan. It was not until the ensuing six months of teaching English to Tibetans (and Thais, Vietnamese, and Laotians) in McLeod Ganj, India, that I began to understand what teaching was for me. Again, this understanding manifested from my experience. I could not successfully teach English to students of such a wide variety of cultures without knowing more about who they were, how their languages worked, and how those variables affected their learning of the English language. My perspective of teaching students quickly changed into one of *learning about students*. This transformed the curriculum as well as its implementation: Tibetans preferred games and conversational practice; Thais had a tremendous understanding of grammar but struggled with phonetics; Vietnamese needed to be encouraged to speak without fear of making mistakes; and Laotians appreciated the cultural experience more than they cared about learning the English language. Without this intense experience of trying to teach students who were so different from one another—and so different from me—I would never have learned

that there are these variables of the experience for all students, or that good teaching is merely a much more complex form of learning.

While in India, a friend introduced me to the work of J. Krishnamurti, which continues to influence my understanding of education. To avoid imposing myself on others, I must first know who I am and who they are to be able to distinguish between the two. To know who I am, I must learn how to do so. Coincidentally, learning how to know oneself is to teach others to do the same. This study is another experience in the collaborative journey of my educational life. It has implications for how I understand my own teaching and learning, but it also has implications for others.

Conclusion

Teachers tell students to pay attention without ever showing them how (Brown, 1999) because teachers struggle to provide instruction to students that they have never received. This study transformed this “tradition of neglect” (Eisner, 1991, p. 234) into a lineage of appreciation. This qualitative inquiry into the commonplaces of the classroom made use of a curricular lens and the cyclical pattern of curricular deliberation to attend to the subtleties in teacher educators’ classrooms and to identify the agency to reconstruct those subtleties in evermore refined curricula that engender more authentic learning experiences.

Somewhat paradoxically, teachers become catalysts of change through a lineage of curriculum. Awareness and articulation of the curricular decision-making process through the pragmatic analysis of the commonplaces in one’s own curricular deliberation has the potential to influence every classroom of future teachers exposed to the process.

In turn, those future teachers transmit the practice to their future students. Finally, those students take it with them wherever they go, because it becomes an integral part of who they are.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a background for understanding the development of the concept of curricular agency within the context of contemplative education. Imagine the literature as a series of three concentric circles, with each section representing a more specific but related dimension of the educational context. The first and largest circle situates contemplative education within the greater context of education in the United States. Moving inward, the second section characterizes the contemplative teacher educator in relation to several other classifications prominent in the literature. The final section identifies curricular agency within a lineage of curricular theory that emphasizes the naming of aspects of the educational process as curriculum to bring attention and understanding to them. Ultimately, this literature review is a resource for readers to verify the sources of these ideas and to look further into those sources to enhance their own ideas.

Contemplative Education

Much of academic life may be compared to solitary meditation, though an appreciation of and opportunities for contemplation itself seem increasingly rare within university life.

–Louis Komjathy (2013)

This section explains the secular nature of contemplative education by examining its benefits in the educational process and its roots in the history of American education.

It then provides a variety of examples existent in American education today to demonstrate both its presence and pervasiveness. Next, it articulates contemplative education's assertion of the humanity found in all aspects of the educational process. Finally, it discusses how this study adds to contemplative education by emphasizing the contemplative nature of curricular development.

The connection between contemplation and education is as ancient (Hart, 2004) as the activity is secular (Langer, 1989). The secular term "university" comes from the very religious idea of knowing one's place in the universe. This is not to deny the presence of contemplation (or education) in religious traditions, but to reassure teachers that the term also has an established presence in secular education (Steel, 2015). Therefore educators should be as comfortable with the label of "contemplative" as they are with the idea of "university" because the point of education is to contemplate the world and one's place in it.

Psychological health, socio-emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and general well-being are important for healthy, happy, and successful lives; yet not a single national educational standard among the current collection (www.corestandards.org) addressed any of these innate human capacities or how to provide them to students. In today's educational climate, policy directs educators to focus on students' academic achievement, particularly on standardized tests (Ravitch, 2013). Initial findings in the emergent field of contemplative education indicated the potential to increase overall student well-being and to improve academic performance for all students, with potential benefits for teachers, administrators, and parents as well (Beauchemin, Hutchins, & Patterson, 2008;

Burke, 2010; MacLean, Ferrer, Aichele, Bridwell, Zanesco, & Faron 2010; Albrecht, Albrecht, & Cohen, 2012; Meiklejohn, Phillips, Freedman, Griffin, Biegel, Roach, & Saltzman, 2012; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Roeser, Vago, Pinela, Morris, Taylor, & Harrison, 2014).

While the term “contemplative education” is emergent in the field of education, some identified the emergence as a reemergence (Hart, 2004; Zajonc, 2006; Morgan, 2014). This was, in part, because cultures throughout history have recognized the concept and value of intentionally training the mind to pay attention (Stock, 2006). It also has to do with the fact that contemplative education has had a marginalized presence in mainstream U.S. education for 200 years (Morgan, 2014).

Mirabai Bush (2011) pointed out that modern contemplative education in the United States originated with the publication of William James’ (1890) *Principles of Psychology*: “The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will...an education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence” (p. 424). Why might the education par excellence have had such a negligible position in this country two centuries after its articulation? James provided insight into this question as well: “It is easier to define this ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about” (p. 424). Still, the current needs of today’s society have inspired individual attempts at meeting the challenge posed by James (1890), and those individual attempts have grown into a collective collaboration.

Like curriculum and instruction, contemplative education is interdisciplinary. It appeared in the collaborative program of the Music Department at the University of Michigan and the curriculum and pedagogy of the Contemplative Studies programs at Brown and Emory. It was the focus of empirical research being done at the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University, the Mindfulness Awareness Research Center at UCLA, the Center for Mind and Brain at UC-Davis, The Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at UMass, the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin, the Mindfulness Research and Practice Initiative at the University of Miami, and the \$12 million Contemplative Sciences Center at the University of Virginia. It has sustained the work of Parker Palmer's Center for Courage and Renewal. It has inspired annual national and international symposia such as the International Symposium for Contemplative Studies and the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education. However, contemplative education was also in P-12 schools with mindfulness programs like SMART-in-Education, teacher renewal programs like CARE for Teachers, and national collaborations like the Mindfulness in Education Network.¹

Its breadth and diversity resulted from the fact that contemplative education has emphasized the humanity existent in all aspects of the educational process. It has acknowledged that, "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998, p. 2). Contemplative education has accepted, as Schwab did over 40 years ago, that consideration of the humanity of students is as important as consideration of the humanity of teachers in

1. See Appendix A for a more complete list of resources related to contemplative education.

curriculum development: “I assume I need not defend...the desirability of considering the character of human personality in deliberating about the ends and means of curriculum” (Schwab, 1971, p. 530). Additionally, contemplative education has held that the subject is the medium through which teachers communicate this shared humanity to their students, as indicated by Zajonc (2010): “We should attend to the cultivation of our students’ humanity at least as much as we instruct them in the content of our fields” (p. 102). Finally, contemplative education has recognized the connection between the humanity in the classroom and in the world beyond it: “In the end, our work lives its ultimate life in the lives that it enables others to lead” (Eisner, 1993, p. 10).

This overview represents the emergence of contemplative education rather than its extent. Contemplative education is clearly the context for identification and analysis of curricular agency within curricular deliberation. However, contemplative education, to this point, has emphasized the development of contemplative curriculum (Holland, 2006; Brady, 2007; Jennings, 2008; Broderick & Metz, 2009; Davidson, Dunne, Eccles, Engle, Greenberg, Jennings, & Vago, 2012). This study, instead, focused on the contemplative development of curriculum—a subtle, but important difference.

Contemplative Teacher Educator

Practical problems intrinsically involve states of character and the possibility of character change. –Joseph Schwab (1971)

It was well-documented within the literature that the identities of teacher educators are as complex as they are dynamic (Danielewicz, 2001; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Loughran, 2014). In addition, there was simply not enough evidence to

suggest any single best model of teacher educator (Sultana, 2005). However, it was helpful to contextualize the idea of the contemplative teacher educator by exploring some other characterizations of teacher educators prevalent in the discourse. Those characterizations included teacher educator as technician (Burke, 1989), as academic (Anderson, 1992), and as reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983). Each had implications for understanding the work of preparing future teachers. The aim of this discussion is to present the three as a progression from teacher educator as technician toward the conceptualization of teacher educator as contemplative.

An understanding of the teacher educator as technician emphasized the importance of the skills and techniques collected by the “master” and provided to the “novice” (Sultana, 2005). In this context, teacher education became teacher training articulated in terms of teaching competencies (Tarrant, 2000). This paradigm allowed for the work of teachers to be controlled and assessed in terms of accountability measures and performance indicators (Hursh, 2000). Through this instrumental perspective of teacher education, teaching itself became decontextualized and teachers dehumanized. It left teachers with a concrete list of what to do but without the theoretical understanding of why to do it that way.

Recognizing the intellectual aspects of a teacher educator’s role provided the theoretical explanation missing from the technician perspective (Day, 2004). From this academic perspective, teachers needed more than a set of techniques—they needed an understanding of the educational foundations, such as philosophy and history (Smylie, Bay, & Tozer, 1999). However, this perspective tended to emphasize theory over

practice, which resulted in teacher educators focusing more on educational theory than preparing students for the realities of the classroom (Sultana, 2005). Teaching thus became an abstraction, disconnected from the chaotic world of P-12 education.

The concept of teacher educator as reflective practitioner arose out of the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice—between teacher educator as academic and teacher educator as technician. It included the ideas of the “reflective practitioner” (Schön 1983, 1987) and, more recently, teaching as research (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). The purpose of this perspective was to provide teachers with the ability to take the techniques and theories they learn in university classrooms and appropriately apply them to the complex circumstances of their own unique classrooms (Sultana, 2005). However, the implementation of this idea led to a broad spectrum of quality in terms of what was acceptable as reflection and as reflective practice (Bradbury, Frost, Kilminster, & Zukas, 2009). This fluctuation in the quality derived from reflective practice alone solicited another characterization of the teacher educator, that of teacher educator as contemplative.

The foundation for this approach involved the work of Byrnes (2009), who conceptualized contemplative teaching as the utilization of the teacher’s innate wisdom (heart) as opposed to teaching solely as technique (hand) or theory and reflection (head). This designation surpassed the objectivity of teacher educator as technician and the abstract nature of teacher educator as academic. It also demonstrated the importance of a more holistic approach to teaching than reflection on only one’s teaching. However, because Byrnes (2009) provided portraits of classroom teachers, she did not address the

role of teacher *educator*. Similarly, Brown (1999) described the teacher as contemplative observer, and more recently Simmer-Brown & Grace (2011) provided several portrayals of religious studies professors as contemplatives.

However, no one had yet explored the teacher educator as contemplative. In addition, even the related but limited scholarship on the topic utilized a pedagogical rather than a curricular perspective. This study examined curricular deliberation as a contemplative, dynamic, and ongoing process. The teacher educator, then, became a contemplative from a practical view, and teaching became both empathetic (Noddings, 1992) and intrinsic (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Using the schema of the commonplaces (Schwab, 1973) and the view of connoisseurship (Eisner, 1991), this study provided a strategy for paying attention to how teacher educators actually develop, implement, and reflect upon their curriculum of instruction. It demonstrated the curricular agency that exists within that curricular decision-making process.

Contemplating: The Curricular Decision-Making Process

The focus of curriculum is a microcosm of the universal—Blake’s grain of sand—to which we bring ourselves, our consciousness, and our cultural reality. –James MacDonald (1982)

The original meaning of contemplative came from the Latin *contemplum*, which means, “to mark out a space for observation” (Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 1966). It related to the work of the augur, an ancient Roman soothsayer charged with observing and interpreting the omens for guidance in public affairs. Curriculum was also a Latin derivative, from *currere* which means “a course of running” (Oxford Dictionary

of English Etymology, 1966). Taken together, the idea of curricular contemplation became the creation of a space in which educators generally, and teacher educators, specifically, pay attention to their curricular choices as a guide to understanding their curricular direction and the progress of their students' movement in that direction. Intentionally going somewhere else specific is impossible without first knowing where one is, and knowing where one is includes acknowledging where one has come from. In a very literal sense, the contemplative curriculum of curricular deliberation in this context meant paying attention to not only what people are learning, but also how they are learning it.

In his analysis of the curriculum shadow Uhrmacher (1997) advocated for the use of a variety of terms of curricula in order to account for the variety of experiences (Dewey, 1934) they engender. These varied articulations helped educators make distinctions that otherwise might be neglected (Moroye, 2009). In other words, the naming of curricula—and their articulation in relationship to one another—was a means for educators to pay attention to the educational process.

The lineage of contemplating as a curricular decision-making process within curricular theory began with Jackson's (1968) "hidden curriculum," which differentiated between the assigned curriculum and the skills required to learn it. The hidden curriculum presumed that there is much more happening in an educational experience than acknowledged through the official curriculum alone. One of these hidden curricula was Moroye's (2009) complementary curriculum, which she defined as "the embedded and often unconscious expression of a teacher's beliefs" (p. 381). This description

acknowledged the added influence of teachers' values to the official curriculum. The idea of contemplative curriculum, however, conceptualized the teacher's beliefs as just one of several complementary curricula. For example, each student also brings his or her own unique complementary curriculum to the educational experience. A curriculum, coincidentally, that is initially hidden from the teacher. Thus, the contemplative curriculum was a curriculum for teachers, not students, as curriculum was generally conceived.

This curriculum for teachers emphasized the relationships among the various aspects of a learning experience as much as their individual qualities (Miller, 2007). In this sense, the contemplative curriculum was less an instrument for controlling an experience and more a strategy for inquiring into it (MacDonald, 1982). For the teacher educator, the result of this inquiry—of this contemplative curriculum—was a more subtle and accurate understanding of curricular decision-making process that manifests in a learning experience for students. This inquiry then served as the foundation for enhancing the development of future learning experiences as well.

The contemplative curriculum manifested from a lineage of curricular theory that highlights the need to pay attention to neglected aspects of the educational process by viewing those aspects through a curricular lens (Jackson, 1968; Uhrmacher, 1997; Moroye, 2009). It differed from previous conceptions of curriculum in its characterization as a curriculum for teachers. This characterization aligned the content of teacher education (instruction) with its form (curriculum). The result is an understanding of teaching as learning. This understanding empowers teachers and students alike to

view the educational process as a dynamic and intersubjective collaboration and to engage with it accordingly.

Conclusion

Neither the specific words of theory nor the specific pedagogical acts of educators are the reality of education. –James MacDonald (1982)

Educators, and people generally, tend to neglect what they already know—that is, what they have already conceptualized. A contemplative perspective transforms the way teacher educators understand all aspects of the educational process because it encourages them to continuously see old concepts in a new light. In addition, contemplative education emphasizes the often-neglected human element that has always been and will always be the essence of education. Contemplative teacher educators recognize that paying attention to what they do and how they do it—to their curricular choices—is incredibly empowering and a means for empowering their students (who are future teachers themselves) to do the same. The curricular agency found in analysis of the curricular decision-making process emphasizes learning as the critical component of successful teaching. Consequently, a curricular perspective is a contemplative perspective; it encourages us to pay attention to the aspects of the educational process often taken for granted.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

What we look for, as well as what we see and say, is influenced by the tools we know how to use and believe to be appropriate. –Elliot Eisner (1991)

Overview

Using the method of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism (Eisner, 1991) and the commonplaces to design an interview sequence and structure (Schwab, 1973), I interviewed and observed four exemplary teacher educators with the aim of articulating one cycle of their curricular deliberation and appreciating their unique curricular decision-making processes. This was intentionally a collaborative aim. By working with each teacher educator to develop an articulation of and appreciation for their respective curricular deliberations, I developed a more refined understanding and presentation of the curricular agency inherent within teacher education, generally, and the curricular decision-making process, specifically.

The outline for this section begins with a description of the method itself as well as my adaptation of it for the purpose of this study. A discussion of the interview framework follows. I then provide a brief description of the participant selection process. I provide the ensuing conceptual framework and associated philosophical lenses for data collection and analysis in relation to my research questions.

Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism

Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism is an arts-based qualitative research method developed by Elliot Eisner (1991) for the pragmatic purpose of enhancing educational practice. Thus, the aim of this approach matched with the aim of my study. More importantly, the form of this method aligned with the content explored, because teachers—specifically teacher educators, in this case—are qualitative researchers of their own classrooms who use that research to enhance their educational practice.

Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism is a method for inquiring into the qualities of the educational world that have implications for the world beyond it. Connoisseurship involves perception, and criticism involves the articulation of that perception for the educational benefit of others. Consequently, this method requires that the researcher possess the prior knowledge necessary to appreciate the intricacies of an educational experience (connoisseurship). Of equal importance, however, is the researcher's ability to communicate those intricacies in a way that allows others to develop new understandings of that experience (criticism). Similar to this characterization of a qualitative researcher, teachers must develop refined sensibilities of their particular teaching and learning contexts in order to enhance the curricula they present to their students.

Educational Criticism accomplishes this task by establishing four dimensions of the process: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics (Eisner, 1991). Just as a map is a useful representation of an area (and not the area itself), these dimensions represent a strategy for organizing one's perception of an educational experience.

Intentional differences (i.e., scale) between the conceptual representation and whatever it represents are the very essence of the map's utility. Similarly, using these four dimensions allowed both my participants and me to simultaneously attend to the intricacies of a dynamic process in similar ways, to collaborate in our interpretations, and to share our experiences of those intricacies in a way that others could understand. Essentially, it provided a strategy for transforming teaching into learning. I now explain further by discussing each dimension individually.

To describe an educational experience is to reconstruct that experience, through writing, in a way that allows those who read it to feel as if they were there. Thus, the description of the educational experience is a description of the qualities of that particular experience. It provides a baseline of understanding for the dialogue between the researcher and the reader to continue. Essentially, description is a presentation of the evidence.

If description is the presentation of the evidence, interpretation is the meaning ascribed to that evidence. More specifically, it is the meaning I ascribed to the educational experience based on the evidence. The most important aspect of an interpretation is to understand it as one among many. If that were not the case, there would be little point in conducting educational research. My interpretation has particular meaning to me, but it is also my hope as a researcher that the participants and the readers find their own meanings in the evidence presented. In addition, since anything meaningful is also something of value, interpretation is the midwife to evaluation.

Evaluation has two qualities, judgment and utility. The first quality, judgment, involves an appraisal of whether or not the evidence presented and the meaning ascribed to it align with one another. This is a reflective quality. The second quality, utility, is deciding whether or not that meaning has usefulness in other contexts. This is a nascent quality, and it leads to Eisner's (1991) final dimension of thematics.

Thematics involve not just that a new idea may be useful in another context, but specifically how it would be useful. Humans live and learn (Eisner, 1991), but they also learn and live. The process is much more cyclical than its linguistic presentation would have readers believe. Consequently, a qualitative inquiry should provide not only a useful idea, but also how to use that idea. This conclusion is appropriate since the purpose of an educational criticism is the improvement of educational practice.

These four dimensions allow researchers, participants, and readers alike, to decide on the credibility of the content of an educational criticism; however, they must also consider the credibility of the form of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism itself. Eisner (1991) provides three criteria for making this determination: "structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy" (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). What follows is an exploration of each criterion as an explanation of its meaning.

Structural corroboration is the triangulation of data sources. The quality of an educational experience is the sum of the qualities of its parts. Consequently, the researcher should provide multiple sources of data because each of those sources highlights different qualities of the experience. In this context, the overall quality of the

educational experience is in reference to its validity for readers as an accurate portrayal of the educational experience.

Consensual validation, then, is the degree to which readers agree about the believability of the presentation of that educational experience. Whereas the author of the educational criticism is responsible for the structural corroboration, the reader is responsible for the consensual validation. The author attempts to evoke that validation, but it is up to the reader to consent to it. This subtlety is imperative to the credibility of an educational criticism because it demonstrates that the structure of the method requires the participation of both author and reader for validation. As it should be, validation is a collaborative process based on the perspective of both author and reader.

Therefore, referential adequacy highlights the empirical essence of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism. It does not rely on theory or experimentation, but on experience itself. In this sense, it is another form of triangulation, but a triangulation of perspective. Referential adequacy details the extent to which the reader's experience of the author's experience of the qualities of the educational experience align.

Curricular connoisseurship and criticism.

Seeing is central to making. –Elliot Eisner (1991)

Because it is grounded in the activities of everyday life (Eisner, 1991), Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism is a broad and adaptable method with applications in a variety of educational contexts. Emphasizing *Curricular Connoisseurship and Criticism* indicates the curricular lens through which I viewed the educational experiences of teaching and learning for the purpose of this study. Viewing

instruction—specifically the curricular decision-making process—as a curriculum for teacher educators demonstrated the practical parallels between this method of qualitative inquiry and the contemplative process of curriculum development.

Connoisseurship is traditionally thought of as the appreciation of art, but Eisner (1991) defines connoisseurship as “the art of appreciation” (p. 63). Therefore, where Educational Connoisseurship envisions the possibility of seeing the classroom as art, Curricular Connoisseurship encourages teachers to focus on their classrooms as an individual art piece. No single person is in a better place to appreciate the nuances and complexities of a teacher’s classroom than the teacher herself or himself. This art of appreciation is one that requires practice—that is a practice—but what is the payoff?

In the context of understanding connoisseurship as occurring in the mind of the individual, Eisner (1991) defines criticism as “the art of disclosure” (p. 86). Quite simply, criticism is the sharing of one’s perception of the qualities of an experience in a way that benefits others’ perception of the same experience. The form of this sharing in the context of education becomes curriculum. The point of appreciating the subtle qualities of one’s own classroom was to create a curriculum based on that appreciation with the aim of enhancing the learning experiences for the students. Learning becomes the foundation for teaching in the way that a refined appreciation is the basis for disclosure that is most beneficial to others.

In curricular connoisseurship and criticism, connoisseurship became a curriculum for the teacher. This, in turn, generated an educational criticism in the very specific form of the curriculum presented to the students. There are two reasons this approach to

teaching and learning was a pragmatic approach. First, appreciation and its reconstruction are fundamental aspects of the ordinary activities of everyday life (Eisner, 1991). This approach is useful in any learning experience, and all experiences are learning experiences (Dewey, 1934). Second, because this approach focuses on curriculum as a process rather than as a product, the process itself becomes part of who teachers and students are. This perspective transforms the emphasis on what one knows into an emphasis on how one knows it, which is occurring in every moment of one's waking life. Consequently, students have the opportunity to see how to learn by learning how to see.

Conceptual Framework and Analytical Lenses

Curriculum in action treats real things: real acts, real teachers, real children, things richer than and different from their theoretical representations. Curriculum will deal badly with its real things if it treats them merely as replicas of their theoretic representations. –Joseph Schwab (1971)

In contemplating the design of this study, I developed a concept map as a means of exploring the relationship of teachers to themselves, to their students, to their content, and to the contexts in which they teach their students. It prompted both my advisor and a committee member, at separate times, to suggest I look into the scholarship of Joseph Schwab (1969, 1971, 1973, 1983). In an ironic attempt to fix the practice of theory by providing a theory of practice, Schwab's (1969) *The Practical* provided the educational world with his theory of the commonplaces. The commonplaces are subject matter, student, teacher, and *milieu* (Schwab, 1973). These are essentially the same elements of

teaching and learning I had developed prior to my knowledge of the commonplaces. That a teacher conceived of the commonplaces independent of Schwab demonstrated the potentially underlying universality of Schwab's concept and made the commonplaces an ideal schema for designing an exploration of curricular development in multiple educational settings. It also inspired further research into the thinking from which those commonplaces arose.

In 1969, Schwab argued that the field of curriculum studies was dying. The fact that scholars continue to argue about whether or not this is the case may raise doubts about his hypothesis, or it may demonstrate his influence in revitalizing the field. Either way, his work is no less relevant because the relationship between theory and practice, even a theory *of* practice, is paradoxical. How does practice transform into theory and back into practice? Schwab's proposed solution to this curricular problem involved the development of the position of a curriculum specialist to facilitate a deliberation between the theoretical and the practical.

In his *Translation into Curriculum*, Schwab (1973) argues that an expert in the experiences of any one of the four commonplaces would still be lacking the knowledge of the other equally important three. For example, a scientist may be an expert in the field but would still lack the knowledge about the teacher, students, and classroom necessary to make an appropriate curricular decision. Consequently, Schwab (1973) proposed that curricular deliberation become the collaborative work of representatives from the four commonplaces. In addition, he designated a fifth representative, that of "curriculum specialist," to facilitate this collaboration. The most striking aspect of his proposal,

however, is the fact that only through consensus of the committee members should any final curricular decision be reached. Herein lies the essential problem of the paradox between theory and practice.

Even if it were possible to bring together a group of representatives from the commonplaces, and to have a curriculum specialist facilitate their discussion, the final curricular decision would still be made by the teacher who presents that consensual curriculum to students. More subtly, if a meeting of representatives of the commonplaces occurred, the content of that deliberation would still be a conceptualization, not the actual qualities of the commonplaces. In addition, that conceptualization would be limited to the perspective of the representative(s) selected. However, there is a method in the madness, or at least, a philosophical structure for designing a study of the curricular deliberations of teacher educators.

Although humans are limited to a single perspective, they have the capacity to empathize—to temporarily inhabit multiple perspectives through creative conceptualization—before “returning” to their own, now presumably more informed perspective. There is perhaps no situation in which this is more evident than a school classroom in which a single teacher is held responsible for the learning of 30 students. Within Schwab’s conceptualization of a learning experience, the curricular question then becomes, “What is the most appropriate process for reaching a beneficial curricular decision?” Or more pragmatically, “How can a teacher account for the infinite data available and still create a lesson plan in time for tomorrow’s first-hour English class?”

Rather than demanding that teachers be more than just teachers, the contemplation of the curricular decision-making process was a practice for learning and teaching how to do just that. Using Schwab's (1973) commonplaces as a framework, the teacher conceptually transcended the role of "teacher" to become the "curriculum specialist" with one important distinction: The idea of a curriculum specialist facilitating a dialogue among representative stakeholders of the educational process to reach a consensus on a curriculum is impractical. Therefore, instead of an external deliberation among actual representatives for teacher, students, content, and context, the process was explored as an internal deliberation—a contemplation of the experiences of the commonplaces and their influence on the curricular choices.

The idea of teachers creating and engaging in that dialogue in their own minds before making a curricular decision is more practical. Additionally, the empirical evidence of the teacher's previous interactions with the actual commonplaces becomes the basis for those conceptualizations. It is the difference between pragmatism as a theory and as a practice, and it requires teachers to have a refined appreciation for the subtle yet complex and often dynamic qualities of the commonplaces that make up their classrooms. In other words, if teachers must hold all of these conceptualizations in their heads, regardless of the source or process, then it is empowering to acknowledge that the curricular choices those teachers make hold the key to curricular agency. However, this hypothesis required contemplative educators, self-identified and otherwise, to demonstrate and recognize the curricular agency found within a teacher educator's curricular deliberation.

Participant Selection

In our daily lives we do not randomly sample in order to generalize. –Elliot Eisner (1991)

Educational connoisseurship and criticism does not emphasize a specific sampling process because that is not how people function in their daily lives (Eisner, 1991). However, all sampling is purposeful sampling. In technical terms, my participant selection process might be characterized as “convenience sampling” (Miles & Huberman, 1994), but it was more refined than that. This specific process of participant selection emphasized the participant level, but it also took the process and site levels into account (Creswell, 2013). I selected each of the participating teacher educators for their experience and exemplary skill as teacher educators. The criteria for this evaluation was subjective; I based it on their academic achievements, their standing among their colleagues, and my professional experiences with them as teacher educators. They were also chosen based on their differences—differences in who they are, where they are, who they teach, and why they teach. I provide an initial description of the individual participants to identify their similarities and differences based on those specific criteria.

The first participant identified as a White female in her early forties. She was an associate professor of education at a large public university. She taught graduate and undergraduate classes in the foundations and curriculum studies. She did not identify as a contemplative educator. However, her expertise in teacher education makes her an ideal candidate for exploring the content of teacher education as curriculum. This

understanding of content was unique in that the content of teaching aligns with the form in which she presented it to students—that is, she was teaching about teaching.

The second participant identified as a White female in her mid-forties. She was an artist and adjunct faculty in the art education department at a large public university. She did not identify as a contemplative educator. Her unique course design, which required extensive individual meetings with her students outside of the classroom, was an interesting way to study the relationship between students and the curricular decision-making process. In other words, the curricular implications of intentionally creating a learning experience between the teacher, student, and content *outside* of the classroom provided insight into the curricular agency present in her curricular deliberation.

The third participant identified as a Black male in his early sixties. He was a professor at a small private university. He taught a variety of graduate and undergraduate courses in interdisciplinary studies and religious studies. Many of his students were in the teacher education programs at the university. He did not identify as a contemplative educator. His training as an anthropologist placed him in a perfect situation for exploring the teacher educator as a connoisseur of the context as curriculum. His focus on how teacher educators facilitate the relationship of students with the content, the teacher, the classroom, and with themselves, was integral to understanding curricular agency within the context of the curricular decision-making process.

The fourth participant identified as a White male in his late sixties. He was a professor at a small private university. He taught primarily online in the graduate teacher education program with some face-to-face graduate and undergraduate classes as well.

He identified as a contemplative educator. His research on the teacher as a contemplative made him ideal for exploring the experience of the teacher educator as curriculum. His focus on how teacher educators relate to who they are as teachers was important to understanding that particular perspective within the curricular decision-making process.

Therefore, each of the four participants provided insight into one of the four aspects of curriculum development that aligned with the commonplaces—teacher, student, content, and context. The difference in institutions of higher education at which each of them teach provided insight into the ways in which context affected the manifestation of the curricular decisions as much as the teacher educators themselves. The selection of these particular teacher educators also demonstrated the importance of collaboration and reciprocity in educational research (Creswell, 2013). Working with these teacher educators to develop their understandings of their own curricular deliberation also informed my understanding of a more general conceptualization of curricular agency within that process. In addition, creating the time and space to work with colleagues to further explore their curricular decision-making processes enhanced their curricular development by creating the time and space to increase their awareness of it.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data in the forms designated by Creswell (2013) as “documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 100). More specifically, I conducted a series of interviews as the primary source of data and an observation as a secondary source of data individually with each of

the participating teacher educators. The interview questions were based on Schwab's (1969) commonplaces. The sequencing of the interview began with the background of the teacher educators as context for understanding their curricular decision-making processes. It then proceeded from the planning to the implementation to the perceived reception of the curriculum. The sequence ended with a collaborative reflection on the overall process and the implications it might have for future curricular deliberations. My preliminary findings influenced later interviews with those teacher educators as we collaborated about the overall process of identifying and analyzing their respective curricular decision-making processes. Finally, I compared the common themes of those four curricular deliberations to the themes present in the relevant literature to identify aspects of the emergent concept of curricular agency and its broader implications for education.

The first interview was semi-formal (Rossman & Rallis, 2011), eliciting data about the educational backstory of the teacher educator. The second interview was also semi-formal, exploring the teacher educator's intentions (and attentions) involved in his or her process of curriculum development (RQ1). Both elements (backstory and intentions) were imperative to an understanding of the curricular decision-making process. The two interviews allowed for a comparison of the backstory and intentions in a way that teacher educators often do not have the time to contemplate during the process of curricular deliberation.

After the second interview, I observed one class related to those intentions, looking at the effect of that teacher educator's curricular decision-making process on the

curriculum itself (RQ2). Within educational criticism and connoisseurship (Eisner, 1991), observation data is often a primary source of data. However, this study explored the very mental curricular deliberations of the teacher educators. That is, what occurred in the classroom was not nearly as important as the way participants perceived what occurred in the classroom within the arc of this single cycle of curricular deliberation. Consequently, the observation data that is included was minimal and in the context of the participant's reflective discussion of what occurred in the classroom during the observation.

The third interview compared how the intentions of the teacher educator as described to me in the second interview aligned with what the teacher educator perceived (and I observed) in the classes. In other words, it was an evaluation of the extent to which the teacher educator's intended and operational curricula align. The degree to which these two versions were perceived to align (or not) influenced the overarching contemplative process by which the teacher educators articulated and appreciated their individual curricular decision-making processes. In a teacher's mind, this is often where the evaluation ends: "How well did I do what I was trying to do?" However, this comparison does not make the necessary next step to evaluating the process itself. Therefore, the third interview was critical for moving toward the metacognitive evaluation of the entire curricular decision-making process. However, it was not the final step.

Based on an initial analysis of the data, I conducted a fourth and much more collaborative semi-formal interview in which I discussed the overall process with the

teacher educator as the basis of the interview (RQ3). I planned on this data collection process ideally taking four weeks for each participant: Interviews one and two during the first week; an observation during week two; the third interview during the third week, and a final culminating interview during week four. However, as many qualitative researchers know—qualitative researchers working with educators, in particular—this was not what happened. Below are the actual dates of the interviews and observations formatted as both a table and a comparative timeline.

Dates for data collection.

	Dr. Grey	Dr. Rockwell	Dr. Douglas	Mr. White
Interview #1	10/28/2015	11/16/2015	09/01/2015	09/24/2015
Interview #2	11/04/2015	11/30/2015	11/13/2015	10/09/2015
Interview #3	11/18/2015	12/07/2015	12/09/2015	10/23/2015
Interview #4	12/01/2015	12/17/2015	01/13/2016	10/30/2015
*Interview #5	--	01/04/2016	--	--
Observation	11/09/2015	12/02/2015	11/18/2015	10/23/2015**

*Dr. Rockwell, because of her content area of art education, inspired a fifth interview to explore the difference, if any, between the implications of curricular deliberation for education, generally, and art education, specifically.

**Because Mr. White’s class was an online class, per his request, we combined the “observation of his class” (reading through the transcripts of that week’s section of the course) with the third interview.

After implementing this process four times, once with each teacher educator, I wrote up each of the four curricular deliberations in a parallel format based on Schwab’s commonplaces (1971). I then conducted an analysis to determine the utility of the overall process for teacher educators (RQ3) and the presence and quality of curricular agency

within that process in a more general educational context (RQ4). The protracted nature of the data collection and the iterative nature of its organization and presentation led to an emergent focus (Eisner, 1991). This focus involved an additional philosophical lens of analysis, that of Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1995) and specifically, the four properties of his more specific articulation of human agency (2006).

Emergent focus.

In laying out the parameters of the methodology of Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism, Eisner (1991) discussed the difference between a prefigured and emergent focus. A prefigured focus involves "a specific observational target," whereas an emergent focus "allow[s] the situation to speak for itself" (Eisner, 1991, p. 176). While this study began with a prefigured focus on the individual teachers' curricular decision-making processes, their curricular agency within those cycles of curricular deliberation emerged as a primary finding of the study. This occurred within the progression of the study. Therefore, although the interviews themselves were structured around Schwab's (1971) commonplaces, the data manifesting from those interviews related to Albert Bandura's (1995, 2006) work on self-efficacy.

The four properties of Bandura's conceptualization of human agency.

It is always timely to conceptualize teachers as human beings. Albert Bandura developed a theory of self-efficacy (1995) from which he derived a psychology of human agency (2006), stating, "People are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them" (p. 164). More specifically, humans have the complex cognitive ability "to comprehend, predict, and alter the course of events [through] visualized

futures that act on the present [and] construct, evaluate, and modify alternative courses of action to secure valued outcomes [and] override environmental influences” (p. 164). In other words, humans have agency. To be an agent, then, is “to influence intentionally one’s functioning and life circumstances” (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). This idea may seem too mundane to be compelling; however, images of parents separated from their children at the border, classrooms full of children yet empty of supplies, and streets full of protestors demonstrate otherwise.

Bandura (2006) argued that there are four properties of human agency: (1) intentionality, (2) forethought, (3) self-reactiveness, and (4) self-reflectiveness. Within the context of curriculum, intentionality and forethought align with the intended curriculum. Self-reactiveness, specifically “the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution” (Bandura, 2006, p. 165), aligns with the operational curriculum. Finally, self-reflectiveness, which is “the metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions” (Bandura, 2006, p. 165), aligns with the connection between curricular cycles as well as the overarching awareness of the process of curricular contemplation.

According to Bandura (2006), in human transactions—as learning experiences are—“one cannot speak of ‘environment,’ ‘behavior,’ and ‘outcomes’ as though there were fundamentally different events with distinct features inherent in them” (p. 165). Instead, agency becomes “the exercise of self-influence in the service of selected goals and desired outcomes” (p. 165). Moreover, this conceptualization aligns with the curricular contemplations of educators as “people live in a psychic environment largely

of their own making” (Bandura, 2006, p. 165). In other words, Bandura’s (2006) articulation of human agency was applicable to curricular deliberation as a human activity. The connection was simple, but the implications of the analysis were significant for the participants, specifically, and educators, generally. Consequently, it became a lens for analyzing the existence of curricular agency within the participants’ curricular deliberations. The four properties—“intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness” (Bandura, 2006, pgs. 164-165)—had interesting correlates within the curricular arc I was exploring through the structure of the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969). Further, the fact that curricular deliberation for educators is primarily an internal and mental activity aligned with Bandura’s (2006) assertion that the human understanding of experience occurs primarily in the cognitive realm as well.

Analytical Process and Rationale

Therefore, the analytical process of this study was itself iterative and influenced the final presentation of the data. I read through the data using each of the three lenses—the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969), contemplative education (Palmer, 1997, etc.), and human agency (Bandura, 2006)—coding for four properties for each of the three lenses.

In the first reading, I coded for the four commonplaces—teacher, student, content, and context. This influenced the formatting for the presentation of the data. Because the interviews themselves were based on the commonplaces, I was able to follow, for example, the theme of content through the arc of the interviews for each participant. In addition, using the commonplaces provided a parallel structure of presentation for the readers. Because the commonplaces provided the structure of the interviews, it was not

difficult to utilize those same commonplaces to structure the presentation of the data. This provided the opportunity for at least three comparisons readers could make.

The first comparison was to track a single commonplace longitudinally through the entire arc of interviews for a single participant. In other words, the comparison demonstrated what that commonplace looked like for a participant in the intended curriculum, the operational curriculum, and the participant's perception of the received curriculum. Additionally, this had implications for participants' future curricular decisions. The second comparison was latitudinal, comparing a commonplace as it manifested among the four participants. For example, it demonstrated how the commonplace of content looked different (and similar) for Dr. Grey and Mr. White. The third comparison for readers involved the idea of how the commonplaces themselves interconnected within the curricular deliberations of the participants. In other words, the comparison demonstrated how Dr. Douglas understood and utilized the relationship between content and context in his curricular deliberations. However, the curricular decision-making process is primarily internal, privileging the unique qualities of contemplative education.

Consequently, a second reading of the data employed the four properties of a contemplative lens—human-centered (Palmer, 1997), intrinsic (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), interconnected (Miller, 2007), and largely based on the perspective of the individual educator (Langer, 1989). At the beginning of the study, I hypothesized that the curricular deliberations of good educators generally, and good teacher educators specifically, all manifested contemplative characteristics. Therefore, I surmised that, the curricular

decision-making processes of these teacher educators would place them on a spectrum of contemplative education based on the strength and frequency of those characteristics in their curricular deliberations, as well as the participants' awareness of them (as such). Ultimately, this proved to be beyond the scope of the study. However, acknowledging the contemplative nature of curricular deliberation and the manifestation of curricular agency within that curricular deliberation warranted identifying the contemplative qualities previously mentioned as they appeared in the data presented to the readers. A contemplative perspective of the commonplaces led to the emergent focus of curricular agency within the curricular deliberations of the participants.

Bandura's (2006) theory of human agency provided four properties—intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness—that, in combination within a human activity, demonstrate the presence of agency. Therefore, a third reading of the transcripts involved determining the presence (or absence) and frequency (or infrequency) of these qualities within the participants' curricular deliberations. All four properties appeared extensively among the data of all four participants. Consequently, the presence of curricular agency within the curricular decision-making process manifested as a significant finding in relation to the issue of burnout among educators (Ingersoll, 2012).

Limitations

The limitations of this study are delimitations (Price & Murnan, 2004). They include aspects of participant selection, program selection, study design, and subjectivity. As opposed to a more quantitative understanding of limitations as detrimental to a study,

I argue that it is in fact these very limitations that give meaning to a study and make it a useful addition to the scholarship of the field if the researcher is able to articulate that utility.

At least two of the four teacher educators selected would not self-identify as contemplative educators, while the other two would, but to differing degrees. Consequently, my choice of participants involved the intentional creation of a spectrum of self-awareness. There are two reasons for this. First, it is my hypothesis that all of the participants selected are exceptional teacher educators with varying degrees of attention to how their curricular choices facilitate that success. The selection of these participants assures a type of contemplative heterogeneity. Second, the purpose of this study is to present this attentiveness to other teacher educators as a means of enhancing their own awareness, as well as the awareness of their students, who will one day become teachers themselves. Therefore, it is important to assist teacher educators in locating themselves on a spectrum of contemplative educators as a means of increasing their awareness. Consequently, they can explicitly teach this process of increasing awareness of one's curricular decision-making process to their students.

This study does not explore curricular deliberation and curricular agency within non-traditional models of teacher education. Limiting the definition of teacher educator to university professor of educational courses in the context of this study provides a more accurate representation of a specific population. However, it also opens the possibility for further study of additional populations within teacher education and beyond it.

Much like with the program selection, I had to decide whether to explore curricular deliberation in terms of breadth or depth. That is, I had the option of studying the progression of a single strand of curricular decision-making from teacher educator to classroom teacher to P-12 student. However, this is an initial study of curricular deliberation and curricular agency with the aim of providing general characteristics of contemplating curricular choices as an ongoing process. Therefore, I chose to look at a variety of teacher educators in a search for the commonalities among their respective curricular deliberations to operationalize a more general form of curricular agency. Again, this decision could catalyze multiple—almost infinite—studies of the progression of curricular deliberations and the curricular agency that manifests from those deliberations in different contexts. The utility of a specific manifestation of curricular agency is limited to the context in which it operates, but the number of contexts is infinite. In addition, an understanding of that process in various contexts is a progression toward curricular agency as a construct of curriculum theory.

Finally, acknowledging the subjectivity of the researcher—and of the readers—allows both researcher and readers alike to utilize that subjectivity as a valuable instrument for making sense of the data as applicable in a number of educational settings. In this way, subjectivity does not negate generalizability. Subjectivity embraces generalizability by acknowledging that the specificity of the study does not keep the readers from utilizing aspects helpful in their own unique stations and rejecting irrelevant aspects or aspects with which they may disagree. This is the essence of pragmatism, as

Eisner (1991) notes, “It is learning from particular experiences that constitutes our most useful generalizing capacities” (p. 178).

Conclusion

Eisner’s (1991) methodology of educational criticism and connoisseurship was ideal for collaborating with teacher educators to describe and appreciate their curricular decision-making processes within a cycle of curricular deliberation. It allowed them to be more aware of the individual artistry of their teaching. Schwab’s (1971) commonplaces provided a simple yet encompassing framework for exploring those deliberations, the very act of which was contemplative in nature. Being able to describe their curricular decision-making processes increased their awareness of the underlying agency within their curricular deliberations. In addition, the method allowed participants to demonstrate how that art connected to their own learning experiences. The participants recognized that they possessed a great deal of agency in the learning experiences they created for their students. Consequently, it was not just the presence of that agency that was important for the participants, but their awareness of its presence, and more specifically, their ability to articulate that agency during the course of our collaborations that was most beneficial for the participants. The presence of agency within the individual curricular decision-making processes of these participants, and curricular deliberations, generally, has implications for these individual educators in their own teaching and for all educators and, consequently, for their students.

CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANT DATA

In this chapter, I offer detailed descriptions of the curricular deliberations of the participating teacher educators. Within Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship (Eisner, 1991), descriptions usually involve presenting the researcher's perception of what occurred in a classroom during an observation. This study is unique in that these are descriptions of the curricular decision-making processes of the participants and their perceptions of the results of those decisions. These descriptions are organized according to the interview questions that were designed according to Schwab's (1971) commonplaces of teacher, student, content, and *milieu* (or context). All four commonplaces were present in all four participants' curricular orientations; however, an inclination to emphasize a single commonplace over the others in their curricular deliberations manifested as a significant insight of the study, and this understanding informed my presentation of the data.

Each description and interpretation of the participant involved a series of vignettes and commentaries. I organized those vignettes and commentaries within the following framework: Introduction to participant; the primary commonplace for that participant; the primary commonplace in relation to the secondary commonplaces (for that participant); the participant's curricular decision-making process; and concluding

remarks for each participant. This is followed by a presentation of each of the four unique manifestations of curricular agency and a brief conclusion to the chapter.

It is important to understand that the focus of the study was on the participants' own conceptualizations of their respective curricular deliberations. I did observe a specific class for each of these teacher educators within one cycle of the participants' curricular deliberations (but that is not the primary source of data, as previously mentioned in Chapter Three). One cycle involved the intended curriculum ("lesson plan"), operational curriculum (classroom instruction), and spiraled curriculum (Bruner, 1977—reflection on the alignment between the lesson and its implementation that influences future curricular development). However, the emphasis for this study was on the participants' perceptions of their curricular decision-making processes rather than my classroom observations. I concentrated on the participants' reflections about their curricular deliberations and the alignment between their intended and operational curricula. The scope of this study did not directly consider the students' received curriculum. This teacher-centered focus meant that the vignettes highlighted the participants' reflections about the students' learning experiences. Consequently, the vignettes are much more dialogic in nature, articulating the discussions that occurred around the classroom observation rather than the observation itself. Additionally, the structural alignment of the presentation of the participant data in this chapter allows readers to compare data in similar categories amongst participants. This intentional organization of the data is also conducive to the thematic analysis presented in Chapter Five.

I met with each of the participants at least five times—four interviews and a classroom observation. The interviews were often at different locations to accommodate the participants as much as possible. The vignettes are directly from those interviews and the quotations are direct quotations from the transcripts. However, I edited the interviews to read as a single dialogue to articulate the essence of those conversations and to create a more user-friendly form of the data for the reader. Sometimes, as in Dr. Grey’s case, this means that I only describe one of several locations, which is still one of the actual places that I conducted an interview. There is also a linear progression to the dialogues as they are sequenced within the study and closely follow the script of the interview questions. However, because some participants emphasized different ideas within their answers to those interview questions, the data may not exactly align from participant description to participant description.

The Paradoxical Pedagogy of Dr. Grey: The Observation of Apprenticeship

Dr. Alexandra Grey.

“Just because you’ve been taught doesn’t mean that you’re an expert in teaching, and just because you’re a teacher doesn’t mean that you’re an expert in teacher education.”

The following is a dialogue constructed from the interview transcripts of Dr. Alexandra Grey. I synthesized the transcripts into a single conversation and described a single setting, the neighborhood coffee shop, to make the data more user-friendly. However, I took all of the quotes of the dialogue directly from the transcripts themselves. The creative elements of the presentation involve my description of a real setting and my

consolidation and organization of the interview transcripts within the framework described in chapter three and summarized in the introduction to chapter four. In addition, the commentaries interspersed throughout the dialogue are also my interpretations as they relate to the themes presented in chapter five.

Meeting Dr. Grey.

“I think about pedagogy as curriculum...I see everything as curriculum.”

I met Dr. Grey at a neighborhood coffee shop that self-identified as an espresso bar. The stucco exterior of the hexagonal building was painted grey. Ascending the three matching grey steps, I walked through the doors to find that the interior industrial design style matched the exterior of the building.

I walked past the counter encased in faux-marble tiles and topped with reclaimed wood. The narrow planks of the original hardwood floors creaked in certain spots. Sporadic shelving and garage-door-style windows of rectangular glass panels framed in black metal sections broke up the exposed brick walls. Above me, exposed ventilation and pendant lighting hung below the corrugated metal ceiling panels.

Dr. Grey was sitting at a small free-standing square table in the more secluded back seating area in a painted-white metal chair that intentionally did not match any of the other white chairs in the section. She was wearing a stylish grey sweater with a hexagonal pattern over a white undershirt. She had on tapered black jeans. She also wore open-toed brown leather platform heels that were a different color brown than her long, straight, brown hair.

Dr. Grey is in her early forties. She is a White, heterosexual, woman with one son in the later grades of elementary school. She loves the outdoors, being barefoot, and being able to see outside even when she can't actually be outside. She runs, skis, hikes, and backpacks. However, she also reads, writes, loves music, and pays close attention to her cooking. She taught high school English for seven years before pursuing a Ph.D. in Curriculum Studies and becoming a professor in Educational Foundations. She is currently teaching a variety of classes involving teacher education at several institutions across the state.

In the coffee shop, there was an energy amongst the customers and employees alike, but the volume of the conversations was muted. This was much like the disposition of Dr. Grey herself, pulsating with energy but outwardly reserved. The small table was covered in her work from a previous engagement as well as the classes she was currently teaching, and she was simultaneously on her phone. However, even the busy-ness of her exterior life could not keep pace with the exuberance of her interior life, which was constantly focused on teaching, despite the fact that she believed she became a teacher by coincidence, as she explained: "I sort of accidentally became a teacher. I did not plan on teaching until...I guess I became interested in it after I graduated from college. I really wanted to be a philosopher and a writer, but they're apparently not hiring philosophers these days. Anyways, I graduated from college, then I messed around for a year or two..."

I interrupted, "What do you mean, 'messed around'?"

She smirked and continued: “I traveled, a lot. I followed some musicians around the country. And I did a lot of hiking. I had a lot of odd jobs. I made coffee for people, and I was a bartender, and I was a waitress. I did a lot of meandering, a lot of wandering. At one point, I moved up to Colorado from New Mexico, and I saw an ad in the paper for an after-school science program. It looked fun, and I needed a job. I actually didn’t like it very much, but I found that I was pretty good at it even though I didn’t really enjoy it.”

“I thought I eventually wanted to be a college professor, but I thought that maybe I would go into high school teaching. And I had a professor who told me those are not compatible—that I couldn’t be both a high school teacher and a college professor. This one’s for you, professor. Usually when someone tells me I can’t do something, that’s the reason for me to do it. Maybe that’s why I became a teacher...because someone told me I couldn’t!”

She laughed and continued: “One day, I got this flyer from a university, *somehow*, and I got really excited about their Masters program that included strands in really interesting ideas. I loved it! I found that teaching was a place where I could use my love of literature and philosophy in a way that could be real and practical. And I was terrified to be a teacher. So I can’t say that it was a natural fit.”

“What was terrifying about it?” I asked.

She let out a quick nervous laugh as she returned to the experience: “I was scared—what would they do? Would they riot? I started by asking them to take out a piece of paper, and I thought they would riot. But they just took out a piece of paper. Then I was fine. I settled in. And by the time I was done with student teaching, I was in

a groove, and I knew that I was good at it. And I didn't want to be a typical teacher. I didn't want school to be normal; I wanted it to be about having experiences and learning from those.”

She paused for several moments, which was rare in our conversations. Then she continued with an important tangent: “It just makes me very uncomfortable to talk about myself. I don't mind sharing stories, and I always talk about my own personal stories in class, but I do that just to give students a sense of what it's like to teach. I also don't like being pinned down. If I say something today, I want to have the right to change it in the future because my opinions and perspectives are always changing.”

I responded: “It seems like an interesting contrast, at least on the surface level; not necessarily of being guarded, but being a private, introverted person and then deciding that you want to become a teacher. You are literally putting yourself in front of people, as a career.”

Dr. Grey continued: “Teaching is very public. And yes—especially when you're being yourself and telling your own stories, and if you're authentically teaching—then it's kind of scary. But when it's in alignment with who I am, then you can't really argue with doing what you think you were meant to do. And just because there are risks doesn't mean that it's not worth it.”

Despite her anxiety, or perhaps because of it, Dr. Grey had become an exemplary teacher and teacher educator. What is clear is that she continues in the profession because she enjoys the work, and she enjoys the work because, as she says, “It's in alignment with who I am.” This insight aligns with the contemplative perspective that

includes the qualities of teaching based on who we are as human beings (Palmer, 1997). It follows, then, that this contemplative quality of good teaching means that the reward for doing so is intrinsic (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) which makes teaching as a profession sustainable. With this glimpse of who Dr. Grey is and how she came to teaching, it will be helpful to understand her perspective on education as a context for exploring her relationship to the commonplaces within the curricular decision-making process.

The purpose of education.

“It’s to help individuals find what they’re good at and to use that to create happy lives, well-adjusted happy people, and just societies.”

To understand the curricular decision-making processes of the participants, it was beneficial for those decisions to be contextualized within their view of the purpose of education generally, and their intentions within the educational process, specifically.

I continued our conversation with a loaded question, “What is the purpose of education?” The issue with asking such a question is twofold. First, to ask such an overarching and complex philosophical question might overwhelm the participant without providing any useful data. However, the second issue seems more detrimental than the first. Without asking the question, it is difficult to contextualize the participant’s curricular decision-making process, and context is integral to understanding curricular deliberation. So, I asked Dr. Grey, “What is the purpose of education?”

Her response was timely, graceful, and poignant: “I think [the purpose of education] is different for different people. But, from a broad perspective in the United States, it’s to promote the public good. And also for individuals. I think it’s to help

individuals find what they're good at and to use that to create happy lives, well-adjusted happy people, and just societies. That's what drives my decision-making process: Is this good for individuals? Is this good for their communities?"

"My classes are a microcosm for the larger purpose of education. In my own classes, because of the nature of the content, and the purpose, and the reasons that students are taking my classes, it's to help them become the best at what they're there for—which is either to become teachers, or educational specialists, or curricularists—so that they can have a positive effect on their communities. The purpose is to help people find what they're good at and maybe understand what they're not good at, and to help them to at least become competent in the areas that they need to be. We're refining what's valuable about their experience and their perspective, so that they can effect change in the communities that they participate in."

"But, for me to say that they're there because they have to create change assumes that change is needed. And, while I believe that change is needed, maybe not everybody does. Maybe they don't see that change as necessary, or maybe they're working in a community where that community differs from them. So, it's really about understanding—because a lot of the classes I teach are on school reform and curriculum reform, and 'reform' implies 'problem'—so, we look at historical contours and so forth, and then specific content."

Dr. Grey believes that the purpose of education is to benefit society on both the individual and communal levels. This is the same as Palmer's (1997) contemplative perspective that education must involve the humanity of those involved. She sees her

teaching as aligned with that purpose. She works continuously with her students as individuals, however a substantial part of that work is helping them to see who they are and what they can be within the context of their specific environments, which she labels “communities.” This is noteworthy, as it is consistently evident that Dr. Grey is a very student-focused educator; however, it is equally important to recognize that while students are her focus, content is the medium in which she operates. This will become increasingly evident in the transition to Dr. Grey’s evaluation of the qualities of a good teacher. It is important to the study because it demonstrates the contemplative emphasis on perspective (Langer, 1989), and it provides a telling example of how each of the participants emphasized one commonplace over the others (Schwab, 1969) within their curricular deliberations.

Who is a good teacher?

“You can’t call yourself a teacher; someone else has to call you ‘teacher’ in order for it to be real.”

It is important to understand the participant’s characterization of education generally and her role within that system, specifically. In the same way, it is important to understand the participant’s characterization of a good teacher generally, and how she views herself as a teacher, specifically. Again, it is a loaded question that would be more harmful to the data if it were not asked. Consequently, I asked Dr. Grey, “Who is a good teacher?”

Her response was extensive and insightful: “I could describe some qualities and characteristics: They’re caring, and they take an interest in the individual lives of their

students. For example, I could think about it backwards. Could I imagine a good teacher who isn't caring? No. Could I imagine a good teacher who doesn't understand or appreciate the lives of his or her students? No. I don't think you can be a good teacher and not have those qualities."

"But in terms of pedagogy, there are so many interesting and unique pedagogies, and I think those have to match up with who the teacher is and what is comfortable for that person. So, it's not that all good teachers use Constructivism, or something like that. I don't buy into that. But I believe that they have a deep understanding of a wide variety of approaches to teaching, a wide variety of philosophies of education, and that they have enough knowledge and background, and creativity and interest in what they're doing, so that they can use that knowledge to be flexible and respond to the needs of their students."

She continued: "So, really, a good teacher is one who is responding, reacting, reflective, and intuitive with his or her students, and I realize that as I'm talking, I'm describing my child's favorite teachers! And my favorite teachers of my child! So maybe that's a problem. But the ones who take the time to identify a student's misconception, or to talk about things a little differently because they have that working knowledge where they can really tailor the curriculum and also the class time to what the students need."

In her remarks about good teachers, it is once again clear that Dr. Grey is emphatically student-focused. However, in her transition to a discussion about pedagogies, it is also clear that—as a teacher educator, for whom the content of her

curriculum *is* pedagogy—she is most comfortable working with and for those students through the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969). She believes that a good teacher will have extensive knowledge of the content of educational pedagogies and philosophies in addition to knowledge of the students’ understanding of the content, because that is the best way to meet the needs of the students. Her comments also indicated there is much more to being a good educator than merely reflecting on one’s teaching (Schön, 1987).

She continued: “And I think there are also lots of other intangible qualities for good teachers—that they’re open and curious; they appreciate the intellect of their students and of themselves, and of their peers. But I think it has more to do with their ability to problem-solve, to be flexible in their thinking. I don’t think it’s things like their students score well on tests. Although, of course you want your students to score well on their tests, but that’s not, to me, what definitively defines a good teacher.”

When there was a natural pause, I asked her about her realization that she was describing her son’s teachers: “You said that you were describing your son’s favorite teachers, but you said that maybe that was a problem. Why do you think that was a problem?”

As always, Dr. Grey responded immediately: “Because I think that we have to think outside of our own experience, especially as teacher educators. Just because it was a good experience for me or for my son doesn’t mean that it should be generalized to all teachers and students. It is the same for my son; he is a unique individual, as every child is. And I mean, his first year teacher—I could never aspire to be as great of a teacher as she is. And I’ve told her that often. I say, ‘You are everything I wish I could be in a

teacher, and everything I wish I could teach my students to be in a teacher!’ But that’s my own experience. It doesn’t mean that we should clone her. But I can really appreciate what she brought to that particular classroom experience.”

I asked a follow-up question: “What is her response when you say that to her?”

“She tells me to shut up. She’s very humble, and she’s hilarious. She has this great sense of humor. I would definitely put that in what makes a good teacher. If you don’t have a great sense of humor, you’re just going to drown. She makes jokes with the kids in a really subtle way that they understand is out of care. It’s not ever mean-spirited. And she sees the best in others. I don’t think she knows—I think she has some inkling that she’s good at what she does, because she enjoys it—but, I don’t think she really sees how fabulous she is.”

Dr. Grey is an exemplary teacher educator. There are multiple reasons for it, but her discussion of her own child’s teachers highlights three significant reasons why Dr. Grey herself is exemplary. The first, which aligns with Bandura’s (2006) fourth quality of human agency—self-reflectiveness, is that she is able to recognize and articulate the type of teacher she prefers. The second, which aligns with the contemplative quality that teaching is unique to the humanity of the individual teacher, is that she is able to see that type as one among many pedagogical approaches, and she sees that there is no single approach that works best for all students. The third, which indicates the transferable nature of curricular contemplation, is that she is also, as a teacher educator, able to help her students—future teachers themselves—to understand these same ideas, and to work

with students in a way that aligns both with who they are as teachers and what their students need from a given learning experience.

“What about you?” I asked, “Are you a good teacher?”

Dr. Grey responded: “It was really important for me to remember that teaching isn’t a profession. And it’s not a calling. I’ve never liked that idea that teaching is a calling. I don’t understand what it means. I don’t really believe in that. I don’t know who would be the one doing the calling. Because it’s not that; it’s a manifestation of a particular kind of person. And not just of a particular kind of person, but of the interactions that that kind of person is lucky enough to have. I don’t know if I was called to teaching; I don’t think I was. But I think I was lucky enough to figure that, given the right situation, I could do it well. And that that’s who I am.”

“And I feel grateful for the people who have allowed me to be their teacher. And just because I’m assigned to be their teacher doesn’t mean that I am their teacher. Clearly, and I can tell you who many of them are, there are people who would not call me their teacher. That’s also why it’s so painful. It’s a huge responsibility for someone to see you as their teacher. I just needed to remember that I was up for the challenge. And I like to be in a place where I can be really grateful and happy for other people. Where I get to be a part of them becoming who they are. Where I can help people and be an important nexus in their life, that’s what I mean by teaching.”

Dr. Grey sees herself as a good teacher because teaching aligns with who she is (Palmer, 1997). However, she also sees herself as a good teacher because her students see her as a good teacher. In other words, her self-evaluation involves the combination of

her own assessment as well as the assessment of her students (Bandura, 2006). For Dr. Grey, to be a teacher is a privilege. It is neither a role, nor a job, but an honorary title bestowed upon truly good teachers by their students themselves. In her comments, the anxiety she feels as a human being in direct relationship with other humans is still evident in her focus on students. However, she also sees herself as a facilitator of learning through the creation of appropriate learning experiences, which is in line with her comfort in working with pedagogy as content. In other words, she viewed teaching as learning.

She continued: “I try to demonstrate flexibility with high expectations. I try to reinforce that I really believe in who they are, no matter where they are or what assignments they may have turned in or not. I’m excited to see my students. I respect them. I just love listening to them. I tend to think about that as my job as a teacher, and to demonstrate ways they can do that for their own students in the future.”

“Like I had a student who missed the midterm window. She was very sad, and very apologetic and distraught. I told her, ‘It’s alright; it’s okay. You don’t have to apologize. You don’t have to feel badly about it. We just have to make plans and move forward.’ She came up to me the next class and said, ‘Can I give you a hug?’ I said, ‘Yeah, why?’ She said, ‘I’ve never had a teacher be so compassionate.’ And I said, ‘You know, think about how that felt. Think about how you were then able to do your work, and think about how you could do that for someone else in the future, and *be* that teacher.’ I wasn’t doing it to be nice. I was doing it because that’s teaching—for her to

have that moment herself of, ‘Oh, that’s teaching!’ That’s kind of how I show up as a teacher.”

Dr. Grey adapted the content of the course to meet the needs of this particular student. Her purpose for doing so was to provide yet another learning experience in which her student could feel what it was like to work with students through the content of pedagogy. In other words, Dr. Grey was modeling her pedagogical modifications to create a meaningful learning experience for her student with the hope that that student would understand how—as a teacher—she, too, can modify her pedagogy to the benefit of her future students. The pedagogical approach is simultaneously complex and logical, yet it was beneficial to the student because it was aligned with who Dr. Grey is as a student-focused teacher (Palmer, 1997) working through the medium of content (Schwab, 1969), and because that orientation was also aligned with the needs of the student (Miller, 2007) in that particular educational context.

The commonplace of content.

“I really believe that you always have to pay attention to content. The content is the context for connecting to students.”

It seems fitting to move from one good teacher to another as a transition from how Dr. Grey viewed herself as a teacher to how she related to the commonplaces, specifically the commonplace of content. Dr. Grey next described her favorite teacher, Mrs. Lowell. However, she loved Mrs. Lowell, not for who she was, but for her curriculum—for her content! Of course, for Dr. Grey, the two—the teacher and the curriculum—are integral, but when in reflecting on her own experiences as a student, Dr.

Grey gravitated to those teachers who used the medium of content (Schwab, 1969) to connect with students.

Dr. Grey, prompted, then discussed her favorite teacher: “My third grade teacher, Mrs. Lowell, was my favorite teacher. I loved her because we did this fabulous year-long musical. I can still sing all the songs from it. I was an octopus. And I still remember that we spent an hour every day for the entire year preparing for this musical. It was the most fabulous musical ever! She let us write parts of it. We practiced the songs; we made our own costumes. It was a really fun, creative year.”

“The storyline was happiness. [Singing] ‘The theme is happiness. What does it mean? Can you find it? Buy it? Can it be seen?’ The musical might have been called *Happiness is*. I think that’s what it was called. So, it was a year-long study of happiness; that’s basically what the musical was about. As an octopus, I did the Beatles’ song, *I’d Like to be, Under the Sea*. Each vignette, each scene, was a different view of happiness.”

Her reflecting then extended beyond the musical: “And she let me do whatever I wanted. I could do whatever was required for the class, and then she would say, ‘Well, you can go to the library, or you can read a book, or you can do an art project, or whatever.’ She never made me feel bad about being smart. That’s why I liked Mrs. Lowell; because she just let me do my thing. And she didn’t make a big deal out of it. It wasn’t like, ‘Oh, you’re so smart!’ It was like, ‘Okay, so what do you want to do now?’ She treated me like a normal child and didn’t make me feel different. Which I appreciated when I was eight. You just want to be like everyone else... Yeah, she was awesome! I’m still in touch with her.”

In both aspects of her description of Mrs. Lowell as her favorite teacher, Dr. Grey associated that joy with Mrs. Lowell's curriculum more so than Mrs. Lowell herself. The year-long musical, the agency she afforded her students throughout the process, these were curricular decisions, and they were what made Mrs. Lowell so memorable for Dr. Grey. Beyond the musical, Mrs. Lowell also provided individualized curriculum for Dr. Grey as a student, again allowing her—as a student—to choose what she did, to choose for herself (with guidance) the curriculum that served as a foundation for her learning experiences (Bandura, 2006). That Dr. Grey is still in contact with Mrs. Lowell over three decades later demonstrates the exceptional quality of Mrs. Lowell's curricular choices. In addition, it was equally important to notice how much of an influence that experience had been in guiding Dr. Grey's curricular choices so many years later as a teacher educator herself. When teaching becomes learning, teaching becomes a lineage; similarly, the concept of curricular contemplation, like curricular agency itself, is potentially transferable.

As an example to demonstrate Dr. Grey's use of curricular choice to empower her students, next is a conversation in which Dr. Grey and I discussed the classroom observation. The students were undergraduates at an engineering university who were taking their first class in an experimental program to produce more P-12 math and science teachers. In the class that I observed, the primary learning experience was a 45-minute lesson in which a group of the students taught the rest of their peers a specific section off the assigned text. The amount of freedom that Dr. Grey allowed her students

in making their own curricular choices, as both students and practicing teachers, was noticeably rewarding for both Dr. Grey and her students alike.

Dr. Grey reflected on the class by providing some context for it: “This class was really about responding to what students say about what they need. That’s really what *Fires in the Bathroom* is about—advice from students. So the class was about getting into students’ heads, being empathetic. That would be one aim; the other would be practicing teaching, getting their feet wet. They had three chapters from the book that they were responsible for, and they pulled out some of the big ideas. And they certainly got their feet wet in teaching! Even those who weren’t teaching were able to get a sense of, ‘Okay, that’s me next, so I really need to start thinking about what I’m going to do to teach.’”

She then provided an aim for the learning experience: “I wanted the students to see what they were made of...to have an experience where they could sort of test themselves. I wanted them to hear students’ voices in the reading and pick out what was important. I never told them that you have to cover what’s on this page or what’s on that page. I really wanted them to think, ‘Well, what *is* important in these chapters?’”

While reflecting, the fourth of Bandura’s (2006) properties of human agency, Dr. Grey realized that a secondary aim was actually a primary aim: “I also wanted them to see each other as teachers. That was sort of secondary, like it will be fun for them to see each other that way. But, now that I look back on it, that was probably more important for them than I realized. It was really like they not only see themselves as teachers, but also each other as teachers, so they see a community of teachers at a school where

formerly that never existed. Even though I couldn't have anticipated that ever happening, I think that became a much more important goal than I had realized.”

Dr. Grey then provided an overall assessment of the class: “In terms of the content, and the body, and the engagement, and all of the important stuff, they nailed it! They did a really good job of thinking about what a teacher does, and they've been thinking about teaching for half a semester. These are students who never thought they were going to be teachers. They've been thinking about it for eight weeks, and there they are! So I was really impressed and pleased.”

She ended her reflection by returning to her own curriculum as it relates to how her students felt about the experience that curriculum created for them: “I tend to be really specific about every minute of a lesson; I'm really *particular* about the development of a lesson. To totally give it over, and to have them do such a great job, and to just think about where they are developmentally, and intellectually, and spiritually, was really hard for me, but I think it worked out really well for them. They came into the class really excited about it! I think they felt really good about what they did and what their peers did (if they weren't teaching).”

The students in her classroom were aspiring teachers. Dr. Grey created a lesson for those students in which they *were* teachers. She sometimes use the phrase, “the apprenticeship of observation,” which is what all students experience, to varying degrees, while in school (making good teaching even more important). However, what Dr. Grey herself experienced is something like the observation of apprenticeship. That is, she created a learning experience for her students to practice being teachers—to be

apprentices—and she observed them in that environment and provided feedback. This relationship with the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969) paralleled her own experiences as a student in third grade. More importantly, because in teacher education curriculum and instruction are one in the same, Dr. Grey’s students were learning to teach through the act of teaching. This was an explicit and intentional aspect of her curricular deliberations (Bandura, 2006), as she explained.

Dr. Grey continued: “If they’re going to be teaching—I have to give them permission to think about the ideas and to be who they are in the moment and then take it with them. That’s always the challenge for me, rather than the structure of the lesson. It’s how do I build an experience that allows them to take the content with them? ‘Assimilate’ is a strong word, but, how do I help them fit the content into their worldview, or change their worldview if that’s what the content requires.”

I remarked: “That sounds like the difference between a lesson plan and the ongoing curricular decision-making process.”

Dr. Grey replied: “Yes, that’s a good point. One of the students recognized that she had to make on-the-spot curricular decisions. Sometimes when you do that, you sacrifice a little bit of the perfectly-constructed lesson. That’s part of whenever you negotiate the classroom space.”

A student in her class provided a quintessential insight into the difference between the traditional understanding of curriculum as a lesson plan, and curriculum as a dynamic learning experience. Without Dr. Grey’s unique relationship to the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969), she might have missed the importance of her student’s

revelation. However, because of her relationship to content, that particular student's comment became a teachable moment in the class and an important data point for Dr. Grey's evaluation of her own curriculum, which is a critical quality Bandura (2006) associated with human agency: "I always go back to the reasons things went well—I have some part in it; I obsessively prepare, because the lessons in which I do nothing take the most time to prepare—but I always attribute the success of a lesson, in a large part, to the students. Because I know that there are certain students that bring such incredible energy and intellect to a classroom. And I'm always so grateful for them. I never see it as something I did or something they did, it's that interaction between the two."

For Dr. Grey, pedagogy is curriculum; however, curriculum is also pedagogy. I believe that it is exceptional instruction to create a space where the teacher facilitates a learning experience by allowing the students to facilitate their own learning experiences. It can look like low-level teaching (because of the minimal observed explicit instruction), but when it is as intentional (Bandura, 2006) and well-planned as Dr. Grey's curriculum, one understands the quality of the teaching by observing the quality of the learning that is occurring. When she made the decision that she was not going to be making all of the curricular decisions in her classroom, it became an exemplary learning experience for her students, a transferable one which will presumably influence the way they create learning experiences for their future students, just as Mrs. Lowell had done for Dr. Grey.

Content-context.

“The things that she said that were outside of class...it really had nothing to do with me...They were talking to each other—students to potential students—it was a real gift.”

Each participant demonstrated an affinity for one of the four commonplaces (Schwab, 1969). However, that emphasis did not negate their relationship with the other commonplaces; instead, that emphasis influenced the way in which the teacher educators worked with and through the other commonplaces. For each participant, I provide an example of the relationship between a primary and secondary emphasis on the commonplaces. This example reinforces the idea that the participants prefer one commonplace over the other, but it also demonstrates the implications for studying the commonplaces in relationship to one another within the curricular decision-making process as a means for understanding curricular agency.

Dr. Grey reflected on her experience of the relationship between content and context by describing a program orientation in which she observed her students communicating with a school-wide audience: “And then I saw them at—we had a big orientation [for this teaching program at the university], and I invited them all—and seven of them showed up! There was absolutely no incentive for them to be there, except that they got some free food from Costco. The things that they said about each other, about teaching, about the class, but mostly how teaching is like the thing that they’re running toward instead of that they’re running away from engineering. They’re running toward teaching, and they feel so good. Danielle said at the end of the panel, ‘Everyone

in this room who is thinking about taking the ed-psych class in the spring, you have no reason not to take that class. It will fit into your schedule, it counts as an elective, and we're going to take care of you. If you feel like you're not allowed to tell other people that you're going to teach, we're going to be here, and we're going to take care of you. We are a community.”

I asked a follow-up question related to her aims for the class that I observed:

“You realized you had achieved your goals for the class the following Wednesday at the orientation when they told their peers they were teachers?”

Dr. Grey responded: “Yes. But what's so crazy—and I talk about this with new teachers all the time, but I *never* would have known that had we not had this weird new teacher orientation/information session. I would've known to some degree because you could see the excitement in their faces as they were watching each other teach. But, the things that she said that were *outside* of class...it was one of those moments where I was clutching my heart. Like I could retire right now! Because the cool thing is that it really had nothing to do with me! I wasn't sitting on the panel. I was standing in the back of the room. They were talking to each other—students to potential students—it was a real gift.”

It is important for teacher educators to have a purpose—an aim—that provides a teleological context for understanding their curricular choices. This is associated with Bandura's (2006) first property of human agency, intentionality. In addition, that aim also serves as a sounding board for reflecting on whether or not the implementation of a teacher educator's curriculum was beneficial for the students, and in what ways. This is

associated with Bandura's (2006) fourth property of human agency, self-reflectiveness. Dr. Grey's reflection on her curricular decisions included a vivid example of how an understanding of the relationship among the commonplaces is important in evaluating the benefits, for students, of one's own curriculum. For Dr. Grey, that evaluation involved the relationship between her primary focus on the commonplace of content, and a secondary focus on the commonplace of context. In other words, the following discussion demonstrates that Dr. Grey could self-evaluate her curricular decisions based on her students' ability to transfer their understanding of the content from one context to another. In this case, the students demonstrated their understanding of the content of the observed lesson by attending an orientation for the education program and telling their peers about how important it was to experience being a teacher, which was one of Dr. Grey's primary aims for the lesson. Additionally, this demonstration of knowledge, and its importance to Dr. Grey, emphasize both the humanity (Palmer, 1997) of contemplative education and its interconnectedness *outside* the classroom (Miller, 2007).

Dr. Grey's curricular decision-making process.

"This is really what's difficult about talking about the curricular decision-making—it's the language itself. There is a significant contrast between thinking of it as your lesson plan versus the ongoing curricular decision-making process."

Dr. Grey said: "You know, a lot of this is *so* automatic for me. I did it for so long that I understand what it means to know how I want to start a class. So it's hard for me to say exactly what I do, which I know is what you want me to do, is to slow down and think about it." I would guess that her response is typical, especially for teacher

educators. However, in my estimation these are precisely the educators who should be most reflective and articulate about the curricular decision-making process, because these are the educators responsible for teaching others to do the same. As was noted in the previous section, there are differences between lesson planning and the curricular deliberations. Perhaps the most important of these differences is that curricular decision-making is ongoing, it occurs throughout the instructional cycle. Conversely, lesson-planning occurs at the beginning of an instructional cycle and ends when the lesson plan is written. Curricular agency manifests from the realization that a teachers are continuously in charge of their curricula.

Overview of her curricular decision-making process.

Dr. Grey began a discussion of her curricular process with an important contradiction and a laugh: “I don’t plan in a way that I teach planning. That’s probably a problem. It’s very hard to conceptualize what it means to start from the middle, as I often do. For some students it makes sense, but, that’s just how I think about curriculum. Because if I don’t...if I start with objectives—which I don’t ever do, I start with goals and aims—but I don’t ever have behavioral objectives. But if I start that way, then I end up being more loyal to the objective than I do to the experience. And I think that closes down the design process rather than opening it up. I think that starting from the middle really opens up possibilities.”

“You don’t have to start in the middle, but I do. And it just takes time for students to understand that, just because you don’t start from the beginning doesn’t mean that you don’t have a beginning. And just because you don’t start from the end, doesn’t

mean that you don't have an end. But I think that starting from the beginning or even from the end, they both close down possibilities before you even get started."

"I think educators just need to think critically about whether we either have to start at the beginning or the end. To boil it down to an over-simplified comparison between Behaviorism and Constructivism—to me, those are the two—and you either start planning at the beginning or the end. So, starting in the middle is not activity-based planning or project-based planning, necessarily. It's really thinking about the experience and how we can make the experience of content meaningful. It's not just the experience itself, like content doesn't matter. Content matters greatly! But it's how do we help the students relate to content through an experience? That, to me, is what's most important."

This was a very interesting element of the discussion. First, because Dr. Grey was aware that she did not teach planning the way she herself planned. This was an intentional curricular choice, and her reasoning was plausible, if not entirely beneficial for students: Most students are not ready to think about planning from the middle when they first explore teaching; in addition, most administrators who serve as their evaluators may not understand the process. However, Dr. Grey's logic for planning from the learning experience outward is persuasive. In addition, her discussion of the logic of her lesson planning demonstrates all four properties of Bandura's (2006) human agency—intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. As she said, it is more creative and open, it is more conducive to creating an authentic and meaningful learning experience for students, and it emphasizes the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969) within the curricular decision-making process.

An example of her curricular decision-making process.

Within the framework of the study, I interviewed participants through a single curricular cycle. Consequently, I conducted interviews before the lesson participants selected for the observation, so that I could understand their curricular decision-making process from start to finish within a specific and concrete educational context. What follows is our discussion of the lesson-planning process that occurred at the beginning of a specific curricular cycle. Again, Dr. Grey focused on her students, but she worked specifically with the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969).

Dr. Grey began with students as a focus but moved quickly to the commonplace of content: “Assuming it’s a topic I’ve already fleshed out, I really start by thinking about my students. And I think about where they are and what their interests are and what—in this content—is most relevant to who I think they are and where they are both professionally and personally. I try to think about whatever the topic is, or what elements of that topic, or what *activities* of that topic would be best for that particular group of students.”

“Again, I look at the broad topic, and then I try to think of my particular students. I try to think about how to help them, regardless of their perspectives of the topic, to explore and experience that content. That’s how I try to think about narrowing down the huge number of experiences that you could provide for your students. What are the big ideas, and then move into the experience.”

“For example, in this one class I’m thinking I really want them to have a debate. I can envision them thinking about the issues of merit pay from different sides. And they

love—they love—they are very intellectual, interesting students who really like to argue with each other in these really playful ways. So, I could see that as being a really healthy and fun way to explore merit pay. And whatever I decide the key activity is, I build out from there. I think about providing an experience for them and then debriefing it to help them understand and conceptualize that experience. Sometimes I think about getting out of the way entirely. They are always co-creating the experience, but to give them some options and then allow them to navigate where we go for the class.”

“You start with what you want the students to do—a debate about merit pay, for example—and then you make connections. How can I get them connected? How can I get them to take a risk? Well, a debate itself is a risk for many. How can I get them to use their imaginations? Maybe they won’t just debate, maybe they’ll role-play. Starting from the experience builds out that experience into something that automatically takes on that beginning/middle/end. When I think about connections and a debate, how am I going to get them connected to the ideas of merit pay? Well, at the beginning of class, then, I might have them talk to a partner about the best teacher they ever had and the worst teacher that they ever had. Or I might ask them, ‘If you had \$1,000 to give to three of your favorite teachers?’ Or, ‘You’re on a committee...’ That’s a way to connect. And that will lead them into the debate. That introduces the concept and the idea; that helps them make a connection between those teachers and that idea of merit pay and that moves them into the debate. And active engagement, then, would be putting their own stamp on the learning, so at the end I might have them write a letter or an email to their favorite teacher and say, ‘If I were in charge of merit pay, you would get...’”

“So it really starts from building out what I see as the central experience. And that experience, for me, really connects with...it’s not just about the students, it’s a balance between students and content and what they’re going to do after that class. So it’s important in the moment, but it also has to carry them somewhere, for me, to make it meaningful. Because I don’t want them to stop thinking about it.”

“I really, really push myself to give constructive and positive feedback when it relates to teaching, because negative feedback, when it relates to teaching in particular—not just a paper, or whatever—but the actual act of teaching, I find that negative feedback can *really* shut someone down. And positive feedback can open them up. The kind of feedback, and tenor of it, can really make a difference for new teachers.”

This discussion was a concrete example of what it looks like when planning outward from the learning experience, to the aims in one direction, and in the other, to the assessment of the learning to ensure that students met those aims. The curricular decisions emphasized the necessity for authentic and logical connections between the beginning of the class through the learning experience and into the assessment of the learning that occurred. However, for as thoughtful and thorough of a lesson as Dr. Grey planned, she did not use any of it in the class that I observed. Still, that does not mean that the curricular decision she made not to use the lesson she planned was a poor decision at all. In fact, the students and Dr. Grey both stated that the learning experience she created and facilitated in place of the one she had planned was of tremendous benefit to the students. The choice not to use a lesson plan demonstrated as much agency as the choices she made in planning that same lesson. Moreover, the curriculum provided was

created in the moment, demonstrating a tremendous amount of curricular agency and emphasizing the importance of recognizing curricular decisions as ongoing.

Reflection on her curricular decision-making process.

For all of her curricular deliberations in preparation for the class, Dr. Grey quickly abandoned her lesson plan and the myriad variations associated with it. This was an interesting curricular decision, especially in terms of teacher education. How likely are teachers to spend as much time as Dr. Grey did planning a class, only to discard the product of that lengthy endeavor? However, Dr. Grey and her students both indicated that they benefited from the curricular decisions she made, from the time she discarded the planned lesson to the end of the class observation.

It was important to me that she have the opportunity to reflect on these curricular choices within the overall context of the curricular cycle, so I commented: “You are a walking, talking paradox. Despite how much you put into your planning, as soon as you show up in the classroom to teach, you let go of the plan and spontaneously meet the needs of your students.”

Dr. Grey responded: “Yes, that’s true. And I’m comfortable with that. I would be uncomfortable sticking to the script, even when it’s my script. And that’s what’s so great. Nowhere else in my life can I have this creative spontaneous idea and enact it immediately in a way that makes other people happy or allows them to have a meaningful learning experience.”

“I think I have strong intuition; I can lead people in my classes pretty well and respond to what they’re feeling and thinking. And it’s exhausting. But it’s also joyful

and rewarding, so it doesn't mean that I don't want to do it. It just means that I can't do it for eight hours a day, like in high school.”

“As you know, you can teach the same lesson in high school in first period and third period—you're still you, and the lesson's still the lesson—but it goes completely differently. I always seem to teach—even if it's a great lesson—I always teach it the best the first time! It gets worse the second and third time because it's not as spontaneous, or fun, or new anymore. And that is the exact opposite of what we tell teachers to do. ‘Whoa, you'll get better. Just reflect and revise that lesson.’ Well, it doesn't work like that for me. I don't do something better the second time. I often do it worse, and with less heart, and with less energy. Were you there when I told them I always throw away my lesson plans? Reusing them takes away that creative aspect, which is what makes me enjoy teaching. Because it's a creative act, it's not a technical act, for me.”

As much time as Dr. Grey put into writing the syllabus, planning the lessons, and thinking about what the experiences would look like in the classroom, teaching, for her, was spontaneously creating the curriculum for her students based on the context of the content (Schwab, 1969). The curricular decision-making process itself is intrinsically rewarding for Dr. Grey (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). She enjoyed making curricular decisions before, during, and after the instruction. If she limited herself to the lesson she had planned, she would miss out on the intrinsically rewarding agency that manifested from the process of making decisions. Because she made the curricular choice not to do so, her choices more closely aligned with who she was as a person (Palmer, 1997), and the results were more beneficial to the students (Miller, 2007).

It was an obvious question, but it was an important question often unasked of educators both by others and by themselves, “Do you only make curricular decisions before you teach?”

Dr. Grey immediately responded: “Before I teach? No! Not at all! They are certainly ongoing. You saw that. I walked in with a lesson plan and...I’m much more comfortable now with having a plan and letting it blow up. And I’m pretty good on my feet, so I’m comfortable with spontaneity, and I’m comfortable giving students choices about how they want to proceed. Like last night: They were supposed to present their autobiography projects, and there was no way we were going to hear from everyone, so we did it in groups of three. And they had these incredibly intimate conversations with each other that I couldn’t have planned better. So I was grateful that I could make that decision in the moment and that it worked out well.”

“If you look at the curricular arc of intended, operational, and received—which is what I was teaching, actually—I actually talked to them about in-the-moment decision-making and encouraged them to think about the spontaneity that can happen in the space between the intended and the received. That’s where risk happens. That’s where energy, and excitement, and change, and unpredictability, and idiosyncrasy—that’s where all those things come to life. That’s what makes teaching, not just fun but, actually a relational, interactive, connected process. Because of all of those are curricular decisions!”

“If I weren’t making curricular decisions, then I wouldn’t be teaching. It’s what I do! I buy into the Connelly and Clandinin image of teacher as curriculum-maker, and I

don't see how we can be a teacher without being deeply engaged in the curriculum design and the curricular decision-making process. Even if someone gives you a curriculum you have to teach, you *still* make decisions about how to teach it. So that still makes you a curricular decision-maker.”

If Dr. Grey stopped participating in the curricular decision-making process, she would literally no longer see herself engaged in the act of teaching (Bandura, 2006); more existentially, she felt she would stop being who she is—a teacher (Palmer, 1997). It is the dynamic process of making curricular choices that energizes and sustains her as a teacher (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). From her perspective, curriculum is never a product, but always a process (Langer, 1989). She was most comfortable working in and from the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969), where content and curriculum are synonymous.

However, what is more subtle is how she works with the content. Beneath the idea of her working with content is the reality of how that work is done—contemplatively, through dynamic relationships (Miller, 2007). The only way to see those relationships is to identify and articulate the elements that allow for those relationships to exist; that is, to see the static elements between which the relationship is formed (Langer, 1989). Dr. Grey's agency as a teacher educator depended her ability to continuously make curricular choices. Defining curriculum as a finished product would limit her choices, limit her agency, and limit who she is as a teacher educator. Without being able to identify these dynamics within her curricular deliberations, it would be much more difficult to realize those places within the curricular cycle where she does and does not have agency. Being able to articulate the fact that she is continuously making

the curricular decisions within a curricular cycle is incredibly empowering for Dr. Grey (Bandura, 2006) and the process itself is intrinsically rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Conclusion.

“I don’t separate curriculum from pedagogy or pedagogy from curriculum. Because as soon as you take the curriculum out of the teacher, you take the teacher out of the teacher. You can’t just say that the curriculum is what the experts create and pedagogy is how the teachers implement it.”

Just like the coffee shop of energized people speaking in hushed tones, Dr. Grey’s reserved exterior contrasts with her vibrant interior. Perhaps that is why she is more inclined to work with the commonplace of content as a medium for connecting with her students. It is clear that she is both an expert in her field and good with people; however, it is also clear that there is some anxiety involved in working directly with students. Consequently, she appears completely energized when she focuses on the students but works through the relationship of the teacher (herself) to the content. The affinity for the commonplace may have as much to do with her anxiety about working directly with students as it does her love for working with content that guides her curricular decision-making process.

However, it is incredibly important to remember that this is neither inclusive nor evaluative. Each participant is an exemplary teacher educator, which is why I selected these participants for the study. What is important is for author, reader, and participant alike to be mindful of how Dr. Grey utilizes her strengths and affinities for one

commonplace is her interactions with the other commonplaces. For Dr. Grey, the content is a dynamic entity. How many students have the opportunity to experience content as dynamic? Her approach is to utilize the content as a medium for creating learning experiences for students in which they also relate to the content as a dynamic entity. In that sense, Dr. Grey connects with the students indirectly through the medium of content; she does so by creating learning experiences in which the students also perceive the dynamic essence of the content. Students connect directly with the content, as does Dr. Grey, and those parallel direct connections form the foundation for a strong, yet indirect relationship between Dr. Grey and her students.

Dr. Rockwell: *The Art of Teaching in the Teaching of Art: Artistic Ideation*

“I tell new teachers all the time, ‘Yes, you’re an artist, and yes, you should continue to create art, but also understand that your teaching is an art. It is an art form, and you should think of it that way. You are the artist in the studio, even when you are the teacher in the classroom.’”

Dr. Linda Rockwell.

The following is a dialogue constructed from the interview transcripts of Dr. Linda Rockwell. I synthesized the transcripts into a single conversation and described a single setting, a local Panera, to make the data more user-friendly. However, I took all of the quotes of the dialogue directly from the transcripts themselves. The creative elements of the presentation involve my description of a real setting and my consolidation and organization of the interview transcripts within the framework described in the

introduction to chapter four. In addition, the commentaries interspersed throughout the dialogue are also my interpretations of the data.

Meeting Dr. Rockwell.

“I think that it is a trait for a good art teacher to be able to sometimes let things flow the way that art can, but, there also needs to be an understanding of that very logical sequential element that goes along with our educational system.”

Dr. Linda Rockwell teaches art education at North State University. Before this, she taught in high school for one year, in elementary school for five years, in museum education for seven years, and in middle school for eight years, in that order. Currently, to be financially solvent—and because she loves what she does—she is working at seven different jobs within the fields of education generally and art education, specifically.

On a bright but bitterly cold day, she asked to meet at a Panera restaurant in between her student observations. I found her sitting at a table near the entrance drinking coffee and working on her laptop. She was wearing a maroon sweater, a brown pleated skirt, and black leather boots that extended to just below her knees. Her long, dark curly hair was pulled into a pony tail behind two small golden hoop earrings. I greeted her, asked if she'd like anything, and proceeded to order a hot chocolate and a couple of chocolate chip cookies. She thanked me for the cookie and put it in her purse for later.

I asked, “Why did you become a teacher?”

She answered without hesitation: “I decided to become an art teacher in high school. My friends were out to lunch at Pizza Hut, and one of them was complaining that her drawing didn't look right. I knocked everything off the table and showed her how to

measure things alternatively, and she got it! Watching her get it was really rewarding, and that's when I decided, 'I want to do that.' I like helping people, and I like figuring things out and helping other people figure things out."

I asked a follow-up question, "There are many professions for helping others, why teaching?"

She laughed, "I don't know. For someone who doesn't particularly care for people, there's something about teaching—that I could really help someone one-on-one more than I could being separated, writing curriculum, or being somehow separate. But, I'm not a people person. I would rather be alone with a book, or drawing, or with paint, preferably by myself. And I've always been like this. It's difficult for me to interact with people. I genuinely care about other people, but I'm uncomfortable in my interactions with them. For example, it's difficult for me to look at you, but I know I need to be doing that in casual conversation...People, I never know what they're going to do." She laughed again.

Dr. Rockwell, like Dr. Grey, experiences some anxiety in her interactions with other people. Whereas Dr. Grey compensated for her feelings during our interviews with exuberant conversation about her profession, Dr. Rockwell was intentionally efficient in her answers. She emphasized those answers as useful data for me, rather than as opportunities for her to reflect further. In addition, during the interviews and observations, Dr. Rockwell focused explicitly and continuously on social cuing as she discussed in her interviews. In addition, both participants emphasized the importance of care. Dr. Grey demonstrated that care through her curriculum, whereas Dr. Rockwell

emphasized the importance of working with people rather than curriculum, despite her anxiety about the former. Still, she could have continued helping others as a P-12 teacher, so I wondered why she pursued doctoral work.

I asked, “How did this lead to your current work at the university?”

She replied: “I became a teacher educator for the same reason, just going forward. I found out, as I was a teacher, that there were things that were going well for me that I could explain to other teachers. And I started having student teachers and observers in my classroom; it was as equally rewarding to help them as it was to help my students directly. At one point, I realized that if I can help this teacher, then I’m also helping the 2,000 students they are going to see over their teaching lifetime, and I like that idea. I like that I can be some kind of help in this world.”

She laughed and continued: “I love it! I make very little money...to the point that it really is laughable; if my husband were to get fed up and leave, I would be living out of my car for sure! But it is so rewarding to me. I love what I do! I go out of my way to find ways to do it. I’m very happy with this; I want to keep doing it. Hopefully in one place...”

Dr. Rockwell experienced that she could help others with art, so she became an art teacher. During her time as an art teacher, she recognized that she could help others with the art of teaching. Especially considering her anxiety regarding human interaction, the career choices she has made demonstrate how intrinsically rewarding working with others as both a teacher and teacher educator has been for her. For the activity itself to be intrinsically rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) is integral to contemplative education.

The purpose of education

“Students are all different people, and they need different things.”

To understand the curricular decision-making processes of the participants, it was beneficial for those decisions to be contextualized within their view of the purpose of education generally, and their intentions within the educational process, specifically. As was her style throughout the interviews, Dr. Rockwell would listen intently to a question and answer it efficiently. It was no different when I asked her the purpose of education.

She stated: “I had always thought of education as the state-provided definition of preparing someone to be a functioning member of society rather than for that person to be happy in what they did. But, maybe it is for that person to be happy with what they’re doing *and* to be a contributing member of our society. I think the purpose of education is for someone to be the best they can be. That sounds like a cheap slogan, but I think that’s what I mean.”

Dr. Rockwell’s similarities and differences to Dr. Grey within this context are noteworthy. Both women experience anxiety during their interactions with others. Within their curricular decision-making processes, Dr. Grey prefers focusing on students and working through the commonplace of content as a medium (Schwab, 1969). In a complementary fashion, Dr. Rockwell focuses on content, but she prefers working through the commonplace of students as a medium (Schwab, 1969). Her focus aligned with her first teaching experience assisting her high school friend, much like Dr. Grey’s focus aligned with her third-grade experience with Mrs. Lowell. In addition, both teacher educators indicated that the purpose of education is to educate individuals for productive

happy lives that benefit their surrounding communities, thus emphasizing the element of humanity within the educational process, an emphasis at the forefront of contemplative education (Palmer, 1997).

It seemed pertinent to speak more in depth about purpose within Dr. Rockwell's content area—art education. Her response involved ideas about the purpose of both art and art education within the greater context of the purpose of education. She said: "My point of view of art is that it is the way that everybody sees, that it is that art in themselves. Because I think it is knowing that—with a richer experience in life—you're able to see the art in someone else, and it just makes life more full. Even if it's not a full-on performance or a show, everybody can identify, 'What is that artistic nature of themselves?' I think it makes life better."

I responded: "That's a beautiful answer, thank you. Especially because of your work with standards and your work with the new art standards, what is the purpose of art education?"

She replied: "Art education would be, I think, that same thing. It's also letting students...it depends on—and this is part of our curriculum in teaching—having each student, each teacher candidate, begin to answer that question for themselves. Because how they answer it is going to influence how and what they teach."

Her response may seem confusing at first, but it is integral to who Dr. Rockwell is as both a person and as an educator (Palmer, 1997). Dr. Rockwell defined art and art education for herself, but she does not define it for her students. She intentionally asks them to define art and art education for themselves, and she intentionally helps facilitate

that process. These two components involve the mindful perspective of contemplative education (Langer, 1989) as well as the intentionality and forethought of human agency (Bandura, 2006). Thus, her definition of art education is that her students and their students define both art and art education for themselves. Again, this element of her curricular contemplation demonstrates the importance of transferability—a key insight of the study. The result, she felt, would be happier people who are more beneficial members of society. She had a term for this process—ideation—which she introduces in the next section. Consequently, Dr. Rockwell would say that a good teacher would care about her students enough to help them learn to see the art in themselves and in others.

Who is a good teacher?

“You know, it’s really easy to tell who among you are the teachers and who among you are the professors,” Dr. Rockwell’s officemate, who is in education but not a teacher herself, said to Dr. Rockwell after hearing one of her student conferences.

“I am a human copy machine. I was being told exactly what to do, and doing it.”

It was important to understand the participant’s characterization of education generally and her role within that system, specifically. In the same way, it was important to understand the participant’s characterization of a good teacher generally, and how she viewed herself as a teacher, specifically.

Again, very similarly to Dr. Grey, Dr. Rockwell had no hesitation in articulating who a good teacher is: “A good teacher is someone who cares about their students. To care about the student as a person. Someone who is able to do what they need to do to help that student succeed with whatever it is that they need. Sometimes that means

helping them with their grades, and sometimes that just means helping them along with whatever it is they particularly need. It should be focused on the class, but sometimes there are needs that affect the class but are not necessarily about the class. I think understanding and helping, in whatever manner, is part of being a good teacher.”

Care is a primary element in Dr. Rockwell’s perspective. Her sense of student, however, transcends the traditional understanding of the commonplace of student as a mere role (Schwab, 1969). In other words, Dr. Rockwell views her students holistically, as human beings (Palmer, 1997). Her goal is to deliver the content to her students so that they can use the content to benefit themselves and those around them. However, to do so, Dr. Rockwell believes the best way she can provide them with that opportunity is to know her students as learners and as people. This emphasis on the humanity of her students is a central contemplative element in Dr. Rockwell’s curricular contemplation.

Dr. Rockwell had a favorite teacher, not because of her curriculum or instruction as with Dr. Grey, but because of who she was as a person. Her memory of this experience within the context of her curricular deliberations provides critical insight into how and why she makes curricular choices. As she elucidated when I asked, “Do you have any favorite teachers?”

She sat thoughtfully for a moment, and then she told a fascinating story: “I had an art teacher in high school, and I don’t know if she was necessarily my favorite teacher, but I did like her a lot. And I guess the reason I liked her was because I think she liked me. She’d go out of the way to compliment me, so I liked her a lot. I didn’t particularly care for her teaching methods, but I liked her.”

“I was the first person she ever gave a ‘100’ to—and I remember—she talked about that all the time. She was one of the art teachers that—and they’re still around today—that felt if they could make their class really really hard and rigorous, where nobody got a really good grade in it, then they were doing their job. They had a really tough class, just like men, which angered me. So I said, ‘Well then, watch this! I’m going to get a 100!’ And I did. I didn’t do that trying to please her; I did it for other reasons: To prove she’s wrong, and, that it could be done.”

“What she thought was a 100 was completely replicating a work of art. It had to look exactly like it; and there had to be absolutely no differences. And I pick up on details very well and see lots of things that I think other people might not see, so that is easy for me. So I did that. It was a pencil drawing. I don’t remember exactly what it was because I just kept getting 100s after that...Once I broke the barrier. But, she didn’t teach me to think like an artist. I never learned to ideate; I never learned to work like an artist. What I learned was to replicate something exactly, because that was what she was after.”

“When I went to art school, I realized that wasn’t being an artist; that was being a copy machine...It took me a very long time to learn how to ideate and to be an artist. We have moved—in the art world, in the art education world—to teaching students to think and work like artists. For me, it’s particularly important, probably because of that experience.”

“I’ve had to learn strategies to teach ideation. And because of that, I’ve gotten better at coming up with ideas to create art. I’ve had to learn how to do it because I have

to teach others to do it, and that is the curriculum. So I'm very conscientious about teaching my students how to think for themselves, how to create for themselves, how to come up with ideas, and how to create projects like an artist would; not to have to sit and wait on me to tell them what to do, or to tell them what to think.”

Dr. Rockwell did not appreciate who her high school art teacher was as a teacher—in terms of her curriculum and instruction—but she did like her as a person. This demonstrated the importance of the human connection, generally, but it also demonstrated the interconnectedness that exists within contemplative education as it relates to the interconnectedness of the commonplaces (Palmer, 1997; Miller, 2007; Schwab, 1971). Dr. Rockwell sees people as more than their roles within the educational context. However, her perspective also demonstrates the complexity of the curricular choices educators are required to make. Her art teacher made poor choices in the commonplace of content, but within the commonplace of student, she made the influential choice to compliment her student. This demonstrated both the separation and interconnectedness amongst the commonplaces. It also explains why it is so important to understand how teachers work within those commonplaces and their relationships (Schwab, 1971; Miller, 2007).

More importantly, Dr. Rockwell provided a summation of both the process and product of her curricular deliberations: ideation. Perhaps because she is such an expert in replication, Dr. Rockwell was paradoxically conscientious about replicating opportunities for independent thought amongst her students. In her estimation, independent critical thought is fundamental to art, art education, happiness, and society.

The commonplace of student.

“What you believe is as important in art education as how you teach it. And I believe it depends on who the student is. My philosophy can change for each student depending on what they need. It’s fairly fluid, and it’s on a continuum.”

How important is the commonplace of students to Dr. Rockwell? Rather than tell the reader, an anecdote of her own is much more appropriate. She began: “Former students who are now teachers thank me whenever they see me. Many of them still call me, and that’s that same rewarding experience—that I’m making a difference. Even Brian, the first student I failed at NSU, contacts me all of the time to tell me how happy he is teaching now!”

I interrupted, “You failed a student who is now happy teaching?”

She smirked and continued: “When I came to NSU—three years ago, four years ago—I was the first one to fail a student. It was a difficult conversation to have, but it wasn’t fair to him to send him out not knowing what to do. If I passed him, he’d go out his first year, have no idea what he’s doing, decide he’s never going to be a teacher, and go off to do some other work. So I said, ‘You’re just not ready yet. You’re going to have to take this class again. Let’s understand what you’re doing and why, and then you can get a job and be a teacher the rest of your life.’ And in his case, it looks like that’s where he’s going. So, even when I’m in uncomfortable situations like this, I love what I do, and I go out of my way to find ways to do it. I’m very happy with this work, and I want to continue doing it.”

Finding work in higher education at the start of one's career can be very difficult. Failing a student in an education program, especially as a beginning adjunct professor, could potentially jeopardize one's entire career. Still, Dr. Rockwell cared more about her student—and not just as a student in her class, but as a human being outside of her class—than she did her position (Palmer, 1997). The result speaks for itself. This is part of why my work with Dr. Rockwell was so intriguing. In addition, I did not observe a traditional class, but instead, a series of individual conferences that she had one-on-one outside of class *in lieu* of an actual class meeting. After an overview of the process, we discussed one of the students from a conference I observed.

Student conference example.

Overview.

Dr. Rockwell began: “It’s one-on-one rather than in a class, so I think that helps. The office itself is very, very small, but I think in some ways it makes it better; I think it’s a little bit more of an intimate situation. I think that intimate setting was more effective.”

I asked, “If it is more effective, why don’t other people create these learning experiences for their students?”

Dr. Rockwell replied: “I can see people not meeting individually. I could see somebody else just saying, ‘Okay, turn this assignment in next week.’ But the students are not going to understand it if I don’t meet with them one-on-one. A couple might, but the majority of them are not really going to have it. In these meetings, I can say, ‘Here’s really what I’m trying to say, let me say this to you in person,’ which is different from my

written comments, which can be terse. I say that to them all the time: ‘My comments can be very terse because I’m trying to get directly to ‘Here’s what I mean.’”

She paused before continuing: “And having the document or the evidence of their work is also another important aspect of that because it’s not just us talking, it’s us talking about their demonstration of learning, however they are doing that. You really need that piece, so that you can see the physical manifestation of their learning and talk about it. The class had a rubric. The work sample has their work sample rubric. I had gone through that in their comments. I showed them where they were on the rubric, comparing their work to where it is on the rubric. There was a rubric for their visual journal, which is kind of like a portfolio of work that they turned in at the end. Then they had other things that were on there: Did you do your philosophy, that type of thing, just so they could see a list of everything they needed to have done and turned in. Really at this point, there’s no reason they all shouldn’t have a 100 in the class, because I say, here’s what the rubric is, here’s where you are, and here’s what you need to do.”

I allowed her more time to make sure she was finished before I agreed and asked a follow-up question: “Yes, I see that they have no reason to fail, thank you. I think this is related; why an individual meeting as opposed to in a class? Like going around to each desk and saying, ‘Alright, what have you got?’”

She confidently replied: “Because that’s just not one-on-one. There’s still somebody sitting next to them; they still want to be seen as whoever their classroom persona is at that time. I think it’s that separating it, taking it out of the classroom to a much smaller space...the more human one-on-one context of meeting at my desk, as

opposed to being with everyone else. Even if I talk to them one-on-one, they are still with everybody else, they're still in that classroom context.”

“I think classroom teachers do this, elementary teachers do that, or even high school teachers, by breaking up the spaces in their classrooms. You'll have a reading area, for example. And I think using that space intentionally is a part of that. I could have done that, too, but it's a room we all share, and there are different classes in there all day, so it just makes sense to be in my office. It's just getting out of that open classroom and bringing it into a smaller space.”

Based on her responses to the alternatives I presented, Dr. Rockwell had clearly thought through the various scenarios and decided the very best place for her students to meet would be in her office. This portion of the dialogue demonstrated all four of Bandura's (2006) elements of human agency—intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. In addition, every curricular choice she made about the process originated from her student-focused perspective. Within those curricular deliberations, the secondary commonplace was content (Schwab, 1969). Dr. Rockwell wanted to do what was best for students, but she wanted to do what was best for students to make sure they understand the content. The other insight into her choices came from her consideration of her students as human beings (Palmer, 1997). She was very intentionally creating a learning experience where they would be much more likely to prioritize being human over beings students. We then spoke about the conference of one of the students—one of the people in her class—whom I had observed.

Discussion of the student conference.

Dr. Rockwell provided some contextual information about the student: “She’s a bit of a difficult—well, she’s not difficult, she’s just her own story. That class does not have near as much work as the other [upper level] class, because it’s their first experience teaching. They do a practicum experience, but I do not have them write full-blown lesson plans, they just write what I call a lesson sketch: ‘What are you going to teach? What’s your goal with it? And then how do you know if the students met their goal? What materials do you need?’ But it is not in a lesson plan format. I just want them to get used to the idea of planning, having to be prepared, and having to have the materials. So they do that, and she’s been turning that in all along on Blackboard—an electronic platform. She’s had all of that. But then they also write a teaching philosophy, and they write reflections on their observations. They have to do observation hours in addition to their teaching, so they write their reflections of those observations. Some of that she’s turned in, and some of it she hasn’t. She’s taking twenty hours right now, which is way too much! She can’t get it done, and she doesn’t. She misses things, and she doesn’t turn those in.”

“You heard part of the conversation; she wants to take two classes that are at the same time next semester. It’s my class and sculpture that overlap, and I had told her no, and he had told her no. And then she just came back at it again and again, ‘I promise I’ll turn things in.’ So, we’ve got kind of a plan, but we’ll see. Her reasoning is: This is the only time that class is offered, so she’ll have to come back another semester just for either my class or his class, or both, if she doesn’t take them at the same time. So what I

have said to her is that I have had students fail 445. It's a very intensive class, and if you fail, you're going to have to come back again anyway. And it's going to cost you more, and you're going to have to make up your grades again. But that's the decision she made. We're gonna see if she can get through it. But if she can't, she can't, and she'll have to take it again."

"She's going to eventually have everything, but I gave her some time to turn it in next week instead of this week. I divided it up for everybody else so half of it is going to be due that week you saw, last week. Then the other half will be due next week, so that they didn't have to do it all at once. She didn't do that, which is no surprise. I said, 'Okay, that's fine. But it's all going to be due next week.' It's actually making it more difficult on her, but that's what she chose to do. As long as it is turned in by the end, my arbitrary 'when it's due,' was just to help them."

It is important to pay attention to the myriad of details about the student. It is helpful for the reader to break up the conversation here with a reminder to notice how much Dr. Rockwell knew about this student, not just as a student, but about who she is as a student and as a person (Palmer, 1997). Dr. Rockwell cared deeply about this student, and she was scaffolding both life and learning experiences for her while providing ongoing feedback.

Dr. Rockwell continued: "At the moment, she's so young and she's...for instance, her philosophy of education is, 'I want to be the cool teacher!'"

I asked, "Is that literally what she wrote?"

She replied: “Yes, those types of things. I tried to explain that a principal is going to read that and immediately go on to the next one, especially when you’re young. You need to not look like someone who’s going to act like the kids, or who’s going to want the kids to like them for the sake of being liked. She really needs more time; she’s not ready to teach yet. Then you heard her talk about how she doesn’t feel comfortable around little kids. And our degree is K-12; you have to have experience with all of the kids. She’s not ready. What I’m afraid of is that she’s going to learn that next semester in 445, that she’s not ready.”

This particular student is struggling with maturity, and that struggle is manifesting in all areas of the educational program in which she’s enrolled. Dr. Rockwell knows the content, and she knows the field; however, she also knew that being an expert in content was not enough to help her students to become teachers who also benefit their students. Again, her curricular decision-making process centered on the commonplace of the student (Schwab, 1969), and not just the student, but the student as a human being (Palmer, 1997).

Reflection on the student conference.

So many of the decisions one makes as a teacher educator are intuitive and/or based on experience. I asked, “In relation to the way you planned for these individual student meetings, what happened during those meetings that was expected?”

Dr. Rockwell replied: “It was all pretty expected for me—according to what I thought, knowing those students, and what they would be doing...just knowing them, seeing past behavior. I check in with them all every week in class, and in their practicum

teaching, and electronically. So I know them pretty well. My goal [with these conferences] is to understand really where they are before it's too late to make any changes, and to give them whatever I can, to help them to either understand or make the edits or make the changes before the final work is due."

"I find out what they understand. What are they understanding? What are they demonstrating they understand? It has to be what are they demonstrating that they understand? Because they can look at me and nod and say they understand, but what are they actually demonstrating with their teaching and with writing their lessons? Then I can see what they're understanding or not. If they're not, that's telling me that there's something...that I'm not presenting the information in a way that's meeting whatever needs they have in terms of being able to understand it. Then I go back and start thinking, 'What would help?' Going back to different things that I've tried can help. If they didn't work, I know that I can try something completely different the next time around, which in this case is building a unit with them rather than just showing them some examples."

Dr. Rockwell created an entire alternative learning experience for her students that was outside the classroom, outside the assigned times of the class, and designed to connect with them as human beings. Beyond the elements of agency (Bandura, 2006) involved in those curricular decisions, the learning experience she created demonstrates the importance of humanity (Palmer, 1997), intrinsic reward (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), the interconnectedness of the commonplaces and life beyond formal education (Miller, 2007), and the importance of awareness and perspective (Langer, 1989) in recognizing

those connections. Despite the variables that were so different for her and her students, or perhaps because of them, she was able to benefit her students in their understanding of the content. This was possible because of how much time she spent getting to know who her students were, knowing how they learned and how they demonstrated that learning. She focused on the commonplace of students throughout the curricular decision-making process always with the goal of helping them (Schwab, 1969). She had two aims, helping them as people and helping them understand the content.

Student-context.

“Someone who is able to do what they need to do to help that student succeed with whatever it is that they need. Sometimes that means helping them with their grades, and sometimes that just means helping them along with whatever it is they particularly need. It should be focused on the class, but sometimes there are needs that affect the class but are not necessarily about the class.”

Each participant demonstrated an affinity for one of the four commonplaces. However, that emphasis did not negate their relationship with the other commonplaces; instead, that emphasis influenced the way in which the teacher educators worked with and through the other commonplaces. For each participant, I provide an example of the relationship between a primary and secondary emphasis on the commonplaces. This example reinforces the idea that the participants prefer one commonplace over the other, but it also demonstrates the implications for studying the commonplaces in relationship to one another within the curricular decision-making process as a means for understanding curricular agency.

A second story from Dr. Rockwell explains how she considered the interaction between her primary commonplace of student and her secondary commonplace of content within her curricular deliberations. Again, in this example, she discussed her curricular decision-making process in terms of a student's learning experiences and personal progress. Because, as Dr. Rockwell stated, "Art teachers are so focused on, 'What are we going to make?' or 'What are we going to do?' And that's great, but, what is the learning? Why are you doing the activity?"

Thus, Dr. Rockwell continued: "My students definitely affect curricular choices, especially once I get to know them and see where they are, they all have different needs. They start with the same basic curriculum that I have for the class. But, I may go to the different readings because I happen to know this student has particular interests."

"For example, I have a student at NSU who changed everything in the class specifically because of her art work. She had always felt like she was not terribly skilled technically in art. Her way of getting around it, she started collecting her artwork into sort of these displays. She would put a bunch of things together according to different themes. Her artwork became a collection of things that she curated together. That made me think of an art education specifically for her work in developing these 'shrines.' So, I adapted—I didn't change, but I adapted—the curriculum. I'm still saying what I wanted to say, but now we're taking it to a different area that's more specific to how she sees the world. So it's applying it specifically to the student's understanding of how I think she would relate to the curriculum better."

“This also helps the others because they begin to understand the differences in their own work. Here’s how this student’s work shows how she identifies with what we’re learning in class. So, here’s how perhaps I can teach the content to meet the needs of future students who think and work like Megan.”

Dr. Rockwell adapted her curriculum for the benefit of one of her students. However, this curricular choice became a significant learning experience for all of the students in the class. This is particularly important because the content of the class is art education. According to Dr. Rockwell, art is seeing the art that is in oneself and others—understanding that art, understanding that it *is* art. Consequently, discovering a process that helps others to do the same is art education. In this one learning experience, she helped the student to see the art within herself, she used that as a model for students to see their own individual art, and she modeled a process by which those same students would one day be able to guide their students through the process of seeing their own art and the art of others. It was a complex learning experience with spiraled implications (Bruner, 1977) in future classrooms. It focused upon the commonplace of the student and its connection to the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969).

Dr. Rockwell’s curricular decision-making process.

“Who students are determines just about everything in my curricular decisions. I know what they need to know, but the students determine how I’m going to teach it. That ultimately becomes the curriculum.”

The student conferences were the example of a curricular cycle of Dr. Rockwell. It was notable that Dr. Rockwell also selected these student conferences as the topic for

our collaboration because it was still curriculum and instruction despite the fact that it occurred outside the designated time of “class” and the designated space of “classroom.” Within these learning experiences, Dr. Rockwell was attempting to know her students beyond the role of student, but she was also attempting to get her students to experience themselves as more than their role of student, still within an educational setting. Below she provides an overview of the curricular cycle and the decision-making process that drives that cycle.

Overview of her curriculum decision-making process.

Dr. Rockwell explained her rationale behind the individual student conferences: “This way I can identify with them one-on-one and use whatever differences there are to help the students, because it’s going to be different with every student. Even if it’s been great, and they get it and their work so far is terrific, it’s a different person who’s going to need something, something specific to them. It’s going to be a little different from everybody else in the class. I can’t do that if I don’t meet with them on-on-one.”

I asked a follow-up question: “What is it about meeting one-on-one; why couldn’t you do that in a traditional classroom setting?”

Dr. Rockwell replied: “Because they’re not going to be who they really are. In a traditional classroom setting, they’re going to be their classroom persona; which has been consistently crafted over their twelve years of public school and whatever classes that they have had in college. They’re going to sit and say, ‘I’m the one who doesn’t ask questions; I just want to get out of here; I’m running out of time and I’ll read it later: I’ll learn it later: I’ll think about it, later...’”

“When you are with them one-on-one, you really get to see what they really understand and what they really don’t understand. We often talk about the readings together [in the conference], and they have to answer the questions right there, as opposed to, ‘Ah, I’ll get to it later.’ They turn in work that looks fine, but do they really have an understanding? You don’t really know until you either see them teach—which I have limited opportunities to do—or you talk to them directly about it and ask them questions, and they have to explain. Then you can really get where they are, as opposed to trying to see understanding on paper, or a conversation with a group in class where they may not feel that they can say what they really want to say. For whatever reason, they are trying to keep their classroom persona going.”

In working with her commonplace focus of students (Schwab, 1969), Dr. Rockwell indicated that an intentional curricular decision she made was to create a learning experience that causes students to be more than just that role of student (Bandura, 2006; Palmer, 1997). She felt that if she could get students to move beyond playing the role of student, then she would have a better chance of knowing who that person was as a student. Of equal importance to her, then, would also be getting to know just how well that person understood the content of the course. This perspective demonstrated the primary commonplace focus of student and the secondary commonplace focus of content. Finally, she also emphasized speaking to her students as people in order to evaluate their learning. Dr. Rockwell grounded this conversation in the commonplace of the content—i.e., the products of their work—but it was not their written work alone, as it would be if her emphasis was on the commonplace of content.

Instead, her primary focus was on the common place of students, generally, and student understanding, specifically (Schwab, 1969).

An example of her curriculum decision-making process.

Dr. Rockwell began: “It is not a traditional lesson, but I can explain. In fact, it is not a lesson at all because I’m meeting individually with students. I try to do this twice a year. I try to meet with students individually twice a year to go over where they are, what they’ve gained personally, what their understanding is, to be able to understand what their needs are, and what they still need out of the class.”

“I schedule time for voluntary conferences in the middle of the year. But this conference, which is the second-to-last-class, is required. I do this *in lieu* of class time. I do absolutely want them to meet with me to go over all those things I said before, but they also have assignments. Before I meet with them for today and tomorrow, they turn in their assignments. I say, ‘You’ve got me one more week. What can I do? What can I provide you in this time frame?’ So it’s a very ‘individual-really-let-me-see-how-you’re-doing’ talk, one-on-one that you don’t have in the classroom. And it’s to see where they really are.”

“Evaluating the success of a student, then, is mostly up to the student. Some of them decide, ‘Nah, this is good enough, fine, I’m missing two points, I’m just going to turn it in as a final next week.’ But, usually that doesn’t happen. Usually they seize the opportunity to say, ‘Oh, okay. Now I get it,’ and they can go back and edit the work sample, and it’s perfect. I almost always have hundreds on the final work sample by the time they officially turn them in. So this class is planned as a, ‘Let’s make sure that they

understand everything, and if they don't, I need to figure out a way to present the information to them in a different way,' or 'I need to find them other examples to go on so that they have this last chance here to do the absolute best they can in the class and on their work.'”

The one-on-one conferences became an intimate space for Dr. Rockwell to evaluate the commonplace of the student based on who they were as people, as learners, and producers of art and educational work. However, this learning experience also provided an environment in which the students evaluated their own work *and* their own learning—not just randomly, but with the work at hand, written rubrics and written feedback on that work as guides, as well as a simultaneous dialogue throughout the review process. In addition, Dr. Rockwell was making an intentional curricular choice to create the opportunity for last-minute modifications of the assignment or her instruction to ensure that the student—her focus—understands the material and is ready to move forward. This was an excellent example of two properties of human agency (Bandura, 2006), forethought and self-reactiveness. In summation, the conferences benefitted students, provided valuable data for Dr. Rockwell, and created a model for how students can one day do the same in their own classrooms. It is the creation of a spiraled curriculum (Bruner, 1977) through a lineage of instruction entirely based on how Dr. Rockwell made her curricular decisions.

Reflection on her curriculum decision-making process.

To begin the reflection, I asked: “How were our interviews—meeting and talking with me—how was this different than how you generally plan for your classes?”

Dr. Rockwell responded: “The only difference is that I’m having to verbalize and explain what I’m doing. But I didn’t change how or what I do at all. I’m just having to put words to it.” She paused, then continued: “I justify my decisions just as much, because I have to justify them to myself. Because, again, I don’t have time to waste. Students don’t have time to waste, and I don’t have time to waste. So, everything I do, I’m thinking, ‘How is this applicable?’ The only difference is that, with you, I’m having to put words to it.”

I then asked: “How is the curricular decision-making process important to your teaching?”

Dr. Rockwell replied: “It’s everything, really. It’s what I decide to teach them. That is the curriculum. It’s what I believe they need to know for the next class, but not just for the next class. I see no reason for anything if it’s not applicable to the fact that they’re going to be teaching next year. The curriculum is all about my teaching.”

Because she teaches art education but is also working on the state’s art education standards, I wanted to see if there was a contrast for her between those seemingly opposed ideas of creativity and standardization. I asked: “Some people feel that artists are only following their intuition, that that’s no systematic approach to their work. Is that the case?”

Dr. Rockwell answered: “Talking about good teachers—I think that is a trait for a good art teacher, is to be able to do both. You have to be able to let, sometimes, things flow the way that art can, but, there also needs to be an understanding of that very logical sequential element that goes along with our educational system. There are some things

that I do need to see. But within that, the way that they respond to it is their own artistry, just like the way that I teach is my own artistry. So you have to translate it and walk the line.”

“For example, my students are really not understanding assessing the objective until the very end [of the semester]. I’m trying to figure out a way to help them get that earlier. The other thing they’re not getting is conceptual learning in the curriculum. They’re still focused on the activity. I’ve got to get them away from the activity to what it is they want their students to learn.”

“So, I’m planning my own hypothetical unit around the idea of identity, and then showing some modern artists—contemporary artists—who deal with the idea of identity. Then I’ll break that down and build a unit with my students. I’ve tried to do this before and shown them examples, but that is not what they all need. I think they need to see me walk through the process of developing a unit on identity. So, I’m changing that up a little for next year, because there are some things that they don’t all seem to be getting.”

Planning a unit, with the students, was Dr. Rockwell simultaneously articulating and modeling a cycle of her own curricular decision-making process. Not for students to replicate it, but for them to create their own individual processes based on experiencing an explanation of hers. In addition, this conversation demonstrates that Dr. Rockwell was continuously gathering information about the best ways to help her students as students and as people. She was making last-minute modifications in her curriculum and instruction to help her current students, and she was already planning ways to change her curriculum in order to do an even better job of helping future students understand and

apply the content of her course. This was a prominent example within the data of Bandura's (2006) property of self-reflectiveness. Dr. Rockwell was proficient enough at this process and instructing others in it that she has come up with language to articulate it: ideation. Teachers must ideate—think and create—learning experiences, like they would artwork, in order for students to learn how to do the same. Teaching (and learning) became art projects of one's own creation. In addition, Dr. Rockwell provided a rationale for this approach: "Because, without adequate preparation and integration, student teachers will fall back on how they were taught, not in teacher education, but in their own schooling. And that's not the point of art." For Dr. Rockwell, the sequence of choices one makes about how to create art was art in and of itself. Moreover, the sequence of curricular choices that one makes about how to teach art education was also art.

Conclusion.

Dr. Rockwell summarized her own characterization quite well when she said, "I think art education is learning the way that you understand art. Art education takes the art that seems separate and abstract and turns it into something that you can understand. Art education translates the art by helping you to make meaning from the art, to read the art, to understand the art." The experiences she had as a student, when she had learning experiences that were the opposite of how she views art education today, are telling. Notably, both experiences as a student involved the idea of replication. Notably, both experiences as a student were offensive to Dr. Rockwell's artistic and educational sensibilities, even at those young ages.

Dr. Rockwell focused on the commonplace of the students where the students were much more holistic than their roles in the classroom. All of her curricular deliberations began, continued, and ended with the student as a focus (Schwab, 1971; Palmer, 1997). Even her method of interacting with students worked as a kind of lineage-approach to education, as she stated: “From my experience, I know what an art teacher needs. So as a teacher, I know what I needed as a teacher, and I pass that along to them.” However, Dr. Rockwell’s work with the composition of state art standards, her discussion of how she plans out units, and her desire for students to understand the content, all demonstrated that her secondary emphasis was on the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969). The student conferences served as an intentional curricular decision to address these many priorities. The benefits were multiple for multiple stakeholders. The students received individualized attention and feedback. The setting itself created a new learning environment in which they could examine who they are as people, as students, and as future teachers. The process itself served as a model for the students and for their future students. Finally, Dr. Rockwell gained valuable insight into the students as people and as learners and made sure they had every opportunity and strategy available for mastering the content for future use (Bandura, 2006).

The results of our work together emphasized the importance of ideation for Dr. Rockwell. For her, ideation involved creativity, the capacity for independent thought, the capacity for independent action, and perhaps most importantly, the contemplative capacity for an independent perspective (Langer, 1989). These qualities combine to create a tremendous amount of curricular agency in whomever they exist. Within the

context of art education, this curricular agency is imperative to the purpose, implementation, and evaluation of the educational process itself. Creating and appreciating art is a highly individualized process; the individuals themselves need to be in control for it to be most beneficial. Not coincidentally, the same criteria apply to the educational process as well. Teaching people to create their own processes for creating, appreciating, and learning about and through art creates critical thinkers who also possess the ability to empathize with others (i.e., to see their art), and to create their own unique processes and art for solving problems and enjoying life.

Dr. Douglas and the Context of the Present Moment: Situated Knowledge

“Unless we actually reflect on our own culture, we’re probably just going to misunderstand other cultures as a version of our own.”

“What kind of environments can we create in which students teach themselves, in which they learn?”

Dr. Barry Douglas.

The following is a dialogue constructed from the interview transcripts of Dr. Barry Douglas. I synthesized the transcripts into a single conversation and described a single setting, his office on campus, to make the data more user-friendly. However, I took all of the quotes of the dialogue directly from the transcripts themselves. The creative elements of the presentation involve my description of a real setting and my consolidation and organization of the interview transcripts within the framework described in the introduction to chapter four. In addition, the commentaries interspersed throughout the dialogue are also my interpretations.

Meeting Dr. Douglas.

Dr. Douglas is a tall, Black man in his mid-60s. He has short-cropped predominantly grey hair, small rounded glasses, and usually a thoughtful smirk. He is an associate professor currently in both the Religious Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies departments at Nalanda University. He teaches both graduate and undergraduate students a wide variety of courses. While at times we spoke about all of his courses, we focused on the introductory educational foundations course he taught within Interdisciplinary Studies department. As he walked through the screen door of the house that had been converted into a series of faculty offices, he was wearing a blue-collared dress shirt, tan slacks, leather dress shoes, and a grey fleece vest. I stood as he entered, and we greeted each other warmly before continuing into his office.

A Fulbright Fellow in Africa with a Ph.D. from Stanford in cultural anthropology, Dr. Barry Douglas is innately preoccupied with and professionally prepared for understanding context. Perhaps because of this, his office has a paradoxical feeling of warmly welcoming guests home.

He told me the story of Little House, the building in which his office was located: “A family lived here. It’s called Little, not because it’s little, but because John and Maggie Little lived here; I think they had at least two or maybe three kids. I’ve talked to her about it; my office was one of the bedrooms, and that’s why the bathroom there has the tub. She said that it’s so small she could sit in the middle of the house and see all her kids crawling around on the floors. I liked that image.”

Our conversations were always contextually-based. As a result, the essence of each conversation was precisely focused, but the examples used to explain and explore that essence were tangential. He consistently referred to both classroom experiences and his (and my) life experiences outside of the classroom in our discussions. For example, asking about my daughter led him to describe teaching in relation to the “sheer intimacy” of a parent learning from a child. He explained, “It would be better—like how you were describing interacting with your infant—if I were to inquire more. I need to ask students, ‘Say more about this,’ rather than to jump in. I’m teaching myself to let my default question be, ‘Can you say more about...?’” If he was not studying the context of a learning experience, he was creating one.

Notably, as a teacher, his contextual perspective emphasized inquiry. He explained: “It’s about five years now that I have been shifting toward a more inquiring mode. As educators, we are not doing the research just to find that things are what we already think they are, because if so, why bother? We’re trying to open up to finding out that the world is different than what we thought it was like.” He continued with a description of his undergraduate teaching at Nalanda University: “I think for the undergraduates, that their lives are the text, and that’s what we’re trying to understand. The books are only part of helping us understand that.”

Dr. Douglas’s perspective was a contextual one (Schwab, 1969), and it was pervasive. He used his context to communicate. As a teacher, he focused on the commonplace of context to create meaningful learning experiences for his students. More importantly, he viewed his role as a teacher to be one of understanding students

within their contexts and helping them to do the same. In other words, he understood curriculum as a context and vice versa. He continued: “My experience of graduate school was like my exemplar, because that had been the most enjoyable and significant learning experience academically in my whole life. I loved my teachers, I loved what we were reading, and it helped me understand my own history and the world. I think I wanted to...I thought, ‘Okay, I am going to reproduce this.’” He laughed: “But not with nineteen-year-olds, who are taking an undergraduate anthropology class because it falls on Wednesday! They were very inappropriate expectations.”

I interjected with an observation followed by a question: “That’s an important idea—the ethics of facilitating a learning experience. I hadn’t thought about this, but your traditional training and your more traditional educational experience could make teaching at Nalanda a kind of culture shock for you. You fit into the academy, but did you fit in here, at Nalanda?”

He responded: “That’s true. It was like culture shock. So for some years, I was adamant about ignoring the human aspect of education that was occurring here, and I just continued going along with my teaching. Because I know that it’s right to have these educational standards. But now I realize it isn’t an either/or. You don’t have to give up standards of education, and you can read some texts that are complex and difficult. But, there’s a way of doing that...actually, it’s almost like a merging, rather than a pre-planned lesson. And nowadays I think, ‘I was good at [the former], so I insisted that my students needed to be good at that as well.’ And I’m not saying that we can toss that out of the window—grammar, grammatical mistakes, spelling, citational errors—that’s there,

but somehow their genuineness...Like in interdisciplinary studies, it's really all about their genuine passion for something. Whatever that is, encouraging that!"

"It took me so long to realize this: If I encourage their passion, then the grammar and citations, or whatever, can be added as part of something you really care about; rather than if I keep saying, 'No, no, no! You misspelled here! You didn't cite that properly.' Then they just feel they can't be genuine. That you're saying I'm not good enough until I have this level of skill. So, I'm only, in the last few years...that lesson is landing of, 'We really need to encourage them where they're at—to be themselves—and then from that, they'll stretch.'"

In the way Dr. Douglas framed his statements, the commonplace of context was clearly a primary lens for him (Schwab, 1969). He enjoyed his time at Stanford as a student because of the qualities of the context it created for him. Because he enjoyed that context, he attempted to recreate it at Nalanda. However, he eventually realized that the context he was creating for his students did not take into account the context in which they already existed (Palmer, 1997). Consequently, he adapted what he did to create a present-moment learning context for his students that aligned with where they were at with the goal of eventually moving them toward the type of educational context he found so inspiring as a doctoral student at Stanford. This was an important reason for why I selected Dr. Douglas; he was focused on context, but he was also constantly reflecting on his curricular decisions and adapting them to create the most ideal context possible for his students. This self-reflectiveness and intentionality (Bandura, 2006) were part of his

curricular agency as an educator. Additionally, this reflection and adaptation of the curricular context aligns with his thoughts about the purpose of education.

The purpose of education

“You can train in a kind of attunement to the situation and to others in that situation. That can be learned.”

To understand the curricular decision-making processes of the participants, it was beneficial for those decisions to be contextualized within their view of the purpose of education generally, and their intentions within the educational process, specifically. In this section, Dr. Douglas described how he worked through the commonplace of context to educate his students. He trained them to perceive their worlds contextually as well in order to draw them out of their present—possibly limiting—context into a wider more empowering future context.

Dr. Douglas began by discussing the context of the educational foundations course: “In this course, because students are being asked to reflect on their educational journey—we read texts about education. For instance, Martha Nussbaum’s book, *Cultivating Humanity*, on reform in higher education. In that she may say—and we knew—that the word ‘education’ comes from the Latin, *educere*, meaning, ‘to be drawn out.’ So sometimes we even use Plato’s allegory of *The Cave*, that we are all within our cave or our cocoon, and education is really to open you to the world, to life, to one’s own inner landscape. It has that sense of almost being liberated from our imprisonment within ignorance, which has both Platonic resonances and Buddhist resonances—that we’re all encased.”

“Frederick Douglass says literacy was really important to his moving from being a slave to being a free person. He realized that that’s why it was forbidden for a slave to learn to read and write. Education is...liberating us to be global citizens, to learn...stepping outside our habitual assumption, our habitual ways of knowing and seeing. Consequently, education may be a challenging and unsettling journey...I met someone this summer, he said, ‘Harriet Tubman freed a thousand slaves and that she could have freed a thousand more if they had realized they were slaves.’ We actually have to realize that we are imprisoned, that our ignorance is not comfortable. It’s not serving the planet; it’s not serving us; it’s not serving the ones we love. And that’s a motivation: To learn something outside my comfort zone, because there has to be some willingness to experience discomfort in education. It’s not real learning if it’s all just confirming each other’s prejudices.”

I asked a follow-up question: “Is there a contrast in being free and yet part of a society?”

Dr. Douglas replied: “That’s the traditional—almost political—theory between individualism and collectivism. Freeing ourselves from our prejudices is not being free to do any damn thing I want, but free from my own embedded personal and cultural assumptions, which allows me to accurately receive the stories of others that are different from my own...If I can empathize a little beyond my own experience, then that’s tending toward a larger feeling of connectedness with others. So you’re free to see the world as it is as opposed to how you think it is, and from that freedom, you recognize you’re a global citizen. We’re connected.”

Similar to both Dr. Grey and Dr. Rockwell, Dr. Douglas also believed that the purpose of education is to create well-adjusted individuals who recognize themselves, both individually and collectively, as members of a global community (Palmer, 1997). The medium for all three teacher educators was education itself. As a trained cultural anthropologist, Dr. Douglas viewed this educational purpose through the movement from a limited and limiting context of one's current cultural assumptions to the freedom derived from accurately viewing one's self and one's place in the world. This was a contemplative approach based specifically on perspective (Langer, 1989). All three teacher educators were aligned in terms of the purpose of education despite the fact that they see the learning experience through different commonplace lenses (Schwab, 1969). Presumably because of this similarity in purpose and difference in emphasis, all three teacher educators' views of teacher educators also had similarities and differences.

Who is a good teacher?

“You're responding to what's happening right then and there.”

It was important to understand the participant's characterization of education generally and his role within that system, specifically. In the same way, it was important to understand the participant's characterization of a good teacher generally, and how he viewed himself as a teacher, specifically. Again, it was a loaded question that would be more harmful to the data if it were not asked.

Dr. Douglas continued with his description of a good teacher within the context of his articulated purpose of education: “A good teacher, then, would be someone that—I've come to shift more and more from the good teacher being the person who knows the most

in the room—to somebody who can facilitate that process of ‘educing’ that liberation. Being a good teacher is really all about students’ genuine passion for something—whatever that is—encouraging that! And it took me so long to realize this: If I encourage that genuine passion, then the grammar and citations, or whatever, can be added as part of something you really care about. Otherwise they feel I’m saying they’re not good enough [to pursue their passions] until they have this level of skill. We really need to encourage them where they’re at—to be themselves—and then from that, they’ll stretch.”

I asked a follow-up question, because this seemed related to his discussion of the purpose of education: “This goal of inspiring passion in students is a more holistic, overarching goal for you in education?”

Dr. Douglas responded: “Yes, exactly. The whole enterprise has something to do with passion, and curiosity, and care, and liking. We’re affectionate about the whole engagement. However, talking about passion in education is dangerous nowadays. But I do want this to be said. There are ethical boundaries, of course, but I only think education works when somehow human beings are together and there is some affection or friendliness to the subject, to the whole process, some love of wisdom. In the same way, taking care of oneself as a human being contributes to the context of the learning experience. It’s a factor—I have to take care of myself, physically and emotionally, to be a good teacher.”

The purpose of education for Dr. Douglas was a more expansive worldview for his students for the benefit of their communities, and the means for achieving this purpose was engagement. It occurs within the context of human interactions and

involves a care for one another as well as the subject. In this characterization of the means of education, Dr. Douglas once again aligned with the other participants in emphasizing care for students, for the content, and for oneself. Clearly, he already demonstrated a care for the context as well. He next articulated what that care looked like in terms of the teacher educator.

Dr. Douglas continued: “The whole teacher needs to be there, the teacher as a whole human being, with emotions, with thoughts, with insights. But it’s very demanding in a certain way because it means the whole person, in a sense, has to show up. There’s still family life and whatever, I’m not saying it in that sense. But I think I’ve experienced this myself is that, to the degree that I do that, the whole thing isn’t quite as draining. You would think, ‘Oh, that’s going to be really demanding! How will you manage all these things?’ But actually, it’s more nourishing to teach as a real-time human being with other human beings.” He laughed. “The humanity of it kind of nourishes all of us in some way, rather than we’re not just doing...we don’t have to sacrifice the content, but the content is within the wholly human interaction of it. At least that’s my aspiration; I’m intrigued about that, and I’m interested in how that’s working.”

“Within that context, students will remember the human texture of whether they were acknowledged and respected as human-to-human. Maybe, that’s what, in the long run, an educational encounter fosters in a person. Yet, I would want to say that if we include that human element, students will learn more. I don’t have research studies to back that up, but that’s what I’m thinking. Somehow, if we include some of the messy stuff of human-to-human interaction in the learning, then as I said earlier, I don’t think it

means we have to sacrifice the content. So that's saying that, in a classroom, for it to be a human-to-human interaction means, we'll all bring our own humanity to the table, allowing that to be seen. You know, students will often say, 'What about you? How was your journey?' They want to feel that from us, right?"

Dr. Douglas believed that the very best learning occurs within the context of a student's passion. The other skills and knowledge that are less enthralling—like grammar, for instance—will also improve within this context of passion, because an improvement in that knowledge and those skills will further the students' understanding of the content about which they are passionate. This aligned with the contemplative properties of the humanity of education (Palmer, 1997) as well as the importance of intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) based on that humanity. Finally, Dr. Douglas articulated that students, in his experience, remember the contours of the context of the learning experience rather than the content (Schwab, 1969). He said both are valuable and necessary, but that the student's experience of the commonplace of the context, in particular, was the most meaningful for the students themselves (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The commonplace of context.

"I was just thinking of how complex a social situation—a classroom—is. All of these different dynamics: you know you had a bad breakfast, or didn't get breakfast, or you're breaking up with your girlfriend, all of those things, you didn't do the reading, or you did it really well, and all those, your relationship to authority, the teacher as an authority, authorities have been abusive to you in the past, you don't feel heard, you want

to be acknowledged as the good student, and smart. All that stuff is kind of flowing around.”

Again, to introduce the commonplace that the teacher educator most emphasized, it is helpful to use the words of Dr. Douglas himself: “When I was in grad school, we were more competitive with each other. But generally, Nalanda students—and this is something that I can learn about from them—they tend to actually try to help each other. They’re quite collaborative in that way. And that’s a very good sign. They want each other to do her or his best. In *Presence*, they call that ‘the social field.’ In education, it’s what’s happening in the social field of the classroom.” Dr. Douglas considered context as the primary factor in his curricular deliberations, but his characterization of the context was quite complex, as it also involved the collaboration of the students as well. In fact, it not only involved their collaboration, it required it. Dr. Douglas used his agency to intentionally provide and rely upon the agency of his students (Bandura, 2006). Coming from such traditional educational training, this was particularly important. Below, Dr. Douglas provides further edification about just what an emphasis on the commonplace of context within a classroom setting entailed.

Dr. Douglas spoke about the context within one of his graduate level classes: “Yes, and how to encourage the relationships and the attention to them among the students. There are five of us in this class. Everybody gets to know everybody else’s project. We say to one another, ‘Go see that talk. Go check out that movie. Here is another reference. I came across this book.’ We’re like a research team. We’re not only listening to each other, or encouraging each other, we’re literally trying to acquire

additional resources for one another. Maybe this is a human capacity that is being developed—that has to do with the abilities to listen and speak and understand each other, and empathize. Maybe that’s more valuable than anything regarding content: How we are with each ‘other’ in this learning situation. To me, it’s just about being willing to encounter different forms of being human. So it’s a life skill, or a life capacity. It’s humans teaching and learning how to be humans.”

To illustrate the power of context as an influence in his students’ learning, Dr. Douglas described the interactions that occurred between a guest speaker and the students, and consequently, amongst the students themselves. All of this with Dr. Douglas creating and holding a context in which these interactions occurred.

Dr. Douglas began: “Then in the guest talk this morning, before the speaker even mentioned that crisis that had happened in his life, he led a conversation on the contemplation of ancestors. The students said things that—and I’ve been with them for twelve, thirteen weeks—they had never said to me. And I’m pretty sure I also presented on the concept of ancestors, which is pretty important to the Buddhist lineage altogether, and just as a general human principle...maybe I didn’t leave enough room, because this student—I sat with the students while the speaker was talking—he said something like, ‘I’m not really sure about my ancestors because I’m adopted.’ I don’t know, but for some reason I thought, ‘Wow!’ I have been with them for twelve, thirteen weeks and this never came up. Somehow today, something about today.”

“Another student said, ‘I didn’t know my father at all.’ The guy who was adopted also said that when you turn eighteen, the legal arrangement was that he could find out

who his parents actually were. He decided not to. Then somebody else across the room—this is how it emerges in a completely unpredictable way—said, ‘Well, I didn’t know my father, but I have my family and support system, etc. And I chose, like you, not choosing to find out who your parents were, I chose not to pursue finding out who my father was.’”

“So I don’t know. Classrooms have an atmosphere in which people feel invited, encouraged, and inspired to share things, or not. I wondered for myself, am I too content-focused, or something, that they haven’t been able to share this? Because he led us in a kind of body-mindfulness exercise, and in many ways, some of the things we’re doing, we had done before: standing, raising our arms or whatever. He did do it more slowly, I noticed that. Also, when he went around and asked people for observations, somehow they were more—I don’t know—stranger things happened than generally when I have them doing walking meditation, or standing. I don’t know why, but the things they reported, they never said any of that before with me!”

For Dr. Douglas, the commonplace of context (Schwab, 1969) represented a complex social situation within the classroom. The collaboration that occurred within that situation involved students with students and students with the teacher. He articulated the importance of the relationships themselves as well as the overarching quality of those relationships as similar to the relationships among teammates. Dr. Douglas also hypothesized that the relationships were more important than the content. In other words, the relationships became the curriculum of the class, demonstrating

Miller's (2007) contemplative connection about the interconnectedness of the elements of curriculum based on the level of awareness involved in one's perspective (Langer, 1989).

The complexity of the social dynamic of the classroom was increased when Dr. Douglas invited a guest speaker to the class. However, Dr. Douglas remained in the class. Despite the fact that the other three commonplaces of the learning experience—content, students, and teacher—remained similar, the introduction of the guest speaker radically changed the context of the classroom dynamic. As a result, student engagement changed as well. Dr. Douglas considered this result to be a change in teacher. Upon further reflection, I wonder if instead it was the change in context—the social dynamics, the relationships themselves—that created the change in student engagement.

Context-student.

“I think for the undergraduates, their lives are the text, and that's what we're trying to understand.”

Each participant demonstrated an affinity for one of the four commonplaces. However, that emphasis did not negate their relationship with the other commonplaces; instead, that emphasis influenced the way in which the teacher educators worked with and through the other commonplaces. For each participant, I provide an example of the relationship between a primary and secondary emphasis on the commonplaces. This example reinforces the idea that the participants prefer one commonplace over the other, but it also demonstrates the implications for studying the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) in relationship to one another within the curricular decision-making process as a means

for understanding the human agency (Bandura, 2006) that manifests specifically as curricular agency among educators.

Dr. Douglas began: “It’s such an important factor to me—how students treat each other. How they listen to each other. That’s almost primary. If we don’t have that, it doesn’t matter if it’s a really good text, or what insights I might have. And the more challenging the material, the more essential that community of learners—listening to each other, mutual respect, for example the bow is just saying, ‘I’m going to listen to everybody that speaks for the next hour-and-a-half.’”

“This is my tenth year at Nalanda. It has changed me. The students have changed me. It took me a long time to let go of wanting to have a good graduate class because I myself received good graduate training. I felt that I wanted to do that in graduate seminars here, and in undergraduate seminars. I didn’t see a difference, and I thought, why don’t we just teach them in the most advanced way we know how? Why make the distinction? But there is a developmental sequence. If you’re 19 years old and this is your first time away from mom and dad, all of those human dimensions I have gradually come to consider. I’ve had to let go of this idea of what a good class is, and the more I do that, the more my classes unfold in ways that are beneficial for my students. It’s still taking me awhile to realize that, ‘Oh my assignment of the reading it’s just one event.’ They’re having their first significant relationships, they may have aging grandparents who are passing on, there’s housing when the floods happened, roommates from hell, there’s money, and work...”

He proceeded with an entertaining anecdote that emphasized the connection between the commonplaces of context and student within his classroom: “One year I taught a Mahayana practice thing, and I think we started at ten in the morning, and some kids, they could not get themselves up and out of bed and dressed and get there by ten o’clock! So that became like a primary focus. I was like, ‘What are we going to do to help so-and-so? Okay, you live in the same dorm, you’ll help him with waking up.’ We had like a buddy system almost. It did work for a while, it helped. It was like a support team because it was the first time living away from home. Literally they were just eighteen years old, and it was the first time away from mom and dad saying, ‘Wake up now, you’ve got to get to school.’ So that’s such a big part of what college life is all about.”

I asked: “Where in the syllabus did it say that this is what you’re going to do? What standards were you covering?”

Dr. Douglas laughed: “Exactly! No, it’s just practical: How will we help all of us get here? It’s a team, right? And other students were generous, saying, ‘Oh, I live there too, and I can knock on so-and-so’s door.’” He paused, then: “I think those two students ended up falling in love and dropping out of college together! So much for good intentions!” He laughed again.

Dr. Douglas has changed his curriculum to meet the context of the classroom and the students within that context. He has done so by suspending his expectations of what the context of the class should be. Dr. Douglas was intentionally learning as much as he could about his students in the class. As a teacher educator, he has shifted his emphasis

from the content he wanted to provide to the students to understanding who they are and where they are in order to better facilitate the exchange of information—the learning experiences—of the students.

Dr. Douglas continued: “I need to just ask the students, ‘Say more about this,’ rather than to jump in. I move too quickly, so, I’m trying to teach myself to let my default question be, ‘Say more about...’ We’re not the only leaders in the room. A student could actually—by being genuine and brave and showing real feelings about the topic—shift things in the class. And I might wake up and go along with them. Brene Brown says, ‘You can lead from any position in the room.’ And Nalanda students are pretty keen on that. They want to have this sense that they are teaching as well, that they are not just learners, and it’s not a one-way transfer of, ‘I know and you don’t know.’ I respect that. They’re right! There are texts that support that idea, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for example. Everybody has insights.”

“So it’s what I’m trying to attune to—when are the students teaching themselves? When are they having insights that are partly self-generated or a matter of their own intelligence being unleashed? Not just when are they learning what I’m saying, but, when are they coming forward with their own recognitions?”

Dr. Douglas was almost hard-wired for the commonplace of context (Schwab, 1969). Still that emphasis had its own context for Dr. Douglas, which was the learning and the well-being of his students. When Dr. Douglas first started teaching, he was still a contextual teacher, but he was providing his idea of the context. As he has continued teaching, his approach was still a contextual one, but now he was working with the

present context of the classroom, including the contexts of the students themselves. It was a subtle but important shift: From attempting to overlay an artificial context to attempting to understand the actual context and to work within it.

Dr. Douglas's curricular decision-making process.

"I used to make a joke that the most enjoyable part of a class was planning out the syllabus. Because in my mind, ideally, we would actually move from this to this in an uninterrupted sequence, but it never is like that in reality! In fact, I couldn't have known, beforehand; there was no way to survey or canvas them. It was very much a getting to know them—what are you bringing to the table, and what skills do you apparently not have?"

Dr. Douglas always had a simple yet organized and thoughtful lesson plan for his classes. In the past, he expended tremendous amounts of energy to keep the curriculum of the class aligned with the curriculum of the lesson he had planned. This was painful for both him and his students. As his curricular deliberations progressed and evolved, Dr. Douglas still continued to make his eloquent lesson plans, but he was much more likely to adapt those plans to the actual context of the classroom as he perceived it in the present moment. As the example about Nalanda culture below illustrates, it was when Dr. Douglass planned, but *then* made curricular decisions based on his understanding of the context of the class in the present moment, that an exceptional context-based curriculum co-emerged.

Overview of his curriculum decision-making process.

As tangential as ever, Dr. Douglas walked me through a curricular cycle using an example from the class he had taught the day prior to our interview. Dr. Douglas began with an explanation of the context for the lesson: “The class I had yesterday, I had a plan of the three things we were going to cover, which was, ‘What is the meaning of culture?’ in this special topics seminar. And ‘How are we going to find out more about that?’ which is to say that we are going to read memoirs, novels, and watch films. And ‘Why does it matter?’ What is the significance of understanding...cultural hybridity, or diasporas, or the mixing of cultures that is much more common now than it was?” However, the context he imagined in his curricular deliberations was much different from the context that manifested in the present moment of the implementation of the class. What happened is described in the following section.

An example of his curricular decision-making process.

“And they said, ‘Oh, that’s opening a whole can of worms!’ And I said, ‘Yes, we would have to open these cans of worms to understand the culture! That would be the idea!’”

Dr. Douglas explained: “In the classroom—and I don’t remember when this happened—we started to talk about the question, ‘What is Nalanda culture?’ And this had not been in my lesson plan. But it seemed worth—we spent an hour of the three-hour class trying to understand that. The first thing I did was to go around and ask them what they had already heard about the class. Because it’s been difficult for me to articulate exactly what it is the class is about, so students had heard various things.”

“So we went around, and pretty much everything they said, I would say, ‘Yes, we could include that, we could work with that.’ Somehow...I guess it was this noun ‘culture,’ which Williams says is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. And I said that to them: It’s partly because of history, but it’s also because it’s used in modern times in so many different ways. Somehow, I could feel, in the moment with them, a need to ground this; we’re not just talking about some abstraction. Like we’re all here at Nalanda; if I wanted to be a good ethnographer, help me describe Nalanda culture.”

“They weren’t able to do it; that was almost immediately apparent. They could give me evaluations, like, ‘Nalanda culture lacks diversity.’ ‘Nalanda culture is narcissistic.’ It encourages—under the name of ‘contemplative,’ interestingly enough—a kind of evasion and bypassing, and not looking at aspects that aren’t socially rewarded. In that sense it became like a complaint session: ‘We still read Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burrows in the Writing School...that’s 60 years ago!’”

“So it seemed worth doing, to try to get them to think about their experience here and begin to apply—this is what we’re going to be doing all semester is try to understand different cultures: Mexican American, Chinese American, Anglo, Dominican...there’s a novel about those two groups meeting—so the fact that they weren’t able to do it... And yet they did get engaged around Nalanda, but almost always negatively. The only person who diverged from that was a slightly older woman from Alabama who said, ‘Well, I grew up with explicit racism and homophobia, and when I came here, I thought this was much better! Based on what I’ve seen in Alabama, I’ve been kind of amazed about how

critical students here have been.’ That really helped us in terms of relativity. That, yes, if you came from a certain place, Nalanda would seem very free, liberated, and much more enlightened.”

“I don’t know. I stuck with it. And I’m even going to continue. I still need to teach them how to give a concrete example of something that’s culturally shaped. So I’m going to begin the next class by saying, ‘Give me an item from your experience that you recognize did not come from your individual personality, but which is culturally relevant—for example, the experience of one’s gender.’ And I may use myself as an example of this. Because it lacked those specific descriptions in the way that you might say about a culture, ‘Oh yes, the food is like this. People eat tortillas for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And their music is like this.’ At the end of the discussion I said to them, ‘In all that you described about Nalanda culture to me, you never told me what music people listen to here. You never told me what dating is like.’ I said, ‘Are drugs part of Nalanda culture?’ And they said, ‘Oh, that’s opening a whole can of worms!’ And I said, ‘Yes, we would have to open these cans of worms to understand the culture! That would be the idea!’”

“We want as holistic a description as possible of what this Nalanda culture that we are participating in is. And one student said, ‘I’m tired of this discussion about Nalanda. I took this course because I thought we might read about other places.’ And I said, ‘Sure. Fair enough; we all have that desire. But, unless we actually reflect on our own culture, we’re probably just going to misunderstand other cultures as a version of our own.’ That may have been one of the better things in that whole exchange. Here’s

why it's worthwhile--why it isn't just more narcissism—trying to understand our own cultural lens as preparation or as ongoing. Going back to the reading journal and the reading notes idea of the constant, continual, repeated need to reflect on how much of this is downloading and habitually structured culture, and how much am I able to see something that doesn't confirm what I already thought I knew. And that student later thanked me. She said, 'It was important that you said that, and I recognize that. We do need to do our own cultural reflection, not just say tell us about those other people.'"

“Although I could have really been wrong, and maybe I was wrong—maybe it didn't warrant as long as it took. But I think I sensed that there was something worthwhile about it, and it certainly helped me get to know them. They all spoke about this. Everyone participated in helping describe...and maybe I should have used that word, 'describe,' so next class I'll say, 'It's different to say that this is a bad book versus its cover is blue and black, and it's two inches, and it was published in 1999...' They weren't able to describe. They have such strong opinions and evaluative judgments. There's something wrong here at Nalanda; that was basically their evaluation.”

Dr. Douglas further explained: “Those two [description and evaluation] have been collapsed for them. So that will be a key learning for the whole semester, if we can tease out the difference between description and evaluation. When are we, as much as we can, just reflecting what's there; and when are we adding on?”

I asked. “When we first began this conversation, it sounded like you had an agenda and went off topic, but that there was something there?”

“But I hadn’t had the idea—before I walked into the class—of applying it to at least one of the cultures of which we’re a part of. Nalanda is a micro-culture. This city has a culture. This state has a culture. One student is from L.A., another one is from Kansas. And sometimes they would refer back to those cultures, like the woman who spoke about Alabama. There is a contrast between the culture they grew up in and the culture here; how they are different and how they are the same. Like the student from Kansas said, ‘Well, it is different from Kansas, but a lot of it is the same. It’s just a subtler version.’”

“And that was the other thing I said to them: ‘So we talked for an hour, and you never told me about the types of music people listen to at Nalanda—which, by the way, I don’t know—and you didn’t tell me if they make food choices. When I encounter students, they are very careful about food. It’s high on their list, like, certain companies... So that’s cultural, right? Your kids aren’t born knowing that; we learn that. And the fact that others around us care about that influences us. Like knowing how to recycle in a certain way.’”

Dr. Douglas was highly sensitive to the fact that his students were not able to describe their own context. They were able to evaluate their own context, but they conflated that evaluation of the context with a description of it. This raised two problems. First, the description was just an evaluation, which is problematic. Second, even as an evaluation, it is unreliable because there was no accurate description on which that evaluation was based. Another factor contributing to the issue was the relativity of a shared context. In other words, despite the students sharing a common culture, their

other contextual experiences influenced their perspective of Nalanda culture, making it difficult to articulate with any consensus. These insights motivated Dr. Douglas to create a spiraled curriculum (Bruner, 1977). That is, he decided to continue to use this contextual learning experience as a sounding board for future class sessions. It was imperative to Dr. Douglas to resolve the students' confusion surrounding the conflation of contextual evaluation and contextual description.

Reflection on his curricular decision-making process.

The majority of the class and structural design for the rest of the semester was completely transformed by one spontaneous, contextual curricular decision. The need to talk about Nalanda culture as an example to ground them in Williams led to this entire sequence of reflections, evaluations, and additional curricular decisions. And it created this entirely new agenda—this structural element for the course—did not exist previously in his plans.

Dr. Douglas continued: “And just to acknowledge something personal here. I think I have fear about this class, because it does touch on gender, race, and class, which are possible minefields. I taught this course 10 years ago at Nalanda, and we had some very heated discussions in class. And people were offended. This is content that people care about, or get triggered by, and at one point in the conversation about Nalanda culture, I did say to them, ‘I’m very grateful for how you’ve had this conversation; that you’ve been willing to listen to each other.’ The way that they conducted it was quite decent and friendly. And even if there was clearly an emotional charge at certain

moments, like, ‘Goddammit! Why do we still read Kerouac and Ginsberg?!’ Still it was respectful.”

“I really do feel after that one class that I have a much better sense of who they are and where we’re going with the course. Like this morning I was looking at this week’s reading, and now I can imagine—I think much more realistically—what they’re going to respond to, what they’re going to be able to read or not read, and how I might be able to combine some theory—the text we’re reading—and their own interests, experiences, and abilities.”

“What I noticed in writing the lesson plan—I spent six years studying culture—I almost didn’t need to pull down any texts, and I already knew the main things I needed to cover. I needed to talk about culture as humanly-produced, not genetic or instinctual...so all of that is there as a kind of background that goes into the lesson plan. But also, on the fly, in our conversation in class, I would try to bring in things that I had been taught about how culture works. That it doesn’t work like this, and it’s not like that. Because I’m trying to get them to learn how to think about culture.”

Previously, Dr. Douglas was both afraid of and frustrated by his curricular decisions. Again, that is because the process involved an attempt to overlay his idea of what the commonplace of context on any given classroom environment instead of an acknowledgement of the context that was already there. As a result, he would spend a good deal of energy forcing one context onto the other, and both he and his students would be frustrated with the results. Because of his continued curricular deliberations, Dr. Douglas has since realized the need to acknowledge and work within the context of

the classroom that is already present. Moreover, he has shifted his curricular deliberations to make that his focus. The results have been rewarding for both him and for his students. In addition, it has led to a self-confidence in his ability to understand and adapt to the classroom context in the present moment and to make the curricular decisions necessary to align the content he wishes to transfer to students within the context in which the transference is occurring. He was now emphasizing the actual context as opposed to his expected context, and it is transforming his curriculum.

Conclusion.

“There is a different culture here. What we are asking of students is different. In classrooms, and in the culture at large—we are probably not used to being in touch with ourselves. Even though it’s something that we long for. I think all of us have a genuine longing to know ourselves better.”

The primary insight of Dr. Douglas and his curricular deliberations was the difference between a downloaded context (his projection) and an emergent context (collaboration with students in the present moment). Ironically, both Dr. Douglas and his students would, at different times, be operating from the perspective of a downloaded context. However, the most engaging and authentic teaching and learning occurred for him when both he and his students were collaborating in the emergent context of situated knowledge. Consequently, Dr. Douglas’s primary focus on the commonplace of context and his secondary focus on the commonplace of students changed from being a means of frustration to a means of curricular agency for both him and for his students.

In addition, there were multiple similarities between Dr. Douglas and the previous two participants, Dr. Grey and Dr. Rockwell. All three teacher educators explicitly taught their students that their method of curricular processing was one among many. They helped their students to see the characteristics of the one and to differentiate it from the characteristics of the many (Langer, 1989). The purpose being for students to eventually develop their own curricular decision-making processes. Second, the three participants agreed on the purpose of education having both individual and collective human elements (Palmer, 1997) that were interdependent (Miller, 2007). Dr. Grey, Dr. Rockwell, and Dr. Douglas all noticed the fact that curricular decisions are being made throughout the curricular cycle, and that the closer to the present moment of instruction that those decisions were made, the more agency they held. Finally, all three participants not only articulated their own curricular agency, but they used that agency as a curriculum for engendering the same process and agency within their students.

Mr. White: Curriculum as Radical Humanism

“There’s no difference between person and teacher as far as I’m concerned. The person is the teacher. You have skills that you’ve developed as a person in order to teach. If you separate teacher and person, then who is that teacher?”

“If you have a teacher who is fully engaged with what they’re doing and aware of how their mind is engaging with what they’re doing, how their emotions are involved, how their body feels when they’re engaged, then they’re much more present as a teacher. They’re much more available to personalize that lesson plan as it’s unfolding in the class.”

“To me, this is sort of radical humanism.”

Mr. Norman White.

The following dialogue is constructed from the interview transcripts of Mr. Norman White. I synthesized the transcripts into a single conversation and described a single setting, his office on campus, to make the data more user-friendly. However, I took all of the quotes of the dialogue directly from the transcripts themselves. The creative elements of the presentation involve my description of a real setting and my consolidation and organization of the interview transcripts within the framework described in the introduction to chapter four. In addition, the commentaries interspersed throughout the dialogue are also my interpretations.

Meeting Mr. White.

“In terms of teacher education, each of us needs to find out who we are in as many different ways as possible in order to be authentic teachers.”

Mr. White’s office was on the second floor of an administrative building across the street from the main campus of Nalanda University. I had been waiting in an old wooden chair in a narrow, windowless hallway with a shelf of dated books on child development and a series of three filing cabinets. Mr. White’s tall frame entered the hallway almost silently; he walked past me, smiled, and took a key from inside one of the filing cabinet drawers. With his back to me, he said, “Please come in,” as he unlocked his office door and pushed it open.

The office was small, but not uncomfortable. There was a desk with only a small stack of manila file folders. No computer, no books, no paper. There was a window, but

a drawn curtain blocked most of the sunlight. The bookshelf next to the window had only a stack of binders and a few stapled papers colored with age. A small recycling bin and a smaller wastebasket both sat empty on the floor next to the desk. The sparsity of the room underscored its few decorations, or perhaps it was the opposite. There was a small cactus in the curtained glow of the window and two handmade candles on the desk. Hanging on the wall above the desk was a *thangka* painting, its silk border covered in an elaborate pattern of golden infinity knots. Above my head a framed black and white photo captured the image of a bald Tibetan man wearing a suit, thick-rimmed glasses, and a smirk; he was performing *ikebana*, the Japanese art of flower arrangement.

Mr. White was in his sixties. He sat facing me with his back to his desk. His tan slacks and grey sweater were as unassuming as the walls of his office. He did not blend into the walls, but he fit in the office. The office, like the man, was a combination of Quaker and Buddhist austerities, but there was an inviting warmth to both—like a space had been intentionally created for me within his own personal space. It is in this space that we discussed his 40-year career as a teacher and teacher educator and how that longevity manifested in his teacher education classes. I asked, “Why did you become a teacher?”

Mr. White replied: “I became a teacher because I had an eighth grade history teacher who really inspired me, and who treated me in a way that respected my intelligence in a way that no other teacher had. There was a lot of respect and expectation in the way that he related to me and to the whole class. It was a very professional, very demanding class, but I felt like he knew me.”

“I remember one time when there was this kind of history contest where some students from the junior high were going somewhere, being a part of something, and several of my classmates were going. He looked over at me and said, ‘I’m surprised you’re not going.’ He had that ability to relate as a human being. And I thought, ‘Wow, I never thought that I could be that good, to be able to do that.’ So, it really upped my game in terms of being a participant in the class, and made me think, ‘Boy, if he can make me feel this way, I want to make somebody else feel that way.’ This is a good thing to do with your life.”

The language Mr. White used was important, when he said, “I felt like he knew me.” That is colloquial in English, but what does it actually mean? To know someone is to be aware of someone. Mr. White’s history teacher was very aware of Mr. White and his abilities, and he was aware of an appropriate way to inspire Mr. White. The result was Mr. White engaging in school, but more importantly, it was motivation for Mr. White to increase his own self-awareness. Mr. White explained: “My favorite subject in school was history, mainly because that teacher was a history teacher. And, my father, and his father, and my mother were all very interested in our family history. I still am. And it was also around the time of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the centennial of the Civil War, the 1960s, and there were all sorts of celebrations of that.”

I asked: “What is it about human history, do you think, that is so interesting for you?”

After a very long pause, Mr. White replied: “Well, I think it helps me to better understand who I am, the things I’m interested in and care about. In just the last several

weeks I've been exploring my father's side of the family, who were Quakers, and who left North Carolina and went to Indiana in the decades before the Civil War because of their abolitionist views. And that kind of courage to sort of strike out into new territory—because the Indians were just right there at that time that they went to Indiana, it was right when the treaties were being signed—it was a pioneering life.

“It took like two months to get there from North Carolina. And I've always felt like kind of an adventurous person myself. I did a lot of adventurous things when I was young. And this thing that I'm doing with my life now, with contemplative education, is sort of breaking new ground, and always on the edge. So, to know that that kind of energy—that there's some linkage there—is kind of a neat thing for me. To know that I'm part of a lineage again, of people who were not afraid to go somewhere where they could start something new.”

I asked a follow-up question: “Why do you think, for you, it's so important to know who you are—whatever that means in terms that work for you—but, historically, and working as a teacher, and so on, why is that a driving force for you? Or is it?”

Mr. White responded: “I think most people would say that your individuality is very important in what you do in the world and how you do it. This is something I believe very strongly, in terms of teacher education, that each of us needs to find out who we are in as many different ways as possible in order to be authentic teachers. Not teaching the way we're supposed to teach, but teaching the way that's really effective and genuine for us in making a connection to students and a unique authorship of the material

we teach. So that, as many ways as you can find out who you are, then—and also you’re going to be happier—because you’ve come home!”

People are individuals. Teachers are people. Consequently, teachers are individuals (Palmer, 1997). Mr. White was arguing that awareness of oneself is critical to one’s curriculum and instruction. As with the other participants, this insight occurred in a formal educational setting at a very young age, and yet, it was integral in the kind of teacher educator Mr. White became. Mr. White appreciated knowing that his ancestors were pioneers with adventurous spirits—that sense of lineage was important to him. He was also part of a lineage of awareness, generally, and self-awareness in particular, going at least as far back as his eighth-grade history teacher. A synonym for lineage is connection. Connection (Miller, 2007) was as important to Mr. White now as a teacher educator, as it was when he was a student. I asked, “What did you like about school?”

Mr. White replied: “As a student, what I loved most about school was engaging with people. It was the people, whether they were teachers or students, whether it was in class or out on the playground. It was the human connection. In contrast, I’m trying to come up with a statement that encompasses the general dreariness of the whole process of school. It was the impersonal-ness of it. There were exceptions, but part of the impersonal-ness was feeling like you’re going through a set curriculum that nobody’s really buying into. People are just doing it because it’s either prescribed, or it’s something they came up with 10 years ago, or it’s the easiest way to go...just feeling that human disconnection was the bottom line.”

“I think that one of the reasons that I didn’t get that excited about school—and I think this is still a big issue, and it’s one that contemplative education addresses—is that there was school and there was life, and those two things were separate. So when school was done, you were free. But what would it be like to feel free when you’re in school? And what would it be like if the things that you learned in school really connected with the rest of your life. That was part of what the problem was for me.”

Mr. White, despite the fact that he truly enjoyed people and learning, did not like school. As he said, there was a disconnect between school and life, between who he was as a student and who he was as a human being (Palmer, 1997). That disconnect that he experienced in school carried into life outside of the classroom and to life beyond schooling (Miller, 2007). In the same way, the connection that Mr. White was attempting to foster through awareness generally, and self-awareness as a human and a teacher educator specifically, had the potential to carry into life outside of the classroom and to life beyond schooling. This informed Mr. White’s view of the purpose of education.

The purpose of education.

“Education happens naturally. We’re constantly learning. Whether it’s productive or not, it happens!”

“Education has to be meaningful. And, some people operate on a superficial level. But, even people who operate on a superficial level want to feel like what they’re doing really means something. They want some kind of deep satisfaction out of it.”

To understand the curricular decision-making processes of the participants, it was beneficial for those decisions to be contextualized within their view of the purpose of education generally, and their intentions within the educational process, specifically.

Mr. White continued: “The purpose of education is to awaken the capacities within us, to engage fully with the world that we find ourselves in. Of course, that can change all of the time. And, providing a variety of skills and methods to investigate and engage with what emerges in your life and in your work, and in your family, and in your culture, and your environment, and all the rest of it.”

“What we’re trying to do, to bring back that natural spirituality—which is not part of religion—which *was* part of education for most of human history...And we’re trying to bring that back in ways which are grounded in human experience. We work a lot with sense perceptions, with bodily experience, with simple communication—being able to listen to somebody. When you actually listen to somebody very deeply, it’s incredibly moving. And that, to me, is that natural spirituality. But, in a lot of education, we’re not taught to do that, we don’t give time for that, we don’t value that.”

“It really gets down to the separation, this duality. Like Parker Palmer says, ‘Divided no more.’ We are part of life, all of it. That’s the richness and that’s the sorrow. We spend so much of our time trying to create a good life, a happy life, a successful life. We try to get rid of all the things that don’t work and hurt, and get divorces, and all the rest of it. It’s this view of creating an ivory tower for yourself.”

I asked: “Why do you think people have this dualistic vision?”

Mr. White replied: “I can speculate on why it happened: To me it’s almost part of the evolution of human consciousness. That when the intellect gets so developed, and this sense of power and control get so strong that you can manipulate your environment, then you become separate from it. And that gradually happened over time. You start planting seeds, and now you’re manipulating your environment. You start raising animals. You’re sort of setting up this better world for yourself—and there’s nothing wrong with that—but as time goes along and the intellect continues to develop, then there’s more a sense that we’re here in control of that over there. So that split happens and pretty soon that natural interconnection just vanishes. Then you have exploitation and harm, things that go beyond what’s natural—what the rest of nature experiences—where animals eat each other and there are droughts and so on. This occurs on a grander scale because of this intellectual development.”

He continued: “Part of the work now is reintegrating and seeing how those parts of the whole function together in nonaggressive ways, which can still be painful at times, but not so incredibly harmful. But it was almost a necessary progression, and now we’re seeing many many people saying, ‘Whoa! We’ve gone way too far!’ And, ‘What can we do to restore that kind of wholeness?’ And we have many people trying to figure that out, and I think that is great!”

He continued with the connection to contemplative education: “And a contemplative worldview is so holistic and profound that it feels like moving from the relative world to something much more meaningful. You’re not just working on the skills level, but you’re working with the whole human being in a way which feels very

spiritual in the most gloriously ordinary sense of the world. It's not teaching spiritual lessons, but actually living the principles. There can be a real sense that—even though people do different things in different classes, and students do different things—there is a kind of shared worldview. Individual students can grow and develop in ways that seem genuinely true to who they are...to what their life is like, to what their background is, and to what their culture is like. It brings forth the best in everyone in their own unique ways.”

Much like the other participants, education, according to Mr. White, had two interconnected aims: Reintegration with oneself and reintegration with one's world. There was some irony there, or perhaps it was the guarantee of success. People could not be separated from who they are, nor could they be separated from where they are, but they could *feel* that way. They could *see* the world that way. In that case, education as a change in perspective (Langer, 1989) was a solution to both issues. That is, an awareness of oneself, one's world, and the connections that already existed could help people to reintegrate by feeling those connections. Moreover, as Mr. White indicated, it was something that increasingly more human beings were beginning to desire. Finally, Mr. White and the other participants agreed that there were a myriad of ways to achieve their shared aim for education.

Who is a good teacher?

“One of the things I've noticed about teachers—good teachers—is that they often can't describe to other people what it is they do and what distinguishes them as a good teacher. They just do it!”

It was important to understand the participant's characterization of education generally and his role within that system, specifically. In the same way, it was important to understand the participant's characterization of a good teacher generally, and how he viewed himself as a teacher, specifically. Again, it was a loaded question that would be more harmful to the data if it were not asked. Still, Mr. White's explanation of a good teacher demonstrated a nuance that at first may seem counterintuitive.

Mr. White began, "Some teachers are very personable. Others are not. But it doesn't mean that they're not effective if they're not personable. I had some teachers who were incredibly effective in teaching me, who really didn't relate to me very much as a human being. But there was something about the way they did it—their own passion, their own interest, their skill—that made it effective."

"I had a high school English teacher who was very...proper, who really didn't relate to us in a friendly kind-of-way. She wasn't unfriendly at all, but she was just going about her business—teaching grammar. Which is something I just didn't give a damn about! But she was so good at it, and she was actually so genuine in who she was. She was comfortable with how she taught, who she was, and the material, and she really loved it, and...I learned it!"

I asked: "Do you think there was any connection between her teaching style and what she taught?"

Mr. White replied: "Yes, I think so. Grammar is very organized...based on rules and procedures, and analysis, and so forth...I think that, yes, that is very much the way that she was as well. When the teacher is tuned in to what it is that they're teaching, that

they actually have experience and interest, and effectiveness in doing that—presenting the material, or the craft, or whatever it may be. And, that they can effectively engage the students in that journey of discovery and learning.”

Mr. White was describing a teacher whose primary emphasis among the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) was content, whose secondary commonplace could have been either context (“very proper”) or teacher (“she was genuine in who she was”). Most importantly (for her), she was good at teaching grammar and her students learned the content.

Mr. White’s discussion of a good teacher demonstrated that there are many ways for different people to be good teachers; there is no single formula. Mr. White’s history teacher and grammar teacher had two very different approaches, yet both were good teachers for Mr. White as a student. In addition, Mr. White emphasized the importance of working through the lens of the commonplaces and related to his focus on the commonplace of teacher, or self, as his primary lens. Mr. White has experience and expertise in assisting teachers learn how to relate to themselves as both teachers and human beings.

The commonplace of teacher.

“This notion of work and life being separate is just such a confused attitude. I’m constantly saying that developing yourself, by developing a greater awareness of yourself and these contemplative capacities, you’re going to be a better teacher even if you don’t do anything different in your classroom than what you’re already doing in terms of the content.”

Mr. White spent many years of his career as a teacher educator looking specifically at the human being who is the teacher in relationship to that role. However, he should introduce the topic to the reader. Mr. White stated: “There’s no difference between the person and the teacher as far as I’m concerned. The person is the teacher. You have skills that you’ve developed as a person in order to teach. If you separate teacher and person, then who is that teacher? Why not just stick in a video?”

I laughed and asked: “Why do you think, for you, it’s so important to know who you are—whatever that means in terms that work for you—but, historically, working as a teacher, and so on, why is that a driving force for you?”

Mr. White responded: “I think most people would say that your individuality is very important in what you do in the world and how you do it. This is something I believe very strongly, in terms of teacher education, that each of us needs to find out who we are in as many different ways as possible in order to be authentic teachers. Not teaching the way we’re supposed to teach, but teaching the way that’s really effective and genuine for us in making a connection to students and a unique authorship of the material we teach. So that, as many ways as you can find out who you are, then—and also you’re going to be happier—because you’ve come home!”

“I’ve come to pay attention to myself as a teacher quite a bit over the years, and how I do that shifts. This approach that you’ve been using, in a sense, has caused me to be more analytical about it. Trying to put into words things that I don’t usually do when I’m paying attention to myself as a teacher. Paying attention to my different inner moods, modalities, the weather of my thinking, the stream of my emotions, and how my

body feels, and just taking that as context for how I'm going to be teaching at a particular time. Trying to be as genuine in that way as I can be. And to trust that, in the presentation of the material, some kind of fresh take on what I'm teaching will happen because I'm paying attention to those dimensions of myself."

Mr. White had an authentic awareness of the human elements of the educational process, those human dimensions that make teaching and learning so complex and dynamic. For Mr. White, the idea in working with the commonplace of self, or teacher, was not to control those human elements, but to become more aware of them. The more awareness there was, the more understanding that occurred. Consequently, the more aligned who one was would be with what one did and how one did it. Moreover, this was a process and a set of skills that could be passed on to students. Humanity was already a focal point of the human experience, why not make it a focal point of the educational experience as well?

Mr. White continued: "For example, on the emotional level, I might trust that I have some real issues, some resentment about a certain way the material has been presented, or the way that I've presented it, and I might lead with that kind of emotional energy, supported by the rest of me. Or, an idea might suddenly pop into my head, and after reflecting on it for a moment, I might think, 'Yeah, I'm going to go with that.' So cognition leads the way. At other times, it might be a somatic experience where I just need to shift my position a little bit, or sit up straight, or lean, or something like that, and that changes the presentation."

“I trust those dynamics. I trust my awareness of them, not to the exclusion of external feedback. So, if I’m heading off in a particular direction, and everyone has blank faces, I’m not completely cut off.” He laughed. “But, as a kind of starting point...and that can happen on all the different levels. Some of these are subtle! But sometimes they can go quite a ways, especially when there’s that engagement with the students that’s happening at the same time. So, if I’m leading with my emotions, it might provoke someone in the class—on any of these levels—to have an exchange, and then it just goes from there. But it comes from that basic trust...that I can do this from anywhere.”

I asked: “It sounds like the practice of paying attention to yourself is very grounding for you...that the trust arises from knowing yourself in a way that a lot of teachers haven’t been trained to do?”

Mr. White laughed again: “Yes. This is a different approach; that’s for sure. It’s a very engaged dynamic process, this notion of teaching. It’s so basic to human existence. Passing on, sharing with—from generation to generation, or peer to peer—the knowledge, skills, and capacities that we are as human beings, and developing those. What’s more basic? Therefore, it’s so important in the work that we’re doing that there be a contemplative discipline. So that the human element is not just pre-formed. That there’s a balance of working with emotion as a teacher—knowing how to regulate it, but also how to value it...how to use it as a form of communication—so there are skills around these contemplative dimensions, to these human dimensions of being a teacher. It doesn’t necessarily have to be contemplative dimensions. But these human qualities need

to have discipline in the best sense of the word, so that you can exercise them effectively.”

Self-awareness was integral to the type of teaching Mr. White described. It allowed the teacher to differentiate between what was happening internally—whether that was cognitive, emotional, even physical, etc.—and what was happening externally within the dynamics of the classroom. Additionally, if he was able to tell the difference, he was able to articulate the difference; and if he was able to articulate the difference, he was able to share it with his students as an important part of their ongoing learning experience.

Mr. White continued: “This all comes out of the tradition, and it’s an ongoing and developing process.”

I asked an important follow-up question: “The content and the material comes from a religious tradition, but is there anything particularly religious about how you teach it?”

He replied: “No. There’s nothing religious about how we teach it. When you try to create a spiritual education, which is not religious, you’re really opening the door as widely as possible. One of the distinctions that is—to me—helpful to make, is the difference between religion and spirituality. To me, religions are manifestations of human spirituality. We’re not just interested in the materialistic world, because there’s more to life than that. If you consider people who have a love for their family, for example, even that has a spiritual dimension that’s not practical. It’s a question of awakening that interconnected, selfless dimension of human beings, which is not only

uplifting personally and for a community, but it's more effective and beneficial for everybody. It's a commonsense spirituality. You don't have to believe anything. There are basic principles, like interconnectedness, but that's a scientific fact! As the Dalai Lama says, 'If science comes up with something that refutes part of Buddhism, then we should change Buddhism.'"

"Contemplative education is secular to me in its very nature. It's drawing a line between the secular and the religious rather than the secular and the spiritual. Because it's our spirit that makes us want to learn and love and enjoy our lives! When you try to create a spiritual education that's not religious, you're really opening the door as widely as possible. We're trying to bring back a natural spirituality, which is not part of religion, but which was part of education for most of human history. And we're trying to bring that back in ways which are grounded in human experience. We work a lot with sense perceptions, with bodily experience, with simple communication—being able to listen to somebody. In a lot of education, we're not taught to do that, we don't give time for that, and we don't value that."

"It's like we—and this is obvious, but—our education system has mirrored the Industrial Revolution. We're supposed to behave like learning machines, rather than human beings. So, how to bring it back to its roots of knowing that are essentially human and based on our natural capacities, just like young children learn...and at the same time, take advantage of all of the knowledge and wisdom that's been developed over hundreds of years of human history—you don't want to throw anything out..."

For Mr. White, being spiritual was being human; religious traditions came after the fact of being human. Consequently, his perception of the commonplace of teacher (Schwab, 1969), or self, involved an increasing awareness of all of the complex dynamics that simply make up who the teacher is as a human being. Understanding the interconnectedness of oneself allowed teacher educators to articulate the idea and the process to others. This increasing awareness, in turn, allowed them to be more perceptive of who they were, and how that was different and related to the others in the classroom. This understanding, then, informed their curricular choices as well, as Mr. White explained.

Mr. White continued: “This idea is that if you have a teacher who is fully engaged with what they’re doing and aware of how their mind is engaging with what they’re doing, how their emotions are involved, how their body feels when they’re engaged, then they’re much more present as a teacher. They’re much more available to personalize that lesson plan as it’s unfolding in the class.”

“They can better sense whether the students aren’t getting it; they can do that from a variety of modalities. And, they have the courage and skills to know how to engage those students or that student in ways that allow the students to access the material now and feel like they’re included in this learning community...that there’s a sense of trust that’s built.”

“So there’s not this teacher-content-student thing. It’s more like the students, the content, and the teacher—from the teacher’s point of view—are all the same thing that’s happening. And that makes it much more accessible. Because the students feel like

they're being heard, like they're a part of the class. Even if they're being challenged, or questioned, or disciplined, there's that lack of separation that Parker Palmer talks about...that the teacher is not divided from what they're doing. But that they are actually relating to it, even if they don't like what they're doing!"

From a metacognitive perspective, Mr. White indicated that paying attention to oneself was a complex but important element of the curricular decision-making process. Teachers who were aware of themselves, cognitively, emotionally, and physically were also able to then differentiate between what was happening for them internally and externally, and how that was different than what was happening in the class. In other words, once Mr. White was aware of himself, he was also aware of what was occurring in the teaching and learning environment that was not himself. This accurate understanding of all four commonplaces—which derived from a focus on the commonplace of self—led educators to develop a sense of trust in themselves and the learning experiences they created. According to Mr. White, this trust led to a more engaging learning environment in which the sense of separation among the commonplaces dissipated (Miller, 2007).

Teacher-context.

“Whether you're apprenticing with somebody in a traditional village...that's going to be a prescribed area of education. Whether you're studying a ceremony, or you're studying at MIT, there's a certain subset of reality that you're engaging with.”

“And that moment of, ‘Oh! Look at that amazing gray, with the soft colors changing across the street.’ That's part of this, too. That's part of this moment of

learning. And that context will affect the moment in a more spacious—and dare I say, contemplative—way.”

Each participant demonstrated an affinity for one of the four commonplaces. However, that emphasis did not negate their relationship with the other commonplaces; instead, that emphasis influenced the way in which the teacher educators worked with and through the other commonplaces. For each participant, I provide an example of the relationship between a primary and secondary emphasis on the commonplaces. This example reinforces the idea that the participants prefer one commonplace over the other, but it also demonstrates the implications for studying the commonplaces in relationship to one another within the curricular decision-making process as a means for understanding curricular agency.

Mr. White began: “I think context is a really important part which isn’t given enough due. The ability to make changes in your curriculum depends so much on personal transformation, and the transformation of the classroom—the learning environment. So, it’s really important for me. Thinking of context is thinking about something outside of myself and outside of the direct relationship with the students and with the subject.”

“Even the time of year, as you know...What’s the weather like? What’s been going on in the world that the students may be thinking about, that I may be thinking about? Are a lot of people sick? Has there been a recent celebration and everyone’s excited about it? Has there been some issue in the community that is like the elephant in the room?”

“Context is just one of those factors that has to be taken into account. Sometimes it’s almost just a mental note that you make to yourself as a teacher: ‘I’m aware of this; I’m not going to talk about it right now, but if I see something that comes up or an engagement that’s related to that, I’m not going to be afraid to go there.’ So, it might be if we’re discussing a particular subject and that subject has some kind of connection to this elephant in the room—and it seems like other people are noticing this elephant, too—I’ll go there. There are so many factors in the context that influence the learning experience.”

“But it doesn’t always have to be...the context doesn’t always have to be that obvious. Sometimes just sort of opening up this dynamic of teacher/student/subject to the larger context—you know, we’re also interested in what we’re studying, what they have to say, what I have to say—we forget that we could actually take a moment and look outside.” He laughed. “And that moment of, ‘Oh! Look at that amazing gray, with the soft colors changing across the street.’ That’s part of this, too. That’s part of this moment of learning. And that context will affect the moment in a more spacious way.”

For Mr. White, curriculum involved all of the commonplaces, but his primary focus was on the commonplace of teacher, or self, with a secondary focus of context. He saw the curriculum for the teacher educator as involving—almost occurring—within the transformations of the self and the environment in which that self is located. In terms of the context, this was a shifting dynamic. In Mr. White’s experience, the context involved a series of concentric circles—class, building, the campus, and the earth—and depending on which of those circles was the focus had an influence on the curriculum of the class.

Therefore, it was important for teacher educators to have an awareness of the complex element of context within their curricular deliberations, especially in terms of how it related to their awareness of themselves.

Mr. White's curricular decision-making process.

"It's not just me teaching the way that I'm most comfortable teaching, but I'm trying to push my students and push myself into these other domains that I feel are beneficial."

Mr. White and I discussed his approach to an online course in the graduate program looking at five educational principles within a teaching context. My observation fell on the week in which they were working with the principle of awareness. Before discussing the specifics of awareness within the observation itself, Mr. White provided an overview of his approach to planning out, implementing, and reflecting on that week of the course within a curricular cycle.

Overview of his curricular decision-making process.

Mr. White explained: "The name of the course is *Transforming Instruction and Curriculum*. The unusual thing about this particular course is that the students have actually done the contemplative practice that is the basis for this further investigation. Now we are going beyond that personal experience of them to, 'Okay, what does this say about teaching and learning?' 'How can I look at these energies within myself?' We take them one at a time, and, 'How does this enhance my ability to teach?' And, 'How can I change the curriculum, the classroom design, and so forth, to bring out these different energies so that we have a complete, holistic experience in teaching and learning

in the classroom?’ They’re working with themselves, primarily, and they’re also transforming their instruction and curriculum.”

“The basic approach is that, in the beginning of the week, the students need to read all of the materials for that week. In this case, it’s over the weekend—Friday through Sunday. That is, kind of, looking at the content. But they’re also looking at it from their personal perspectives. I work with second-year graduate students in a two-year program, so they’ve learned a lot about a contemplative approach to learning—which is that, when you’re reading content, you’re receiving what the articles and the books and so forth have to offer. And, you may have comments; but, you first allow it to speak to you, and then you bring in your responses and questions. It’s like you’re not interrupting someone when they’re talking to you. You have enough ability to regulate your mind.”

“So, what happens in that first weekend is that they then respond to the material from that second level, which is, ‘What, in here, is really important to me as a teacher?’ Because I’m training teachers. And, in this particular course, I’m training them about these certain dispositions...certain energetic dispositions that we work with in the program in order to better understand the learning styles of those students’ and teachers’ teaching styles.”

Because it was an online course, the “week” actually began over the weekend, allowing the students to interact with the content before presumably returning to whatever teaching contexts they inhabited during the course of the week. This allowed them to work with the content on a theoretical level before looking at how the content

might be applied in practice in their individual teaching contexts. For the week's observation, they were looking at awareness. Consequently, they were reading about awareness as a theoretical concept and working with it as a personal experience before expanding that exploration into their teaching.

Mr. White then described the next portion of the week's class: "The middle part of the week—Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday—a lot of them are back in school. They take this issue that they've developed and see how it plays out. I've taken a more practical bent this year, to ask them to see how it shows up in their work or teaching presence. To go immediately to the application, and specifically the obstacles and glimpses of liberation they experience with this energy. It's really much more experiential in this first section, in terms of their teaching situation."

"And they try to make an effective change in their behavior, or their instruction, or their curriculum in line with these particular teachings. Then they report back about that, how that went. I have criteria for how they post, and what the structure of it is like. I give them discussion guidelines for how awareness could be practiced in the discussion forum. And again, there are criteria for describing not only what happened 'out there,' but describing what happened in their own inner process, while they were doing it. And the way that I have this particular course set up, is that then that's Thursday, and on Friday a short paper is due about what you experienced that week."

Mr. White designed a balanced and pragmatic approach in his curricular deliberations. The learning experience he provided were primarily spaces in which the students were creating and reflecting on their own learning experiences using content as a

sounding board. In addition, they were paying attention to themselves as teachers and as students throughout the process (Palmer, 1997). Mr. White spent a good deal of time reflecting on his curriculum, but his curricular decisions maintained a primary goal of creating spaces in which his students were increasing their awareness of who they were as people and as teachers in both their teaching and the online context. Working with the commonplace of teacher (Schwab, 1969) meant increasing an awareness of oneself formally (Langer, 1989) and intentionally (Bandura, 2006) in a variety of teaching and learning environments.

An example of his curricular decision-making process.

Within the framework of the study, I interviewed participants through a single curricular cycle. Consequently, I conducted interviews before the lesson participants selected for the observation, so that I could understand their curricular decision-making process from start to finish within a specific and concrete educational context. The following was a discussion of the intended student experience of the principle of self-awareness within this course and the insights that occurred for Mr. White and for his students within that week.

Mr. White continued his description of the course: “For example, there’s quite an extensive thread here, and I’ve responded a couple of times. Sometimes this goes on, and I’m not even involved...because I’m making all of these decisions about whether or not to respond, ‘Well, I could say something about that, but it’s a little too picky, or it’s a little too obvious, or maybe somebody else will come along and say something or ask a question.’ When things are going along really well—you know, I’m always the guy who

wants to jump in and talk—but I have to regulate my emotional responses to some of these posts and let them create the community themselves. Because that’s the other thing I really want people to do, is to begin to learn from each other, and with each other, because I think that’s how people learn best anyway, is from their peers. I want to try to create a learning community, especially in the discussion area. And that’s why I give these kind of guidelines for when they’re communicating with each other. That there’s some back-and-forth, and that they’re asking each other questions and responding to each other.”

“However, one of the challenges that we run into all the time with this approach is that people don’t want to take the time to reflect on their own transformative inner-experience of doing these practices. They always want to think about—with the best of intentions—how can I use this in my classroom; how does this benefit the teaching of my students? I’m constantly saying that developing yourself, by developing a greater awareness of yourself and these contemplative capacities, you’re going to be a better teacher, even if you don’t do anything different in your classroom than what you’re already doing in terms of the content.”

The curricular choices that Mr. White made were consistent with the purpose of fostering an environment in which his students could practice self-awareness. Even the hybridity of the program created two different spaces, real world and virtual, for his students to compare and contrast the experience of who they were in each of those two spaces. Within this course, there was also a shift. Students had to be aware of what they

did within the educational contexts in which they were applying the content of the course, and then again, when they returned to the online discussion to discuss those applications.

Mr. White then transitioned into speaking about the curriculum of self-awareness within an online context as a part of the larger hybrid education program. He was discussing the creation of the online discussion, in which the discussion itself became the content of the course. The students, throughout the course of the week, were actually studying the conversation that they were having with one another, and they were simultaneously adding to it. All of this was occurring in the space of continued self-awareness.

Mr. White continued: “It’s an interesting sub-question about the online context, because, without having those three weeks—those 21 straight days—of being together 12 hours a day during the summer, the online piece would not work in the same way at all. First of all, they’ve had that group experience of beginning to learn mindfulness, awareness, compassion, and contemplation practices together. They’ve had their meals together. They’ve stayed together in the same dorm. Everything has created a really strong community, which carries over into the online context. Within the online class, I want to try to create a learning community, especially in the discussion area. And that’s why I give guidelines for when they’re communicating with each other. That there’s some back-and-forth, and that they’re asking each other questions and responding to each other.”

“And there are a lot of good things to say about this type of curriculum. Because in this case, there’s an immediate response within the online course discussion which

changes the content that we have to look at. Because, in a sense, the online discussion becomes our content. Because the students read to it, and think about it, and respond to it. So, it's not just...it's a little different than a classroom discussion where you may be taking notes on what somebody says, but...in an online discussion, they're asked to actually formulate and edit their comments and their responses. Sometimes they write spontaneously. But the best responses, you can tell that they took some time and prepared a thoughtful paragraph. And that becomes content in a way that it never does in a traditional face-to-face classroom. So that becomes fodder for curricular change later on."

"In this case of awareness, it's just a reminder to be aware more often, and, that the subject itself is...somewhat ephemeral. And it's easy to...get lost in...the philosophical world, or a poetic world, or wherever, when you're talking about awareness." He laughed. "So, being aware of that tendency with that subject—wanting to bring the class down to earth again. 'What are practices that we can do that cultivate awareness?' 'What did you do in your class today that was different that helped you?' as almost a prop to generate a more aware condition for yourself while you're teaching. That kind of emphasis, of balance. Or if I'm teaching another subject that is much more content-oriented, then stressing the...the more spacious ways of engaging with that."

Mr. White designed this course to be useful for his students as they took it. That idea of useful meant practical for his students in terms of the value of the content itself, the timing of the study of that content, and most importantly, the curricular design of the course itself that facilitated the interaction between the students and the content. It was

looking at a simple set of five educational principles—awareness being the principle in this case—understanding the concept(s), applying it in their educational contexts, and reflecting on that application, all within the span of a week. None of which sounded like it involved awareness of the self; however, as Mr. White indicated, that was the most important element of the week, the course, and the program itself. Mr. White’s curriculum created a space for the practice of self-awareness. Consequently, an increase in this self-awareness transformed what happens in the classroom, regardless of whether or not a teacher’s techniques or strategies changed.

Reflection on his curricular decision-making process.

Mr. White expressed a concern that, in part, inspired the study: “Your questions... cause me to reflect on things and practices and dynamics that I am usually so involved with, and so—at this point in my career—intuitive with, that, I don’t give it a second thought.” Even the most mindful of teacher educators could be either so intuitive or so busy, that they did not reflect on their curricular decision-making process as part of the curricular cycle. That is to say, they were unaware of the multitude of curricular decisions they were making, so they were not explicitly teaching their students about the curricular decision-making process itself. This did not mean that these teacher educators were making poor curricular decisions, but it did imply that they may not have been explicitly teaching their students how to make good curricular decisions. In that sense, this opportunity to reflect on his curricular cycle was beneficial for both Mr. White and myself.

Mr. White reflected on the overall experience of participating in the study: “Your questions cause me to reflect on it in an analytic way. So what was kind of intuitive, you’re asking me to draw it out, and I’m seeing, ‘Oh! It looks like that!’ You’re asking me to step outside of it. And, to look at it from a broader, more removed, perspective. And that’s very different. It causes me to reflect on things and practices and dynamics that I am usually so involved with, and so—at this point in my career—intuitive with, that, I don’t give it a second thought in the way that your questions are demanding that I do. But it’s similar in that I’m just telling you what I actually do.”

He then reflected specifically on his curricular decision-making process: “There’s always this balance in my mind between, ‘What is the material I want to present?’ and, ‘Who are these people I’m presenting it to?’ I don’t want to spoon-feed them something so obvious that they’re not challenged. On the other hand, I don’t want to make it so alien that they don’t feel like they’re part of the curriculum. Using that same dynamic, to me it’s essential that the students have a personal connection with whatever it is that we’re studying. If I’m flexible in how I construct the curriculum in the moment with the students in such a way as to engage them with that material, then hopefully, it has a more meaningful, a more personally meaningful outcome for them.”

“Consequently, I have a lot of confidence in people, so I tend to work with what they present. It’s this whole idea of saying, ‘Read this material, and what is meaningful to you?’ That’s what I want students to work with. I trust them to do that because I know that they want to get something out of this. I’m not going to tell them, ‘This is what you need to focus on.’ I’ll give them a subject, I’ll give them material, and then I

ask, ‘Okay, what’s up for you?’ That’s my trust in people making their own journey out of the curriculum we design.”

At first glance, Mr. White seemed to be talking about the content and the students. Upon closer analysis, however, it was clear that he was talking about both commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) through his primary emphasis of the commonplace of the teacher, or self. This was a subtle but very important distinction. His curriculum and instruction were both teacher-centered. In other words, he viewed the teaching and the learning through the teacher’s experience. As demonstrated, this was not a negative perspective. As the teacher, Mr. White had a lot of curricular agency himself. Compare this with his agency in the other commonplaces of content, context, and students, in which he had an increasing lack of curricular agency. Mr. White also recognized the importance of the relationships among the commonplaces (Schwab, 1971; Miller, 2007) within his curricular deliberation and utilized his agency from an emphasis on teacher to facilitate and strengthen those relationships, as was demonstrated from his discussion of the role of the commonplace of students within his curricular decision-making process.

Mr. White continued: “We, teachers, learn from our students as well. I’m always—in the online discussions—I’m always surprised by where the students go. What part of the reading materials and their own experiences that they choose to discuss to further that class discussion. So...so a lot of times I’ll find myself contemplating what they’ve written and responding to it...in a way that is a little bit different than I would’ve previously thought about it. That’s where it comes in as a curricular decision. Sometimes I’ll take my response—I’ll take their post and my response—and I’ll copy

those and include them in the class the next year. And I'll say to myself as I'm redoing next year's lecture, 'Here's a different thing altogether.' It came from a student, but it also elicited something in me that might be worth integrating into this whole body of knowledge. So, there's a kind of delayed reaction on that, because the whole online experience is a kind of a delayed reaction anyway."

"In the same way, a lot of times, changes to our classes and our program come out of contemplative student debates that occur during our summer sessions. We listen to what students have to say about their learning experiences and change the way we try to facilitate those experiences. Or, even if we don't change, hearing what their concerns are allows us to explain why we do it the way we do it in response to what their concerns are."

"The curricular decision-making process and the teaching go hand-in-hand. If I decide to approach a topic from a particular perspective, that will influence the way I present it, or the way I engage. I think that because the way I teach involves the presence of the students, the participation of the students, that the curricular decision-making process is influenced by my interaction with the students. So, the decision-making process and the interaction with the students happen organically in the process. And that experience will affect how I do it in the future. So the next year, when I'm teaching that course, that experience in the classroom will probably alter the curricular decision-making process in the preparation for the next time I teach."

Through his emphasis on the commonplace of teacher (Schwab, 1969), Mr. White made the curricular choice to learn from his students and to allow that learning to

influence the curriculum. This may seem commonsensical, but in fact it was a very advanced perspective in curricular deliberation. By allowing the experience of the student to influence future curricula, Mr. White was paradoxically giving up some of his curricular agency to his students while maintaining his curricular agency. In other words, he could make decisions based solely off of his understanding of the learning experience (and in paradoxical fact, that was exactly what he was doing), but he instead was allowing the students' experiences of the learning to inform his curricular decisions both in the present and future, spiraled curricula (Bruner, 1977). As Mr. White said, because it was an online course and the conversations became the curriculum of the learning experience. This was possible because all of the commonplaces were interconnected (Schwab, 1971; Miller, 2007).

Mr. White explained: "All these elements that we've been talking about—the curriculum, instruction, relationships, context, etc.—they're not really separate from each other. They're not seen as isolated from each other. We can see them as separate ingredients in the same way that you make a dish—you add this and this and this... And sometimes you're paying more attention to these elements than other elements...there may be different dishes on the table, and you're eating them at different times, but it's still one meal. And the meal takes place in an environment. A meal is more than just the food on the table."

"And this takes time in teacher education. This takes time. Because you have to learn the pieces. If you get too into how they relate to each other, then you don't really have the skills or the knowledge to ensure that those relationships work. But, I think

from the beginning, just to have an awareness of that dynamic, and to begin to explore it a little bit at a time. So that when you get to the point that you're actually putting out that entire meal in the dining room, that there's not that shock of, 'Oh, there's a dining room here!'"

Mr. White's metaphor was appropriate for a discussion of the commonplaces, but it was also incredibly complicated. An individual commonplace was as complex as an individual dish in a meal, made up of separate ingredients brought together in the right proportions and sequence. However, those commonplaces also came together to form an entire meal—the learning experience. Therefore, there were not only very important relationships among the variables of the elements of the individual commonplaces, but those commonplaces then came together to form larger, more complex and dynamic relationships as elements of the learning experience. Moreover, that learning experience took place in a larger context that was increasingly complex and dynamic. His response to this potentially overwhelming situation was to be aware. The more awareness he had, the more capable he would be of properly creating and/or navigating this dynamic situation. That awareness became his agency.

Conclusion.

“We're supposed to behave like learning machines, rather than human beings. So, how to bring it back to its roots of knowing that are essentially human and based on our natural capacities, just like young children learn.”

For Mr. White, curriculum was radical humanism. According to him, education was always happening because living and teaching were not disconnected, nor were

living and learning. Within his curricular deliberation then, Mr. White emphasized the commonplace of teacher (Schwab, 1969) as a human being (Palmer, 1997).

Consequently, education was as much for the teacher as the student, and it involved awareness of the interconnectedness of humanity (Miller, 2007) and the educational experience as a fundamentally human process: “There’s a balance of working with emotion as a teacher—knowing how to regulate it, but also how to value it...how to use it as a form of communication—so there are *skills* around these contemplative dimensions, to these human dimensions of being a teacher. It doesn’t necessarily have to be contemplative dimensions. But these *human qualities* need to have discipline in the best sense of the word, so that you can exercise them effectively.” For Mr. White, awareness as agency involved the natural capacity of all human beings to be more aware of who they are and the interconnectedness of the present moment. However, it also involved the practices by which both teacher and student alike continue to cultivate that natural capacity.

Similar to the other participants, Mr. White had a positive learning experience that informed his perspective on curriculum and instruction. He, like the others, suggested that his approach to curricular deliberation was one among many, and one designed to help his students to discover their own unique ways to develop and pay attention to their curricular decision-making processes. Mr. White, as with the previous participants, understood the ongoing nature of the curricular decision-making process; it did not begin and end with a lesson plan, but continued through the learning experience and into the next curricular cycle as a form of spiraled curriculum (Bruner, 1977). All of the

participants acknowledged the purpose of education to be a happy and self-realized individual who is consequently a beneficial member of society. Finally, Mr. White and the other teacher educators of this study used their curricular agency to increase the curricular agency of their students. As Mr. White concluded: “This approach encourages students to bring in more of *themselves* and not to try to be perfect little mindful, compassionate teachers...to work with what they’ve got.”

Four Manifestations of Curricular Agency

An analysis of the curricular deliberations of these four teacher educators led to a focus on the concept of curricular agency as one possible solution, among others, to the problem of teacher burnout (Ingersoll, 2012). This focus necessitated an attempt to characterize and contextualize the idea of curricular agency within curricular theory specifically, and the academy generally. Bandura’s theories of self-efficacy (1995) and human agency (2006) are foundational and presented, in summary, proceeding this section. Cornbleth’s concept of curriculum-in-use (1985), Thornton’s characterization of curricular-instructional gatekeepers (1991), Martin-Kniep and Uhrmacher’s discussion of teachers as curriculum developers (1992), and Rogers Stanton poignant presentation of the curricular Indian Agent (2014) are all interesting tangents to this particular conceptualization of curricular agency; however, the thematic results of the unique manifestations of curricular agency that arose from the curricular contemplations of the participants in this study provide the most extensive and nuanced data for operationalizing curricular agency.

The curricular agency of Dr. Grey: Observation of apprenticeship.

“I can’t imagine a moment where I would be a teacher but I wouldn’t be a curriculum maker.”

Even someone established in the field can feel helpless when faced with the vast scope of the educational institution of the United States. If a doctor of philosophy—who is also a teacher educator and active scholar—feels powerless, how much more so a high school teacher? Agency is a critical aspect of teaching and learning that is both beneficial and sustainable. My conversation with Dr. Grey turned from the curricular decision-making process to the presence of curricular agency within that process. Consequently, I asked, “Why do you worry about teacher preparation?”

“Well I worry because when I think about the times when I feel like I’m the best teacher, those are the times that are not generally included in current teacher preparation. I sort of knew that was there, but then I ask myself what I can do about it. That’s me being tired of fighting the current education machine. I don’t even know what else I can do. All I can do is control my class, and even *that’s* going away.”

“It’s so political, and there’s so much pressure that we’ve totally forgotten, in some ways, what it means to just focus on what it means to be a teacher. It doesn’t mean that you know what the standards are. That’s a technical skill. That doesn’t have anything to do with teaching. It does eventually translate into helping you to be a better teacher, but knowing classroom management is not knowing how to teach. So that’s where we’re at right now: Classroom management and can you implement curriculum that somebody else writes? If you can, then we’re going to give you a license.”

“So part of it is that I’m so frustrated with the culture at my institution around teacher education. And I’m so frustrated with the rhetoric *about* teacher education. Sometimes I don’t push as hard as I could...or should. I’m tired. I realize now that my tiredness is around the schooling aspect of it and the institutional aspect of it. But the teaching aspects are stronger than ever. So, the question I have to ask myself is, ‘What am I going to do about that?’ You know, ‘What am I willing to do?’”

It was evident that Dr. Grey feels helpless, but was she, really? What was so empowering about reflecting on the curricular decision-making process was its accurate portrayal of what was actually occurring within a curricular cycle. Sometimes educators feel like they are doing well; sometimes educators feel like they are doing nothing right; but what is really happening? This contemplative process helped educators—in this case, teacher educators specifically—determine, with greater accuracy, what was actually occurring within a curricular cycle. The majority of evidence collected from the interviews and observation demonstrated the exceptional amount of curricular agency Dr. Grey derived from her ability to continuously make curricular choices before, during, and after instruction. Why did she feel otherwise?

She provided further disconfirming data in her critique of the evaluation process at her present institution: “People look at me like I am crazy. When I say that writing an objective on the board is the worst thing you can do for education, it’s true educational blasphemy. And I was critiqued my first year at this institution because I didn’t have objectives. And I said, ‘Oh, I have very clear aims. I can tell you exactly what they are, and my students can tell you exactly what they are. But I will not write behavioral

objectives because I philosophically object to that.’ And she said, ‘Okay,’ and proceeded to write in my evaluation, ‘Failure to provide objectives.’ I wrote a whole rejoinder, as I’m sure you can imagine, citing everyone I could think of and articulating that just because I don’t write objectives doesn’t mean I don’t have clear goals.”

Despite feeling like she had no control over what was occurring to her—and to others—within the education system, Dr. Grey repeatedly demonstrated that she had tremendous agency derived from the curricular choices she made. By taking a philosophical stand during the evaluative process, Dr. Grey turned her evaluation into curriculum for her evaluator. It was not yet clear whether or not her “lesson” was a success, but what was clear was that Dr. Grey consistently had the ability to choose what she did, how she did it, when she did it, and the opportunity to explain why she did it that way, whenever she was making curricular decisions—and she was always making curricular decisions.

Curricular choice is curricular agency, as Dr. Grey indicated: “Any definition of curriculum that displaces or marginalizes people who could otherwise create curriculum—for example, if my definition of curriculum is the official district curriculum, and nothing else counts as curriculum, so nothing else matters, then it marginalizes the teacher’s role in creating the curriculum—so to define curriculum in a way that excludes people is a problem.” According to Dr. Grey, the most rewarding curricular choices she made as a teacher educator were the ones where she passed that agency on to her students. Not coincidentally, the joy she experienced as a student of Mrs. Lowell paralleled that same curricular choice. The intrinsic quality of that reward

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) was an important element in providing teachers and students alike with that sense of agency. Finally, it was perhaps most significant to recognize that Dr. Grey's use of her own agency to pass that agency on to her students was also an intrinsically rewarding learning (and teaching) experience for the students themselves.

Conclusion.

Dr. Grey's reflections throughout the contemplation of her curricular cycle demonstrated all four core properties of Bandura's human agency (2006). She had aims and goals that were, for her, substantially different than learning objectives. As an example of forethought, she considered that much of what she does as a good teacher is not included in what occurs in teacher education, demonstrating an explicit connection between future outcomes being influenced by present choices. Pervasive in her teaching was a strong sense of self-reactiveness. That is, despite her meticulous and thoughtful planning, the most thorough of intended curricula could be immediately replaced with a more aligned operational curriculum. Finally, Dr. Grey continuously engaged in metacognitive evaluation, seeing her work in connection to itself as well as to the ever-broader circles of the educational institution of the United States. Dr. Grey clearly possessed curricular agency, but what form did it take?

Throughout my work with Dr. Grey, she referenced "the apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975; Borg, 2004). In addition, Dr. Grey demonstrated the most affinity for the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969). As a result, agency, for Dr. Grey, was recognizing that she was constantly making curricular decisions. Consequently, she was always in control of the operational curriculum. She used that

agency to create learning experiences in which her students apprentice as teachers under her observation.

The curricular agency of Dr. Rockwell: Ideation.

“I think the way I present things is still my own art, regardless of whether it has been written for me, or whether I’m coming up with it entirely on my own.”

One way of articulating a concept—particularly a new concept—is to explore the contrasting qualities of what it is and is not. Dr. Rockwell’s life experiences were more illustrative than my commentaries could ever be. Below she vividly describes an early childhood experience which clearly affected her and her teaching to this day. It provides a working example of what ideation is not, but also of what it is for her, and it relates to Dr. Rockwell’s curricular agency.

Dr. Rockwell began: “I had a second grade teacher, whose name was Weeda Campbell, I can tell you exactly what her name was—I’m sure you’re not going to put that in there—she’s long gone but... We did not have elementary art; I didn’t take art until high school. But, she was having all the students do a sunset/windmill/silhouette picture every year and continued to have all of her students do it every year, including my brothers, who are five and seventeen years younger than I am! They did the same sunset/windmill/silhouette painting. She did this every single year. And I think she was praised for it. She must have been, because that’s why she kept doing it. So every year, there are these sunsets with these windmills that are hanging up on her wall. Well, I happened to have seen the sunset the night before we were doing this, and the sunset had purple, and it had dark blue...”

I interrupted because of her clarity in describing the colors of the sunset: “This is only second grade?”

Dr. Rockwell continued: “Yes. And it had splotches of stars. So I painted my sunset the way I saw the sunset...which she picked up and held up and belittled to everybody in the class: about not following directions, and this is not what she said to do, and the sunset had to be yellow and orange, and the sunset did not have purple, and all of this. And of course, I was horribly embarrassed. And she tore my sunset up and threw it away. So I made a sunset the way she wanted her sunset, and then she hung it up on the wall. But I remember that very clearly. And so that’s probably why I never liked her.”

Ms. Weeda is an example of the art teacher who was not teaching art. And what was the experience for her students? She asked students to replicate nature but to do so inaccurately. The student who attempted to do so accurately was publicly criticized by her teacher in front of her peers. The implications were presumably vast and haunting. Still, the point of the vignette is about art education. The teaching of art through replication was not the same as the replication of the art of teaching. According to Dr. Rockwell, the purpose of art education was to help students see their own unique artistry, and to see that unique art in everyone else as well. Ironically, as a young student, Dr. Rockwell was doing exactly what was asked of her: replicating the sunset. She was criticized for it. This experience helped Dr. Rockwell recognize art education as a curricular decision-making process in which ideation—the creation of one’s own ideas—became the agency of teacher educator, teacher, and student alike. The agency manifested from the fact that each person has the capability (and course requirement) to

engage in a process by which he or she sees the individual artistry of themselves and of others. We continued with my next question: “How would you characterize what you do, personally, as a teacher educator?”

Dr. Rockwell explained: “Teaching for artistic behavior, to be able to become an artist; how do you actually teach to think like an artist, and be like an artist? Those processes, those creative processes, can transfer to other areas in everything, really, in life, but particularly in school. Everybody has some sort of artistic ability. It may not be drawing; it might be just being able to see art in everyday living. It might be collecting something. It might be the way that you interact with other people...Everybody can identify the artistic nature of themselves. I think it makes life better.”

“In all of my classes, I focus so hard on having my students identify what is their philosophy of education. Because, otherwise, you can’t truly teach well unless you really know, I think, why you are doing it. In my case, every person can be an artist because every person is an artist, and it’s helping them find what that happens to be for them. As I said, I’m a big believer in the *Studio Habits of the Mind*, and *Teaching for Artistic Behavior*. Because I know that, that is how I look at those different types of curricula that relate to teach them. But I also am aware that there are other people who think differently in terms of: Art is perhaps just a set of skills that you need to learn and a list of elements and principles. We’re moving away from that, but that is the point of view of some people. Because I know what I believe and I teach, I’m also conscientious about choosing things that also counter my particular points of view to give a bigger picture of art education to the student.”

Dr. Rockwell, like Dr. Grey, recognized the existence of multiple curricular perspectives. This is meaningful for two reasons. First, it demonstrated to teacher educators, teachers, and students that there is no one correct answer or view. Not of art, not of art education, and not of education. Second, it was very important to recognize one's own perspective to be able to then tell the difference between one's perspective and the perspectives of others. Good art will look differently to different people. Art, generally, will look different to different people. Perhaps most importantly, art education could now look differently to different people.

Conclusion.

Dr. Rockwell, like Dr. Grey, demonstrated all four properties of human agency (Bandura, 2006). Even in her lesson planning, Dr. Rockwell could provide a rationale for why she chose to create individual meetings instead of a traditional class. In terms of forethought, she failed a student, knowing that if she passed him, he would have quit teaching, and he called to express his gratitude as he is still teaching today because of her. Not only did Dr. Rockwell create learning experiences in the individual meetings simultaneously based on students' needs, she also modified future curricula based on the results of those experiences; for example, the "new" self-identity unit. Lastly, Dr. Rockwell was continuously reflecting on her curricular choices, articulating that the only difference between her internal process and our external process was that she was having the same dialogue (she has with herself) out loud with me. Dr. Rockwell exhibited the four properties of agency and did so in a way that was unique to who she is as a teacher educator.

For Dr. Rockwell, the commonplace of student (Schwab, 1969) was paramount, in part because of her own sensitivity to being a student—an art student, in particular—who was not provided the opportunity to think (and teach) like an artist. Dr. Rockwell identified with ideation as her form of agency, the idea that she could be creative throughout her curricular decision-making process. She then used her agency, not to tell students how to ideate but how to discover their own individual processes of how to ideate.

The curricular agency of Dr. Douglas: Situated knowledge.

“It’s learning self-awareness; it’s valuing our own experience; it’s worthwhile noticing what we’re thinking and feeling; and it gives them a certain kind of authority. Because the authorities aren’t just the authors we read. Students actually know their experience probably better than anybody.”

Dr. Douglas evolved in understanding his role as a teacher educator. At the beginning of his teaching career, he believed it was his responsibility to recreate the context of his most rewarding personal learning experiences for his students. He now realized it is his role to understand the actual context of the classroom in the present moment, to work with and from that context, and to teach his students to do the same. This was what Dr. Douglas referred to as situated knowledge. That is, learning is the collaborative construction of knowledge within the parameters of the given context of a present moment. Dr. Douglas maintained his primary lens, not to his frustration, but to his relief. This shift in perspective, however, allowed him to experience significantly less frustration in his work with the context, and it also allowed his students to benefit from

his expertise in the same realm. He was no longer downloading context, so he could now recognize when his students were doing so and teach them to change as well. This was his discovered and shared curricular agency of situated knowledge. It was the difference between a downloaded curriculum and facilitating an emergent curriculum through his curricular decision-making process.

Dr. Douglas explained: “So this term—this is probably the word I use most habitually now for this kind of automatic learning—is ‘downloading.’ So the students were downloading. They’re essentially going into their previous bank account to say that this is something I already know. So downloading is, in a sense, dis-engaged, the opposite of engaged. Downloading is, ‘I’m just seeing my projected screen.’ Like what I was describing is, ‘I came out of grad school, and I just kind of downloaded my positive memory of grad school, but it didn’t fit!’”

Dr. Douglas then provided his understanding of the opposite of disengagement: “I think by ‘engaged,’ I probably mean that things emerged. This was something that I hadn’t thought of beforehand, and they hadn’t thought of beforehand...Both synthesizing and in the moment realizing we’re talking about reflecting on our own position: gender, race, and class—there’s a whole bunch of stuff there—first-person inquiry—we’re talking about including that but not just being indulgent. We’re talking about the journey that the researcher makes doing research.”

This insight, that situated knowledge is process-oriented and collaborative, led him to reflect on the role of the students within his classroom. Dr. Douglas explained: “Leading can happen anywhere in the room; you could be at the back of the room, but if

you're brave enough to be vulnerable, you're leading at that moment. So then that means that in the classroom—and this is what's in the book that I've just finished that uses a lot of classroom examples of just what you described—almost like facilitating learning rather than being the teacher. Rather than pouring the content into the students, like downloading. What kind of environments can we create in which students teach themselves, in which they learn?"

Dr. Douglas realized his curricular agency through his natural affinity for the commonplace of context (Schwab, 1969). In his earlier years of teaching, a range of issues and concerns frustrated Dr. Douglas. First, he was unable replicate the context of a great classroom based on his experiences at Stanford. Second, his students did not provide a context that aligned with his experience of what a classroom context should be. As a result, he was frustrated with students, students were frustrated with him, and those elements hindered the teaching and learning processes. As Dr. Douglas passed through countless additional curricular cycles, he came to realize his curricular frustrations could be transformed into his curricular agency. Because of his affinity for and expertise in working with the commonplace of context, Dr. Douglas could create meaningful learning experiences by spontaneously adapting to the immediate context of the actual classroom learning environment rather than his own projections. By understanding the living contexts of his individual students within the collaborative context of his classroom, Dr. Douglas could make curricular decisions to ensure that his instruction was much more aligned with the context of the classroom in that moment. The teaching and learning

began to manifest for and from the commonplace of context. This was what Dr. Douglas referred to as situated knowledge.

His students' learning depended upon his understanding of the qualities of the present classroom context. However, once he made this shift in perspective, he also realized that he could use that understanding to enhance his curriculum by teaching from those qualities. This provided Dr. Douglas with an authentic sense of curricular agency. In addition, he noticed the collaborative nature of the commonplace of context, and he saw a primary aim in his teaching was to pass on the ability to articulate and utilize context as a means of learning to his students. Once again, as with Dr. Grey and Dr. Rockwell, Dr. Douglas was able to use his own curricular agency as a means for passing that curricular agency on to his students. Presumably, they would one day do the same, and the lineage of curricular agency would continue.

Conclusion.

Dr. Douglas, of course, also demonstrated the four core properties of human agency laid out by Bandura (2006). Ironically, the fact that the actual classroom context never aligned with the idealized version he projected onto his classes, demonstrated his intentionality. Second, in viewing the arc of his own teaching career, he had the forethought to continuously change his present curricular choices in order to create a more aligned teaching and learning context for his students and for himself. These changes were both short and long-term changes, demonstrating self-reactiveness in addition to forethought. Finally, Dr. Douglas had the realization that there was already a

context to work with, and that he was an expert at doing so. This metacognitive evaluation created a strong sense of curricular agency for Dr. Douglas.

He defined this agency as situated knowledge. That is, he used his understanding of the present moment in the learning experience to dictate his curricular decisions. His agency was paying attention to the situation and making curricular decisions in the present moment to guide and facilitate appropriate learning experiences for his students. He used his agency to create these learning experiences in which students also learn to make choices based on their more accurate understanding and articulation of their contexts in any given moment.

The curricular agency of Mr. White: Self-awareness.

“Teaching sort of shifts from content to learning from the exchange, how to facilitate the exchange better.”

“You want to act swiftly when you have to opportunity to—a teachable moment—but if you act without awareness, you could cause more harm than good.”

It was while reflecting on his curricular decision-making process that Mr. White’s specific version of curricular agency manifested strongly enough for articulation. Through the commonplace of the teacher (Schwab, 1969), or the self, Mr. White viewed the teaching and learning process as an opportunity for creating environments for discovering and enhancing self-awareness. This was a reaction to his own formal education. Who he is as a human being had always been a focus in his life—both in and out of school—consequently, he emphasized the element of the human teacher as a primary element of the educational process. Awareness was the curricular agency by

which Mr. White understood the benefits of emphasizing humanity within education (Palmer, 1997), the process by which to do so (Langer, 1989), and the importance of the connections (Miller, 2007) among the commonplaces.

First, Mr. White reflected on his more traditional teacher education experience: “When I was trained to be a teacher, I was trained how to do things well, how to do things effectively. To the extent that who I was as a person affected that was either a problem, or, maybe if you were really good at it, it could enhance it a little bit. But, there was nothing about who you were. It was, ‘Here’s how you teach this; here’s how you plan a lesson, here’s how you manage a classroom, blah blah blah...’”

Mr. White—as a student, teacher, and teacher educator—had always been a human being. In his reflection, he was clearly frustrated with how his humanity was addressed (or not) throughout his formal education. As a reaction, Mr. White made awareness, self-awareness as a human and an educator, a focus of his curricular deliberations. He explained: “The notion is that awareness is a natural thing, and we just have to cultivate it. We do have the capacity for awareness, just like we have the capacity for learning to speak. And if the conditions are right, then we’re able to develop those capacities. But, as with any capacity, there are going to be ways that we deceive ourselves and think that we’re actually developing a capacity, when it’s more like we’re developing this capacity in order to reify ourselves, in order to feel comfortable about the way we do things rather than to be effective.”

Mr. White continued: “However, your true experience can be uncomfortable. And how to take what you’re experiencing in those uncomfortable moments and use

contemplative practice on the spot. ‘Let me take a breath, relax, let that go, and open up to the situation as it is.’ So that there’s a contemplative practice that you’re doing while you’re teaching, to develop awareness. That’s what it’s about.”

Mr. White’s description of awareness demonstrated that it had two characterizations. First, awareness is a natural capacity, meaning it is present in all human beings. Because it is present in all human beings, Mr. White indicated that it is possible to develop that capacity in students through the facilitation of learning experiences designed to enhance that awareness. Second, awareness can also be a practice. In other words, it can be an intentional activity of and for the teacher which enhances that awareness within any given teaching and learning experience. Mr. White then explained what that looks like in greater detail as well as the potential benefits for students.

Mr. White continued: “The idea is that if you have a teacher who is fully engaged with what they’re doing and aware of how their mind is engaging with what they’re doing, how they’re emotions are involved, how their body feels when they’re engaged, then they’re much more present as a teacher. They’re much more available to personalize the lesson plan as it’s unfolding in the class. They can better sense whether the students aren’t getting it; they can do that from a variety of modalities. And, they have the courage and skills to know how to engage those students or that student in ways that allow the students to access the material now and feel like they’re included in this learning community...that there’s a sense of trust that’s built.”

Mr. White explained how students experienced this sense of trust: “So there’s not this teacher-content-student thing. It’s more like the students, the content, and the teacher—from the teacher’s point of view—are all the same thing that’s happening. And that makes it much more accessible. Because the students feel like they’re being heard, like they’re a part of the class. Even if they’re being challenged, or questioned, or disciplined, there’s that lack of separation that Parker Palmer talks about...that the teacher is not divided from what they’re doing. But that they are actually relating to it, even if they don’t like what they’re doing!”

Mr. White described the awareness as an understanding of one’s body and one’s emotions, but it was also an understanding of the collective feeling of the students as well as the context in which everything is occurring. The accuracy of the understanding leads a teacher to act more appropriately within the present moment, so awareness provides the agency for the teacher to do what is most beneficial in and for a complex and dynamic learning experience. Awareness also provided the teacher with a heightened sense of the interconnectedness of the commonplaces within a given teaching and learning experience. Consequently, that experience was passed onto the students, who felt more connected to the learning experience themselves, creating a community that makes the learning experience that much more accessible to students. The agency of awareness for the teacher educator led to a greater sense of connection. This connection, and presumably the awareness that preceded it, then became a similar experience for the students as well.

Conclusion.

Mr. White, as with the other three participants, demonstrated evidence of the four core properties of human agency as depicted by Bandura (2006). His class design, his interactions with students, the hybridity of the teacher education program—these all serve as examples of intentionality. His discussion of adapting or explaining curricular choices to students based on their own reflective seminars about the curriculum were manifestations of his pervasive forethought, in which future outcomes influence present curricular choices. His discussion of allowing students' online discussions as the curriculum of the course were evidence of the creation and modification required of self-reactiveness, the third core property of human agency. Self-awareness was, itself, a metacognitive evaluation of one's self, one's curricular choices, and how both influenced and were influenced by one another.

Consequently, Mr. White identified self-awareness as his curricular agency. His understanding of who he is and how he is feeling—and separating that out from his understanding of the other variables in a teaching and learning experience—informed his curricular decisions. He used that agency, as do the others, to create learning experiences in which his students were constantly practicing self-awareness as students, as aspiring teachers, and as human beings.

Operationalizing Curricular Agency

The symbolic ability to comprehend, predict, and alter the course of events confers considerable functional advantages –Albert Bandura (2006)

Curricular agency derives from a conceptual process involving the intentional contemplation of the curricular decision-making process, a type of “anticipatory self-

guidance” (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). The process itself is both reflective and creative, analyzing previous curricular choices in order to envision new curricular choices within learning experiences that do not yet exist. It is a part of the teacher educator’s cyclical process of teaching and learning from teaching.

Teachers (even as students) first have classroom interactions and interpretations of them in order to cognitively conceptualize and empathetically deliberate among the different qualities within their own minds. Before, during, and after that deliberation, teachers are constantly making curricular decisions as they utilize their curricular agency to facilitate meaningful learning experiences for students: “Through cognitive representation, visualized futures are brought into the present as current guides and motivators of behavior” (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). Consequently, those curricular choices provide yet another learning experience, but one that is now more intentional. Using Schwab’s (1969) commonplaces in the conceptualization of curriculum as a process allows the teacher to record, interpret, and evaluate the learning experience by comparing the ways in which the hypothesized qualities of that learning experience did or did not align with the actual qualities of the aspects they represented. This contemplation informs future internal curricular deliberations, and the cycle of the curricular decision-making process continues with ever-increasing accuracy.

This approach of curricular contemplation demonstrates teachers possess significant control over the curriculum in terms of its creation, implementation, evaluation, and revision. The pragmatic need for such a tool in education generally and teacher education specifically is well-articulated in a study on curricular enactment.

Macintyre Latta, Handson, Ragoonaden, Briggs, & Middleton (2017) poignantly demonstrate the pragmatic importance of curricular agency and are worth quoting at length:

When educators insisted on seeking certainties within learning processes and products, their focus tended to be more oriented toward external attention. It is this pull toward certainties that suppresses trust in the curricular agency to be ascertained through internal attention. Educators' external curricular attention further reduces awareness of the complexities through limiting opportunities for learning interactions and debates, thus restricting and thwarting differences. Negotiating differences of all kinds are, then, less familiar and less trusted as being productive within curricular enactment. Educators' external curricular attention curtails what has been encountered and thus constrains what curricular possibilities can be envisioned (pgs. 200-201).

External curricular attention is necessary; however, a focus on external rather than internal curricular attention contributes to a lack of agency and an increase in the potential for teacher burnout. Essentially, teachers are either liberated or oppressed by their own curricular deliberation. This experience is reinforced and generalized by Bandura (2006) in his discussion of human agency:

People of low efficacy are easily convinced of the futility of effort in the face of difficulties. They quickly give up trying. Those of high efficacy view impediments as surmountable by improvement of self-regulatory skills and perseverant effort. They stay the course in the face of difficulties and remain resilient to adversity (p. 171).

Bandura's explanation describes both an origin and a possible solution to teacher burnout.

When people feel they have the ability to influence the events of their own lives, they are much more beneficial to themselves and to society as a whole. When people feel that they must passively accept the events of their own lives, it is paralyzing. This connection is demonstrated among educators specifically and people generally. Bandura

(2006) lists the benefits of the connection when agency (self-efficacy) is realized:

“Moreover, efficacy beliefs affect the quality of emotional life and vulnerability to stress and depression...Efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to level of motivation, emotional well-being, and performance accomplishments” (Bandura, 2006, p. 171).

These benefits are available to educators because they are available to people.

Ultimately, curricular agency provides an understanding that gives students more control of their own learning experiences. With curricular agency, what we are learning as teachers is also what we are teaching to students—how to be aware of the dynamic nature of curriculum in all educational experiences with the intention of continually refining that same curriculum. Just as teachers are responsible for the curriculum delivered, students are responsible for the curriculum received. Consequently, students see how to learn by learning how to see. This becomes an ongoing process of qualitative inquiry. Teachers are no longer telling students (and themselves) what the world is, they are asking. They are showing students how to ask as well. Curricular agency demonstrates that, although people are not in control of the world, we are in control of how we think about it. And the results, according to Bandura (2006): “Those of high self-efficacy influence the course of their occupational self-development, are receptive to innovations, and make their life work more productive and satisfying by restructuring their occupational roles and the processes by which their work is performed” (p. 176). The teachers and students who are people outside of their roles in the classroom become more content and beneficial members of society.

Chapter Four Summary

In this chapter, I offered detailed descriptions of the participating teacher educators within the framework of Schwab's (1971) commonplaces. The commonplaces include teacher, student, content, and *milieu* (or context). In my interpretation, each of the four participants favored a specific commonplace over the other three. Moreover, the commonplace they most favored always colored their view of the other commonplaces. All four commonplaces were present in all four participants' curricular orientations, but this inclination to emphasize a single commonplace over the others in their curricular deliberations manifested as a significant insight of the study, and this understanding informed my presentation of the data.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEMATICS AND CURRICULAR AGENCY

Recalling the idea of the chalkboard from chapter one, this study is pragmatic in both the theoretical and literal sense. Ermeling (2015) noted the importance of the chalkboard for providing a narrative of a lesson, listing key principles, and facilitating collaboration between teachers and students. Drawing upon Eisner (1991) and Schwab (1971), creating a space for teacher educators to have a parallel experience in which the practical technology of curriculum is used to transform one's own teaching experience into a learning experience. Beyond reflection (Schön, 1987), the structured contemplation of a cycle of one's curricular deliberations leads to the recognition of one's curricular agency as a specific manifestation of human agency (Bandura, 2006), as a teacher-centered response to the overwhelming nature of the current state of the educational profession in the United States. Participants demonstrated the fact that educators are agents in and of their own curriculum, their own instruction, and the learning experiences they created for their students. This articulation provides the model and the means for future classroom teachers, and hopefully their students as well, to discover their own agency.

Teachers in the current U.S. educational system will always maintain control over at least two integral aspects of the educational process—their perspective and their curricular choices. That is, teachers cannot control the U.S. institution of education in

which they teach, but they are always in control of how they operate within it. In the same way, teachers cannot control the curriculum provided to them, but they are always in control of the curriculum they provide to their students. And more importantly, the process by which that occurs. To view curriculum as both a process and a product—as opposed to solely a product—creates an empowering perspective of education that highlights the agency of the teacher *for the teacher* by providing a more accurate understanding of the educational process, in general, and the role teachers in it, specifically.

To briefly review, then, this study took Joseph Schwab’s (1971) commonplaces—teacher, student, content, and *milieu* (or context)—as a structure for the explicit contemplation of one curricular cycle for each of four teacher educators. Based on the commonplaces, I created series of interviews by which we collaboratively explored how these four teacher educators described their curricula; how they understood the process of its creation, implementation, and reception; how they perceived the resulting learning experiences for their students; and how an explicit contemplation and articulation of what is usually an interior process influenced that process and its resulting curricula, if at all. The four interviews included topics such as the participants’ backgrounds, their intentions and lesson-planning, their perception of the implementation of that lesson, and their overall impressions of the contemplative exercise as a whole.

I then analyzed that data according to three philosophical lenses: The commonplaces of Joseph Schwab (1971), the qualities of contemplative education associated with, among others, Parker Palmer (1997), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990),

Jack Miller (2007), and Elizabeth Langer (1987); the third and emergent philosophical lens had to do with Albert Bandura's (2006) human agency.

In my interpretation, each of the four participants favored a specific commonplace over the other three. Moreover, that affinity for one commonplace also influenced how each participant viewed and interacted with the other three commonplaces of a learning experience. A thematic analysis of the material also provided a working concept of curricular agency based on Bandura's (2006) theory of human agency and related to the participants' relationship to the commonplaces as well their demonstrable contemplative qualities. Each participant articulated a type of curricular agency unique to who they were as educators, as teacher educators, as contemplative teacher educators, and, ultimately, as people. What follows is a more expansive presentation of the answers to the research questions followed by the significance of the study, implications for future research, and closing thoughts.

Thematic Responses to the Research Questions

How do these teacher educators describe their own curricula in light of Schwab's theory?

I worked in collaboration with each of the four participants to slowly and explicitly articulate, and thus describe, one cycle of their own curricula. The structure for doing so revolved around Schwab's (1971) commonplaces. I asked them to contemplate and characterize their curricula as it progressed from the inception of an idea to its planning, to its implementation, to a consideration of its impact on students as well as its implications for future curricula. An analysis of that contemplation using three

philosophical lenses—the commonplaces, contemplative education, and human agency—produced a primary and secondary insight: The existence of complementary curricula for each of the four commonplaces specifically, and their interconnectedness within the learning experience and beyond, generally.

Four complementary curricula.

Moroye (2009) rightly identified the complementary curriculum of teachers—a curriculum separate from the content of the class that teachers nonetheless bring into the learning experience based on who they are and what they believe as human beings (Palmer, 1997). Combining this idea with Schwab’s (1971) commonplaces—teacher, student, content, and *milieu*, or context—in which teacher is one of the four commonplaces, indicates that there is a complementary curriculum for the additional three commonplaces as well.

As an example, the prescribed curriculum—the content—is not just the agenda for a class, it was created at some point by other sources or by teachers themselves *with* an agenda as well. Its selection as content for a particular class, its organization prior to that class, et cetera. In addition, then, an educator would also want to know who created that content, and in what historical context, as well as who required that content for a particular grade level and in what historical context, et cetera. This is the idea of the complementary curriculum of the content.

The depth of the complementary curriculum of the commonplace of content (Schwab, 1969) would indicate equally compelling complementary curricula for the other commonplaces as well. Imagine the complexity of the complementary curricula of the

individual students in a class and what they bring to the learning experience.

Consequently, this idea, of identifying and studying the complementary curricula of each of the four commonplaces—individually and in relationship to one another, is unique to individual learning experiences. These complementary curricula of the elements of a learning experience require additional study individually and in relationship to one another.

General interconnectedness.

In his discussion of the holistic curriculum, Miller (2007) emphasized the quality of interconnectedness within the curriculum. As the participants described their perceptions of their own curricula, they realized for themselves that the elements of a learning experience are interconnected, as Dr. Douglas highlighted in recounting the inclusion of a guest speaker in his class. Although the students were covering content through activities that Dr. Douglas had done with them previously, doing so with the guest speaker in the role of teacher completely transformed how the students interacted with the content and with one another. However, the learning experiences themselves are also interconnected among the ever-widening contexts in which they occur.

Mr. White highlighted this point when he discussed the inclusion of noticing the weather as part of the class. Not even formal education occurs within a vacuum. Because education is a fundamentally human process (Palmer, 1997), everything that affects human beings will also affect the learning experiences that manifest within the educational process. Consequently, educators should work to take these ever-widening circles of interconnected contexts into account during their curricular deliberations. This

idea, of taking additional contexts into account, is a noticeably contemplative approach as it takes the humanity of education into account (Palmer, 1997), demonstrates its interconnectedness (Miller, 2007), and requires a mindful perspective (Langer, 1989) beyond the consideration of the classroom alone.

Similar to the study of the commonplaces in relationship to one another, the various contexts in which learning experiences occur and their influence on those learning experiences also indicate the benefits of additional study. This would be particularly true in a study using a contemplative perspective (Langer, 1989) and a framework based on Schwab's (1971) commonplaces. For example, a research question could be, "How does the context of the school district influence the commonplace of content within an individual learning experience?" That is not to indicate that the context of learning experiences have not been studied, but that an extension of exploring the context of those learning experiences organized and understood using the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) would be beneficial.

How does this process of curricular contemplation influence their curricula, if at all?

After interviewing participants before and after they implemented a particular curriculum—as is a common evaluative process of evaluation with which most educators in the United States are familiar—I *also* interviewed those same participants about their perceptions of the overall process of contemplating their curricular decision-making processes for a curricular cycle. I wondered how creating a semi-structured environment based on the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) would influence their curricular

deliberation. I wondered how creating a formal contemplation (Langer, 1989) of their curriculum—requiring exterior verbalization of a primarily interior and mental activity—would influence their curricular decision-making processes. A noteworthy insight from considering this particular question was that all participants favored one commonplace (Schwab, 1969) over the others. A secondary finding was the recognition, by the participants themselves, that their interior deliberations could be articulated and consequently, become a transferable curriculum (Eisner, 1991) of teaching as learning.

Favoring commonplaces.

Participants worked through their curricular deliberations using the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) as a structure for articulation throughout the study. In my interpretation of the data, each of the four participants favored a specific commonplace over the other three. Moreover, that affinity also influenced how each participant viewed and interacted with the other three commonplaces of a learning experience.

For example, the first participant, Dr. Grey, had a natural inclination for emphasizing the content in her curriculum and instruction. Her favorite teacher was not her favorite teacher because of who she was as a human being (Palmer, 1997), but because of what she provided to Dr. Grey in terms of the curriculum that facilitated her unique learning experiences and how she felt during those learning experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Thus, her curricular deliberations focused primarily on content, but she also demonstrated the secondary dimensions of content-student, content-teacher, and content-context. That is, as an example, she cared a great deal about her students, but she demonstrated that care for her students through her work with the

content. This is a subtle, but important difference; she thought about education not in terms of what she could do directly for her students as human beings, but in terms what types of learning experiences she could create for them.

In comparison, Dr. Rockwell had an affinity for emphasizing the student in her curriculum and instruction. She made curricular choices based on a focus of the students themselves. To parallel the previous discussion of Dr. Grey, Dr. Rockwell's favorite teacher was so, not because of the curriculum she provided—in fact, she found her curriculum to be outdated and demeaning—but because her teacher liked her as a human being. Consequently, her secondary dimensions looked like student-content, student-teacher, and student-context. She designed individual meetings with the explicit purpose of getting her students to be more of who they are as human beings (Palmer, 1997) than their mere role of student in her classes.

The evidence of this study suggests that educators (will) demonstrate an affinity for one commonplace (Schwab, 1969) over another and that this affinity influences both their curriculum and their instruction. Therefore, it is both possible and practical to create an inventory of self-assessment similar to that of the Myers-Briggs personality indicator (Myers, 1962) but based on the commonplaces. The instrument could be used in teacher education to help teacher educators, teacher evaluators, and future teachers better understand the commonplaces and how their relationship to the commonplaces influences their curriculum and instruction.

Recognition and transferability of teaching as learning.

A primary aim in this study was a change in perspective (Langer, 1989), and increase in awareness, for the participating teacher educators. By intentionally slowing down the curricular decision-making process for these teacher educators and by collaborating with them to articulate what their curricular decisions were and how they made them, their instruction became curriculum *for themselves*. In the words of associated scholarship, during this study, they became reflective practitioners (Schön, 1987) who engaged in teaching as learning (Duckworth, 1986). Because the participants themselves are unique as both educators and human beings (Palmer, 1997), the results of this deliberate articulation of their curricular decision-making processes also manifested in unique results.

For Dr. Grey, she realized that much of what she did as a teacher educator—the curricular choices she made—were largely missing from teacher education, in her class specifically, and in teacher education, generally. As a result of this study, she recognized the interconnectedness (Miller, 2007) and is including more of what she does as an educator in her curriculum for teacher educators. Dr. Rockwell experienced that the dialogue she had with me was very similar to the internal dialogue she literally had with herself. She expressed a confidence in her process as a successful manifestation of her aim of making curricular choices that focused on putting her students as human beings (Palmer, 1997) at the top of her list of priorities as a teacher educator. After much reflection (Schön, 1987) and study of his own instruction (Duckworth, 1986), Dr. Douglas stated that his initial struggles in teaching gradually became the strength of his

teaching. Whereas he used to project his own idealized version of the context onto the classes he taught, his perspective changed (Langer, 1989), and he is now able to articulate that he works specifically and intentionally with the context that presents itself in each class. Finally, Mr. White indicated that his work with the commonplace (Schwab, 1969) during this study required that he change his perspective (Langer, 1989), and the result was an increase in awareness of his own curricular choices and his intentions in making them.

The participants discovered that they were constantly engaged in the curricular decision-making process and that their engagement in that process—the process itself—was unique to who they were as educators and as human beings (Palmer, 1997); consequently, their curriculum was much more dynamic than the mere lessons they had planned. Furthermore, increased awareness of those curricular choices increased their agency (Bandura, 2006). The results were twofold. First, because the participants were able to articulate their own curricular decision-making processes, it was now in a form that could be provided to their students—future teachers themselves—as a part of their curricula. Second, because they had experienced the process of articulating their own curricular decision-making processes, they could now also guide their students through that process as part of their curricula.

What are the benefits (and potential hindrances) of curricular contemplation?

This study demonstrated that educators continuously think about their curricula and make countless curricular decisions involved with a single day of teaching. In fact, counting those curricular decisions would be the foundation of an intriguing study. To

return to the point, this study demonstrated the importance of creating a formal process by which educators could increase their awareness of their own curricular deliberations by articulating it according to the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969). Analyzing the data according to the three philosophical lenses—the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969), contemplative education (Palmer, 1997, etc.), and human agency (Bandura, 2006)—revealed that the formal process of curricular contemplation was primarily beneficial for the educators with one noticeable hindrance.

Alleviating burnout.

A primary problem in education addressed by this study was teacher burnout (Ingersoll, 2012). Teachers—regardless of subject matter, grade level, or experience—must seemingly teach everything (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). At the same time, an increasingly standardized curriculum, a rise in the number of testing mandates, the use of student test scores to evaluate teacher performance, and the ascendance of parent control through the privatization of public education, all quickly make teachers feel helpless (Ravitch, 2013). A primary aim of this study was to slow the curricular decision-making process down and provide a framework for its articulation. The result was that the participants realized that they had much more agency (Bandura, 2006) in their curriculum and instruction than they previously realized.

By collaborating with the participants in an effort to recognize and describe their individual processes of curricular deliberation, all four teacher educators realized and articulated the amount of control they had in the daily activities of their professional lives. Dr. Grey stated that she was constantly making curricular decisions (Bandura,

2006); furthermore, it was these very decisions that made her a teacher (Miller, 2007).

Dr. Rockwell emphasized the concept of ideation. In her case, this meant she saw the process of making curricular decisions to be a creative act of which she was in control (Pannells & Claxton, 2008). Dr. Douglas recognized the difference between a projected educational context and the actual educational context of the present moment.

Consequently, he made curricular choices to adapt his lesson plans to the context of the class itself at any given moment (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005). Finally, Mr. White noted that if one removed the human who was the teacher (Palmer, 1997), then who and what would remain? Consequently, the fact that teachers are humans means that teachers who increase their awareness (Langer, 1989) of this fact naturally increase their agency (Bandura, 2006), allowing for far more productive curricular choices within learning experiences.

Slowing down the curricular decision-making process and collaborating in its articulation according to the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) produced the recognizable benefit of curricular agency, which will be discussed in response to the final research question of the study. However, the relevance of this ideas to the benefits of curricular contemplation lies in the fact that educators—as human beings (Palmer, 1997)—who feel that they are in control of their activities are much more likely to remain engaged in those activities (Bandura, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Consequently, this study demonstrated that curricular contemplation is a process by which educators can recognize their curricular agency as a potential response to the burnout (Ingersoll, 2012) endemic to the teaching profession.

Contemplation is more than reflection.

Curricular contemplation is more than mere reflection (Schön, 1987). Whereas reflection, by design, is looking back at what has already occurred to infer meaning, contemplation is paying attention to all elements of the experience and all times—before, during, and after—the focal event has occurred. Curricular contemplation, then, is a specific and explicit analysis of every element of a curricular cycle with the intention of accurately depicting the curricular arc—intended, operational, and (perceived) received—so as to identify an educator’s curricular agency within it.

Again, examples from the data were revealing. Dr. Grey explained that she was continuously making curricular decisions. This statement demonstrated that the mental engagement (Langer, 1989) involved in curricular deliberation occurred as a matter of reflection (Schön, 1987), but it also occurred as in the planning and implementation of the curricula as well. Dr. Rockwell, in articulating the ideation of her curricular deliberations, noted that this creative mental act was ongoing; therefore, reflection (Schön, 1987) was only a part of the process of contemplation. Dr. Douglas emphasized the importance of making curricular decisions in and based upon the present moment—again, limiting the pragmatism of reflection alone. Finally, Mr. White was explicit in teaching and describing the importance of awareness in every moment of curricular deliberation, not just after the implementation of curricula.

Educators are reflective (Schön, 1987) and should be; however, their mental attention to the design and implementation of curricula as well. That is, the concept of contemplation expanded the utility of reflection to all stages of the curricular arc. Thus,

curricular contemplation involved the intentional change in perspective advocated in contemplative education (Langer, 1989); it acknowledged the interconnectedness of the various elements and the various moments in the curricular cycle (Miller, 2007); and it revealed all four properties—intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, *and* self-reflectiveness—present in the human agency characterized by Bandura (2006).

Time-consuming.

Schwab (1973) proposed that curricular deliberation become the collaborative work of representatives from the four commonplaces—teacher, student, content, and *milieu* or context. In addition, he designated a fifth representative, that of “curriculum specialist,” to facilitate this collaboration. He argued that such a committee should be formed in each school in the United States. The most striking aspect of his proposal, however, was the fact that only through consensus should any final curricular decision be reached. Yet, even if it were possible to bring together a group of representatives from the commonplaces, and to have a curriculum specialist facilitate their discussion, the final curricular decision would still be made by the teacher who presents that consensual curriculum to students. Rather than demanding that teachers be more than just teachers, the contemplation of the curricular decision-making process was a practice for learning and teaching how to do just that. Instead of an external deliberation among actual representatives for teacher, students, content, and context, the process was explored as an internal deliberation—a contemplation of the experiences of the commonplaces and their influence on the curricular choices. As this study demonstrated, however, this practical

evolution could still be seen as largely impractical without modification or contextualization.

Participants stated that slowing down the curricular decision-making process, forcing its verbal articulation and extended contemplation was rewarding. However, there were also the logistics to consider. Schwab's pragmatic goal of curricular consensus through the deliberation of representatives of the commonplaces under the guidance of a curriculum specialist occurring in every school across the United States was paradoxically impractical. Similarly, expecting educators to work with an educational researcher through a series of approximately ten interview questions four times surrounding the implementation of a single lesson is impractical. While a first time of working through a curricular cycle using the commonplaces (Schwab, 1969) may be time-consuming, it is possible that this first time would lead to faster, and eventually internalized versions of curricular contemplations in the curricular cycles that follow. This data was beyond the scope of this particular study.

What are the educational implications of curricular agency as a manifestation of curricular contemplation?

Curriculum, depending on its definition, could be considered both a static product and a dynamic process. Curricular contemplation in this study led to an idea for the development of a spectrum of curriculum—from static to dynamic—and an exploration of the relationships therein would be beneficial to the field of curriculum theory but are beyond the scope of this study. However, the simple acknowledgement of the potentially dynamic nature of curricula, reinforced by the data of this study, created the opportunity

to identify and operationalize the concept of curricular agency as a potential response to the high rate of teacher burnout (Ingersoll, 2012). It also created the possibility for studying the curricular agency of students.

Curricular agency.

The results of this conceptualization applied to curricular deliberation were beneficial for educators, in particular:

People who develop their competencies, self-regulatory skills, and enabling beliefs in their efficacy can generate a wider array of options that expand their freedom of action, and are more successful in realizing desired futures, than those with less developed agentic resources (Bandura, 2006, p. 165).

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Educators are impotent when they believe they are; however, educators are also empowered when they believe they are.

Curricular agency derives from a conceptual process involving the intentional contemplation (Langer, 1989) of the curricular decision-making process. The process itself is both reflective (Schön, 1987) and creative (Pannells & Claxton, 2008), analyzing previous curricular choices in order to envision new curricular choices within learning experiences that do not yet exist. It is a part of the cyclical process of teaching. Teachers must first have classroom interactions and interpretations of them in order to efficiently conceptualize and empathetically deliberate among the different qualities (Schwab, 1969) within their own minds. Before, during, and after that deliberation, teachers are constantly making curricular decisions as they utilize their curricular agency (Bandura, 2006) to facilitate meaningful learning experiences for students. Those curricular choices provide yet another learning experience, but one that is now more intentional (Bandura, 2006). The awareness of curriculum as a process allows the teacher to record, interpret,

and evaluate the learning experience by comparing the ways in which the conceptualized qualities of that learning experience did or did not align with the actual qualities of the aspects they represented. This contemplation informs future internal curricular deliberations, and the cycle of the curricular decision-making process continues.

This contemplative approach provides teachers with significant control over the curriculum in terms of its creation, implementation, evaluation, and revision (Bandura, 2006). Ultimately, it provides an understanding that gives students more control of their own learning experiences. With curricular agency, what we are learning as teachers is also what we are teaching to students—how to be aware of the dynamic nature of curriculum in all educational experiences with the intention of continually refining that same curriculum. Because just as teachers are responsible for the curriculum delivered, students are responsible for the curriculum received. Consequently, students see how to learn by learning how to see (Eisner, 1991). This becomes an ongoing process of qualitative inquiry (Duckworth, 1986). Teachers are no longer telling students (and themselves) what the world is, they are asking. They are showing students how to ask as well. Curricular agency demonstrates that, although people are not in control of the world, we are in control of how we think about it (Bandura, 2006).

Significance of the Study

The metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one's thoughts and actions is the most distinctly human core property of agency –Albert Bandura (2006)

Curriculum influences, but does not control, learning. However, teachers can increase their agency through the curriculum by (re)cognizing it as simultaneously a

dynamic process and a finished product and attempting to understand the implications. We, educators, should not attempt to negate the plurality of received curricula, but to embrace it and appreciate the fact that a single intended curriculum can create an infinite number of received curricula merely through implementation. A truly sophisticated tool is a tool simple enough that anyone and everyone can use to improve their respective situations. The analysis of curricular deliberation demonstrates that the concept of curricular agency itself is such a tool: teachers are agents in the educational process.

Paying attention to the development of one's own curricular deliberation enhances the process and the resulting product—a curriculum of instruction that becomes a tool for teaching other educators to do the same. To perceive educational experiences as a curriculum for teachers (Duckworth 1986), as well as for students, has the potential to transform one's entire approach to teaching and learning. The field of teacher education is unique in that the subject matter (of instruction) and its presentation (through instruction) are one in the same. This alignment of content and form places teacher educators in an ideal situation for studying their own teaching style as a means of instruction. Consequently, this study demonstrated that contemplating the curricular decision-making process and identifying one's agency in that process has the potential to be a curriculum for teacher educators and teachers alike.

By learning to pay attention to what they do while teaching, teacher educators cannot help but teach their students to do the same while learning. The concept of curricular agency takes advantage of the efficiency of the educational process already in place to transform the curriculum by transforming the perception of curriculum (Langer,

1989) from product to both process and product. Because of the interconnected nature of the process of curricular deliberation, exploring curricular agency within the curricular decision-making process at the level of teacher educator allows that concept to transfer to the other levels of the educational process. In addition, because the educational process exceeds the boundaries of the schools meant to facilitate it, the practice of paying attention—and the benefits of that practice—have an overall effect on society in new, exciting, and researchable ways. Paying attention enhances the learning experience. Enhancing the learning experience enhances one’s quality of life.

As academics, educators, and human beings, we cannot merely criticize the current educational situation; we must provide pragmatic and sustainable alternatives and validate their benefits in order to transform society by transforming the individuals within it. We do so by starting from where we are—from who we are—as opposed to who we are not. Embracing honesty involves drawing upon our strengths as much as acknowledging our weaknesses.

Implications for Further Research

The curricular arc of intended, operational, and received appropriately assumes a teacher-centered orientation. Within this model, the curricular agency of a teacher decreases from intended to operational to received curriculum. However, drawing a mirrored arc that is student-centered demonstrates the opposite: student agency gradually increases from intended to operational to received. Considering the agency of both teachers and students within the curricular arc has theoretical and practical implications, but it is beyond the scope of this study.

My research into curricular agency led quickly into social studies education: Textbooks, the colonized version of history presented as fact, the lack of agency among indigenous people—the pervasive and systematic oppression of marginalized peoples. Teachers, like the Curricular Indian Agent (Rogers Stanton, 2014), are paradoxically both perpetrator and victim of this marginalization (Kim-Hung, 2016). Because of our intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1997) as both educators and human beings, we are in positions that are simultaneously oppressed and oppressive. The study of intersectionality and agency among educators, generally, as both a marginalizing and marginalized group in society, is as important as any other research that can be done at this time.

Concluding Thoughts

People live in a psychic environment largely of their own making –Albert Bandura (2006)

Teachers can feel existentially eviscerated by the educational institution that silences their voice, denies their benefit, and blames them for societal ills. Consequently, teacher educators are often either disconnected, suffering from burnout, or both, and they can (consciously or unconsciously) teach their students—future classroom teachers—to think and feel the same. In human experience, things are the way that we think they are. Similarly, we are only capable of what we think we are capable. If we limit our thinking, we limit our potential. Educators have more agency than they believe.

The previous paragraph notwithstanding, evaluation is more judgmental than descriptive. Educator training with an emphasis on the accuracy of description rather

than the importance of evaluation, and through ideas like curricular contemplation, will do much to benefit education and the human beings involved in the process. Because accuracy in description is neither pessimistic nor disheartening, but empowering; through it, problems dissipate and agency manifests.

Finally, as Albert Bandura (2006) says, there is no absolute agency. In writing, as in teaching, I feel honored to serve as a mirror that merely reflects the wisdom of others. This study is an articulation of the wisdom of the people I have been fortunate to interact with on this educational journey. Thank you for your contributions to education generally, and my own education, specifically.

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APPENDIX A: MANIFESTATIONS OF CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION IN THE
UNITED STATES

Organizations:

Association for Contemplative Mind In Higher Education (of Center for Contemplative Mind in Society) <http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/acmhe>

Center for Courage and Renewal (Parker Palmer) <http://www.couragerenewal.org/>

Garrison Institute <http://www.garrisoninstitute.org/>

Mind and Life Institute <http://www.mindandlife.org/>

Institutions:

Brown University <http://www.brown.edu/academics/contemplative-studies/>

Emory University <http://www.emory.edu/ECCS/>

Montclair State University <http://www.montclair.edu/academy/contemplative-pedagogy/>

Naropa University <http://www.naropa.edu/>

OISE, University of Toronto <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/oise/Home/>

Stanford University <http://ccare.stanford.edu/>

UC-Davis <http://mindbrain.ucdavis.edu/>

UCLA <http://marc.ucla.edu/>

University of Massachusetts <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>

University of Miami <http://mindfulness.miami.edu/>

University of Virginia <http://www.uvacontemplation.org/content/home>

University of Wisconsin <http://www.investigatinghealthyminds.org/index.html>

Vanderbilt University <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/2010/04/contemplative-pedagogy/>

K-12 Programs:

SMART-in-education (PassageWorks) <http://passageworks.org/courses/smart-in-education/>

CARE for Teachers <http://www.care4teachers.org/>

Mindfulness in Education Network <http://www.mindfuled.org/>

MindUP <http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/>

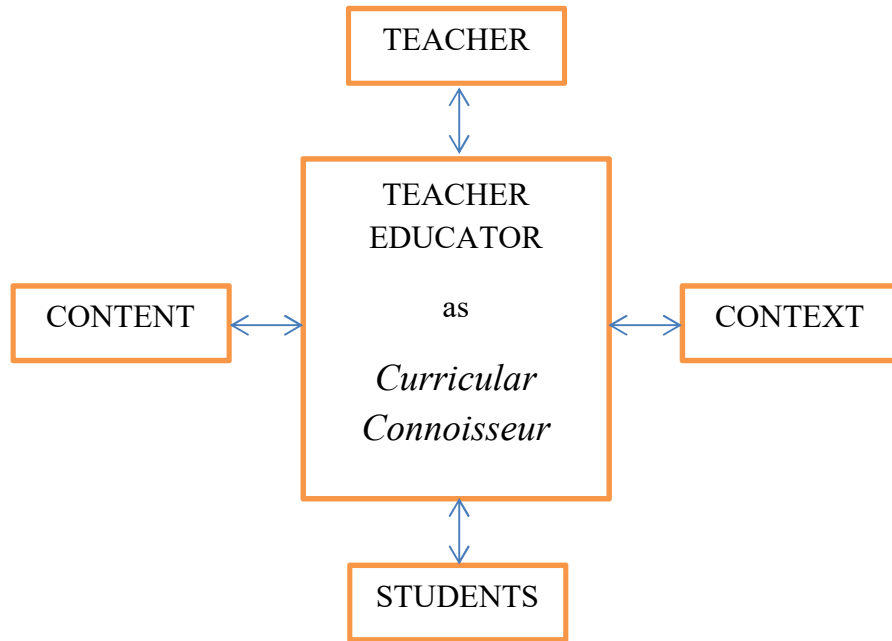
Conferences:

Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/event/7th-annual-acmhe-conference>

International Symposium for Contemplative Studies (MLI) <http://www.iscs2014.org/>

APPENDIX B: CONCEPT MAP



APPENDIX C: BACKGROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date: _____ Time start and stop: _____ Length: _____ Background

Interview

1. Why did you become a teacher?
2. Explain the path that led you to become a teacher educator?
3. Who was your favorite teacher? Please share a story that illustrates why.
4. Who was your least favorite teacher? Please share a story that illustrates why.
5. What was your favorite subject? Please share a story that illustrates why.
6. What was your least favorite subject? Please share a story that illustrates why.
7. What were you like as a student?
8. As a student, what did you like most about school?
9. As a student, what did you like least about school?
10. Is there anything you'd like to add?

APPENDIX D: INTENTIONS INTEVIEW QUESTIONS

Date: _____ Time start and stop: _____ Length: _____ Intentions

Interview

1. What is the purpose of education?
2. What makes a teacher effective?
3. What is similar about who you are as a person and who you are as a teacher?
4. What is different about who you are as a person and who you are as a teacher?
5. How does who you are influence how you teach?
6. How does what you teach influence how you teach it?
7. How does where you teach influence how you teach?
8. How does whom you teach influence how you teach them?
9. How do you teach your students to pay attention?
10. What does that look like in your classroom?
11. Is there anything you'd like to add?