Space for Transformation: Relational, Dialogic Pedagogy

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Abstract

Given the current and historical trends favoring the view of teachers as passive followers of "expert" directives, teachers are in need of continuing education that encourages them to be active change agents in educational reform. Teachers need professional education that helps them critique trends which question the legitimacy of their knowledge and experience as vital to critical conversations about school improvement. In this article, we elucidate the epistemic stance and the dialogic, relational approach to pedagogy that we adopt during the 3-week Summer Cohort experience. Second, we describe and analyze one of these activities—autobiographical writing which sets the framework for the course in terms of the relational and dialogic processes of our pedagogy and suggest ways in which such writing provides spaces for transformation in our students. We hope to demonstrate the ways in which a relational epistemology and dialogic, relationally oriented pedagogy provides one way to invite teachers to personal and professional transformation.

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The education of teachers serves many purposes including fostering skill development and knowledge acquisition. Teacher education is often understood as helping individuals "become teachers" where "learning how to teach is described as a process of transposing teaching skills onto persons ... so that teacher education becomes [a project] of transposition rather than transformation" (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996, p. 67). However, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) have explained, "Becoming a teacher involves more than transposing teaching skills onto an already-established personal identity" (p. 65). While skills development and knowledge acquisition are necessary for the education of competent teachers, they are not sufficient—not if our goal is to prepare all those who teach for the complex demands of a reform-oriented educational arena (Beyer, 2001; Liston & Zeichner, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1990). In particular, skill development and knowledge acquisition alone do not help teachers to develop or to value their own insights and their own contributions to the project of education within the larger academic community. In this traditional stance toward learning, "[k]nowledge is generally viewed as something outside the learner to be taken in through the learning process" (Dirkx, 1998). Professional development aimed at skill building and knowledge banking distances teachers from their own acts of knowing and perpetuates a dichotomous relationship between teachers and their developing knowledge as well as a compliant stance in the face of more authoritative "knowers." This leads to compartmentalizing—a sense of separateness—between the knower and her knowledge and may be of particular significance to women who experience themselves relationally and their growth within connection (Surrey, 1991). In these times when the professional identities of teachers are being eroded by scripted programs and top-down mandated curricula, teachers need graduate education that works against this compartmentalization and allows a sense of wholeness and autonomy to emerge as part of one's professional and personal development (Cranton & King, 2003). Reform-oriented teachers in particular need graduate education that reconnects them to their own knowledge, their ways of knowing and teaching, and fosters an empowered sense of purpose and agency more than a program of skills and knowledge alone can provide.

Indeed, given the current and historical trends which favor hierarchical school structures and view K-12 teachers as passive followers of "expert" directives (Kincheloe, 2003), teachers are in need of the kind of education that allows and encourages a sense of wholeness that leads to a view of themselves as active agents within the school structure. Teachers need the kind of education that will, in fact, prepare them to critique trends which call into question the legitimacy of their knowledge and experience in the critical conversations about school improvement. Yet it is not always easy to bring teachers to the point where they view their experiences as important and *themselves* as active agents of change. The transformation of teachers from knowledge consumers to knowledge producers, from readers of scripts to writers of generative curricula, from passive followers to educational leaders can be a serious challenge in the professional education of teachers (Cranton, 1996a; Mitchell & Poutiatine, 2001). Within the broader context and body of literature often

associated with undergraduate teacher education and learning theory, the Masters in Effective Teaching and Leadership program at Butler University intentionally takes up the challenge of developing spaces for adult learner transformation with practicing teachers. We are guided by a set of beliefs and program goals which value the practicing teacher as an active agent of school reform, view teaching as "wide awake" (Greene, 1995) creative, relational, intellectual, and moral work, and assert that the teacher/researcher role is essential for teachers who will make meaningful and lasting contributions to local school reform. This philosophy is rooted in a view of learning as an act of consciousness-raising and critical reflection (Dirkx, 1998) which leads us to purposefully reconnect students to their own "knowing" by regularly asking them to examine and reintegrate their assumptions about their teaching selves and their learning selves, an important aspect of teacher development (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999).

This examination and reintegration of aspects of self is fundamental to our conceptualization of the meaning of transformation. Indeed transformation might be defined as a process of re-envisioning and reordering and reconstruction of various aspects of self and the conscious acknowledgment and valuing of that process. Like others (Hagar and) we consider transformation as "becoming"; a deeply personal reinvention of self (Dirkx, 2006).

The explicit reconnection of these different aspects of their professional selves, as well as of educational research more generally, sets the context in which they may gain new insights about the educational process and their roles within it. One way to reconnect teachers with their own knowing and bring them to a point of valuing their own experiences is through teacher research. In fact, it is widely accepted that teacher research can be a powerful influence on the how teachers think and feel about their teaching and themselves as teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; 1999; Hankins, 1998), and it is often regarded by teachers as a transforming experience (Fecho, 2000). Because the very word transformation implies movement, our program seeks to create dynamic spaces for teachers to reposition themselves as teacher-researchers within a transformative community. Eileen de los Reyes and Patricia Gozemba (2002) define this space as a *pocket of hope*:

> (T)here are pockets of hope—physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and political communities—where students and teachers are engaging possibility and challenging despair .... Consistently, these pockets of hope share similar characteristics: a democratic teacher, a community that serves as an empowerment zone, a democratic pedagogy, and participants actively engaged in changing the world .... All of them [pockets of hope] are largely unheralded learning and teaching communities in which Freirean and feminist pedagogies engage students in rigorous academic work and projects of social change (pp. 1−2).

In our program, we explicitly seek to create such a learning and teaching community and to educate our students as teacher researchers as a means of personal

transformation and empowerment. Like Mezirow (1990), however, we believe that insight and personal transformation are not in and of themselves enough. Rather, we regard personal transformation as a means to a larger end—the empowerment of others (Freire, 1971). Through teacher research, we expect that our students will apply the insights they glean to their daily practice as teachers achieving a particular kind of praxis—one aimed at the creation of socially just educational climates for all students.

These are ambitions goals, and providing the kind of transformative education that would prepare reform-oriented teacher researchers is as others have noted, "not so easy!" (Sockman & Sharma, 2008). As instructors we have taken up the challenge by designing an intense early experience for our incoming graduate students. As their initiation to our program, all students take an inquiry-oriented 3-week summer intensive called the Summer Cohort. This six credit-hour experience combines an introduction to epistemology, educational research, and teacher research, as well as an examination of what makes a "teacher leader." We ask our students to reconsider their seemingly separate roles in the professional landscape and prompt them to live lives as reform-oriented teacher-researchers and leaders whose work would demonstrate a wholeness of purpose. This purpose is the creation of empowering learning communities—their own "pockets of hope" in the service of children. Our intent is to approach these three aspects of their (and our) teaching lives as synergistically connected. We hope that such synergistic knowledge might better prepare our students to take active roles as reform-oriented teachers. In addition, we believe that such integration helps students develop a stronger, more coherent, and holistic sense of *themselves* in their multiple professional roles, making action for others more possible.

In order to create the necessary conditions for transformative learning, we have chosen a relational, dialogic approach to pedagogy (Fecho, in press; Lysaker, Tonge, Gauson & Miller, 2011; Thayer-Bacon, 1997.) This approach stands in contrast to a transmission view in which the teacher as the authority would "handout" knowledge of research methods didactically and students would be expected to take up this knowledge language of traditional educational research "as given." Rather, we choose a dialogic, relational approach in which our students' knowledge and experience are immediately important and brought directly into the curriculum through ongoing opportunities for personal and social dialogue. Through course assignments, particularly reflective, autobiographic writing, we ask them to think about themselves as knowers and thinkers, to examine their beliefs about teaching, research, and leadership as well as themselves as active agents in educational contexts. Through this critical examination of themselves, we provide the context for transformation; the exploration of alternative understandings of how they see the world and their roles within it (Cranton, 1996b).

In this article, we elucidate our epistemic stance and the dialogic, relational approach to pedagogy that we adopt during the 3-week Summer Cohort experience. Second, we describe and analyze one of these activities—autobiographical writing

which sets the framework for the course in terms of the relational and dialogic processes of our pedagogy and suggest ways in which such writing provides spaces for transformation in our students. We hope to demonstrate the ways in which a relational epistemology and dialogic, relationally oriented pedagogy provides one way to invite teachers to personal and professional transformation, and how this transformation may lead to new and empowered identities as teacher researchers and leaders.

Grounding Our Pedagogy: Relational Epistemology

Relational epistemology is a set of beliefs about knowledge and knowing. As Thayer-Bacon (1997) and other feminist scholars describe it, a relational view of knowing and knowledge is grounded in the idea that we come into being in and through relationship (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). All knowing and learning comes from our human need for connection with others and with the world. Given this epistemic stance, it follows that our knowledge of the world is mediated by our relationships with those around us, particularly those to whom we are most attached. As Grumet (1992) tells us, "The world we notice is the one that someone we cared about once noticed and pointed to" (p. 6). Therefore, as Palmer (1983) suggests, "knowledge contains its own morality, that is it begins not in a neutrality, but in a place of passion within the human soul" (p. 7). We embrace this theory of knowledge in our work.

Self as Relational

The nature of the human person as a relational or social being, that is one that cannot develop without the presence of others, is a belief espoused across time and disciplines. Many serious scholars have described and theorized the nature, source, and importance of this quality of being human. For example, Vygotsky (1978) believed that social contexts, and in particular the interaction and language that accompanies them facilitate learning. Indeed he asserts that learning occurs first on the social plane and only later becomes personal as it is "internalized" as part of one's own thinking. In this way the language and thinking of others is integral to our own. In a similar but not identical way, feminists such as Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) regard the ways in which we know to be fundamentally relational; we know, learn, and grow through our connections to others. From a philosophic perspective, Heidegger (1953) argues that *to be* in the world as a human person, in the first place, *is to be in relation*—that within the notion of self is the other. Similarly, the work of Bakhtin (1981) and others conceptualizes the human person, as -*itself relational*-, constructed within the relationships and languages of others. This is consistent with contemporary psychological perspectives such as Gergen (2009) who has described human beings as fundamentally relational beings across contexts.

Self as Conversation

Indeed if self is a relational event constructed as a group of selves (Habermas, 1981) or self-positions (Hermans, 2001), then the essence of self might be thought of as a conversation between these self-positions (Lysaker & Lysaker, 2005). As instructors interested in facilitating transformation, our job becomes one of helping our students engage the many aspects of themselves (across space and time) in conversation with each other and with the coursework. Indeed since transformation is thought to occur when we perceive difference and those differences lead us to question our way of viewing and being in the world (Cranton & King, 2003; Mezirow, 2000), setting up these conversations with self and other is critical to teaching for transformation. It is, in fact, the contrast of our different self's views that provide the occasion for transformation. For example, bringing the "self who teaches" in conversation with the "self who learns about research" is likely to provide an experience of disequilibrium resulting in an openness to transformation. As others have noted, working toward this authentic encounter with aspects of self and developing this level of self-knowledge is demanding imaginative work (Dirkx, 2006).

Care and Intersubjectivity

This relational context is also central to transformational learning theory (Cranton, 2006) and leads us to consider the kinds of relationships we form with our students. Indeed, a fundamental assumption of the relational self is that some kinds of human relationships set up better conditions for self-development—for knowing and learning—than others (Goldstein, 1997; Lysaker & Lysaker, 2005; Thayer-Bacon, 1997). In particular, relationships of care set up a sense of reciprocity and afford intersubjectivity and are therefore more likely to provide the subtle interpersonal circumstances necessary for self-transformation. As Nel Noddings (2005) argues, to care is to "apprehend the reality of the other," to imagine the other's perspective, to have an intersubjective relationship. Intersubjectivity is then an intentional relational context within which knowing self and other in new ways becomes possible. A shared set of subjectivities characterized by a sense of space for reciprocity and afforded by care replaces the dichotomous subject−object paradigm in which the teacher is the subject and the students are objects imposed upon by the teacher. The communicative actions with the intersubjective landscape, rather than occurring from single identifiable positions, involve a complex dance of positioning and repositioning in an effort to reach common understandings. Each person then is able to come to understand one's own self as one of a group of selves (both within each person and among others) connected to one another through position-taking interaction. One outcome of this fluid, caring intersubjective landscape, unlike the more dichotomous teacher−student relationships, is the enhanced possibility of equal relations, undistorted by power (Carspecken, 1996).

Key to this view of relational learning and the establishment of intersubjectivity is the notion that care is not unidirectional. According to Noddings (2005), the one

cared for must accept care from the one caring. For us as teachers, this means that we not only need to actively choose to know our students, and not simply impose ourselves, but we create an environment of trust and reciprocity making the acceptance of care by our students possible. Our decision to be purposely relational in our pedagogy is not a sentimental one. Rather as Thayer-Bacon (1997) reminds us, to be relational in our educational work is not about "feeling good" but is a moral decision to care as a critical aspect of good teaching and learning. For us a critical, relational epistemic stance results in the establishment of the caring relational climate—the first step toward transformational reform-oriented education.

Relational, Dialogic Pedagogy

These assumptions lead us to a kind of pedagogy which invites the subjectivity, personhood, and personal story of each student into the instructional dialogue and requires that we bring ourselves to the task of teaching in similar ways. There is intentionality to relational pedagogy which asks the learner to come to her or his own realizations as opposed to arriving at a predetermined conclusion held by the instructors. Others have identified instructional practices associated with dialogic pedagogy including the use of authentic questions without prescribed answers, the "uptake" of students' ideas during discussion and "discourse moves that incorporate, probe and honor students' multiple voices in the classroom" (Juzwik, Nystrand, Kelly, & Sherry, 2008, p.6). We add to this view by emphasizing the careful and purposeful invitation of subjectivities and the establishment of a particular set of intersubjective relationships accomplished through course assignments and practices.

A relationally oriented, dialogic pedagogy is relational in multiple, layered ways. There are the most obvious relationships—that of teachers to students and student to student—the interpersonal web of relationships that constitutes the learning community. In addition, there is the students' relationships to herself or himself. Autobiographical writing and discussion promote these relationships as they foreground past experiences, present assumptions, and future goals. This awareness of the self "in dialogue" becomes a condition for personal transformation (Hermans, 2001; Lysaker, 2007). Parker Palmer (2007) suggests a third relationship, that of the students' relationship with the "subject"—his or her connection to the topics themselves. These extra personal relationships are particularly critical to the cohort experience as students forge new relationships with the subjects of educational and teacher research. This set of relationships then—*inter, intra, and extra personal*—becomes a critical focus in the construction of teaching and learning experiences and results necessarily in a relational, dialogic pedagogy which facilitates the construction of spaces for personal transformation. Relational, dialogic pedagogy makes room for the learner's experiences to shape the way he or she learns and encourages the learner to value those experiences as part of his or her knowledge base. What follows is a description of our use of autobiographical writing which we offer as an illustration of relational epistemology and relationally oriented pedagogy.

Autobiographical and Reflective Writing: Creating Spaces for Transformation Across Time and Space

Autobiography has a long history as a method by which teachers are encouraged to use their own stories as resources for understanding themselves, discovering the intricacies of what they know (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) as well as their relation to the sociopolitical contexts of their teaching. Autobiographical and reflective writing is a consistent feature of the Summer Cohort and the primary way we address the immediate goals of reconnecting our students to their own knowing and promoting opportunities for transformation. The instructional use of autobiographical writing sets up multiple intersubjective relationships for students and encourages the valuing of those experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge. These outcomes are of course in service to the larger purpose of preparing them as teacher researchers and leaders.

The Relational, Dialogic Spaces of Autobiographical and Reflective Writing

Our engagement with the students begins with an assignment distributed electronically 2 weeks prior to the first class. In this pre-course assignment, we first ask our students to write a short autobiographical piece about themselves as educators. Prompted by Parker Palmer's (2007) assertion that we "teach who we are," we invite students to consider that they will also ground their research and their activity as school leaders in *who* they are. The first part of the assignment asks them to write a brief reflection on their views of knowing. Questions include, "How do you go about knowing something?" What do you think knowledge is?"

Purposes of Autobiographic Writing

Establish relationships with students. From the perspective of relational, dialogic pedagogy, we are doing several things in the autobiographical part of the assignment. First, we are establishing our own relationships with the students. Through our initial e-mail, we introduce ourselves to our students and welcome them to the course as members of the "cohort". We immediately and purposefully use this language to name and hence begin to establish a sense of communal identity among the students as members of "The Cohort."

Communicate openness. Second, we use the assignment itself to communicate a relational and open epistemic stance. Such openness is crucial if the instructional work we do is to transform, to change, and not simply continue the current trajectory of our students' ongoing formation. In addition, we immediately let them know something about us as instructors; that we hold the belief that the content of the course is directly related to them and to how they think about the central topics of the course. We hope that this communicates a sense of respect and care for them

as students, and more importantly as thinkers, and sets a tone for the kinds of relationships that we hope to have with them. In this way, we begin our relationships with each of them by overtly valuing those relationships as well as with the cohort community; we begin "where the students are" as a critical part of developing teacher leadership both individually and communally (Hill, 2005).

Emphasize self-knowledge. Third, by making autobiographical writing the first thing we ask of them, we also highlight the importance of self-knowledge, self-reflection, and writing as a way of knowing which we return to throughout the summer intensive. This is consistent with our overall goal of providing transformative experiences that lead to empowerment and is supported by the work of Clandinin and Connely (1996) who suggest that teachers' life stories are important resources in a transformational empowering curriculum. We begin the process of raising these stories to consciousness and into the class community by directly asking them to bring who they are and what they think and feel to their conversations with the assigned texts and with the subject of research and epistemology.

Autobiographical Writing and Intersubjectivity

However, in terms of the larger goal of creating space for transformation, perhaps the most important relationship that is set up in this first assignment is the student's relationship with her own thinking and experience made possible through the intersubjective experiences of reading one's own writing (Lysaker, 2006). Such an experience sets up a dialogue between aspects (or positions) of self over time, between the writer of the words and the reader of the words. Though the passage of time that defines these two self-positions is short, the result is a dialogue between some past and present experience. In this way, we work to move student from self-reflection as a purposeful self-awareness raising and meaning-making experience, toward more critical self-reflection which asks students to assess those experience with an intention of acting in the future (Malkki, 2010). This intersubjectivity, or the internal conversation with our different self-positions, which is made possible by writing creates a fluid space in which thoughts change and hence a fertile ground for transformation. Indeed this "internal" dialogue is the essence of critical self-reflection in which one notices and confronts one's own beliefs. It is the multiple intersubjective experiences that provide the context for noticing, questioning, and making sense of difference which is at the core of transformational learning (Freire, 1971). Carter and Doyle (1996) use Goodson's work (1994) to argue:

> (R)esearch on teachers' lives and how teachers experience their work can serve to raise consciousness about conditions of teaching in schools, empower teachers to make their resistance to government reforms more clear and powerful, and enlist teachers' voices in the radical reconstruction of schooling experiences to make them more inclusionary and emancipatory. In this view, the study of teacher's lives-and the autobiographical

writing that results from those lives-is seen as an attempt to create a "counter-culture based upon a research mode that above all places teachers at the center of the action and seeks to sponsor 'the teacher voice'" (Goodson, 1994 as cited in Carter & Doyle, 1996).

By locating knowledge for teaching within teachers themselves and by demonstrating clearly the complexity of the enterprise of teaching, it becomes possible to deny those with primarily "outsider" knowledge, that is university-based researchers and government policymakers, access to a simplistic knowledge base for controlling teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Autobiographical writing then leads students to a new view of themselves as knowers and as reformers.

Reflective Writing

In addition to the autobiographical writing, we ask students to use reflective writing to respond to a set of research studies which represent a variety of epistemic stances, designs, and topic areas. Reflection (Schon, 1983) and critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1990) have been used extensively in teacher education to facilitate the kind of thinking necessary for a considered and purposeful approach to practice. In the Summer Cohort, we make use of reflection and autobiographical writing to help students become aware of their own assumptions as a first step to a transformational experience.

Purposes of Reflective Writing

Raise assumptions. One purpose of this assignment is to make students aware of the range of assumptions about knowledge and knowing that are present in current educational research having them see the ways in which research design flows from those assumptions and notice the different ways in which research writing is voiced. A second but equally important purpose is to draw out their epistemic stances, methodological preferences, and responses to the "tone" of particular kinds of research.

Develop relationship with the subject. From a relational, dialogic perspective we are providing space and opportunity for students to forge a relationship with the "subject" of research. We intentionally select research articles that reflect the disciplines within which our students work as teachers. Through this simple action we provide them with an opportunity to "recognize" themselves in the curriculum, to encounter research as a "subject" that represents some aspect of who they are and can be known in a personal way. In addition, we hope they begin to see they are a part of the ongoing interpersonal negotiation that typifies our relational, dialogic approach to knowledge and knowing.

After they read this set of studies, we ask them to write personal responses to each article which we guide with questions. The questions that we pose are relational; they aim to set up a dialogue between the students (his or her beliefs, background,

assumptions) and the author and subject of research. Questions include (1) What is your reaction to the piece? (2) How did it make you feel as a reader, an aspiring researcher, and an educational leader? (3) What beliefs does the author hold that are implicit in the article? (5) What questions does the author raise for you? (6) What aspects of the article departed from your own experience? (7) In what ways did you agree with the author?

Encountering dissonance. This reflective writing asks students to consider their past thoughts and past actions in relation to their present subjectivities. It requires students to think about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, both present and past, and draws on personal capacities for reflexivity as well as imagination—both of which are critical to making sense of teaching and learning. We believe that both the process of reflection (thinking about one's own thinking) and imagining the future consequences of one's insights call on the many self-positions we inhabit to enter into conversation—who we are as teachers, learners, family members, aspiring school leaders. This brings to fore a kind of contrasting dialogue of multiple perspectives, a "the simultaneity of difference" within our own consciousness, leading to newness of thought (Bakhtin, 1981) and professional transformation. Like the social interactions we have with other people, our "self-conversations" shape our knowing and being (Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978).

In addition this pre-course assignment allows students to begin forging their relation to the subject in a personal way prior to meeting their peers or instructors. They are not simply asked to read and "take away" something from the texts. They are asked to articulate what they think and believe about what they have read and imagine what the authors might think and believe as well. This requires that they bring who they are and what they think and feel to their conversations about assigned texts, as well as with the subject of research and epistemology. From the start, they engage in dialogic relation with the subject of research. One relevant feature of the pre-course writing which promotes this personal relationship to the subject is its individual nature; the writing is done before they meet their peers in class. Again, this emphasizes and places value on self-knowledge and relationships within the person, that is between self as teacher and self as researcher. While we value discussion and use it as the central pedagogic tool, we believe that our students benefit from getting to know themselves and their own ideas through the articulation of them in writing *before* they enter into dialogue with others. The pre-course assignment sets them on a course of developing their own thinking and recognizing their own voices in relation. This is then further nurtured and developed through participation in multiple discursive contexts throughout the course (Mezirow, 2000). In this way, we hope to foster their relationships with the "subjects" of research and of epistemology within which transformation may occur.

Fostering peer relationships. This pre-course assignment also promotes the building of peer relationships. Each student brings their autobiographical writing to class the

first night. Students then read these pieces aloud to a partner as a way of building community and as a way of hearing the different perspectives and voices within the class. Sharing autobiographical writing allows the students to consider multiple perspectives to research right away from those most like them-their peers. This is another example of how we demonstrate the value of self-knowledge and try to create a sense of equity among all of us as knowers.

Conclusion

In this article, we have described our relational, dialogic epistemic stance and the pedagogy that flows from a belief that teacher education and teacher learning is meant to be a transformative experience, not a skills transposing process. We have outlined one of our course assignments as an illustration of the relational, dialogic spaces for transformation that it provides. These relational spaces of dialogue include the relationships between us as instructors and our students, the relationships between the students and the subjects of research and epistemology, the peer relationships between students, and the relationships they have between their own self-positions over time. Emphasis on these relationships is done in service to each student's personal transformation and most importantly, the larger goal of preparing reform-oriented teacher-researchers and leaders.

Our students have both an excited and fearful response to our relational, dialogic pedagogy because it requires openness, risk taking, and the particular responsibility that comes from being an active knower. While this approach to assignments proves difficult for some, particularly those who are accustomed to hierarchical, transmission views of knowing, our pedagogical choices are aimed at helping teachers overcome their apprehension. We work to make visible and real, our belief that teachers are generators—not simply consumers—of knowledge, by inviting each student's personhood into the curriculum through relational dialogues around epistemology and research.

As we attempt to redefine and transform our traditional teaching roles and the power relations associated with said traditional role, we open the space for students to transform and redefine their own roles in relation to both teaching and learning. By reconfiguring the traditional, didactic graduate learning experience into a relational, dialogic inquiry, we hope to encourage integration and reconnect our identities as both learners and experts, as teachers and students. Further, we see the integration of roles and identities as having "the potential to alter profoundly the cultures of teaching ... and how they [teachers] position themselves ... as agents of systemic change" (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 470). In this way, we work toward our programmatic goal of transformative, reform-oriented graduate education.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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