Experiences of Learning to Teach Physical Education: Navigating Tensions

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**Abstract**

This narrative inquiry explored two pre-service teachers’ experiences of learning to teach Physical Education during a 16-week internship. A research puzzle was named: how learning to teach is experienced by pre-service teachers and how they dwell in spaces of tension while learning to teach Physical Education.

Two pre-service teachers in secondary urban school settings were part of the study over a six month period before, during, and after the 16-week fall semester internship. Field texts included audio recorded and transcribed group and one-on-one conversations, field notes from school visits and teaching observations, journal writing and reflections, artifacts from the participants’ internship, and text message conversations. Narrative accounts that inquired into their experiences were co-composed with each participant.

Three threads of narrative connection reverberated, moving toward new wonderings related to the research puzzle: shifting stories to live by, teaching their way, and working alongside teachers. Questions arose about how we might be able to use this inquiry to reflect on our own experiences and practices and how narrative inquiry may be a valuable methodological approach for Physical Education teacher education.

Key words: teacher education, Physical Education, socialization, field experience, identity, teaching, narrative inquiry, curriculum

**Introduction**

This paper discusses a narrative inquiry study that focused on how two pre-service teachers, Ali and Lauren, experienced learning to teach physical education during a 16-week internship in two urban secondary schools. Issues and tensions surrounding physical education teacher socialization, identity development, and mentoring are discussed in relation to the findings of the study. Such a discussion is significant because literature on learning to teach physical education is limited, especially in relational ways that narrative inquiry brings forth.

The format of the introduction follows this outline: a brief introduction and overview of narrative inquiry as a methodology; an overview of tensions surrounding learning to teach including occupational socialization theory, identity development, the teaching of physical education, and mentoring; how these tensions relate to the current inquiry and a naming of the research puzzle.

**Narrative Inquiry – A Brief Overview**

Narrative inquiry was chosen as a methodology for the study because of its relational foundation and the ability of the researcher to build close interactions with participants. Stories of experience are a beginning and ending point for narrative inquiry research; through telling and reliving of stories that we might be able to see how our experiences shape identities and future experiences.

This study was a narrative inquiry into experiences of pre-service teachers during a 16-week internship semester in relation to Aoki’s (1986/1991) notion of tensionality and dwelling productively in spaces of tension. Narrative inquiry is both a method and a methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); it is a way of living alongside participants and living with stories. The researcher is able to share their experiences with participants while spending many hours together in the schools and outside of the schools. Sharing and learning from each others’ experiences allows educators to hold up a mirror, see new angles, and think about perceptions and practices. Through conversation and living alongside each other, we may come to understand each other while also asking more questions. The researcher positions themselves and their stories to live by *in the midst* of the inquiry, which means that they already had their own experiences about a topic which most likely led them to be interested in the topic to begin with.

This study followed Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) understanding of narrative inquiry. While living alongside participants and sharing experiences, the researcher focuses on the three dimensional space: (a) temporality; (b) personal and social, and; (c) place. These dimensions are also referred to as commonplaces (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Thinking narratively about experience, the researcher attempts to wonder about what participants shared in relation to the three dimensional space. While looking inward (at internal conditions such as hopes, feelings, fears, reactions, etc.), looking outward (at existential conditions, the environment), and looking backward and forward (in the past, present, and future), stories of experience intersect with time, personal/social, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These intersections were places where more questions and wonderings emerged.

**Terminology**

Narrative inquiry makes use of unique conceptions that may not be familiar. Terminology in this paper will reflect these differences but an attempt will be made to relate the terms to those more traditional or familiar paradigms. For example, rather than naming a research problem or a particular question, a narrative inquirer will name a *research puzzle* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) or set of *wonderings* that frame the study. As well, *stories to live by* is a narrative conceptualization for professional identity that has been developed over time by Connelly and Clandinin (1999) as the link between knowledge, context, and identity. Stories to live by “...make evident the personal, social, and political contexts that shaped our understandings” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 55). A narrative way of thinking about identity takes into consideration the interconnected and interrelatedness of past and present, a person’s practical knowledge, and the landscape(s) on which a person lives and works. These are a few common narrative inquiry conceptions or terms that are used throughout the paper.

**Review of Literature –Tensions in Learning to Teach Physical Education**

In the field of education there exist many examples of tensions with regard to teaching and learning, and each is unique. Quite easily, however, tensions can be regarded as negative rather than spaces of potential growth. As teachers, we might ask ourselves how to get rid of tension; we may wish to live a discourse of ‘effective teaching’ which is smooth and without disruptions. Teachers are constantly living within *tensionality*, or as Aoki (1986/1991) calls it, the *zone of between*. Aoki (1986/1991) asks teachers to consider how tensionality “… allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck, and that tensionless strings are not only unable to give voice to songs, but also unable to allow a song to be sung” (p. 162). It is not so much a matter of overcoming and escaping the situation, but more so being able to dwell productively within it. Spaces of tension are places where learning can occur.

Cook (2009) used the term *productive equilibrium* to describe the inevitable state of imbalance experienced by a pre-service teacher entering a school as they navigate new relationships and contexts within the workplace. The following subsections are each a brief overview, although certainly not an exhaustive list, of literature surrounding potential tensionality that pre-service teachers may face as they enter the landscape of schools.

**Occupational Socialization Theory**

Socialization in the workplace may be a potential space of tension for pre-service teachers while learning to teach. Socialization has been linked to self-concept regarding the feeling of inclusion in a membership to a particular group with who they can identify (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009). Socializing forces can be thought of as invisible curricula, can be a powerful initiation into the culture of schools, and may be a space of tension for pre-service teachers as they navigate the landscape of schools.

Occupational socialization is a process by which we learn roles, expectations, and values that are associated with a particular occupation (Stroot & Williamson, 1993). Teaching as an occupation has its own socializing forces which may affect both beginning and experienced teachers in the profession. Teacher socialization is a term used to describe the factors and forces that influence a teacher’s beliefs, assumptions, and values (Lawson, 1983a). Early experiences in schools can greatly influence a pre-service teacher’s beliefs by challenging or reinforcing their understandings of what it means to be a teacher (Pike & Fletcher, 2014).

Using a framework developed by Lortie (1975), three kind of socialization that teachers face can be identified (Lawson, 1983a). *Acculturation* includes actions, beliefs, and value systems that are learned from birth that create and reinforce ideologies about professional conduct. *Professional socialization* is the process through which we learn and maintain values deemed ideal for teaching physical education. *Organizational socialization* is the process that serves to maintain traditional skills or routines that are valued by a school, organization, or institution and may work against change in order to maintain traditions. This framework is useful when considering how socialization influences pre-service teachers while learning to teach.

A review and synthesis of literature by Pike and Fletcher (2014) revealed promising findings about socialization in physical education. O*rientation,* a term named by Lawson (1983a; 1983b), describes a teacher’s beliefs and perspectives about physical education, their pedagogical practices, based on prior experiences and socialization, and the strategies that they use. Pike and Fletcher’s (2014) review of research found that prior to 2000 many prospective and established physical education teachers possessed a *coaching orientation*; their beliefs, goals, and visions closely aligned with coaching rather than teaching. Since 2000, researchers have found a noted shift in recruits of physical education teacher education programs from a coaching orientation toward a *teaching orientation*, with a focus on healthy living and the holistic development of the child (Pike & Fletcher, 2014).

This shift is promising; pre-service teachers may be entering the profession because they are attracted to teaching and not for other aspects, such as vacation time and coaching positions (O’Bryant et al., 2000). This position is supported by other researchers such as Curtner-Smith, et al. (2008), Griffin and Combs (2000), Richards and Templin (2011), and Stran and Curtner-Smith (2009) identified by Pike and Fletcher (2014) in their review of literature. Just as the above researchers found a shift in pre-service teachers, McCullick (2001) found a similar trend in practicing teacher’s orientations. In relation to socialization, the voices of teachers in the field are critical because of the influence that they may have with pre-service teachers during internships and the first years of teaching.

It is important to remember that pre-service teachers have agency and are not necessarily directed uncontrollably by socializing forces. Socialization is dialectic, a two-way process where pre-service teachers may actively try to shape the schools, programs, and universities that are continually shaping them. Lawson (1983a; 1983b) found that physical education teachers possessed one of three socialization strategies: *custodial* involves acceptance and internalization of elements of socialization without question or critique; *innovative* involves active attempts to change the socialization setting; *in-between* involves a custodial or innovative response to socialization.

**Identity Development**

Another example of tensionality that may be experienced by pre-service teachers, and directly related to socialization, is the shifting and always changing nature of a developing professional identity. Identity is not determined by a single factor; our lives are made up of many multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses (Richie & Wilson, 2000). A narrative view of identity believes that through experience and the telling and reliving of experiences, we shape our identities, our *stories to live by*. Stories to live by are stories that each of us live and tell that highlight the multiplicity of our lives (Clandinin, 2013). Knowledge is intertwined with identity. A narrative way of thinking about identity takes into consideration the interconnected and interrelatedness of past and present, and personal practical knowledge, and the landscape(s) on which a person lives and works.

Learning to teach is an ongoing journey that begins long before formal post-secondary education; pre-service teachers have already spent approximately 13,000 hours observing teachers by the time they enter teacher education (Britzman, 2003). This socialization process, referred to earlier as acculturation (Lawson, 1983a), is a process that constructs and reproduces what society believes ‘a teacher’ to be and, as a result, pre-service teachers already have begun to shape their stories to live by based on the discourses of public education. The reasons why people choose to become a physical educator have been termed a person’s *subjective warrant* (Lawson, 1983a) and can be influenced by their background and early experiences. Teacher education programs further shape pre-service teachers’ subjective warrants and notions of what it means to be a physical education teacher (Curtner-Smith, 2001; McCullick, 2001; Richards & Templin, 2011).

When pre-service teachers enter schools in a new role as educators, they must navigate the landscape of education from a new perspective and may find themselves in spaces of tension in relation to their stories to live by. The multiple discourses and where they intersect can be sites of tension but also can be productive sites of critical reflection and development – these spaces of tension can be a focal point for examination.

**Teaching of Physical Education**

Another example of tensionality that pre-service teachers may face while learning to teach is the concept of *curriculum*. Curriculum can be formal or informal, written or unspoken, traditional or innovative. As they learn to plan and implement meaningful, relevant, and unique learning opportunities for students, spaces of tension may arise when pre-service teachers realize that not all students are alike and not all situations call for the same action. Their own voice and stories to live by must be somehow recognized in their planning and day to day interactions. As well, often in a role of being evaluated, pre-service teachers must be mindful of the landscape of the school and beliefs or orientation of cooperating teachers. This concept can be discussed in terms of *curriculum-as-plan* and *curriculum-as-lived* (Aoki, 1986/1991) in relation to the tension(s) that pre-service teachers might experience while attempting to find a balance between both.

The *curriculum-as-plan* is a collection of statements of *intent* and *interest*, created by people with particular orientations to the world, with assumptions about learning and being, and with particular knowledge claims about how teachers and students understand. Aoki (1986/1991) says that “… ignored are the teachers’ own skills that emerge from the reflection on their experiences of teaching, and, more seriously, there is forgetfulness that what matters deeply in the situated world of the classroom is how the teachers’ “doings” flow from who they are, their beings … forgetfulness that teaching is fundamentally a mode of being” (p. 160). Yet, teachers must teach the curriculum-as-plan, a document that can feel constricting. This often becomes a balancing act between being and doing.

Teachers have unique life experiences, histories, autobiographies, and stories to live by. Students also enter into the classroom world with unique backgrounds, home lives, previous experiences, and voices. Curtner-Smith et al. (2008) acknowledged that students can be a powerful socializing force on pre-service and beginning teachers. Together students and teachers create and live out exceptionally distinct and varying versions of what physical education looks like. Aoki (1986/1991) calls this the c*urriculum-as-lived*. Each student is living out a story of what it is to live school life, and teachers, knowing the uniqueness of what it is like to live daily with them, navigate the curriculum-as-planned. Dwelling in the spaces between can be challenging, especially at a time when learning to teach, such as during internship.

**Mentoring**

Cothran et al. (2005) explain that “... teachers who receive mentoring are more likely to stay in teaching, be satisfied, hold better teaching attitudes, and implement more effective instructional practices and long term planning” (p. 328). Mentoring by teacher educators, teachers in the field, and colleagues can be an essential part of the growth and development of pre-service teachers, especially in the beginning years of the profession. The journey of learning to teach can be lonely and is often considered an individual act (Britzman, 2003). However, learning to teach is a social process of navigating one’s values, beliefs, and intentions, which are often countered by realities in schools, politics, curriculum, and tradition. Occupational socialization (Lortie, 1975), a pre-service teacher’s subjective warrant (Lawson, 1983a), and their shifting stories to live by on a complex landscape of school can create many spaces of tension.

A positive mentoring relationship can challenge a pre-service teacher, creating productive spaces of tension; they can provide guidance, act as a sounding board, help pre-service teachers learn about and implement formal curriculum, support taking risks and challenging dominant or traditional ways of teaching, and can help with nonteaching related issues that pre-service teachers face in the transition to the workplace. Professional collaboration, support, reflection, and role modeling provide tools for pre-service teachers (Cothran et al., 2005; Dodds et al. 2005; Griffin & Ayers, 2005; Stroot & Williamson, 1993).

**Tensions – In Relation to the Study**

The research puzzle named at the outset of the study was *what tensions do pre-service teachers experience in various contexts, at different times throughout the 16 weeks, and while working alongside many people in a landscape of education*? Further questions and wonderings surrounding the research puzzle emerged prior to and throughout the study such as how pre-service teachers experienced relational shifts as the semester moved forward, and how pre-service teachers might dwell in spaces of tension while learning to teach.

Each participant in the study experienced learning to teach physical education uniquely. However, they also shared some similar experiences which can be termed *threads of narrative connection* (Clandinin et al., 2006). Three threads of narrative connection that emerged through the participants’ experiences while looking across their stories were a) shifting stories to live by, b) teaching their way, and c) working alongside teachers.

The following section outlines the inquiry (methods) beginning with ethical considerations, context and participant selection. Living the inquiry (data collection) outlines what techniques and methods were used to collect field text. Creating research texts (analysis) explains the process of co-composition of the final text for publication.

**The Inquiry (Methods)**

Narrative inquiry work is always relational and involves institutional ethical matters but also a relational ethic through the way in which we engage with our participants. Besides obtaining ethical approval from the institution, ethical approval from two local school divisions was necessary before conducting research on school grounds. Other ethical considerations included maintaining meaningful relationships with participants throughout the study and maintaining an awareness of what the presence of a researcher in the school setting might influence. Prior to beginning the research, however, one of the first ethical decisions was regarding the choice of participants; selection is purposeful in relation to the emerging research puzzle and wonderings.

The participants in the study, Ali and Lauren, were two pre-service teachers who were well known to the researcher through teaching at the university. Each was a physical education major in the secondary education program in the Faculty of Education. Lauren had moved away from where she grew up to attend the university and play hockey on the varsity team. Ali had grown up in the city and remained living with her parents while she completed her degree. Both were in the same teacher education program but Lauren had started a year prior to Ali, taking less than a full course load to accommodate her hockey commitments. They entered their internship semester at the same time in the fall semester.

The teacher education program involved a progressive immersion into schools. Moving from one afternoon per week to one complete day per week in an elementary or middle level school, pre-internship in sixth semester included an entire three week ‘block’ in the secondary setting. Following this, in the seventh semester, was the 16-week internship in a secondary setting during which time pre-service teachers are expected to slowly build up their teaching load to full time. Ali and Lauren, in the opinion of the researcher, had challenged themselves throughout the teacher education program to dwell in space(s) of tension rather than turn their focus to teaching sport knowledge and content – planning and implementation skills that they had already learned and demonstrated. The researcher felt that Ali and Lauren would successfully be able to navigate the complex landscape of their 16-week internship but would also attempt to continue questioning space(s) of tension in relation to their stories to live by.

The researcher approached Lauren and Ali as pre-service teachers to work alongside because of our already-existing relationship and because of their questioning of curriculum-as-plan in relation to their developing professional identity. As a narrative inquirer, the researcher was aware that “...these relationships might be viewed as research contamination or criticized for the researcher studying people just like her ... yet from a relational standpoint, connections such as these offer richness and depth and allow insights that would otherwise not be possible” (Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 255).The researcher believed that the already existing relationships allowed the inquiry to begin more personally than had they just met at the outset.

**Living the Inquiry (Data Collection)**

Ali and Lauren agreed to meet at least once per month as a group and audio record (to later transcribe) the conversations. The researcher met with them together four times informally for one to two hours at a restaurant or at homes in the evenings. The four group conversations had no set questions or scripts but took on the form of an informal discussion, requiring listening, probing, and questioning for clarification (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Both Lauren and Ali agreed that they enjoyed the group conversations and found it interesting to hear stories of experience of the other. In addition to meeting once per month as a group, the researcher also met each of them one-on-one in their schools periodically so they could share their space(s), share some lessons and planning, and so the researcher could observe their teaching experiences if they wished.

The researcher collected *field texts* in the form of *field notes*, such as voice memos following school visits, observational notes, thoughts, questions, or reflections. Each note was not necessarily lengthy, but helped fill memory gaps and allowed the researcher to take a step back to further reflect at a later date (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Ali and Lauren shared *artifacts* such as lesson plans and internship evaluation documents. The researcher continued to engage in *journal writing* to keep track of thoughts, questions, and new or emerging wonders throughout the inquiry. Although time consuming and always interpretive, the researcher found the journals to be worthwhile by helping sort through puzzling experiences and to show patterns that emerged as time moved forward. The researcher shared some of these journal entries during our conversations. In addition, Ali and Lauren shared *critical incidents* from their teaching experiences.

One field text that was not anticipated was in the form of *text messages*. Clandinin (2013) explained how, “As we negotiate relational spaces with participants, including places and times to meet and events to become part of, we also negotiate a diversity of field texts. It is important as researchers to stay awake to the multiple ways to tell and live experiences” (p. 46). This reminder was helpful as the researcher attempted to remain attentive to the shifting nature of narrative inquiry. The group began to realize before internship even began that text messaging could be a convenient way to communicate schedules in order to plan ahead. However, text messaging emerged into a valuable field text; it became a way to keep in daily contact regarding events, experiences, emotions, and asking each other questions. Lauren and Ali said that when something happened at school, often their first reaction was to text message the researcher or the group (in a *group text message*, all participants can contribute to the conversation). The researcher recorded all text messages in a calendar format so that it could be recalled what had happened on which day. The researcher also added my reflections, thoughts, and/or questions beside each conversation.

**Creating Research Texts (Analysis)**

When the internships concluded, the researcher moved away from field texts and began writing *interim research texts* using a combination of transcriptions, text messages, field notes, and artitfacts in order to begin to make sense of all the field texts. The researcher talked to Ali and Lauren frequently after the semester had concluded but the group needed to find a way to move farther apart. By discussing in more detail the co-composition of interim research texts, the group was still able to engage in relational ways.

From the interim research texts, the group identified where actions/events occurred, story lines interwove, and gaps or silences were found. By “...considering all of the possible stories... or what we had lived as part of the inquiry process, [we] then chose specific stories of practice that seemed to [us] to be particularly relevant to the wonders about the experience... (Burwash, 2013, p. 64). Together the researcher with each of the participants highlighted particular narrative fragments, where space(s) of tension emerged through their stories of experience regarding learning to teach physical education.

Using the co-composed interim research texts, the researcher created *narrative accounts* for each Ali and Lauren. These were shared with each of them again, which “... allowed us to respond to each other’s tentative interpretations and representations in the narrative accounts...” (Clandinin, Steeves, & Li, 2010, no page). The researcher wanted to be sure that before moving ahead with *research texts* that Lauren and Ali agreed their respective narrative accounts were representational of their experiences. Once the narrative accounts had been co-composed for each Ali and Lauren, thinking about experiences that were identified as having relevance to the research puzzle (Burwash, 2013), the researcher looked across the narrative accounts for *threads of narrative connection.*

As the researcher looked across the narrative accounts, there was no attempt to generalize the experiences of all pre-service teachers but, rather, wonder about how Lauren and Ali’s stories of experience “...lie alongside each other or how they may bump up against each other” (Burwash, 2013, p. 233). The researcher recognized interrelationships between these resonant threads and with the research puzzle regarding Aoki’s (1978/1980) space(s) of tension between curriculum-as-plan, and curriculum-as-lived. As mentioned earlier, in this study, some threads of narrative connection that emerged through Ali and Lauren’s experiences while looking across the narrative accounts were *shifting stories to live by*, *teaching their way*, and *working alongside teachers*.

**Evaluating Qualitative Research**

It may be important to point out that even though certain terminology is not common in narrative inquiry work, many of the same criteria used to evaluate qualitative research was evident.

*Credibility* is a term that refers to how consistent the data, representation of data, and analysis of data is in relation to what participants actually meant to say (Mertler & Charles, 2005). Strategies used in this study to enhance credibility of a study were prolonged engagement in the field, consulting participants often and throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing processes, and acknowledging researcher biases at the outset. Although the term credibility is not used in narrative inquiry research explicitly, such strategies were inherent in this work.

*Confirmability* is another term that may be used to evaluate qualitative research that refers to how conclusions or interpretations have been reached. In narrative inquiry work, conclusions are not reached. Rather, further questions are developed. Since this may be a bumping up place between narrative inquiry work and other research methodologies, it is important not to ignore this space of tension. The use of transcripts from conversations and spoken words can be a strategy to demonstrate confirmability. As well, many direct quotations were used in the document in order to show readers the field texts and what was spoken in some shared experiences. Interpretations of the researcher are demonstrated as confirmable because of the back and forth and co-construction of research texts alongside Ali and Lauren.

*Dependability* “...attests that methods are systematic, well-documented, and designed to account for research subjectivities” (O’Leary, 2004, p. 58) and is another term often used to evaluate qualitative research. Documentation and collection of field texts, reasons and wonderings about decisions that were made, and references to methodological foundations for these processes were outlined throughout the research.

These terms used in qualitative research evaluation create spaces of tension with narrative inquiry work and bumping up places become evident. Rather than ignore this tension, these terms are discussed above. Although each thread of narrative connection could be presented and examined in great detail, constraints of publication do not allow for such an extensive review. Rather, the following section will briefly present narrative accounts (results) from each of the threads and make connections to literature in the field.

**Threads of Narrative Connection (Results)**

This section explores the three threads of narrative connection that emerged through Ali and Lauren’s narrative accounts. Some of Ali and Lauren’s stories of experience are shared in this section together with wonders that emerged in relation to the research puzzle of how learning to teach Physical Education is experienced by pre-service teachers during a 16-week internship.

**Thread - Shifting Stories to Live By**

*Shifting stories to live by* was a thread of narrative connection that emerged from living alongside the participants throughout their internship semester. Both entered the school setting with a teaching orientation but may not have worked with teachers who held a similar orientation.

**Lauren**

Lauren shared an experience from the first day of school when she had to share a space with another teacher who seemed unorganized:

…so I asked what gym she is in. She’s like, ‘I don’t know what gym I’m in today,’ so I decided to just make the call. I said, ‘well, we are going to gym number two right now and we are just going to go through some stuff so if you need half the gym we are not using it.’ And then she is like, ‘well I don’t know, I don’t even know where I am,’ so then she says, ‘I guess I will just take the girls out for soccer,’ and comes back with two balls. I’m thinking, ‘oh my god.’ So we walk the other way into the gym and I decide to try to get started with my stuff…

(Transcribed from group conversation, September 10, 2012)

Lauren storied herself as an organized person and said she cringed at the thought of another physical education teacher ‘just playing soccer’ on the first day of school. Lauren commented that perhaps the confusion had been a result of multiple teachers sharing the same space. Curtner-Smith (2001) found that scheduling or timetabling by school administrators was a challenge faced by Physical Education teachers but I also wondered if the scheduling had also been affected by a dominant discourse in schools that Physical Education was a less important subject area than academic subjects.

As Lauren worked alongside Physical Education teachers and learned about the school’s Physical Education program, she began to feel more familiar with some of the resources available to her. The subject area used a common text book but Lauren said:

…I don’t like using the tests and stuff from the textbook website because they’re not good enough. I would rather make my own quizzes or whatever that align more closely with what I have taught or what we have talked about in class.

(Written from school visit notes, September 21, 2012)

I remember feeling proud of Lauren for explaining to me her understanding of curriculum-as-lived in relation to curriculum-as-plan and assessment. This was something we spent a lot of time on in the undergraduate course I taught and I was happy to see that Lauren seemed to be able to transfer her experiences in class to her teaching in internship. I noticed her confidence seemed to be growing since the story of experience she had shared of her first day of teaching and feeling lost. Looking backward in time, Lauren later explained that:

I also think that because I was really nervous at the start. That helped. I seem to come across as more confident when I am more nervous. So I guess the students thought I was confident and strict. It worked out. When I’m nervous I am more loud and clear. More specific.

(Transcribed from group conversation, October 2, 2012)

Lauren said that she had been nervous at the start of the semester but came across as confident in front of the students. I wondered if Lauren had also been living a cover story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) at the start of the semester, outwardly portraying confidence but inwardly feeling lost and nervous. I wondered if she had become more comfortable as she spent more time teaching and was able to find a productive space of tension between feeling nervous and being prepared, no longer needing a cover story.

Regardless of other teachers’ orientations to teaching physical education, Lauren resisted and continued to demonstrate innovative responses to varying degrees of professional socialization.

**Ali**

Ali also felt tension in relation to her story to live by of how teaching was ‘supposed to be.’ She said that she wanted to:

... figure it out as I go... not always do things how they want me to ... or just doing what the teacher wants and not learning what works best for me. I think [Krista] has trouble backing off ... she told me how I am going to do my lesson. I didn’t tell her how I wanted to do it ...

(Text message, October 14, 2012)

She seemed to experience pressure to do things in certain ways, perhaps in order to uphold tradition or routines (Lawson, 1983a), often called organizational socialization. At the end of the semester Ali looked back and said:

…because at the beginning I was just always fluttering back to where Kelsey was sitting to talk to her about how the lesson was going and I shouldn’t have done that. That was my struggle at the beginning. If a student asked me something, my first reaction was to turn to Kelsey and ask her. So when Krista started out butting in and stepping in, it was kind of normal to me. But later on, it just got to be too much and I would have liked to have the class on my own.

(Transcribed from group conversation, December 6, 2012)

Ali seemed to identify a shift in her confidence over the course of the internship semester and an increased desire for independence. She mentioned that she felt the style of supervision by a few of her cooperating teachers did not align with her growing confidence and desire to be ‘in control’ of the class and figure things out for herself. This space(s) of tension between Ali’s curriculum-as-lived and her developing stories to live by seemed to be challenging for her.

Ali had articulated that she noticed her dependence on Kelsey at the start of the semester shifting to more independence as the semester progressed. Curtner-Smith (2001) explained that pre-service teachers often feel inadequately prepared for the landscape of teaching and learning and Lawson (1983b) further described this feeling as a disconnect between content of teacher education programs and what really happens in schools. I wondered about Ali’s feelings of preparation during the first few weeks and what Anspal et. Al (2012) called a primary concern for survival.

I was reminded of Aoki’s (1978/1980) concepts of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived and the *zone of between* where teachers might find themselves in space(s) of tension. I also wondered about Ali’s developing stories to live by and thought of Britzman’s (2003) explanation about how pre-service teachers “…are confronted not only with the traditions associated with those of past teachers and those of past and present classroom lives, but with the personal desire to carve out one’s own territory, develop one’s own style, and make a difference in the education of students” (p. 41).

Although socializing forces could be identified throughout the semester in various forms, both participants predominantly demonstrated innovative responses rather than accepting the socialization without question or critique. It was interesting to see both exercising their sense of agency and finding positive spaces of learning in the tensionality they experienced.

**Thread- Teaching Their Own Way**

Both Ali and Lauren strove to *teach their own way* and honour their stories to live by rather than unquestionably following their cooperating teachers’ lead. This isn’t to say that all of the cooperating teachers’ pedagogical practices were not teaching oriented; this was not the focus of the study. However, there was a wide variety in the beliefs of the cooperating teachers both in the ways they taught and the ways they mentored pre-service teachers.

**Lauren**

I thought about Lauren’s stories of experience while learning to teach during internship and her relationship with Sarah, a cooperating teacher she worked alongside:

So I was teaching tchoukball in Sarah’s class. We were on the third day or so and then after she asked how I thought it went. I said I had thought it went good. The kids understood the game, were catching on, we did a lot of talking through it and reviewing things. And then she says, ‘so what are you going to do about the girls in class?’ and I said, ‘what’s wrong with them?’ because I thought they were involved. She thought they weren’t participating enough and she was pressing me to get them involved. Her suggestion was putting competitive against non-competitive … I’m a competitive person and I would have probably really strived from that in school but I don’t think it is right with this group. I think that we should take advantage of the competitive kids in class and get them to work on bringing up those non-competitive kids to feel more confident and take part more. But she didn’t agree so I was like, ‘uh, okay so the non-competitive kids

are just going to sit on the side and watch the competitive kids and then they will go out

and feel like they are being watched by the competitive kids?’

(Transcribed from group conversation, November 14, 2012)

Lauren described how she taught the lesson and thought it went well. She said that Sarah had a different perspective on how to organize the class to encourage more involvement. I sensed that although Lauren did not agree with Sarah’s perspective, she did not want to appear disrespectful. Lauren told me that she anticipated the students would not respond well to Sarah’s method of handling the situation. Was Lauren dwelling in a space of tension between finding her own way and working productively with a cooperating teacher? I wondered if Lauren felt she would lose a certain degree of control if she taught the class the way Sarah suggested. Lauren continued to describe her tchouckball teaching experience:

Anyway, so the next lesson I put my focus on inclusion but not in the way she suggested. We went through the rules again and I said that the next two days of playing they will be marked on how well they focus on inclusion. Who you pass the ball to; you gotta bring everyone into the game. And maybe you don’t feel confident carrying the ball or holding the ball or whatever but the point is to bring the whole class up. So I put that huge spin on it and told them that we would be on the side watching and ticking off names. It was intense. They even asked if encouragement would help and so they were all so positive to each other and it worked so well!

(Transcribed from group conversation, November 14, 2012)

Lauren explained that she listened to Sarah’ suggestions the day before but decided to try something else. In her story of experience, Lauren did not agree with a suggestion Sarah had made regarding a way of teaching the class, so Lauren decided to try her own way of teaching the class. She grouped the students in a way that she thought would be effective and used a teaching strategy she had not tried yet. Lauren said in this story of experience that the students seemed to connect with her way of teaching and Sarah responded in a positive way.

In another story of experience, Lauren explained how she created her own calendar for sharing the teaching facilities even though the department had one created already:

The teachers here have to share the gyms and stuff so at the start of the year we all get this massive chart of who is where and when. I don’t really like the format that they use

so I retyped my own.

(Written from school visit notes, September 21, 2012)

Lauren described to me how she had created her own calendar to follow because she had found the common calendar confusing to follow. She also explained how she created her own quizzes that aligned more closely with her teaching rather than using the tests from the textbook website:

…I don’t like using the tests and stuff from the textbook website because they’re not good enough. I would rather make my own quizzes or whatever that align more closely with what I have taught or what we have talked about in class.

(Written from school visit notes, September 21, 2012)

Lauren seemed to story herself as an organized and prepared person, and said she did not mind creating her own materials. She said she felt more comfortable using materials that she had prepared and that more closely aligned with her way of teaching.

I thought about Lauren’s stories of experience and navigating curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived; she seemed to be trying to find a space to dwell between that reflected her own developing professional identity as well as respected the school’s and teachers’ ways of doing things. Lauren seemed to be exercising her sense of agency in response to professional socialization that she was facing in the school.

**Ali**

Ali felt she could not be perceived as the real teacher unless she was alone with the students and without supervision. Ali described how she felt about this space of tension in a group conversation:

...she won’t give up her class to me fully either. It’s that she is a ... powerful woman, so it’s hard for me to take over if she won’t let me take over. Maybe she feels like she has to be like that, if she doesn’t trust me yet?

(Transcribed from group conversation, October 2, 2012)

Although Ali expressed frustration with their relationship and her desire to have more control over the class, Krista often gave her positive feedback as well. Most often, this positive feedback was communicated after a lesson was complete and in an informal setting. Ali seemed to sense a disconnect between the positive feedback she received from Krista outside of class time and how she perceived Krista’s actions during class time.

Ali had a knee injury from the summer and said that after her knee healed and she began participating in the Physical Education classes she taught, she felt she connected more with the students in a relational way:

I had this huge moment the other day when we were playing basketball and the boys were just being insane and way too competitive so I split up the boys and girls. The girls played three on three on the two half courts and weren’t really doing much. So I went over there and said, ‘ok, let’s do four on four and then there is no sub,’ and I played with them. When I got involved their attitude and everything was totally different and they were like, ‘oh, Ms. Schultz, let’s one on one,’ so it was this huge relationship building piece for me. For them to see me involved with them.

(Transcribed from group conversation, November 14, 2012)

With this building confidence in her teaching and the relationships she was building, she seemed to feel more comfortable teaching. When we talked about her knee injury after internship had concluded and were talking about how her confidence might have been affected, Ali wrote:

The injury without me realizing it until after my internship, completely affected my confidence. I have always been a strong athlete and I took pride in being an athlete that could participate in any activity with high intensity, and for the first two and a half months, not being able to run and get involved, was a major shot to my confidence.

(Email, February 22, 2013)

As well, she said once she started coaching basketball after school, she felt the students in her classes who were also on the team were more open to her.

I am loving coaching. Really loving it. Now those girls are more open to me in class and stuff. And their personalities have changed toward me. I think that the management in class got a lot easier that way…

(Text message, December 6, 2012)

Ali said she felt her classroom management improved in grade nine Physical Education once she began to build relationships with students. I wondered about potential connections between Ali’s confidence in herself as a teacher, her relationship alongside Krista, and her desire to teach her own way.

**Thread- Working Alongside Teachers**

*Working alongside teachers* was both challenging and rewarding for the participants in the study. Although they were able to have productive professional dialogue with and received constructive criticism from most, challenges arose when the pre-service teachers did not align with the teaching orientation of the cooperating teacher or their stories to live by bumped into one another.

**Ali**

Ali shared that she did not feel she could fully take over the class. She also explained the tension(s) she felt– which she called adopting two philosophies and making her own – and Aoki (1978/198) called tensionality between curriculum-as-plan (Krista’s plan) and curriculum-as-lived (Ali’s hope to be ‘the teacher’). She explained this further and said:

I honestly think the hardest thing for me is adopting two philosophies and trying to make my own, because I’m with two different teachers right now. Kelsey and I are super comfortable and can talk about absolutely everything, but Krista I just feel is super judgemental and so strict that I got all worked up.

(Transcribed from group conversation, October 2, 2012)

Ali had began teaching Krista’s class in late September as part of her teaching load in addition to the class she was already teaching for Kelsey. We began by thinking with stories of experience from the end of the internship semester. This story was shared by Ali in December during a group conversation. Ali described the experience and space(s) of tension when she felt that her teaching was interrupted by Krista:

Normally, she would yell, ‘Ali!’ and then I’d have to stop what I am doing and go over to her, or she would stomp over to me, and then she will say in front of all the kids, ‘don’t do that,’ or whatever. The kids are noticing too. The other day a girl in the computer lab said after Krista walked away saying, ‘no, no, this is all wrong,’ this kid says, ‘Ms. Schultz, why is she always yelling at you? On Tuesday we were reviewing a handball handout I made and [Krista] was like, ‘no, this is all wrong,’ as I was sitting beside a girl on a computer ‘cause they have an assignment they’re working on. Then Krista left and the student turned to me, ‘why does she always get mad at you?’ She doesn’t even hold back, even in front of the kids...I don’t want to tell [Kelsey] everything and then she thinks I’m bashing. Because I’m not. Like, just the other day I said to Krista, ‘you’ve been more than willing to help me and lot of people just leave and do other things while the interns are teaching. So I don’t know what’s better or what’s worse. Someone who is in your face and just, ‘do this and this and this,’ or someone who just takes off and then when you need help, there is no one.”

(Transcribed from group conversation, December 6, 2012)

Ali shared that she was frustrated that Krista interrupted her. On the other hand, Ali said she was not sure if she preferred a cooperating teacher who was rarely present, such as Kevin (her Social Studies cooperating teacher). She told me that Kevin’s style of supervision was the opposite of Krista’s, and often he did not ask about what she was teaching that day. This seemed to bother her and she said she perceived his behaviour as a lack of interest.

Each of Ali’s cooperating teachers seemed to live out a different version of supervision and mentoring, which created a space of tension for her. I thought about how each cooperating teacher might interpret a process of supervising pre-service teachers differently. Looking backward to Ali’s text message about her perception of Krista having trouble ‘backing off,’ it seemed that Ali’s curriculum-as-lived and her story to live by of figuring out what works for her was bumping up against Krista’s style of supervision. I wondered about Bullough and Draper’s (2004) explanation of mentoring as a power negotiation of control over situations, and if Ali did not feel that she had control of her own teaching. In contrast, Ali had wished that Kevin provided more feedback about her teaching. I wondered if Ali felt that she was inadequately prepared, as Anspal et. Al (2012) identified as a common concern for pre-service teachers.

As I inquired further into Ali’s stories of experience and her internship semester while learning to teach, tensions surrounding wanting to figure out what is best for her seemed to bump into discourses about mentoring and supervision styles of cooperating teachers.

**Lauren**

Lauren shared a story of an experience from one of the first days of the 16-week internship semester. Although she was working primarily alongside Janay as her cooperating teacher and had attended the internship seminar with her, Janay’s teaching schedule had been shuffled on the first day of school because of her semi-administrative position which required her to teach three classes each day instead of four. This extra preparation period provided time for her to attend to school-wide responsibilities outside of the classroom. As a result of the shuffled schedule, Lauren and Janay asked three other teachers if Lauren could teach their courses in order for her teaching load to be full. As mentioned earlier, pre-service teachers are required to teach one class from the beginning of the 16-week semester until the end, while gradually adding more classes to their schedule throughout the semester. For a three-week period of time the pre-service teacher would have a full teaching load before gradually getting back to only one class per day. It was agreed that Lauren was going to work alongside Brad, a first year teacher, in the grade nine female Health Education and Physical Education class that he taught during the last period of the day. As well, Lauren was going to work alongside Sarah, a teacher who was in her fifth year of teaching, in a grade ten female Wellness class. Wellness was a course that combined Physical Education and Health Education into one semester.

Lauren seemed nervous about the shuffle of Janay’s schedule because she was working with more than one teacher. In my experience as a cooperating teacher and faculty advisor, pre-service teachers often work with two cooperating teachers in order to gain experience in both their major and minor areas of study. Lauren expressed her feelings in a text message:

There was this shuffle of teachers at school start up and now Janay is not in charge of my period 5 class. Instead Brad is the teacher for that class. And now I will have 3 different evaluators for my IPP. Will this end up being more work for me?

(Text message, September 10, 2012)

Lauren referred to the Internship Placement Profile (IPP), an assessment tool for cooperating teaches and pre-service teachers to work on throughout the semester. Lauren seemed concerned that working alongside three cooperating teachers would be more work for her. However, in my experiences it is the cooperating teachers who set aside time to discuss the pre-service teacher’s IPP at appropriate times and the process does not require extra time on the part of the pre-service teacher; the primary cooperating teacher usually coordinates the organization of the group. I shared my experiences regarding the IPP with Lauren and she seemed more at ease about working alongside three cooperating teachers.

When describing her relationships with each of her cooperating teachers, Lauren said that Janay “… has very similar outlooks on Physical Education as me” (Text message, October 31, 2012). About Brad Lauren said, “I thought we’d totally be on the same page how we kind of teach” (Transcribed from school visit conversation, December 11, 2012) but felt like they did not agree on many things. Lauren looked back on her relationship with Sarah and said:

Sarah doesn’t really see things the same. But things have been so much better. Honestly, I don’t know what it was at the start, maybe she was trying to be a little bit tougher and test me a bit, but then she completely was like, ‘have at ‘er,’ and left me all the time.

(Transcribed from school visit conversation, December 11, 2012)

Lauren described how she perceived their progressing relationship over the semester and that she was able to teach how and what she wanted by the end of the semester.

Both Ali and Lauren worked alongside multiple cooperating teachers who supported them in various ways and at differing levels. Although these multiple relationships created spaces of tension for them as they navigated unique orientations to teaching and different approaches to mentoring, both participants were able to learn and grow from what could have been potentially negative situations.

**Discussion and Further Wonderings**

Presented in the section above are only a few of the stories of experience that Ali and Lauren shared throughout their internship semester while learning to teach. With a turn back to the literature in relation to the stories shared above, we may be able to see connections and begin to ask more questions about how learning to teach is experienced by pre-service teachers and how we may be able to support them. The sections below present some connections and wonderings that I, as the researcher, have considered and perhaps readers will share similar questions.

**Shifting Stories to Live By**

As mentioned in earlier, it is generally agreed that that identity is dynamic and ongoing, not stable, involves multiple identities, and is developed among the presence of others within various contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lofstrom, 2010; Mooney, 2007; Schepens et al., 2009). Thinking from a narrative inquiry standpoint, I wondered about Lauren and Ali’s stories of experiences and thought about how their stories to live by seemed to shift over the course of the 16-week internship. I was reminded that stories to live by are a continual process over time and that identity is never determined by one single factor, person, or idea (Richie & Wilson, 2000). Multiple discourses and where they intersect can be space(s) of tension, and I sensed that both Lauren and Ali experienced multiple discourses as they worked alongside many people in the context of school. I was also reminded that stories to live by involve agency and that each person will differ in how they deal with the landscape of school, teaching, and learning.

As I thought about these emerging wonders, I imagined possible ways that learning to teach could be different. I wondered about how stories to live by shift and develop, and what learning to teach might look like if experiences and curriculum-as-lived were thought to be of equal value as curriculum-as-plan. How might pre-service teachers be able to dwell in the space(s) of tension between each and find a balance while simultaneously hearing both? Would Ali and Lauren’s experiences have been different if they had sensed that it was okay to be nervous or not ‘know’ everything? How might a culture of busy-ness in schools be preventing pre-service and beginning teachers from finding the support they need? These questions and wonders about shifting and developing stories to live by could be for future inquiries.

**Teaching Their Way**

I was reminded of an explanation of how pre-service teachers can be caught between tradition and change. Britzman (2003) said pre-service teachers “… are confronted not only with the traditions associated with those of past teachers and those of past and present classroom lives, but with the personal desire to carve out one’s own territory, develop one’s own style, and make a difference in the education of students” (p. 41). I wondered about Lauren’s and Ali’s desire to teach their own way and carve out their own territory. I thought about space(s) of tension or borderland spaces between teaching curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived.

I felt uncomfortable as I thought about tradition and socialization in relation to learning to teach and experiences of pre-service teachers. I wondered about what Lawson (1983a) called professional socialization where teachers acquire and maintain the values, skills, and knowledge deemed ideal by teacher education programs. On a larger scale, Lawson (1983a) talked about organizational socialization and how new and experienced teachers acquire and maintain ideologies valued and rewarded by the organization. I wondered about perceived competency and how pre-service teachers might feel limited by tradition and socialization. Aoki (1984) described competency as a perception often oriented toward efficient control. This means to an end view of competence reduces teachers and students “… from beings-as-humans to beings-as-things,” (p. 129) and is an unfair way to judge pre-service teachers.

I wondered about dominant discourses in physical education about perceived teaching competence. Are pre-service teachers given permission to try teaching their own way, honoring their stories to live by and curriculum-as-lived? Do discourses of perceived competence in teacher education and schools silence pre-service teachers? I wondered about open dialogue and continual reflection about how or why teachers act and think certain ways and what is regarded as competence. I also wondered about teacher education programs supporting pre-service teachers as they navigated space(s) of tension in relation to teaching their own way. I wondered about starting with experience, personal practical knowledge, and how pre-service teachers might examine and question traditional ways of teaching while working alongside cooperating teachers and students, creating their own style and making a difference in the lives of students.

**Working Alongside Teachers**

As I thought about stories of experience shared by Ali and Lauren and the thread of working alongside teachers, I considered the term mentor and wondered about its relation to cooperating teachers. Mentoring involves a “… shared intellectual, ideological, political, personal, and emotional journey” (Chawla & Rawlins, 2004) and is a term used in many contexts among many professions. Although the first few years of learning to teach are critical in a teachers’ career and that “…teacher mentoring may reduce the early attrition of beginning teachers” (Odell & Ferraro, 1992), I wondered about differences between mentors and cooperating teachers. Posden and Denmark (2007) said that mentoring is usually a sustained relationship between a ‘novice’ and an ‘expert’ in the profession that is established in order to provide help, support, and guidance while learning and developing skills.

I felt uncomfortable with Posden and Denmark’s (2007) description of the ‘novice’ and the ‘expert’ in a mentoring relationship. I wondered about what assumptions are made when pre-service teachers work alongside cooperating teachers. Are cooperating teachers perceived as experts and if this is the case, what makes them experts? Do years of experience produce expertise? I thought about the cooperating teachers in Ali’s and Lauren’s stories of experience during internship and the number of years each had been teaching. I wondered about labelling a cooperating teacher as an expert teacher who works with a pre-service or novice teacher, according to Posden and Denmark’s (2007) description of mentors. I wondered if a discourse exists in teacher education and schools that cooperating teachers must be experts, and if this discourse influences how cooperating teachers work alongside pre-service teachers. I wondered about questioning and troubling the discourse of ‘good’ supervision and being an expert and how this discourse might be renegotiated and restoried to value a teacher’s and a pre-service teacher’s background, experiences, and knowledge.

**Summary of Wonderings**

Through this narrative inquiry about experience of per-service teachers while learning to teach physical education during a 16-week internship, more questions emerged. Narrative inquiry work does not create conclusions but rather generates more wonderings for our work as educators.

I wondered about shifting stories to live by and imagined a landscape of school where curriculum-as-lived is considered as valuable as curriculum-as-plan. I wondered about a dominant discourse that places teachers in an all-knowing positionality; I thought how personal practical knowledge could be restoried to have teachers-as-learners, experience as value, and with always shifting and developing stories to live by. I also wondered about a culture of busy-ness in schools that potentially perpetuates a lonely and isolated feeling, especially for beginning and pre-service teachers seeking support. I imagined how this culture could be shifted and the school could become a place of collaboration between pre-service teachers, teacher educators, teachers, and students.

I wondered about Ali’s and Lauren’s stories of experience and the thread of wanting to teach their own way. I thought about teacher education and landscapes of schools, teaching competence and why teachers are expected to act or think in certain ways. I imagined a collaborative environment where students, pre-service teachers, teachers, and teacher educators create open dialogue about perceived competence that challenges traditional perceptions of competence while honoring experiences and curriculum-as-lived. I also imagined a landscape of teaching and learning where teacher education programs and schools help support pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers navigate the 16-week internship by providing a space for ongoing dialogue.

A thread of narrative connection that emerged throughout the inquiry and in Ali’s and Lauren’s narrative accounts was working alongside teachers. I wondered about these space(s) of tension and the relational aspect of teaching and learning. I thought about the connections with other threads of narrative connection, as they overlapped and bumped up against dominant discourses in schools and teacher education in borderland spaces. I wondered about connections between Ali and Lauren wanting to teach their own way and working alongside teachers. I thought more about how teacher education programs might work alongside teachers and pre-service teachers in open dialogue regarding learning to teach. I wondered about being a coopering teacher and what it means to be a ‘good’ cooperating teacher, according to dominant discourses in schools. I imagined an internship seminar made possible by universities and school divisions. It could be ongoing throughout the semester to facilitate dialogue about mentoring and how it can be lived out and supported. I wondered about these new imaginings in relation to stories to live by and a journey of learning together.

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