A collaborative retrospective analysis of becoming teacher educators

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Abstract

This self-study describes two junior teacher educators' retrospective analysis of stories they told themselves and others during the first years of their practice. Using the tools of narrative analysis and a Living Theory framework, we engaged in a re-analysis of our reflective journals and our students' anonymous feedback in order to interrogate our current concepts of self and practice in relationship to those we espoused as we entered the academy. Our re-analysis showed our early perceptions have shifted, informed by our growing understanding of our roles and contexts. Reconsidering early student feedback illuminated consistencies and contradictions between the stories we told ourselves and our students' perceptions. This study has significance for novice teacher educators and others who find themselves in new academic positions. Reanalysis and reflection of this nature can increase teacher educator efficacy. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of collaboration and the value of self-study as tools for the development of emerging teacher educator-researchers.

Keywords: Narrative Inquiry; Teacher Education; Student Voice; Collaboration

Background

We, Valerie and Laurie, met and became friends during our doctoral work at a large Western university in the USA. At that time, nearly 10 years ago, Valerie had been a junior high language arts teacher for 12 years and had recently transitioned to a position as an elementary school principal. Laurie had been teaching middle school language arts for nine years and had just begun teaching a course at the university for prospective teachers. In 2008, Valerie began her tenure track position at a small, private liberal arts institution in the Northeast. Her students are elementary education undergraduates who are predominately female, white, upper middle class, of traditional college age, and from the Northeast. In 2009, Laurie became an assistant professor at a moderately large state institution in the Southeast. She works with undergraduate and master's level middle level education students, the majority of whom are also female and white. While nearly 85% of Laurie's students come from within the state, there is a wider range of socioeconomic diversity and age, particularly among the graduate students.

As novice professors starting our respective university positions, we decided to systematically examine our initial experiences and reflections as we navigated our new professional identities. At the time, we committed to sharing with one another our experiences and reflections through online journaling and extensive student feedback/evaluation. Mutual trust enables us to be honest with one another about inconsistencies between our ideals and actions as educators and to challenge each other's experiences and 'stories' (Berry & Crowe, 2009; Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993; Mitchell, Weber, & O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2005; Taylor & Coia, 2009). We saw this relationship as an opportunity to research our shared commitment to improving our practice as teacher educators and to involve our students in that process (Walton, 2011). Students' voices, we believe, should be a key component to our analysis, and we endeavored to involve them in a "partnered practice" and as an integral part of our "feedback loop" (Berry & Crowe, 2009, p. 86; Samaras, 2011, p. 93). Three years later, we began the process of re-analyzing all the data from our novice years, investigating our lived experiences, shared reflections, and student feedback from our current perspective.

Two questions guide this inquiry:

- What were the stories we were telling ourselves initially and how do they compare to those we tell now?

- How did/do they compare to how our students have seen us?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, we unite the research traditions of self-study, narrative inquiry, and living-educational-theory. Self-study research emphasizes identifying, examining, and reframing teacher education practices in an effort to improve pedagogy (LaBoskey, 2004). Self-study is often conducted in collaboration; as teacher educators challenge their understandings about teaching and learning and develop identities as teacher educators, they do so with the help of trusted colleagues and friends (Schuck & Segal, 2002; Taylor & Coia, 2009). Williams, Ritter, and Bullock (2012) provide an overview of 60 self-study teacher education researchers who have

shared their journeys into the academy. Interestingly, their review shows no evidence of a study that specifically addressed the use of student voice and feedback in their analysis of practice and their transition from teacher to teacher educator. Our study, therefore, is uniquely positioned to contribute to the literature on teacher educator induction. As teachers, and now teacher educators, committed to being responsive to student needs, we value the interconnectedness of our experience with that of our students. Allender (2001) views the study of learning to teach as primarily a "task of self-development," one that intertwines our personal stories with those of our students in order to better understand our teacher selves (p. 1). Writing and sharing our successes, failures, questions, and responses, and sharing them all with students, have been opportunities for greater self-knowledge and have sustained our commitment to change (Kirk, 2005; Perselli, 2005).

Narrative inquiry is a way to understand experience as "stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). More specifically, it is a process between researchers and participants, over time, in multiple spaces, and in collaboration, of "living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives" (p. 20). As new teacher educator-researchers, our "stories" existed in a time and space bound by our new professional contexts, as well as our personal experiences within them. Progressing through the first years, we called upon students and each other to serve as "response communities"; that is, we asked others to read narratives of our experiences and respond in ways that helped us analyze them from other perspectives or meanings (p. 60). Now as fifth and sixth year teacher educators, we returned to these stories, rereading and retelling, and in some ways reliving, them as we reconstruct our professional identities in response to a transformed worldview (Childs, 2005). Narrative inquiry, then, serves as a focus of this self-study, drawing on our stories, then and now, read in "recursive spirals," allowing continued examination of our practice (Berry & Loughran, 2005, p. 178).

Our ongoing narratives have provided us the opportunity to (re)assess and (re)analyze our fidelity to our initial espoused beliefs about teacher education. At times, our beliefs and values have been challenged by the conditions of our institutional contexts as well as our own feelings of uncertainty or insecurity. Living Educational Theory provides a framework for explaining educational influences and how they contribute to our learning and the learning of others (Whitehead, 2008). Walton (2011) asserts that a key component of Living Educational Theory research is its "commitment to paying attention to the congruence between values and action" (p. 576). As we examine our practices for such congruence, we create theories which then further influence practice; thus, teaching becomes a catalyst for learning (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006; Walton, 2011). The narratives we have constructed and told over the years have changed with telling and retelling and the meaning we ascribe to them is continually evolving.

Methods and Data Sources

The primary data sources for this study were our own online journals spanning a two-year period and submitted every two to three weeks in a private web-based conference space. Our journals allowed regular cross-country 'conversations' to occur, with the option to reply and respond at any time even though we were in different regions of the country. Although some researchers are wary of using their own journals as 'field texts', Clandinin and Connelly

(2000) argue that they are a valid data source that provides a "reflective balance" of our lived experiences and subsequent notes (p. 104). While these entries are from 2009–2010, we felt returning to them would allow us to reflect and assess our 'stories'. Manke and Allender (2006) suggest that it is in returning to our writings and looking at them differently that they become "artifacts" which can be re-analyzed again and again, each time providing a deeper understanding of what they (and perhaps we) want to say (p. 262). Like Manke and Allender, we endeavored to enter into a dialogue with our past and listen to what it has to tell us about whom and where we are now.

Returning to these artifacts, we re-read them and re-analyzed them from both a more 'insider' and 'outsider' perspective. As we navigated our respective positions, we gained an insider perspective, growing more skilled at our work and learning through experience. Yet, over time, we have developed a perspective of our early years that is more 'outsider' as it has become more far removed. This "meeting of ourselves in the past through inquiry" helps us realize how we have shaped and formed the space we now inhabit (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 60) and allows us to better understand our current positions (and potential futures). As we revisit our past selves and past practices, we are more fully aware of the theories we have constructed and how they have influenced our work and selves. We can see that our "present best thinking" then is vastly different from what it is today, which may very well be vastly different tomorrow (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 2).

In addition to our journals and the stories within them, we gathered feedback from students during the same timeframe. These data include informal anonymous mid- and end-of-course questionnaires about our teaching, as well as formal evaluations required by our institutions. These instruments were adapted from Brookfield (1995) and were used with permission. We returned to these data in an effort to learn how our respective students have storied us over the course of our emergence as teacher educators. Have/do their stories corroborate, complicate, or contradict the stories we have told about ourselves? For us, researching our teaching practice necessarily involves student perspectives, as students' narratives are essential in informing our living-theories and emerging practices (Walton, 2011).

Results and Discussion

Three predominant threads emerged in the stories we told ourselves and one another during the first years of our practice. Consistent with numerous other beginning teacher educators (Arizona Group, 1994; Bullock & Ritter, 2011; Hu & Smith, 2011; Patrizio, Ballock, & McNary, 2011), we experienced and talked about our sense of being ill-prepared for our new professional responsibilities. Although for us it was more a sense of feeling alien, unsure of how to become credible and competent as teacher educators in unfamiliar landscapes. Additionally, we, like our peers above, felt the tension of balancing our new professional responsibilities with our personal lives. Finally, we articulated the ways in which we were coming to create our identities as teacher educators. For each of these threads we have included data clips from our journals juxtaposed with excerpts from student anonymous feedback. In some instances, our students corroborated our stories; in others they complicated them; and, at times, they contradicted what we reported.

Navigating as Newcomers.

Valerie

> Here I am beginning my second year and feeling a little more comfortable that I know what I'm doing and I have the capacity to actually be of service to my students. Last year was a steep learning curve. The most difficult aspects were trying to gain a sense of the culture at my institution and the small town community where it is located. Most of my students come from fairly affluent circumstances (very different from my own childhood). They are almost all White, of traditional college age, and involved in sororities/fraternities, clubs, and sports. (V. A. Allison-Roan, personal communication[1], August 22, 2009)

> - Was always there to help with any concerns.
> - Whenever people had questions, Valerie answered them and no one was overlooked. Feelings were valued. (Student comments, personal communication, Fall 2009)

Re-analysis

Reading back through my Blackboard posts from Fall 2009, I am struck by the story they tell of my position in my new communities (on campus and in town). I had already been there a year and yet continued to feel I was at the periphery. In my courses, I had begun to feel more at home and in a better position to serve my students. But even there, I recognized a divide between my students and me. Because I had not yet ventured to share details of my childhood with students, they were largely unaware of this difference that occupied the classroom with us. For me, it loomed large. In contrast, looking back through students' feedback on my instruction, a predominant theme is appreciation for my efforts to create a nurturing classroom environment, supporting them as learners. This stands in sharp contrast to the isolation I felt being a newcomer and the uncertainty I experienced in my practice as a teacher educator.

Laurie

> This first semester of my professorial career, I will be teaching two sections of a brand new course. I'm really excited, but also a little intimidated. It's never been taught before because there was no need. Recent demographic shifts have led to a need for ESL instruction and diversity training. That's where I come in. I'm the 'diversity person'. I'm a Latina but I don't consider myself truly Latina in that I did not grow up speaking Spanish and do not live the lifestyle, if you will. To be held up as a kind of 'representation' of the Latina experience is odd to me. But, I am the 'expert' in diversity and culturally responsive teaching here and I hope to live up to the expectations that they all have of me. (L. A. Ramirez, personal communication, August 21, 2009)

> - How supported the instructor made me feel because of her strong knowledge of diversity; it made a great impact on me to learn more about it.

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[1]   Research journal

- [She] is very helpful and assertive – she wants to help her students learn and grow! (Student comments, personal communication, Fall 2009)

Re-analysis

Looking back, I realize the story I was telling was a way to relinquish responsibility. Notice my use of quotations - I positioned myself as a non-expert in a set of circumstances outside my control. The intimidation, fear, and uncertainty are clear in this story, which now reads as a woeful tale. I see how I created a scenario where failure would not be my fault, rather than facing the challenge head-on. I wonder: Did this story I then told myself compel me to try harder or simply excuse myself? And how much of that story did my students read? In student feedback from the same semester, a pattern emerged – they felt I was knowledgeable, relevant, and engaging. This directly contradicted how I viewed my teaching and expertise. This, and similar comments, have bolstered my confidence and positively impacted my teaching and attitude toward my work.

In graduate school we had been insiders: in the institution and communities we worked with in our roles as clinical instructors and student teaching supervisors. Furthermore, there had been a safety net of peers and faculty who knew us and knew how to support us. We benefited from regularly held cohort meetings and dialogue with faculty who had mentored many previous graduate students who had worked in the same capacities. When we finished graduate school and moved to our tenure-track positions thousands of miles away, we were supposed to know and do many of the same things. The important difference was being in unfamiliar environments where we did not initially understand the structure of our institutions, the fine details of our new states' influences on teacher education, or the norms and values of our new communities. We had both lived virtually our whole lives in one place and had never had to actively work at navigating as newcomers. Doing so was emotionally taxing, particularly when combined with our professional responsibilities and the circumstances of our personal lives. Ultimately, the stakes for our professional success were higher as tenure track faculty than they had been as graduate students.

Personal vs. Professional – Finding the Balance

Valerie

It has been terribly hectic in my life this semester between professional and personal factors! It feels like I'm simultaneously wishing I could stop the progression of time and holding my breath until the semester ends and I get a little down time. Between my husband's ongoing health issues, my father's death last winter and my son's father's sudden death last month, as a family we've been pretty overwhelmed with challenges!

On campus we're involved in a search for a science/math educator …Additionally, we are restructuring our program to align with new (and invasive) guidelines from the state at the same time our liberal arts requirements have been revamped. Lots of time has gone into developing syllabi for courses that have never been taught… work that feels like a waste of time. Will it be remembered when it's time for me to go up for tenure? (V. A. Allison-Roan, personal communication, April 14, 2010).

- I think that the instructor should be more open minded to students and their thoughts and ideas as well as what they might have going on outside of class.

- Teacher is always responsive. I think her background allows for this.

- I feel like the instructor was very responsive to us and was interested in our concerns if we had any. (Student comments, personal communication, Fall 2009)

Re-analysis

I am now somewhat amused by the summary of my life and work that I record in my journal and by students' feedback on my teaching from the semester my father died. The crises I experienced were invisible to my students, since I did not disclose them, but they were present in my classroom and in my interactions with students. In some ways I found it difficult to always authentically empathize with the problems students shared because they seemed trivial. I do not think it would have been appropriate to share the full weight of the crises in my personal life with students; however, in retrospect, it was not helpful to keep those matters completely concealed. Who knows, it might have been a worthwhile experience that students could have drawn on, as they will likely face similar events at the intersection of their personal and professional lives.

While human resource policies at my institution would have allowed me to take time off to deal with family matters, I worried doing so would be perceived as me being 'high maintenance', and so I did not. Instead, I put forth extra effort in order to give those around me the impression I was unflappable. It was not healthy and in the end had negative consequences for my family and my health. Now, as I am on the cusp of taking on leadership responsibilities in my department, I am committed to working with junior colleagues to ensure they do not fall victim to the same mindset and perceptions of our institution.

Laurie

I had an entire week (first week of October) during which I was VERY sick. I missed all classes that week and really have huge chunks of time that are just lost. This is one of the toughest things about being in a small, unfamiliar community. No idea where to get medical/dental assistance, where to purchase medicine, etc. My unofficial mentor and her graduate assistant came to pick me up and drive me to the doctor – embarrassing! (L. A. Ramirez, personal communication, October 19, 2009).

- Very responsive and understanding of unexpected issues outside the classroom.

- She was more than willing to do whatever she could to help.

- We were always allowed to voice our concerns and professor would listen and give advice and words of encouragement. (Student Comments, personal communication, Fall 2009)

Re-analysis

I am shocked to look back at these journals and the student comments because of the lack of personal detail that I shared with anyone, even my trusted colleague and friend. The sickness I allude to was much worse than I describe, even requiring a trip to the emergency room. Students seem to not have noticed a change in me, but perhaps they just did not yet know me well enough. They did note my willingness to help, listen, and encourage, perhaps

because I was wishing for those things myself as a neophyte. What is most interesting is that there is no mention at all of the tumult in my home life. The move to a new job and a new town caused great strain on my marriage of only one year, none of which I admitted in my journal entries. The story I was telling the world was that I was strong and that my personal and professional lives were not affecting one another. This story was completely fictitious and yet I seem to have been convincing in my act.

Identity Development

Valerie

> It's hard to be the new kid on the block, especially if you're following someone who was really well liked! It's really hard to develop enough background knowledge about a program and its students -- when you are new to the community having come from a very different context -- to be really effective and seen as credible. And some groups just have 'personalities' that are hard to build bridges with.

> This year, I'm feeling very differently about setting my seniors loose. I'm going to really miss working with them. The dynamic in the group is friendly and supportive of one another and me. I'm excited to see them teach, but I will miss the group discussions and the laughter that has frequently peppered them – even when addressing very serious topics. Earlier this week, two of them opted to summarize their views/ideals on inclusive education by performing an original rap song for the class. Funny stuff and very thoughtful! (V. A. Allison-Roan, personal communication, October 14, 2009)

- Positive, teaching methods were immediately altered after we journaled about varying techniques.

- Still kept with certain instructions even if students had concerns with them. (Student comments, Fall 2009)

- I'm surprised by how much I am learning! I thought I knew a lot about literacy from Literacy I but I realize I have much more to learn.

- I thought we would go more in depth w/ literacy & sometimes I feel like we are repeating Literacy I too often. (Student Comments, personal communication, Spring 2010)

Re-analysis

My learning to be a teacher educator and developing my identity as one involved, in some ways, shedding my old identity as a principal and establishing myself as someone new. Students during the first year resented that they did not get to have the instructor I replaced. Initially, I tried to mimic her practices but was a poor substitute. In my second year I gave up the charade, had a more developed understanding of students and their needs and was more willing to risk being myself in my classroom. I revamped my syllabi and aligned them with my values that learning should be interactive and is enhanced when there is a strong sense of community. I continually worked to solicit and respond to students' feedback about their learning experiences.

While most students evaluated my efforts positively, inevitably there were always some whose expectations I simply did not meet. Brookfield (1995) cautioned teachers to not succumb to the temptation to be universally loved and appreciated. None of us will ever be all students' ideal teacher. This does not mean we can fail to encourage students' voices or discount the messages they convey. It does mean there must be balance and critical reflection on all data about our practice. As time goes by I am becoming more adept at considering students' anonymous feedback along side other lines of evidence about my work.

Too often in the first years of my practice my goal was to have my students feel satisfied and happy. This caused me to err on the side of being supportive over being challenging. As I have more fully embraced my identity as a teacher educator who is committed to social justice, I have prioritized the goals that my students experience disequilibrium, are prompted to question their assumptions and tacit beliefs, and wholeheartedly consider how they will work with their future students in ways that are empowering to them all.

Laurie

> As far as my own professional development is concerned, I think this semester was MUCH more productive and less stressful than Fall was. I feel like I was much more 'clued in' to what was going on and hopefully lost that deer-in-the-headlights look I felt was becoming permanent. I felt much more able to contribute to my middle grades team in meetings and even made a comment in faculty meeting for the first time! I think in some ways I really had to set aside my ego... It was difficult at first, especially as a new faculty member, to 'put myself out there' and ask for help, advice, feedback, and discuss the successes and challenges of the course as it was taught for the first time ever. A couple of the students from the class also gave some input and that was really helpful. They are great to work with. I am, after these past 8 months, feeling like part of the team and feeling that I am making a positive contribution, not only to the students, but to the program and the college as well. (L. A. Ramirez, personal communication, May 26, 2010)

- Do what Laurie does and be yourself always.
- Laurie was so thought provoking and challenging. (Student comments, personal communication, Spring 2010)

Re-analysis

In the first two semesters of my professorship, I remained silent. I did not feel that I had any expertise to offer or contribution to make. Not until the final few weeks of the academic year did I feel that I could utilize my voice and be heard. It still required some daring and did not come easily. The most surprising part was that the reception was welcomed and appreciated. I had successfully shifted into a new identity – I was a college professor. The move from classroom teacher to graduate student to assistant professor was complete. As summer approached, I felt much more knowledgeable and aware of the demands of my new position. More importantly, I felt more confident and willing to change and grow with the help of others. Gone was the guise of strength and the impenetrable shell I had adopted eight months earlier. I had developed a willingness and ability to be vulnerable, asking students for

input and seeking advice from colleagues. I was becoming a more honest version of myself and telling a more truthful story. My student commented that I was always myself; while I do not believe that was true, it was simultaneously a compliment and a challenge. Since that first year, I have striven to be more authentic in both my personal and professional lives and I believe that has positively impacted on all aspects of my life.

Conclusions

Research suggests that new teacher educators take about three years to establish their teacher-researcher identities (Bullock & Ritter, 2011; Murray & Male, 2005). Early on, pressures of the academy often require teacher educators to shift their focus away from teaching, toward service and research. In our experience and in the contexts in which we found ourselves, this was not exactly the case. Rather, as new faculty in departments or programs undergoing major changes and personnel turnover, we were required to devote significant time to service, in some ways compromising the attention we could focus on teaching and scholarship. After successfully navigating third-year reviews, we seized the opportunity to intentionally, purposefully focus on our teaching, turning back and reflecting on where we are now compared to where we began. We returned to our early journal entries and student feedback, reanalyzing them with new eyes. This was a conscious decision to refocus and attend to improving our teaching while engaging in meaningful scholarly activity.

The brief examples of the data and reanalysis provided in this study demonstrate how we, as novices in new contexts, told our stories to ourselves and others. Because our journals were personal, between trusted friends, we spoke plainly about our vulnerabilities and the incongruities we found in ourselves, our contexts, and our expectations. "It is in our everyday language that we are most likely to lay bare our taken-for-granted assumptions, casually or unthinkingly revealing deep difference in the stances and values of our research, and perhaps of ourselves" (Mitchell & Weber, 2005, p. 5). As we returned to our stories and those of our students, we were able to engage in dialogue with them, remembering the selves we were in the past and reflecting on how our stories and selves have changed. Valerie sees how she has both grown and remained stagnant. Laurie sees how her story stemmed from her own concerns of inadequacy. We both found significant differences between our views and student perspectives. This type of inquiry clarifies how we, and others, shape and interpret experiences. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert, we are not merely objective inquirers as we study our own practices. Rather, "we have helped make the world in which we find ourselves" (p. 61).

Significance

This investigation has potential impact for other novice academics. Our experiences, though not universal, can reinforce an appreciation for the journey of becoming a teacher educator. Inquiries such as this offer new teacher educators an approach to studying their professional identities over time, in multiple spaces, and through interaction with others. Allender & Allender (2008) argue teaching is "not about fulfilling some theoretical image or ideal" (p. 35). Rather, it is engagement in a process where self, identity, and stories are

continually changing and growing. Perhaps, unlike our initial conceptions, other junior faculty will see themselves as 'good enough' in the moment, knowing that every experience brings possible improvement (p. 35). Self-study and narrative inquiry allowed us, and can remind others, that "looking inward can lead to a more intelligent and useful outward gaze" (Mitchell & Weber, 2005, p. 4). Using a Living Theory approach to educational research frees teacher educators from the mistaken assumption that expertise is the sole property of empirical, "scientific" research (Walton, 2011; Whitehead, 2009). Knowledge has many sources and each experience, good or bad, provides a learning opportunity. The theories we develop through collaboration with colleagues and students have immediate and real applications (Walton, 2011). In addition, Living Educational Theory research allows teacher educators to merge their teaching and research as well as their values and practices.

This study has significance for teacher education overall. We engaged in this reanalysis not to highlight the weaknesses we felt as beginning teacher educators, but to mindfully assess our progress as a means for supporting our continued professional development. Narrative inquiry can contribute to new senses of meaning and significance by those who read the stories, offering them "a place to imagine their own uses and applications" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). Whitehead (2009) attests that the narrative researcher and Living Educational theorist "privileges individual lived experience as a source of insights useful not only to the person himself or herself but also to the wider field" (p. 189). Teacher educators at all levels might benefit from a turn to others and a return to past selves to acknowledge that "in important ways, we learn from others to be the persons we say we are" (Eakin, 2008, p. 50). In our case, our students' voices helped us see ourselves from different perspectives and provided images of ourselves that we might not have otherwise seen. At the same time as we were helping to shape who they become as teachers, they were influencing our evolving identities as teacher educators. Sharing our journeys and the educational influences that shape them can help strengthen our theories and identities. We encourage other teacher educators/researchers to put forward their individual stories and theories so that we might all learn from each other and strengthen our collective educational scholarship.

Déjà Vu

Now, in our fifth and sixth years at our respective institutions, we no longer feel as alien, isolated, or inadequate as we did in our first years. Our work with students, colleagues, and each other has strengthened our sense of competence in teaching, service, and scholarship. And yet, recently entrusted with leadership positions – Valerie as department chair and Laurie as program coordinator –we are beginning again on journeys through unknown territory, once more full of doubt, insecurity, and uncertainty. We wonder if this is simply the nature of academia. The experiences of the Arizona Group (1994) offer some comfort; our experiences mirrored theirs and the anxiety we felt was echoed in their writings and reflections (Arizona Group, 1994; Guilfoyle, 1995; Pinnegar, 1995). We have come to realize that developing as teacher educators is a highly complex process, "for it involves learning many roles, forming a variety of relationships, and understanding numerous contexts" (Guilfoyle, 1995, p. 11). While the constant evolution is familiar and expected, it does not come without growing pains. Having revisited our data and reanalyzed our

experiences for this study, we have seen our growth and come to realize that perhaps we were not as unprepared and ineffective as we initially thought.

As we move forward in our leadership positions, we will continue to chronicle, collaborate, and systematically investigate our journeys. While there is insecurity associated with assuming new responsibilities, we realize this step is less intimidating that the step into teacher education because of the road we have already traveled. We now benefit from a greater awareness of our respective contexts as well as the academy in general. More importantly perhaps, we better understand how to support ourselves and one another in navigating new roles and responsibilities. Documentation of our journey has not only allowed us to look back on our own growth and potential for further growth with confidence, but provides us with insight into how we might nurture and support others within our communities.

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