

RADICAL (RE)IMAGININGS: VISIONARY PEDAGOGY

AS PRAXIS FOR TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Radical (Re)imaginings: Visionary Pedagogy as Praxis for Teacher Development

This dissertation explores the use of temporal storytelling within an online teacher professional development to understand how engaging in archaeology of self practices (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019), radical dreaming and world building (brown & Imarisha, 2015), might offer a lever of change for teacher transformation. Asking two companion research questions, the study explores how visionary pedagogy impacts teacher practice as well as how the design of an online in-service professional development influences teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency. Undergirded by literature in the field of the psychology of narrative identity development (McAdams, 2003), future thinking (Oettingen, 2018), and Indigenous research paradigms (Wilson, 2008), this research holds the ontological assumption that transformational change in teaching practices occurs when individuals reposition their understandings of themselves (Utt & Tochluk, 2020) and their own practice. Findings demonstrate the importance of providing space for teachers to engage in radical dreaming while creating opportunities to build dreams into existence through action planning and an engagement with mental contrasting (Oettingen, 2018). Further, findings highlight the relational nature of learning (Wilson, 2008) and



that creating opportunities for self-reflection and the cultivation of deep relationships with others is integral for teacher transformation to take root.

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## CHAPTER I

### PREFACE

*Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen (Tafuya, 1995, p. 12).*

In the book *Storytelling Animals: How Stories Make Us Human*, Jonathan Gottschall (2012) argues that “we are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories” (p. 15). As humans, our lives are grounded in stories; they form who we were, who we are, and who we desire to be; they shape our inner life, our interactions with others, and the way we see and understand the world. Gottschall (2012) goes on to note that “story—sacred and profane—is perhaps the main cohering force in human life. A society is composed of fractious people with different personalities, goals, and agendas. What connects us beyond our kinship ties? Story” (p. 280). We are each made up of stories, and thus this dissertation is made of stories, my stories, stories of others, and the intersections of these stories. As these stories, and stories in general, are such a sacred and integral part of who we are as people, I open this dissertation with the stories that have shaped me and my educational journey. I do this in the hopes of offering readers insight into the purpose of this work as I intentionally move toward a different understanding and (re)imagining of teacher development through the lens of stories.

I have always loved language. From an early age, I remember the excitement I felt when I learned a new word; how it felt to turn over long syllables with some words

ringing with melody while others felt as though they were stuck to the roof of my mouth. It was no surprise, then that I discovered a deep love for reading and writing upon entering school. The acts of reading and writing were as natural as breathing and I spent much of my childhood and adolescence breathing life into stories and having stories breathe life into me. When I entered high school, however, teachers told me that my creative metaphors and the beautiful language that sang beyond the words on the page were merely frilly and had no place in academic writing. Being required to write five-paragraph essays with tired transitional phrases and predictable sentence structures left me feeling as if I had lost a friend, as in many ways, the language of stories had become my most trusted confidant.

After graduating high school and transitioning into my teaching career, I found my lost friend as I dusted off the books that brought me pleasure as a child and the stories I had written before I was inexplicably told by teachers to hide them away. Being able to share these stories with my students and hold space for the sacred practice of writing moved me in ways I had not known were possible. Teaching my students about the beauty of language and the power of storytelling gave me back that which was stolen by my teachers' requirements of the mundane.

However, when entering my doctoral program, I was once again met with the familiar feeling of angst when reading academic papers. Very few scholarly articles drew me in with their language; rather the jargon felt decontextualized and the tapestries of long words jumbled. While the concepts were compelling, I felt disconnected from the words on the page realizing that I desired relationship and purpose more than concepts and conclusions. It wasn't until I read Shawn Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony*:

*Indigenous Research Methods*, that I felt that melody come to life within academic writing.

Grounded in relational accountability, Wilson (2008) notes that writing to an anonymous reader as is dominant within academia, lacks a relational context, to him, an integral part of research and writing. Thus, in his book, he structures his writing in two voices by drawing on the oral tradition of Indigenous storytelling and “utilizing the direct relationship between the storytelling and the listener [with] each recogniz[ing] the other’s role in shaping both the content and the process” (pp. 8-9). Wilson (2008) begins each chapter of his book with a letter to his sons through an applied relational literary tool. The letters are followed by traditional academic writing, with Wilson (2008) speaking explicitly about the tension between these processes. Wilson (2008) employs these two voices as a bridge between relational writing and academic writing, a bridge that, for me, as a lover of stories due to the kinship and connection they offer, creates the joy and pleasure that can be lost in academic writing.

Drawing on this relational literary tool, I begin each chapter of this dissertation with a letter written to Jose, whom I was fortunate to have as a student in my classroom in 2010. These letters are written to build a relationship between this research and the reader while unearthing my relationship with Jose and my anger with the schooling system that failed Jose. These sections will be written in a different font to create an intentional shift for the reader. Through this structure, my hope is that the reader will come to understand that the ideas presented in this dissertation are not only words on a page, rather these “ideas [are] develop[ed] through the formation of relationships [with] an idea [not able to be] taken out of this relational context and still maintain its shape”



(Wilson, 2008, p. 8). Through these letters, the reader will come to know me in relation to this research and my motivation for, and commitment to, educational change.

Jose,

When the COVID-19 pandemic became more than a news story, you were on my mind. As I planned to be quarantined for the foreseeable future and was met with an overwhelming sense of loss and grief as I began canceling trips to see families as friends, I thought of you and how you weren't given the chance to plan for your future. You weren't given a chance for one more conversation with a loved one, one more hug, one more laugh. Instead, your life as you knew it was pulled out from underneath of you before, I would imagine, you were able to do any sort of future planning. Yet, it seems to me that thinking about and planning for the future is such an integral part of who we are as humans and how we develop our life stories and our identities often thinking two steps ahead of the present (or maybe that's just me). And so, this pandemic, as many other things in my life since the day we met, has made me think of you.

For ways that I will try and explain in the coming pages, you are very much a part of so much of my story and my reason for doing the work I do. So, in order to tell my story, I am going to move through the ways our stories are entangled and how our time together produced me, my life, and my research in very particular ways.

### **Framing My Story of (Be)coming Wide-Awake**

I often wonder how to best tell my story; how to convey what words seem to lack. While my story is long and tangled, this piece of my story begins and ends with a boy named Jose. By the time I met Jose, I had been a classroom teacher for just over four

years in elementary and middle schools in my hometown and had spent the previous decade working in non-profit organizations with youth of all ages. While I knew that I had more to learn, at this point in my story, I felt solid in my knowledge of content and pedagogy and grounded in my understanding of the teaching profession. Little did I know, Jose would change all of that. He would simultaneously tear my life apart and set me on an entirely new path that forced me to do deep reflective identity work.

Jose started in my class during the beginning of my fifth year of teaching; he started with a chip on his shoulder and trauma that was palpable. While Jose and I eventually learned the art of mutual respect, this dance did not permeate beyond my classroom's four walls with him being suspended more often than in class. With suspensions piling up and Jose continuing to push boundaries, he was expelled and, mere months after, arrested for murder. Articles in the local newspapers were inundated with images of Jose as a villain, his family as apathetic and uninvolved, and his community as violent and inferior. Yet nowhere were discussions that highlighted the fact that his mom had relentlessly pleaded for help from law enforcement only to be told that they could not do anything to help until Jose committed a crime. Nowhere did the articles discuss what an amazing big brother he was. Nowhere did the articles shed light on Jose's story of being pushed out of school after school, system after system, until he was left hopeless with an intense amount of institutional betrayal. Instead, Jose, his family, and his community were painted as flawed and one-dimensional. Compounded by the media representations and his behavior in school and the juvenile detention facility where he was held pending his trial, Jose was tried as an adult at only thirteen years old. During his

trial, the judge argued that Jose had “no redeeming value” and sentenced him to life in prison.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to this part of my story beginning, I had moved through my life oblivious to the inherent inequities and injustices baked into the very fabric of this nation. My white skin and middle-class upbringing afforded me the ability to ignore the realities of oppression with my privilege acting as an invisible shield that I unaware I was carrying. My experience with the relationship between schools and prisons was limited and based solely on movies, media, and hearsay. After Jose’s expulsion and subsequent arrest, however, I began looking at the world differently, schools differently, systems differently, and myself differently; in a sense reaching what Maxine Greene (1978) refers to as wide-awakeness which she describes as the “...conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep themselves awake, to think about their condition in the world, to inquire into the forces that appear to dominate them, to interpret the experiences they are having day by day” (p. 44). Although my administrators had deemed me highly effective on my teaching evaluations which positioned me as a teacher leader, I had never once had to confront the reality that school was more than a place to support students academically. I had never had to consider the fact that there were many students whose experiences mirrored Jose’s experience in classrooms across the United States; students who, like him, were, and continue to be, pushed out of schools at alarming rates, entangled in the School to Prison Pipeline (Mallett, 2015; Wald & Losen, 2003). My privilege had cloaked the fact that I was a part of this system, a cog in the wheel of a

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of the sentence proceedings, Jose became the state’s youngest convicted murderer in recent years and was mandated a sixteen-year prison sentence prior to being eligible for parole. As per the school district policies, I was unable to contact Jose prior to, during, or after his trial and thus do not know where he is currently being incarcerated.

machine that forced out students who were unintelligible based on the invisible cultural norms embedded within schools.

While it may sound strange to say that one single person could simultaneously tear my world apart and yet set me on a new path, it does not seem that there is another way to explain this part of my story: these changes in my life trajectory. Before Jose, I was naively accepting of the systems in which I existed and the nation in which I lived. I had never heard words such as neoliberalism or white fragility, I had never thought about the effects of white supremacy, nor had I considered how I was a part of the upholding of settler colonialism. Instead, I was perfectly happy supporting students in my classroom and working hard to be the best teacher I could be, and until I met Jose, I thought this was enough. Yet, I realized in the Spring of 2010, that this previous and naive version of myself was never going to be enough. What I did not realize at the time, with this newfound wide-awakeness, there came a heightened sense of responsibility and accountability to interrupting injustice and catalyzing change; an awareness that I believe would have remained elusive without Jose.

Because of this experience, I have spent the last decade looking for tools to disrupt this pipeline of disposability (Giroux, 2016) and what Stovall (2018) refers to as the school to prison nexus which understands schools and prisons as being engaged in similar practices that dehumanize and confine students rather than cultivate relationships (Nocella et al., 2018). Data shows that this nexus, also colloquially referred to as the School to Prison Pipeline (Skiba et al., 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003) and the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track (Browne, 2003), disproportionately impact students of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). This racial discipline gap is exacerbated by other

factors such as dis/ability status, school size, and free and reduced lunch status (Loveless, 2017).

Along with disparities in classroom exclusion on the basis of inequitable and unjust discipline policies and practices, students of color, students with dis/abilities, students who identify as LGBTIA+, and students living in poverty or attending poorly funded schools, have far lower graduation rates than their peers and continue to score lower on standardized assessments in reading and math (George, 2015; Hung et al., 2020; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Losen & Whitaker, 2018; Martin & Smith, 2017; Murnane, 2013; Valencia, 2015). While research has continued to highlight “achievement gaps”<sup>2</sup> for traditionally underserved students, the creation of just and equitable schooling policies and practices have remained arguably unsuccessful. Instead, efforts to disrupt these unjust conditions place the onus on students, families, and communities creating and perpetuating deficit-oriented frameworks and a pipeline of disposability (Giroux, 2016).

With a vast amount of the research in this arena using statistical analysis to draw generalizable conclusions, the stories of the students and families whom these statistics represent, their complexities and multitudes are simplified to a number with their storied lives being erased. The tension I feel about this erasure has caused a sense of dissonance within me; there is a vast amount of research, yet so few stories of those like Jose<sup>3</sup>. While one can easily access a plethora of data about our nation’s students who receive

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<sup>2</sup> The use of quotes around the phrase “achievement gap” aims to highlight the arbitrary and contrived nature of this colloquial term and the ways in which it deems certain students as achieving higher than others without pointing to the systemic opportunity gaps (Milner, 2012) that create educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) for students due to being underserved by schools.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that this work is not being done, rather that it is uncommon within this field. For example, Winn (2010; 2011) and Wadhwa (2016) are two authors who are engaging in the work of highlighting stories through portraiture and narrative accounts of students.

disciplinary infractions in schools, the numbers are missing the stories of that data, with students, families, and communities being viewed as one-dimensional (Edmonds et al., 2009; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). This approach leaves out the stories of students and their teachers who are in the thick of this work every day. I am thus left wondering how stories can be leveraged as a methodological tool, and in a sense, a relational tool to ensure that ideas still maintain their shape rather than being removed from the relational context in which they live (Wilson, 2008).

In grappling with this wonder, I turn to teacher professional development. This space is one that often perpetuates one-dimensional understandings of students with relationality often left at the door (Darling-Hammond, 1990), and yet a space that holds strong possibilities for change and transformation. While common in schools across the nation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Wilson & Berne, 1999), studies have shown that professional development that arms, or weaponizes, teachers with tools and strategies to implement in their classroom is dangerous (Cherry-McDaniel, 2016). Unfortunately, this type of professional development is all too common with the production of learning being enacted through the building of teachers' toolboxes without a "critical unpacking and challenging of... beliefs and assumptions" (Cherry-McDaniel, 2016).

As a teacher for over a decade, I have spent countless hours engaged in this type of professional development, continuously armed with static statistics about my students and readied with tools to combat the areas in which *they* are lacking. Yet, rarely in my experience did I have opportunities to critically reflect on my own story, the stories of my students and their families, and the story of schools. Thus, this dissertation will start here,

in the space of teacher professional development; a space where stories about students are created and yet can also be disrupted, and a space where we have the choice to do learning as it has always been done, or to (re)imagine learning as a storied and relational opportunity for transformation.

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTION

*People reproduce identities not just by telling and retelling the stories from which they were constructed, but also by institutionalizing those stories: by building them into norms, laws, and other institutions... that give social actors incentives to perform their identities well (Hayward, 2013, p. 2).*

Jose,

I will never forget the day you started at the school where I was working. It was during a morning class in early fall and we were all outside on the asphalt next to the overgrown track. While you began exchanging greetings with other students in the class, making it clear that you were a familiar face around the neighborhood, you never met my eyes, intentionally looking down each time I tried. The only time I remember you looking me in the eyes in those early days is when I kept you after class to see how you were doing. I tried to banter with you about music and movies, which I thought might help you open up, but you made it clear that this is not what you were here for. While I felt that spending time talking about things that were non-school related would help you to see that I cared, I had been wrong. In many ways, it felt to me like this made you shut down even further. Over the next few weeks, however, your tough exterior slowly melted away and you no longer put your head down when I walked by, and sometimes, just sometimes, when you saw me in the hallway, you gave a slight nod in my direction.

During that time, I learned a lot about you, some from snippets I heard in the hallways, some from rumors told by staff and students, and some from the stories you told, or boasted about, during class and in the hallways. I learned that you had been in and out of juvenile detention



centers and had been suspended and expelled from virtually every school you had attended; that you had strong ties to a local gang and that your new clothes came from the drugs you sold after school and on the weekends. What I didn't learn about you until later, however, was that you were an incredibly loyal friend and that even though you wouldn't admit it out loud, your little brother meant the world to you, you loved your mom, and you missed the hell out of your dad and big brother. I learned that even though you spent much of your time in school creating waves of chaos, you didn't actually like getting in trouble, but it was easier than admitting that school was hard for you and getting in trouble was all you had ever known. I learned that you joined the gang not because you loved violence or were a "delinquent," as the news would later talk about, but because you wanted a family, people who would have your back and protect you.

While some of this is based on assumptions and speculation as our time was cut short, I know that no matter what others say about you and no matter the story you created in your wake, you were incredible, and you deserved more than life handed you. I know that the intersecting systems that put you in prison for life at the age of thirteen failed you and that since the day we met on the asphalt next to the overgrown track, you have never left my mind or my heart. Instead, the path I have been on, is in many ways influenced by you and your story and the failure of the systems in which you were enmeshed by no fault of your own. To be brown and grow up in poverty in America sealed your fate before you were born as the many systems ensured that you ever had a chance to be your own person.

So, the story that will unfold over the remainder of this dissertation is a testament to both the failure of those systems and my dreams for a different future. A future where your brown skin,

the neighborhood you grow up in, and your father's criminal record will not write your story before you are born. That instead, we can see the walls that have been created by these systems as bridges of possibility, and that as a society we can dream and imagine equitable and just futures where you and others like you have a chance not just to survive but thrive.

### **Stories as Bridges**

This dissertation's overarching goal is to understand how using stories and thinking intentionally about the future can influence teacher practice. This becomes particularly relevant as the research grounding this dissertation took place in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic that forced teachers, administrators, and district and state leaders to (re)imagine education. Prior to COVID-19, the idea of moving school entirely online existed only in the stories of science fiction; however, this pandemic tasked all educational stakeholders with the need to create new structures, new policies, and ultimately, new teacher practices at an urgently rapid pace.

The timing is particularly relevant due to the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing concern of racial violence after the murder of George Floyd by the police in the spring of 2020. While the wave of dialogue and activism surrounding the murder of George Floyd centralized around the police force and a call to defund the police and move toward abolition, it simultaneously impacted schools. During the spring and summer of 2020, communities across the nation marched in protest of police presence on school campuses, exclusionary discipline practices which disproportionately target students of color, and curricula grounded in white supremacy.

Although 2020 has been heralded as one of the worst years in United States history, it also offers a chance to (re)imagine schools as spaces where all students can

thrive. Yet, as Love (2020) argues, this task requires more than (re)imagining the oppression at the very root of our schools because “... before COVID-19 closed our schools and dismantled our way of life, schools were failing not only children of color but all children.” Inspired by Love’s (2020) call to do more than simply going back to the ways things, this dissertation explores how visionary pedagogy might offer us an analytic for teacher, and ultimately, school transformation.

Centering teacher professional development as a space of possibility, this dissertation examines how an online teacher professional development course that intentionally centers storytelling can influence and transform teacher practice and students’ futures. Although organizations across fields of study have shown that teacher professional development can provide teachers a space to learn and grow in their craft (e.g., Exploring Computer Science, National Equity Project), this pandemic has highlighted the need to create these spaces within virtual settings; settings that until the spring of 2020 were optional rather than required.

While the shift to online learning has focused on ensuring access to technology and delivery of content, teachers have continued to serve as frontline workers with conversations around creating community, ensuring wellness, and developing opportunities for healing being albeit absent. This gap calls for a move toward centering teachers’ needs through listening and learning from them in order to create opportunities to ask questions about how teacher professional development can center storied and relational learning as a means of (re)imagining and transforming teacher practice. The research questions undergirding this dissertation are as follows:

1. *How can visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?*
2. *How does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?*

This research will ask these two broad research questions, with each question answered by a different theoretical framework and methodological approach as the questions demand different approaches and knowledge sets. As these two research questions are, in essence, companion questions, the same process will not answer them both. Therefore, while there are themes of teacher learning, embodied practices, and critical reflection within the findings and discussion for both research questions, it is important that each question is answered through a theoretical lens that will allow for a deep analysis on that particular topic. In this, research question #1 which asks how a visionary pedagogy can transform teacher practice, engages with literature in the field of social psychology around narrative identity and future thinking; while research question #2 which focuses on the influence of the design of the online professional development, engages Indigenous research paradigms specifically attending to theories of relationality.

Each of the research questions attends to the concepts and ideas that I set out to study with the associated analytic questions providing a framework for how I am reading and understanding my data. As will be discussed more thoroughly within Chapter V: Strategies of Inquiry, I developed these questions after data collection commenced as a way to engage in a reading of my data that moves beyond conventional qualitative methods (St. Pierre et al., 2016). Research question #1, will engage a case story methodology (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001) of three teachers followed by a

multiple case study analysis (Stake, 2006). This research question leverages the following analytic questions as a way to read the data through the grounding theories:

1. *How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?*
2. *How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice?*
3. *In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?*

For research question #2, the associated analytic question will be used to think with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) by plugging in the data to the concept of Indigenous relationality (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson, 2008).

1. *How can online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?*

### **Teacher Learning and Visionary Storytelling as Praxis**

This dissertation is grounded in a belief that teacher knowledge is vital to student success. This research is aligned with studies that continually identify teacher quality as the most important factor impacting student academic achievement (Hawley & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996) as well as research that concludes that high-quality teachers rather than programs most strongly impact student learning (DeMonte, 2013; Polly et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2007). While pre-service teacher development is an important and arguably vital aspect of developing teacher skill sets and dispositions (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999), in-service teacher education also serves as an integral part of teacher learning. Yet, the investment in

teacher development and particularly in-service teacher development remains neglected with a focus on programmatic efforts and curricular dissemination.

Numerous studies, in fact, argue that when teacher professional development does occur, it is wholly inadequate and does not provide teachers with opportunities to engage in understanding equity issues within school systems or with the agency to catalyze change (Borko et al., 2011; Little, 1993; Newmann et al., 2000). Scholars engaged in this line of research argue that is the case because teachers lack respect as professionals (Apple, 1995; Apple & Jungck, 1990; Pinar, 2012).

This dissertation aims to contribute to the field of teacher professional development by pushing back against traditional/conventional professional development (Sykes, 1996; Whitcomb, 2009) that is often “decontextualized and contrived” (Wilson and Berne, 1999, p. 174) as well as “intellectually superficial [and] disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning, fragmented, and noncumulative” (Ball & Cohen, 1999, pp. 3–4). By holding space for teachers to “...look beyond the given, beyond what appears to be unchangeable” (Greene, 2009, p. 397), there exists a desire to understand the impact of a (re)imagined professional development enacted through the lens of storied and relational learning.

While storied learning is not a new line of teacher education research and has been studied extensively through the lens of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hendry et al., 2019), the research questions extend existing literature through a focus on future thinking (Oettingen et al., 2018) and ontologies of relational learning (Wilson, 2008). Although the work in this dissertation is narrative in form, this specific research project engages with theoretical frameworks outside of narrative inquiry as a

way to explore teacher learning through the lens of psychology (McAdams, 2003; Nelson, 2003; Oettingen, 2000) and relationality (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson, 2008). This is an intentional strategy to employ the frameworks that operate best given the particular research questions.

This dissertation considers the implementation of a visionary pedagogy<sup>4</sup> which was developed through a deep engagement in reading and learning from a variety of scholars and activists both within and outside of the field of education. This pedagogical approach, developed as part of this dissertation, engages teachers in temporal storytelling practices that ask them to engage in critical self-reflection and prospection (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007; Szpunar et al., 2018) in order to (re)imagine a different future for schools. In creating space for teachers to think about their own stories and the stories they hold about their students, visionary pedagogy serves as an analytic for teachers to interrogate, (re)imagine, and (re)story their teaching practice both individually and collectively. As part of a larger framework, visionary pedagogy asks teachers to interrogate their positionalities and identities to think about teacher learning and practice, not as divorced from stories of themselves and their students, but as always intertwined.

By thinking about stories as a form of identity development (Hayward, 2013), visionary pedagogy is grounded in a desire to (re)imagine professional development spaces that arm teachers with tools and strategies to implement in their classroom (Cherry-McDaniel, 2016) in order to move toward a critical self-reflection and relational learning. As Sealey-Ruiz (2017) argues,

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<sup>4</sup> Visionary pedagogy will be described in detail in Chapter IV: Design Methodology.

Change toward others cannot occur until we examine our beliefs about ourselves in relation to others. Self-reflection and personal conviction about injustices that occur to other people are crucial first and second steps toward lasting change in how we view and treat people who are not like us (p. 128).

Thus, in (re)imagining teacher professional development, visionary pedagogy was embedded as a heuristic to move teachers toward an examination of their beliefs in conjunction with the process of visioning which asked teachers to (re)imagine their classrooms and schools in a compelling future<sup>5</sup>. This process of prospection (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007; Szpunar et al., 2018), or future thinking, was designed to offer space for teachers engage with counterfuturisms (Springgay & Truman, 2019) to think and *be* outside of time in their radical (re)imaginings of the future. As Greene (1995) argues, imagination

is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called ‘others’ over the years.... Imagination is the one that gives credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions (p. 3).

While the significance of the imagination in learning and personal growth is present across educational scholarship (Dewey, 1934; Greene, 1995), the particular use of the term radical dreaming builds off of the work of Love (2019), Kelley (2003), and Stovall (2018), who use the term to consider how we might move toward abolition and liberation. Stovall (2018) uses radical imagination to “challenge us to think about the

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<sup>5</sup> Here I draw on the work of adrienne maree brown (2017) who roots her visionary work in the writing of Octavia E. Butler who constructed her novels around compelling, rather than utopic futures. This particular theory of futuring will be discussed further in Chapter III: Review of Literature.



world as it is while committing to a process that systemically changes it” (p. 53). The use of this term is undergirded by a sense of responsibility calling for a move away from critique and toward engaging in actionable change. Thus, the notion of radical imagination as embedded within visionary pedagogy, moves toward relational learning in considering how we might engage in “...critical and imaginative dreams of collective resistance” (Love, 2019, p. 101).

This dissertation considers how visionary pedagogy might move toward deep and sustained transformation of teacher practice through seeking to understand both the effect of visionary pedagogy on teacher practice as well as the influence of the design of an online professional development on teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency. While one might argue that engaging in (re)imagining one’s future classrooms is simply an act of indulgence (Oettingen, 2000) and does not transform teacher practice, COVID-19 has shown us that futures once only present in the stories of science fiction are possible. Therefore, this dissertation argues that if we are to truly change education, to heed Love’s (2020) call to “not to just reimagine schooling or try to reform injustice but to start over,” holding space for teachers to radically dream a future not yet here is the entry point toward transformation.

### **Research Question #1: Psychology of Identity Development and Future Thinking**

As this dissertation explores both the individual learning experience of the teachers engaged in the professional development and the influence of the design of the professional development on teacher learning, each research question is undergirded by a guiding theoretical framework chosen based on the question explored. For research

question #1, which asks *how visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development might offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice*, scholarship within the field of social psychology, and specifically theories of narrative identity development (McAdams, 2003), autobiographical memory (Nelson, 2003), and future thinking (Oettingen et al., 2018) serve as the theoretical framework. In order to read the data through the lens of autobiographical identity development and future thinking the analytic questions are as follows:

1. *How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?*
2. *How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice?*
3. *In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?*

Several concepts ground the theoretical framework for this particular research question which each concept intersecting to provide a deep foundation for data analysis. The first of these concepts is the notion of narrative identity which “refers to the narratives people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and others” (McAdams, 2007, p. 4). This concept is particularly relevant as this dissertation is grounded in an ontological “... assumption of the storied nature of human experience” (McAdams, 2007, p. 4). The notion of autobiographical memory, which Welch-Ross (1995) describes as the memories that compose one’s life history, is also important to this particular research question in that it provides a way to consider the influence of life stories (McAdams, 2007) on teacher’s narrative identities and teacher practice.

Further, drawing on the concepts of episodic memories and episodic future thinking (Berntsen & Bohn, 2010) provides a way to think about temporal notions of identity development through understanding past memories and future orientations. This theory provides a bridge to understanding the impact of the past, present, and future on one's narrative identity development. In this regard, future thinking is an important practice in grappling with temporal storytelling and understanding how moving toward a radical imaginary (Love, 2019; Kelley, 2003; Stovall, 2018) through visionary pedagogy might be leveraged to transform teacher practice.

Specific to the literature on future thinking, this study draws on the work of (Oettingen et al., 2018) who argue thinking about the future is thought to have three distinct functions: (a) it allows us to imagine and visualize possibilities through mental exploration; (b) it allows us to make predictions for our future by inferring from our past; and (c) it helps to pave the way to reach our goals. While there has been extensive research on the second and third functions, few studies have focused on the first function of future-thinking with exploration and imagination serving as anchors (Oettingen et al., 2018). Thus, this study seeks to address this perceived gap by immersing teachers in visionary pedagogy to consider the influence of the imagination and future thinking on teacher practice.

The final concept grounding the theoretical framework for this particular research question is the notion of mental contrasting (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al. 2001, 2009; Szpunar et al. 2018; Wright 2008), which Szpunar et al. (2018) describe as "... the act of juxtaposing a positive future outcome with present circumstances" (p. 53). Considering this practice as part of visionary pedagogy provides important

understandings of Oettingen's (2000) model of fantasy realization particularly in using visionary pedagogy as a practice by which to move beyond acts of indulging and dwelling, which have been shown to lack the power to change behavior, and toward mental contrasting through supporting teachers in moving imagined future dreams into actionable items.

### **Case Story Methodology: Telling the Storied Lives of Teachers**

To read the data through the analytic questions associated with research question #1, which considers the influence of visionary pedagogy on teacher practice, the findings are situated within case stories. The methodology of case stories draws on work in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Shulman, 1987) in its merging of narrative analysis and case study methodology (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001). Stake (2006) positions cases as a unique form of data in that a "... case is a noun, a thing, an entity; it is seldom a verb, a participle, a functioning" (p. 1).

This methodological approach allows for a combining of the traditional methodology of case studies with the centrality of stories present in this dissertation, through gathering data from teacher interviews, focus groups, visionary stories, and work samples from the professional development course in order to construct case stories of three teachers. Each case story will consider (a) the influence of the teacher's autobiographical memory on their teacher identity, (b) the teacher's visionary stories and the ways in which they were thinking about the future of their classroom in connection with their narrative identity, and (c) concrete ways in which their visionary story influenced their teaching practices. The case stories are followed by a multiple case study

analysis (Stake, 2006) that deeply considers the quintain as read through the three analytic questions.

Case stories present a particular methodological approach that provides for a complex and nuanced understanding of the individual teachers with the space to concentrate on a specific case in order to examine the complex phenomena of teacher practice (Parsons, 2012; Stake, 2006). Due to the temporal nature of this research and the focus on narrative and story, case stories provide a way by which to bring the stories of the teachers to life.

### **Research Question #2: Design Processes as Relational Accountability**

In connection with research question #2 which asks *how the instructional design of an in-service professional development influences teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency*, scholarship within the field of Indigenous methodologies, and specifically that which centers relational ontologies serves as the theoretical framework. To read the data through the lens of Indigenous notions of relationality, the analytic question grounding the data analysis is as follows: *How can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?*

In considering the theoretical framework for research question #2, it becomes important to have a deep understanding of the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of the Indigenous research paradigms undergirding this work. Across Indigenous scholarship, the notion of relationality and relational accountability is central in “compell[ing] the researchers toward a deeper commitment and ethical practice of community-based research” (Ansloos, 2018, p. 8). Indigenous research paradigms push

against conventional research paradigms (St. Pierre et al., 2016) which desire objectivity, in an effort to move toward research that is relational.

While many Indigenous scholars engage in research and scholarship that pushes back on conventional paradigms, I draw on the work of Shawn Wilson (2008), Opaskwayak Cree and Bagele Chilisa (2012), Bantu to engage with research question #2. I do this to think intentionally with their relational paradigm and deep commitments to relational accountability. Wilson (2008) argues that “relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality” (Wilson, 2008, p. 7). Thus, engaging in relational research requires a shift in the definition of relationship in that “rather than viewing ourselves as being in relationship with other people or things, we are the relationships that we hold and are part of” (Wilson, 2008, p. 80). For Wilson (2008), each aspect of the research, including the questions asked, the methodological approach, and the data collection methods, holds relational accountability at the core. This grounding ontology of relationality and relational accountability is furthered by Chilisa (2012) in her belief that “the researcher becomes part of circles of relations that are connected to one another and to which the researcher is accountable” (p. 13). For this particular research question, the notion of relationality as described by Wilson and Chilisa are essential as this question is concerned with teacher voice and agency as developed through an online professional development space. In this, there exists a deep commitment to holding close relational forms of research that “liberate all our relations” (Ansloos, 2018, p. 8).

Although there are arguably many research approaches that move against conventional methodologies (e.g., new materialisms and arts-based approaches), due to the presence of relationality that continued to shimmer in my data, engaging with an

Indigenous research paradigm helped me think differently about the influence of the design of the professional development on teacher learning. This shift in my thinking allowed for an opening of new ideas and questions around the role that relationships play within learning and research, thus holding space to grapple with what an online design process might look like if the ontology, epistemology, and axiology were grounded in relationality rather than conventional notions of objectivity.<sup>6</sup>

### **Thinking with Theory: Plugging in Data to the Concept of Indigenous Relationality**

As research question #2 seeks to understand the influence of the professional development design on teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency, the data analysis for this question draws on the practice of “thinking with theory” as developed by Jackson and Mazzei (2012). This particular methodology moves against “conventional social science research driven by pre-existing methods and methodologies...” (St. Pierre 2016, p. 104), arguing that conventional methods of organizing data into chunks to develop codes and themes often provides information that is already known (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Thinking with theory allows for a reading of the data through a particular theoretical concept which provides a more nuanced and less curated approach to thinking about data. Thus, for research question #2, the data, which includes teacher interviews, focus groups, and an anonymized post-survey, were plugged into the concept of Indigenous relationality as theorized by Wilson (2008) and Chilisa (2012).

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to acknowledge my positionality as a white scholar engaging with Indigenous research paradigms as well as to point to the fact that this research question is not engaging with the full scope of Indigenous research paradigms, rather only the work of two particular scholars. My positionality as well as my commitments to this work will be discussed fully in Chapter V: Strategies of Inquiry.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) describe the process of plugging in as requiring three particular moves (a) “putting philosophical concepts to work via disrupting the theory/practice binary by decentering each and instead showing how they *constitute or make one another*” (p. 5); (b) being intentional with how particular analytic questions allow for new ways to consider the data “made possible by a specific theoretical concept” (p. 5); and (c) “working the same data chunks repeatedly” (p. 5) to create new knowledge and consider the flexible and supple nature of each theoretical concept. Through the process of plugging in, one becomes enmeshed in what Jackson and Mazzei (2012) refer to as the threshold which allows for an increased awareness “of how theory and data constitute or make one another – and how, in the threshold, the divisions among and definitions of theory and data collapse” (p. 6).

In considering the three moves discussed by Jackson and Mazzei (2012), it is important to acknowledge that prior to moving into this particular threshold, my intention was merely to understand how the design of an online professional development course might influence teacher learning. However, as I read my data, I continued to be struck by the ways in which relationality manifested within and across various data. Thus, I put the theory of Indigenous relationality to work by developing an analytic question that was made possible only through a deep understanding of this theory. This allowed me to work through the data repeatedly in order to consider the relational nature of learning within an online professional development. Thinking with theory provided space for creative methodological understandings of the design research process through a grounding in relationality.



## **Becoming through Undoing**

When this study was conducted, we were living in a reality that we did not know was a possibility beyond science fiction stories; a reality that up until early March 2020 was thought as a product of the future rather than a present possibility. While opportunity gaps (Milner, 2012) have existed in this nation's schools since their inception, the COVID-19 pandemic has punctuated the false assumptions held by many regarding the meritocratic nature of schooling. Thus, the primary goal of this dissertation was to consider the impact of providing space for teachers to interrogate these false assumptions while highlighting their agency to individually and collectively consider this current moment as an opportunity; not to (re)imagine the oppression at the root of schooling in this nation, but to instead, consider what might be possible in a future we have yet to build.

Although I cannot go back in time and differently engage with Jose and the systems that seemed committed to disposing of him, systems whose discourse and stories constructed and marked him as having “no redeeming value” before his thirteenth birthday, I hope that by (re)imagining the construction of teacher learning, space can be created that will move us toward a radical undoing of time and a creation of endless possibilities (Springgay & Truman, 2019). Just as brown & Imarisha (2015) remind us that “all organizing is science fiction...we are shaping the future we long for and have not yet experienced,” this dissertation is in many ways science fiction in that we have not yet experienced an educational system that is equitable and just. That, however, does not mean it is impossible; it just means that we have to ask new questions, collectively dream

different futures for schools and our students, and build them into existence (Imarisha, 2015a).

### Summary

This dissertation is grounded in a belief that people lived storied lives, and the storied lives we live as well as the ways that we think about our future, have a direct impact on the present moment. Seeking to understand how we might (re)imagine learning as both storied and relational, this dissertation studied a teacher professional development grounded in visionary pedagogy asking two questions:

1. *How might visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?*
2. *How does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?*

As each question explores a different aspect of the research, a unique theoretical framework and methodology was leveraged. Research question #1, which focuses on teacher identity and experience, is grounded in scholarship within the field of social psychology, and specifically, theories of narrative identity development (McAdams, 2003), autobiographical memory (Nelson, 2003), and future thinking (Oettingen et al., 2018) which serve as the theoretical framework. In order to analyze the data, a case story methodology (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001) was employed, which blends narrative analysis and traditional case study methods to write three case stories of teachers.

Individual case stories are followed by a multiple case study analysis (Stake, 2006) which was leveraged to understand the quintain through the particular analytic questions for this research question which are as follows:

1. *How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?*
2. *How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice?*
3. *In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?*

Research question #2, which focuses on the design of the professional development, is grounded in theories of relationality drawn from Indigenous paradigms with a particular focus on the work of Wilson (2008) and Chilisa (2012). The practice of thinking with theory, developed by Jackson and Mazzei (2012), serves as the methodological framework. The methodological approach to this question involved plugging in the concept of Indigenous relationality with the data gathered through an engagement with the analytic question guiding the reading of this data which asks: *How can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?*

Overall, this dissertation seeks to understand how an online professional development grounded in storied and relational learning might influence and ultimately transform teacher practice.

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*As a matter of principle, humanity is precarious: each person can only believe what he recognizes to be true internally and, at the same time, nobody thinks or makes up his mind without already being caught up in certain relationships with others, which leads him to opt for a particular set of opinions (Merleau-Ponty, 2008).*

Jose,

As I write you this letter, I realize how long it has been since I last saw your face. This year, you will be 23 years old, just two years younger than I was when I first met you on the asphalt at the back of the school. While I haven't seen you in over a decade, your face is still fresh in my memory. Not the face that was plastered to news media sites when you were arrested and later sentenced, but the face that I came to know over the time you were my student, the face that didn't show the scars of the trauma you had endured throughout your thirteen years. I see in you the eyes of your father who I never met, but whose picture was on your living room wall. This was the only picture I remember seeing in your house the first time I did a home-visit and met your mom. I don't know if you knew this then or perhaps have learned since, how much your mom loved you and that even though she wasn't home as much as you would have liked, she did everything she could for you and your little brother.

During that first visit, your mom cried; did she do that in front of you often? She seemed to me like someone who very rarely broke the tough exterior she projected. She cried because she was lost and didn't know what to do and she cried because she knew you were in trouble. She had

seen the same patterns with your older brother, who was incarcerated when he was only a few years your senior. She cried because she didn't know who to turn to for help as schools continued to suspend and expel you and law enforcement continually told her there was nothing they could do until you were arrested for a crime; she cried because she saw your little brother in third grade at that time exhibiting these same patterns. But most of all she cried because she was scared. Scared for you.

I tell you this because when I first met your mom, I was lost and scared too, and when I left your house, I cried. I cried because up until that point, somewhere in the back of my mind, I believed those misconceptions about families who didn't care about their kids' education because they didn't show up to events. I believed that when families reached out to law enforcement, they would get the help they needed, and worst of all, I believed that as a teacher, I could serve as some sort of hero to swoop in and offer needed support. It's hard to admit and it's not something I'm proud. After meeting your mom, I realized my error was grounded in my privileged naiveté in my misconceptions about you, your family, and the systems in which you were enmeshed.

I didn't realize how wrong I was until months later when everything your mom feared during that first meeting came true; when the nice clothes and electronics turned into a backpack full of drugs when those drugs were exchanged for a gun, and when you were arrested for murder. I am telling you this because I want you to know that even though it probably didn't feel like it, you had a lot of people in your corner who loved you and wanted to see your life end up differently. I was so angry for so long as I tried to contact you but was told by the school district that I was not allowed. I just wanted to tell you I was sorry; tell you that this wasn't your fault;

tell you that even though you might feel alone, I saw you, and I cared. This story is a testament to that failure to more fully understand the insurmountable systemic barriers that were built around you.

These letters have been written many times in my head and my heart because if I can find you one day, I want you to know what an impact you had on me and how every single day since I first met your mom, you and your story have pushed me to think about the misconceptions I so absently believed that caused me to lack the imagination and the activism to stand up for you and your family as I should have. They have pushed me to have conversations with other teachers about their understanding of school systems in the case that they have someone like you in their class, someone who was never given a chance to be seen as anything other than a statistic.

### **Overview of Theoretical Terms**

Within particular fields of study, the language that is used, while beautiful in its own right can feel strange and unfamiliar to those who are not immersed in the same literature or philosophies. Often, these tapestries of long words require that the reader spends more time deconstructing individual concepts forcing them to miss the melody of the language on the page. To ensure that my work is relational and moves beyond concepts and conclusions and toward relationship and meaning, the literature review will begin with a definition of the key theoretical concepts and a discussion of how each concept is integral to this research. The definitions of the key concepts will be followed by a narrative journey operationalizing each theoretical concept through a discussion of

how these concepts work together and why the research questions cannot be understood without each serving as a grounding force.

### **Neoliberalism**

For this particular research project, neoliberalism will herein be understood as “policies designed to restructure public education on free market principles” (Lipman, 2017, p. 3). The impact of neoliberal policies within public education can be seen across schools with a shift from education as a public good to education as a private commodity. As Lipman (2011; 2017) discusses in her work, neoliberal policies, racism, and education are interconnected in ways that create segregation, racial inequities, and disenfranchisement due to increases in privatization and a desire for production and individual models of growth. Neoliberal ideologies create narrow understandings of success and a recipe for competition and the commodification of knowledge. Lipman (2011; 2017) and other scholars draw on the work of Lipsitz (2014), who furthers this codification of racist policies as enacted through neoliberalism. Lipsitz (2014) argues that neoliberalism needs race even more than previous stages of capitalism did. By making public spaces and public institutions synonymous with communities of color, neoliberals seek to taint them in the eyes of white working class and middle-class people, who then become more receptive to privatization schemes that undermine their own stakes in the shared social communities that neoliberalism attempts to eliminate (p. 11).

The research questions that ground this dissertation are constructed so as to try and understand how we might (re)imagine schools as places where all students can

thrive; therefore, understanding the insidious neoliberal machine is integral to understanding the historical and cultural context of this work. As there is a distinct intersection between neoliberalism and racism within education, dreaming of new ways to do school will only create change and transformation if neoliberal ideologies are both understood and dismantled. If not, the same century-old stories of failing schools in Black and brown neighborhoods will continue to be pervasive.

### **Chrononormativity and Counterfuturisms**

Chrononormativity, which Freeman (2010) defines as “the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward productivity” (p. 3), helps us understand the ways time structures our existence, from how we set our clocks and organize our days, to the way that public schools are structured, and learning is understood. As with the neoliberal ideologies discussed above, chrononormativity is foundational to the way schools are structured and function day to day (Springgay & Truman, 2019) in that schools are grounded in ideologies that promote self-interest, privatization, and entrepreneurship above community, public interest, and service (Lipman, 2011; Lynch et al., 2007). Because of the insidious nature of chrononormative logics guiding schools, we must do more than (re)imagine schools because, as Love (2020) warns us, simply (re)imagining would involve (re)imagining oppression at the root of schooling in this nation. If we are to consider instead what might be possible in a future we have yet to build, we must think outside of chrononormativity and toward what Springgay and Truman (2019) refer to as counterfuturisms.



Springgay and Truman (2019) conceptualize counterfuturisms through the lens of “queer and crip time, Afrofuturisms and Indigenous futurisms to counter progressive or chronological time” (p. 548). Intentionally moving against chrononormativity (Freeman, 2010) and linear progress reveals new possibilities for dreaming and rebuilding.

### **Counterstorytelling**

The practice of counterstorytelling (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1989; Delgado, 1993) which grew out of critical race theory began with the work and activism of legal scholars of color dedicated to racial justice (Matsuda, 1991). Critical race theory which foregrounds much of the work in schools that aims to disrupt systemic racism is grounded in the following five tenets as seen across literature. Stefancic and Delgado (2012) describe these five tenets as follows: (a) “...race is ordinary, not aberrational” (p. 7), (b) racial advancement only occurs when the interests of Black and white communities converge, referred to as interest convergence, (c) race is not a biological category; it is a social construction, (d) all people have intersectional identities, and (e) counterstorytelling is a critical tool to uplift voices traditionally silenced.

With a particular focus on counterstorytelling, a key tenet of critical race theory, there exists a desire to tell “the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26) to counter deficit storytelling or what Bell (2019) refers to as stock stories. Delgado (1989) argues that

... stories create their own bonds, represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings. The cohesiveness that stories bring is part of the strength of the outgroup. An outgroup creates its own stories, which circulate within the group as

a kind of counter-reality. The dominant group creates its own stories, as well. The stories or narratives told by the ingroup remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups, and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural (p. 2412).

Scholars, organizers, lawyers, and educators committed to racial justice engage in the process of counterstorytelling as a way to center the stories of oppressed people and counter the dominant narratives that paint those outside of the mythical norm as *other* (Lorde, 1984). Counterstorytelling thus offers a storytelling practice “from the vantage point of those oppressed... [as] a means to challenge power... [and] reveal structures and practices that contribute to inequality” (Picower & Kohli, 2017, p. 8). In this way, counterstorytelling becomes a powerful vehicle in this dissertation for considering how schools might look outside of a society built on neoliberal paradigms and chrononormative logics.

### **The Social Imaginary**

Western society is rooted in Cartesian understandings of self, a mind/body dualism with worth being seen in terms of objective qualities of reason over the partial and subjective qualities of emotions (Lynch et al., 2007). This dualism is exacerbated by neoliberal policies that “do not provide space or value for relationality, emotions, and caring, rather lift up individualism and entrepreneurship” (Lynch et al., 2007, p. 12). Lipman (2011) describes neoliberalism as having “developed as a new social imaginary, a common sense about how we think about society and our place in it” (p. 6). This social imaginary takes into account how people make sense of their world through stories, legends, and myths, essentially constructing a shared social imaginary through the

creation of “common understanding[s] that make possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy” (Taylor, 2004, p. 23).

Within systems grounded in neoliberal ideologies and chrononormative logics, this social imaginary is constructed in ways that commodifies individual success while simultaneously rejecting the individual as a whole person with a mind and a body; thus, viewing the individual as an instrument of progress above all else. While this social imaginary has far-reaching influence on all areas of society, as Lipman (2011) notes, schools are especially influenced. We can see this in the closing of public schools and an increase of charter schools, the broadening of the standards movement, increases in high-stakes assessments, an embracing of punitive discipline models, and the prevalence of best practices seen in schools.

Although the social imaginary shifts based on the common understandings within society, this takes time as the myths and stories that create these shared practices and belief systems do not take root overnight. During the time of this dissertation research, the closing of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented and more structurally radical than any previous educational shift in the history of United States schooling. Because of this shift in policy and practice, the social imaginary has not yet been able to come to terms with the present reality due to the rapid rate of change. This has resulted in a social imaginary grounded in an understanding of schooling that is within a paradigm of standardization, measurable outcomes, and individual progress.

This reality has created tension as the social imaginary of schooling is counter to the needed response for students and families within a global pandemic as standardization and measurable outcomes lack relevance within online schooling. Deconstructing the

dissonance felt by teachers and other educational stakeholders committed to providing an equitable and just education points to how teacher learning as constructed through a neoliberal social imaginary does not provide teachers with space to move beyond Cartesian dualism and toward creativity, emotional processing, exploration, and embodied teaching and learning, thus creating dissonance for teachers who were (and continue to be) asked to do the unimaginable.

For many teachers, this dissonance starts during their preservice teacher education with the pressure of performance assessments, such as edTPA<sup>7</sup> which are designed to determine whether or not teachers have the pedagogical knowledge and skills necessary to be effective classroom teachers. As with teacher evaluations and other standardized assessments, this constructs a social imaginary that normalizes standardization and objectivity and subsequently produces teachers who are seen as effective only if they meet these external and often decontextualized demands. Tuck et al. (2016) argues in their critique of this normalization of standardized measurement practices, and specifically the edTPA that, “it has been important to study and critique the problems of using market-based logics to guide what should be pedagogical decisions and to consider origins and explore the consequences of the socially constructed educational policies” (p. 198).

This critique points to the infrastructure, policies, and practices that have created this neoliberal social imaginary, an imaginary that is rigid and based in a desire for self-success over community development. As Cacho (2012) notes, “in no small part, our

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<sup>7</sup> edTPA is a performance assessment developed by Stanford University faculty and staff at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). The edTPA assessment is currently being used by more than 959 educator preparation programs in 41 states and the District of Columbia (AACTE, 2021).

analytical limitations can be traced to past solutions” (p. 4); solutions which in this particular historical and cultural moment have resulted in an increase in accountability measures, an increase in celebrating individual progress, and an increase in identifying successful teaching in very standardized and limited forms<sup>8</sup>.

So, when we, as a nation, are met with very different circumstances, those that call on community efforts and solidarity wherein standardization and individualism are neither desirable nor possible, teachers feel the brunt of this tension as they are asked to *be* in a way that they were taught was wrong. To move beyond this tension requires that educational institutions, both instructionally and through research, engage in radically (re)imagining the social imaginary that has pre-existed the present time. Radically (re)imagining the social imaginary allows us to move outside the bounds that have kept us tethered to the ground when we have always been meant to fly.

### **Bound by Time: Teacher Education and Learning as Linear**

Within the United States, schools have been historically grounded in linear time, with chrononormativity acting as the driving force. Chrononormativity impacts learning, for both teachers and students, as learning is viewed as a progression always moving forward in an attempt to reach an externally determined goal. This linear structure reflects the underlying ideologies embedded within neoliberalism which promote individual self-

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<sup>8</sup> We can see this in teacher professional development programs that offer digital badges for completed learning (Shields & Chugh, 2017), as well as student behavior frameworks grounded in behaviorism such as School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS) which offers tokens for appropriate behavior. Among the concern regarding the promotion of individual notions of success, these frameworks create and perpetuate a capitalist driven consumer culture.

interest and efficiency (Lipman, 2011). Springgay and Truman (2019) referencing Halberstam (2005) and Freeman (2010), note that

Education is typically marked by chronological time from the punctuated bells that mark out the school day, to the developmental narratives of moving from childhood to adulthood through learning... These normative understandings of time are predicated on advancement, development and innovation (p. 547).

These chrononormative logics, which begin in early childhood, are normalized through K-12 schooling and, for teachers, continue during their teacher education programs and in-service professional development. This ideology is normalized within educational discourse resulting in teachers being expected to construct their classrooms around structures that attend to mastery wherein "...mastery is assumed to be the most valid measure of teacher competence" (Zeichner, 1983, p. 4). This intersection of the neoliberal social imaginary and chrononormative logics produces teachers as intelligible only if they affirm normative and linear notions of individual progress.

Given the neoliberal social imaginary and chrononormative logics constructing teachers, the investment in teacher education and specifically in-service teacher remains neglected with the focus on programmatic efforts and curricula (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Korthagan, 2017; Marrongelle et al., 2013). These curricula, which normalize the discourse of this particular social imaginary, center that which values measurable and observable outcomes and individual success measures rather than outcomes related to teacher agency and personal growth and development.

Darling-Hammond (1996) argues that the lack of investment in education is a consequence of the factory model of schooling, which readily supports bureaucratic

control over teacher knowledge, experience, and agency. This concern is mirrored by others in the field who argue that teachers are not respected as professionals (Apple, 1995; Apple & Jungck, 1990; Pinar, 2012) and are viewed instead as conduits for instructional policy rather than actors with agency (Darling-Hammond, 1990). As the teaching profession continues to be ensnared in scripted curriculum and prescriptions for student success with a neoliberal paradigm, teachers have essentially become “managers of student learning” (Pinar, 2012, p. 6) rather than instructional designers and facilitators of learning. This has resulted in teaching being “... seen as technical work, as teachers are not expected to study what their students know and need to know because the curriculum is predetermined and preassembled” (Milner, 2012, pp. 163-164).

Research over the past four decades has shown that when professional development for in-service teachers does occur, it communicates an impoverished and deficit view of teachers and teacher learning (Little, 1993). Numerous studies have argued that professional development is wholly inadequate and does not provide teachers with opportunities to engage in understanding equity issues within school systems or with the agency to catalyze change when equity issues are identified (Borko et al., 2011; Little, 1993; Newmann et al., 2000). Instead, the majority of professional development that teachers receive is focused on learning to carry out a mandated program/curriculum or how to teach isolated skills and concepts (Rotermund et al., 2017). This focus is primarily due to professional development being driven by the demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and is thus structured around learning how to use pre-packaged curriculum (Achinstein et al., 2004; Sleeter,

2008) to ensure that students are meeting measurable and externally identified achievement outcomes.

As conversations pertaining to concerns regarding teacher learning are not novel, reform efforts over time have changed the scope of professional development with new and innovative approaches beginning to fill the gaps left by one-shop workshops (Little, 1993). These conversations have shifted toward asking questions regarding what constitutes meaningful professional development (Wilson & Berne, 1999), with novel ways to reform professional development aiming to engage teachers in reflective teaching and metacognition through critical reflection about their teaching and learning processes (Sykes, 1996). While professional development reform has resulted in new opportunities for teachers to engage in inquiry-based learning (McDermott, 1990), as it is sitting within a neoliberal paradigm structured through chrononormative logics, there exists a disconnect between true teacher-centered inquiry and the increased levels of accountability and linear success measures that make teachers intelligible.

This tension is demonstrated by research that seeks to identify the qualities of highly effective professional development (Garet et al., 2001; Penuel et al., 2007) as a means to measure the validity of professional development as translated to change in teacher practice. The key features that have been widely recognized by researchers include: (a) content-focus- the focus of activities in connection with the subject matter and student learning (Desimone, 2011); (b) active learning- ensuring that teachers have the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion and planning (Garet, 2001); (c) coherence- how professional development activities are aligned to school and district goals, standards, and assessments (Garet, 2001); (d) duration- ensuring that adequate



time is spent on material (Desimone, 2011); and (e) collective participation- engaging teachers in professional learning communities with feedback from members of the learning community (Barr et al., 2015; Garet, 2011; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Kennedy, 2016; Wilson & Berne, 1999; Desimone, 2011).

This particular line of research embraces neoliberal paradigms of standardization and chrononormative logics regarding success as linear and measurable, which assumes that teacher learning is based on “teachers’ *capacity* to reform [rather than] the *meaning or significance* that teachers attach to specific reform initiatives” (Little, 2001, p. 41). Along with this, the underlying epistemologies of this research positions teachers as objects rather than agents of the professional development wherein they are more readily supported by maintaining compliance and fidelity rather than catalyzing change (Kohli et al., 2015). Understanding the historical and cultural context of professional development within this nation highlights openings for further interrogation of the impact of neoliberal policies and chrononormative logics on in-service teacher learning and practice.

### **Online Learning: No longer a Trend**

Neoliberal paradigms and chrononormative logics also strongly impact online learning arenas for both preservice and in-service teacher development. Within teacher education programs, alternative certification programs, and graduate-level programs across the United States, there has been a recent shift in instructional models that embrace blended learning, hybrid learning, and fully online formats (Duesbery et al., 2019; Kentnor, 2015; Naranjo, 2018). As Kentnor (2015) argues, online education has moved from a trend to a mainstream practice. This shift has created open border classrooms (Duesbery et al., 2019), allowing for increased access to learning and new

possibilities regarding the “transmi[ssion], preserv[ation], and generat[ion]” (Sener, 2012, p. 124) of learning material. Beyond increased access to learning, online and blended learning environment have additional benefits including: (a) increased flexibility as courses can be taken asynchronously (Duesbery, 2019), (b) an increase in applicants to programs, specifically in underrepresented subjects such as science and math (Harrell & Harris, 2006), (c) increased “independence, self-directedness, and interdependence” (King, 2002, p. 240); and (d) increased interactive opportunities for those teachers who “‘find their voice’ in mediated interaction” (Dede et al., 2008, p. 9).

Within the field of education and teacher preparation, proponents argue that “teacher education programs will need to consider creating relevant coursework and practica to prepare teachers entering 21st-century classrooms, a growing number of which will not have walls” (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). While a number of teacher education programs have heeded this call through the creation of hybrid and online learning opportunities (Duesbery et al., 2019; Harrell & Harris, 2006; Kennedy, 2010; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012; King, 2002), some critics argue that online learning cannot fully replicate the experience of teaching in a live setting with others raising concerns regarding a lack of social connectedness within online settings as some learners find online courses to be socially isolating (Hill et al., 2002).

Although there are clear benefits and drawbacks to providing online learning experiences for preservice teachers, Kennedy and Archambault (2012) argue that there is a need to prepare teachers to teach online courses to shift with the changing times and the increase in K-12 online course offerings as online and remote learning formats continue to grow with the rapid increase in technology (Gemin et al., 2015). However, as many of

these studies note, a majority of preservice teacher education programs are not taking into account the changing landscape. When online learning does occur, the focus is solely on using technology and the tools rather than pedagogy (Irvine et al., 2003). This concern becomes especially problematic because as King (2002) notes,

the process of developing online teaching and learning experiences is not one of merely “revising” curriculum to fit technology, but to consider the needs of adult learners, the curriculum and the technology to afford a learning community and develop a community of practice (p. 42).

Therefore, even when teacher education programs do shift to include online learning opportunities or courses in online learning, without a focus on online pedagogy, this will create little benefit for future teachers’ classroom practice.

As teacher learning extends beyond their preservice courses, it is important to consider the learning opportunities that in-service teachers are provided as part of their professional development. As Dede et al. (2009) note, online teacher professional development programs are able to “...fit with [teachers’] busy schedules... draw on powerful resources often not available locally, and... can create an evolutionary path toward providing real-time, ongoing, work-embedded support” (p. 9). Research that studies online teacher professional development has demonstrated beautiful possibilities for creating learning communities that reach beyond what are traditionally hyper-local experiences (Dede et al., 2009). These benefits have been found across studies with a key component for success being the importance of instructional design and the facilitation of interactions between teachers (Thomas, 2002; Wang & Chen, 2008; Wu & Hiltz, 2004).

While national professional development organizations such as the National Writing Project, the National Equity Project, and Facing History and Ourselves continually create opportunities to extend interactions between teachers beyond the school and district level, most of the in-service professional development experiences that teachers are offered, even if having online components, occur locally. However, online professional development can counteract this limitation by offering opportunities for increased collaboration across the world; opportunities that would not be possible without the use of technology.

An example of this work is through Exploring Computer Science (ECS) which provides a robust model of an organization on the cutting edge of online instructional design in their intentional facilitation of interactions between teachers outside of their local communities. ECS employs a hybrid model of both in-person and online learning to increase sustainability and inclusive opportunities for computer science teachers across the nation (Goode et al., 2019). Research associated with ECS professional development has found that instructional design is central to the success of the program with “collaborative lesson plan ‘remixing,’ dialoguing with teachers from across the nation, and cultivated support targeted to individual content knowledge needs” (Goode et al., 2019, p. 607), demonstrating the greatest impact on teacher learning and engagement.

Whether or not teacher education programs and in-service professional development organizations choose to take current needs and trends into consideration when developing their framework and curricula, K-12 schools are seeing a vast increase in students engaging in online learning. During the 2013-2014 school year, 2.7 million K-12 students engaged in some form of online learning which increased from 1.2 million

during the 2009-2010 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). While one can conclude that these figures will continue to increase based on current trends, this particular correlational trajectory was shattered when the nation was met with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 that resulted in nationwide school closures. While the pandemic made evident a number of gaps within our educational system (e.g., the digital usage divide), it also highlighted the fact that these gaps were present far before the pandemic changed our way of life.

### **Developing a Beloved Community**

Anyone who has been in the field of education for any amount of time has likely heard teachers express their frustration with professional development. While teachers have various reasons for this frustration, one such reason is that professional development often feels irrelevant to the needs of their students and is therefore regarded as disrespectful of their time. One possible antecedent to this tension is that many teachers do not have a community to engage with; to collaborate and resist, experience vulnerability as a strength, and speak their truth while growing in discomfort. Rather, due to neoliberal ideologies and chrononormative logics, individual progress is viewed as a marker of intelligibility, making authentic community feel just out of reach. While research has continued to demonstrate the importance of collaboration amongst teachers, pushing for professional learning communities (PLCs) and critical friends' groups (CFGs) (Curry, 2008; Dufour & Eaker, 1998), genuine collaboration is antithetical to the neoliberal policies driving teacher learning and evaluation.

While structures such as PLCs and CFGs can provide powerful learning opportunities, they are often implemented within the same neoliberal paradigms and

chrononormative logics that hold narrow visions of success and thus make it difficult, if not impossible, to truly create what hooks (1996) refers to as a beloved community. hooks (1996) argues that a beloved community “...is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world” (p. 265). Yet, within neoliberal schooling spaces, claiming individual identities is rarely valued, as the ultimate goal is to increase student achievement, a goal narrowly interpreted and often standardized, leaving teachers little to no opportunities to challenge each other and grow together. Developing beloved community, as theorized by hooks (1996), is further made difficult by the ways in which neoliberalism has trained teachers to *be* teachers. To be a teacher within the current social imaginary is to teach within a dominant discourse that requires that one has *all* of the answers and strategies to ensure *all* students’ academic achievement. This discourse does not leave room for the person of the teacher (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) or for an ideology of humility and curiosity. This tension is exemplified Wheatley (2002) who argues that

...we weren’t trained to admit we don’t know. Most of us were taught to sound certain and confident, to state our opinion as if it were true. We haven’t been rewarded for being confused. Or for asking more questions rather than giving quick answers. We’ve also spent many years listening to others mainly to determine whether we agree with them or not. We don’t have time or interest to sit and listen to those who think differently than we do (p. 38).

With this invasive neoliberal paradigm setting the stage for teachers, it becomes imperative that teacher collaboration moves beyond working together to develop

prescriptive toolkits of strategies, standardized approaches to learning, and narrow conceptions of growth. Disrupting this paradigm requires that we shift notions of collaboration toward beloved community where teachers can get uncomfortable with their differences and hold their stories and the stories of their students as important opportunities for learning; a community comprised of people who know that learning is not standard and not knowing is not wrong. This requires a paradigm shift in the way that teacher learning is viewed and enacted.

### **Stories as Transformation**

Each of us carries with us thousands of stories. These stories, existing at individual and collective levels, provide profound ways to understand our experiences and the world in which we live (Bell, 2019; Lewis, 2011). Existing in a sort of symbiosis, Lewis (2007) argues that stories and humans are inseparable because in many ways, “we are narratives... they are what gives shape to us, what gives us meaning” (Hendry, 2019, p. 59). In this, we are more than the stories we carry with us; rather we are a story. Hayward (2013) furthers this belief by arguing that “storytelling is how people make sense of the world... [it] is how social actors give to lived experience a shape or form that enables them to comprehend it and to use it as a guide to future action” (p. 15).

Stories define the boundaries of who we are and who we are not, and “...without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other” (Lewis, 2011, p. 506). Those who study narrative identity (e.g., Bruner, 1987; 2003; Freeman, 1993; Polkinghorn, 1988) believe that people construct their identities (both at the individual and collective levels) through narrative form, with some scholars theorizing that it is through “becoming a conversation partner in these narratives” (Benhabib, 1999, p. 344) that our identities are formed.

Others place importance on stories and storytelling, arguing that stories are critical for making sense of identity at individual, organizational, institutional, and cultural levels (Loseke, 2016). This notion of stories as being essential in claiming our identities is important because as Eaton (2019) notes “stories are rooted in relationships, not only with [others] but with history, community, culture, place, space, time...” (p. 97). This conception of stories moves us toward an understanding that as storied individuals, our relationships with others and understandings of ourselves are historically and culturally contextual.

As stories are important for the development of our identities and finding our place within a community, it becomes important to think about the types of stories being told and the impact of these stories on the individuals they represent. For those from minoritized and marginalized communities, telling stories becomes a way to “bear witness to their struggle and survival in a racist system” (Bell, 2019, referencing Levins-Morales, 1998). Delgado (1989) furthers this ontological belief in his argument that “oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation” (p. 2436). Therefore, stories as an analytic have the power to disrupt neoliberal ideologies and chrononormative logics pervasive in school systems and teacher learning spaces while also providing a bridge toward understanding, interrogating, and disrupting the social imaginary that has normalized colorblind discourse through standardization and assimilative expectations.

In the Storytelling Project Model (STP), Bell (2019) positions stories as a vehicle by which to interrogate racism arguing that as stories “operate on both individual and collective levels, they can bridge the sociological and abstract with the psychological and



personal contours of daily experience” (p. 13). This model for understanding stories allows for a bridging of the individual experience and a systemic analysis to move past Cartesian dualism through engaging people in an embodied relational space of sensemaking. As “...existence is inherently storied” (Kearney, 2002, p. 130), storytelling as the vehicle for learning can help teachers understand the story of their racial identities as well as the stories of their students’ racial identities (Hayward, 2013) in conjunction with an extensive systemic analysis that moves the abstract toward praxis.

This positioning of stories becomes particularly important within the scope of schools because if there is not an interrogation of the stories told about students and families, the dominant narrative becomes the naturalized discourse, no longer representing stories, but instead representing Truth (Delgado, 1993). Interrogating and critically analyzing stories thus provides intentional opportunities for those in the dominant group to confront what Anzaldúa (1990) refers to as racial blank spots. By confronting these racial blank spots through counterstorytelling, naturalized discourse within the neoliberal social imaginary can be highlighted and interrogated at both the individual and systemic level in order to more intentionally consider ways to disrupt chrononormative logics and dominant hegemonies.

Understanding stories as a vehicle by which to “unpack... racism’s hold on us as we move through the institutions and cultural practices that sustain racism” (Bell, 2019, p. 13), provides a strong link to work in critical race theory in that racism is central to inequities and injustice within this nation. Extending the work of previous critical race theorists, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) further the tenets of critical race theory to provide a framework specific to education. Referring to themes rather than tenets, Solorzano and

Yosso (2002) include the following themes within their framework: (a) an acknowledgement of “the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination”, (b) a direct “challenge to dominant ideology”, (c) a “commitment to social justice”, (d) a belief in “the centrality of experiential knowledge,” and (e) a “transdisciplinary perspective” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, pp. 25-26). By grounding one’s work in these themes, there exist opportunities for educators to examine racism and commit to dismantling the master narrative that has been disguised as objective and neutral, a master narrative that is guided by neoliberalism and chrononormative logics. This engagement allows opportunities for teachers to confront their racial blank spots by holding space for students and families to become empowered in sharing their own stories.

On a larger scale, counterstories provide a heuristic to disrupt the conventional narratives of whiteness and dominant thinking perpetuated within schools by the neoliberal social imaginary. As Denzin (2008) argues, “we need to tell the past and its stories in ways that allow us to disrupt conventional narratives and conventional history. Such disruptions help us to better understand how racism and social injustice have been seamlessly woven together” (p. 119). In this way, counterstorytelling provides a vehicle to (re)story the past and present and more intentionally consider counterfuturisms (Springgay & Truman, 2019) so that we can (re)imagine a different future where white teachers can identify their racial blank spots rather than having their “... racial lens remain almost solely focused on the (often misunderstood) racial identities and experiences of students of color” (p. 126). This shifts the paradigm away from a

dominant neoliberal social imaginary and toward a social imaginary that allows us to move outside the chrononormative bounds that have silenced the stories of so many.

### **(Re)imagining Learning: Theories of Futuring as a Method of Change**

Today, we live in a reality that did not even seem possible at the beginning of this century, complete with virtual reality gaming, smartphones, and self-driving vehicles. These innovations have made their way into our educational system with virtual learning (Kennedy, 2012), national standardized curriculum and assessments (e.g., Common Core State Standards, SBAC/PARCC, etc.), and new waves of educational research that ask teachers to consider elements of their teaching differently than ever before (Buffington & Day, 2018; Leung & Fung, 2005; Moorhead, 2018; Paris & Allain, 2017). While these innovations have led to new conversations and spaces of possibility and transformation, they have also made evident the values within society and the ways in which these values are practiced within the field of education.

For example, while educational research has led us to new territories in the field of curriculum theory, pedagogy, and learning sciences, the policies enacted in schools continue to replicate the policies at the end of the last century; policies that ensure increased control of teacher and student bodies and imaginations. These control mechanisms can be seen through teacher evaluation frameworks (Schmoker, 2012), standardized assessments of teacher candidates (Tuck et al., 2016), an increase in school privatization (Lipman, 2011), zero-tolerance policies (Skiba et al., 2006), and externally identified student achievement metrics (Hagopian, 2014). Each of these policies is arguably grounded in neoliberal paradigms of individualism and self-interest (Lipman,

2011; Lynch et al., 2007) and notions of success based on chrononormative understandings of progress as linear (Springgay & Truman, 2019).

The concern regarding this existing scholarship has been met with research focused on understanding and dismantling the neoliberal paradigm and chrononormative structures of schooling (e.g., Brooks et al., 2017; Springgay & Truman, 2019) to move outside of humanist notions of freedom and rationalism (Freeman, 2010). This line of research is preempted by a concern with the policies and practices that have historically marginalized particular groups of people, causing them to be viewed as existing outside of time (Lothian, 2018). Within the field of education, Springgay and Truman (2019) are paving the way for this research, arguing that the progress narrative embedded in neoliberalism and chrononormative structures rely on “ongoing erasure of queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and crip subjects” (p. 548) which exclude those whose futures cannot be conceptualized within this dominant narrative.

In schools, this has broad, and far-reaching impacts as students with marginalized identities lack access to a high level of education because of structural systems such as tracking (Valenzuela, 1999), the hidden curriculum (Anyon, 1980; Apple, 1971; Giroux & Penna, 1983), and a lack of teachers and adults who look like them in their classrooms and chosen fields (RunningHawk Johnson et al., 2020). These structures limit students in their ability to see future possibilities. Along with this, research has shown that school systems and teachers within those systems have lower expectations of particular students as a result of their identities (Ross & Jackson, 1991; Spencer et al., 1999). We can see the impact of this research when looking at data showing that students of color, students living in poverty, students with dis/abilities, and students who identify as LGBTIA+ have

lower achievement scores and graduation rates and higher rates of suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement (George, 2015; Hung et al., 2020; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Losen & Whitaker, 2018; Martin & Smith, 2017; Murnane, 2013).

While this is the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century education system where we find ourselves, this does not have to be the reality for our children and grandchildren. Instead, there exist opportunities to (re)imagine future possibilities for schools, possibilities that ask us to think and be outside of chrononormativity. Springgay and Truman's (2019) conceptualization of counterfuturisms help to think about how we might move against humanist notions of time in particular within school spaces. Using the term counterfuturisms which they connect to queer temporalities, Afrofuturisms, crip time, and Indigenous futurisms, Springgay and Trumann (2019) position their research as considering ways that speculative futuring reveals new possibilities for dreaming and rebuilding.

Although this work has more recently begun to enter the field of education (Springgay & Truman, 2019), scholars in queer studies (Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005; Munoz, 2009), Indigenous studies (Dillon, 2012; Whitehead, 2017), and Black studies (Eshun, 2003; Kilgore, 2014; Womack, 2013), have been asking questions regarding futurity and temporal understandings of self and community far before neoliberal policies began to take root. These different ontologies of time allow for the imagination to be decolonized (brown & Imarisha, 2015), which open spaces of possibility.

While some of this theorizing sits within the academic sphere through scholarship, a vast amount of the work has been a result of social movements and

organizing efforts on the part of people with marginalized identities with these future ontologies providing us a “way to think about how the past, present, and future ‘touch one another’ simultaneously” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 549). The majority of this work comes from communities who are seen as existing outside of time (Lothian, 2018) or having no future on the basis of heteronormative and white supremacist societal underpinnings. Three such theories of futuring include queer futuring, referred to as queer temporalities, Afrofuturism, and Indigenous futuring. While these particular theories of futuring are grounded in varying epistemological assumptions, they all share an ontology of futurity and a commitment to action.

Queer theories of futuring, which arose out of a desire to disrupt normative approaches to futurity that legitimize reproduction and situate those who are non-heteronormative as existing outside of time (Halberstrom, 2005; Freeman, 2010; Lothian, 2018; Springgay & Truman, 2019), help people take a nonlinear approach to the production and reproduction of futures (Lothian, 2019). Queer theorists embrace the term queer temporalities as a way to think outside of the traditional bounds of linear time and progress and to unsettle normative notions of futurity which often reproduce “normative understandings of time [which] are predicated on advancement, development and innovation” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 547). Queer temporalities attempt to *make strange* notions of progress and production to “disrupt chronological and linear narratives of becoming” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 548).

Drawing on Freeman’s (2010) notion of chrononormativity, which she describes as using time as an organizational tool to decide what holds value, leads to offerings of an alternative framework; a framework that pushes back against canonical knowledges

(Halberstrom, 2005) and instead embraces queer time, by “allow[ing] for hauntings or spatiotemporal feelings that need not to be rendered intelligible” (Springgay & Truman, 2019, p. 549).

Unlike chrononormativity, queer time is positioned outside of traditional understandings of time. Because of this repositioning, queer time offers new possibilities and futures (Edelman, 2004) for those who are traditionally denied access to the future based on the dominant social imaginaries (Lothian, 2018). While some queer theorists such as Edelman (2004), regard queer time as existing counter to possible futures, others such as Munoz (2009) argue that queer time is futurity and instead “draw on queerness... as a collective modality of futurity” (McBean, 2013, p. 124).

One avenue of this work that has been taken up in more recent scholarship is the practice of thinking speculatively through a lens of queer theory to move from deconstruction and critique toward visualizing and reconstructing possible futures (Lothian, 2018). Brown and Lothian (2012) argue that “to speculate, the act of speculation, is also to play, to invent, to engage, in the practice of imagining” (para. 2). These ontologies of queer temporalities provide a path to construct experimental ways of being while opening possibilities for “radically different and better elsewhere” (Lothian, 2018, p. 22).

Another way temporality has been theorized is through Afrofuturism and Indigenous futurities, both of which imagine different possible futures aimed toward liberation, emancipation, and decolonization. Afrofuturism is “an aesthetic and cultural movement in which black people of the African diaspora imagine alternate worlds and futures across a wide range of cultural forms, including literature, music, and film”

(Streeby, 2014, p. 35). Afrofuturism is often considered an activist movement (Thomas, 2019), with those who take up the work of Afrofuturism engaging in counterstorytelling (Bell, 1992) as a way to disrupt white supremacy inherent in master narratives (Kilgore, 2014; Springgay & Truman 2019).

As an ideology, Afrofuturism is grounded in the belief that the work being done by historians to counteract the messaging that Black people did not exist in history is not enough. Instead, Afrofuturists argue that there must be an intentional engagement with thinking about and imagining different futures for Black people (Womack, 2003).

Thomas (2019) asserts that one of the reasons for this lack of investment in the future for Black people is due to what she refers to as the imagination gap, which is caused by a lack of diverse imagery in media which “confi[n]es kids and future adults] to single stories about the world around them” (p. 6). Afrofuturism is in many ways a response to this critique as it exists at the “intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation” (Womack, 2003, p. 9). As with queer temporalities, Afrofuturists see this work as impacting the future while also impacting the right now (Womack, 2003).

Afrofuturism has been taken up by various theorists, activists, artists, and writers with each iteration grounded in an ontological belief that change is possible and life does not have to be as it currently is (Bennett, 2016). Like queer theories of time, “Afrofuturism stretches the imagination far beyond the conventions of our time and the horizons of expectation” (Womack, 2003, p. 16) as a way to push back against normative notions of time and humanity. Eshun (2003) notes that “by creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress, these futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory” (p.



297). Thus, the idea of engaging with counterstories and the intentional development of counter-futures is a critical tool to intervene in the current political landscape (Eshun, 2003).

Scholarship and activism within Indigenous futurities have a similar aim with regards to imagining emancipatory futures; however, for Indigenous scholars and thinkers, the main project is to “counter persistent settler colonial fantasies of Native disappearance” (Medak-Saltzman, 2017, p. 143). As a move to create other possible futures for Indigenous people, possible futures that do not exist within the white settler fantasy (Tuck & Yang, 2014), those engaging in work around Indigenous futurity (e.g., Dillon, 2012; Whitehead, 2017) center decolonization as their ultimate aim. Medack-Saltzman (2017) notes that,

By creating blueprints of the possible and providing a place where we can explore the potential pitfalls of certain paths, Indigenous futurist imaginings make it possible to transcend the confines of time and accepted “truths”— so often hegemonically configured and reinforced— that effectively limit what we can see and experience as possible in the present, let alone imagine into the future (pp. 143-144).

Each of these conceptions of futurity offer possibilities for liberation, decolonization, and emancipation as they move against traditional understandings of time and current sociopolitical settings in order to ensure that people who have been storied outside of time are not only present in our histories but also in our futures.

## Visionary Fiction

Visionary fiction which sits under the umbrella of science fiction and draws on theories of queer temporalities, Afrofuturism, and Indigenous futurity, considers how peoples' ability to think toward a future can impact their present. This genre of writing is compelled by an ontological belief that if you are unable to imagine it, you are unable to change it.

In their book, *Octavia's Brood*, brown and Imarisha (2015) coined the term visionary fiction as a way to describe the future social justice possibilities embedded within science fiction and speculative fiction; possibilities that offer a space to play without having to deal with real-world and material costs (brown & Imarisha, 2015). Noting, "whenever we envision a world without war, without prisons, without capitalism, we are producing speculative fiction" (p. 3), they describe visionary fiction as distinguished from science and speculative fiction in that it is always grounded in understandings of social justice and decolonization. They argue that

...this space is vital for any process of decolonization, because the decolonization of the imagination is the most dangerous and subversive form there is; for it is where all other forms of decolonization are born. Once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless (p. 4).

Conducting visionary fiction workshops for activists and community members across the nation, brown and Imarisha's work continues to be taken up in many different contexts as a way to both radically imagine and create change. These workshops are grounded in the work of Octavia E. Butler, a Black female science fiction writer who believed that science fiction stories keep alive the realism of actual events (Menne,

2011). Octavia Butler's myriad of novels which do not imagine a utopian future rather a compelling future (brown, 2017), contain "important resource[s] in our journey toward cultural and institutional change" (brown & Imarisha, 2015). Octavia Butler did not write about futures free of conflict; rather her stories, which she developed through reading current events, provide windows into troubling futures that she argues are right around the corner if humanity does not change. Octavia Butler did not believe that utopia was possible; rather she believed that conflict and discordance are inevitable due to the systemic forces and institutionalized power at play.

While there has been scholarship that considers education through the lens of science fiction (Mason, 2013; Roue, 2016) and scholarship that connects Octavia Butler's work to other fields of study (Pasco et al., 2016), there is currently a lack of educational scholarship grounded in the ontological and epistemological assumptions present in visionary fiction (brown & Imarisha, 2015) and the work of Octavia Butler.

Outterson (2008) begins to do some of this work in thinking about Octavia Butler's pedagogical philosophy and particularly the way in which it is the process of trying to reach *a* utopia versus *the* utopia itself that is important in her work; an ontology that could be applied (although not fully done so by Outterson), to education in thinking about the importance of process over product. This notion of process over product is counter to the neoliberal and chrononormative social imaginary as it is the learning process rather than the outcomes that are central to Octavia Butler's work.

Another piece of work that could be broadly applied to the field of education is Streeby's (2014) article which argues that Octavia Butler was an early theorist of neoliberalism, specifically in her consideration of the impacts of individualism and

privatization on communities. Although the project of this article was not to connect Butler's work specifically to education, it does some of this work in helping us "...think about the history and human costs of the neoliberal policies we see all around us and how [they] can... help us imagine a different world" (Streeby, 2014, p. 34). This article thus offers food for thought in considering the long-term impacts of neoliberalism as well as a heuristic for how we might change our present to create new more just futures. Both of these articles provide insight into how Octavia Butler's work can serve as a powerful instrument for engaging in radically (re)imagining education outside of the neoliberal social imaginary.

### **Harnessing the Imagination**

The power of the imagination is not a novel concept; rather philosophers, psychologists, scientists, writers, and artists have long since spoken about the importance of harnessing the imagination. Albert Einstein is quoted as saying: "imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution." And yet, within the field of education, embracing one's imagination is not often a sought-after trait for teachers or students, arguably, as the outcome cannot be easily measured. Instead, beyond primary grades, students are asked to limit their imagination and focus on factual information. This limiting of the imagination can be seen in the shift in the English language arts curriculum within the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which moves away from narrative and puts a greater emphasis on informational and argumentative text (Goldstein, 2019). The shift in focus can also be seen in the push for standardized curriculum (Noddings, 2013), teacher evaluation frameworks (Schmoker, 2012), standardized

assessments for teacher candidates (Tuck et al., 2016), and student achievement metrics (Hagopian, 2014).

These few examples highlight the implicit requirement to shed one's imagination and future dreaming in order to embrace standard and dominant ways of knowing and being. Often a wild imagination is seen as childish, which can ultimately lead to tension between the expectation of attaining knowledge and the desire to engage in imaginative activities. Over time, the expectation to increase one's knowledge through standardized means of production has, in a sense, replaced space for imagination and dreaming. As Le Guin (2004) reminds us "the exercise of imagination is dangerous to those who profit from the way things are because it has the power to show that the way things are is not permanent, not universal, not necessary" (p. 222). If we are to heed Le Guin's words, it would seem rather apparent that the neoliberal social imaginary has ensured that the exercise of the imagination is replaced with standardization and narrow notions of individualized success as the imagination is a dangerous tool for social change.

Yet, there is an argument to be made about the importance of imagination. If we do not embrace imagination, we run the risk of reproducing the same inequities and injustices that have always been present, run the risk of blindly following chrononormative logics of linear progress and attainment. Greene (1995) who spent her career advocating for a release of the imagination, argues that imagination is in many ways the most crucial aspect of education and is what

...makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces  
between ourselves and those we teachers have called 'others' over the years....

[it] permits us to give credence to alternative realities... to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions (p. 3).

Greene's (1995) theorization of the imagination as fuel for opening possibilities is, in her eyes, a requirement for teachers, as learning to teach, and learning in general, is in and of itself an act of the imagination. She argues that "to call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise... to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real" (p. 19).

While Greene's work is centered on teachers, others outside of the field of education have also called for a feminist pragmatist approach to utopian thinking as a way to "provid[e] visions to which we might aspire; help[ing] us to understand ourselves both as we are and as we might be" (McKenna, 2001). Arguably, the resurgence of science fiction narratives in mainstream books, movies, and television (Hill, 2015; Lambie, 2017; Woods, 2019) demonstrates the belief that the imagination is vital for knowledge of self and larger social change. As Audre Lorde (1984) so famously said, "... the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (p. 112). Thus, to create something new, there is a need to release the imagination (Greene, 1995) and create new tools and new ways to dismantle existing paradigms. If not, we run the risk of living within the same social imaginary and continuing to reproduce that which has always been.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To explore the two research questions guiding this study which are as follows: (a) *how can visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional*

*development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice; and (b) how does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency,* each question will engage with a different theoretical framework as the questions demand different approaches and knowledge sets. As these two research questions are, in essence, companion questions, the same approach will not answer them both. Therefore, it is imperative that each question is answered through a theoretical lens that will allow for deep analysis of that particular topic.

### **Research Question #1: Psychological Conceptions of Narrative Identity and Future Thinking**

The study's first research question asks how visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development might offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice. As this question focuses on understanding the individual teacher's experiences, the theoretical framework draws on theories of narrative identity development (McAdams, 2003), autobiographical memory (Nelson, 2003), and future thinking (Oettingen et al., 2018). Developmental psychological theories of identity provide a lever for considering this question in that the focus is on unearthing teacher's perceptions of self in connection with their teacher identity and teacher practice. This is particularly relevant as research within the field of psychology has continually found intrinsic links between the self, autobiographical memory, and prospection (Fivush & Haden, 2003), with various lines of research arguing that it is the intertwining of one's memory and their construction of life stories that create this link (Bruner, 1987). Others position narratives as the critical link between one's memory and understanding of self (Fivush & Haden, 2003).

Specific to the link between self and autobiographical memories, Fivush and Haden (2003) argue that “both memory and self are constructed through specific forms of social interactions and/or cultural frameworks that lead to the formation of an autobiographical narrative” (p. vii). These findings highlights the connection that memories provide to the understanding and development of self and the way in which one’s social milieu impacts this understanding and development. Scholars such as Oettingen et al. (2018) are interested in temporal understandings of self through the process of prospection which Gilbert and Wilson (2007) theorize as the ability to engage in future thinking in order to pre-experience events. This particular line of research considers the how thinking about the future influences the development of self. Oettingen et al. (2018) argue that a person’s ability to think about their future influences their behavior, their understanding of self, their surroundings, and the world.

Temporal understandings of self as a way to consider the intrinsic link between the past, present, and future are theorized by numerous scholars. For example, McAdams (2003) offers a life-story theory which engages in a diachronic integration of identity in understanding identity development as being organized temporally: past, present, and future stories about one’s self (in childhood) and identity (in adulthood). Others such as Szpunar et al. (2018) drawing on Berntsen & Bohn (2010) deconstruct the episodic and semantic modes of future-thinking which link imagined future events and autobiographical memories of past events. Oettingen et al. (2018) further these findings in their theories of futuring, which engage individuals in the process of extrapolation from their past experiences (Oettingen et al., 2018), thus temporally intertwining the development of self.



Although the development of self, or more pointedly, one's identity (McAdams, 2003) is a complex process and is always fluid, constantly changing, and never static (Erikson, 1971), scholars across the field of psychology acknowledge the temporal understanding of self. To deeply consider the foundational theories undergirding the temporal development of self, it becomes important to consider each body of literature as integral to painting a complete picture. Therefore, the below sections discuss these theories in connection with narrative identity and the making of self (Haberman & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 2003; Nelson, 2003) as well as future thinking (Oettingen et al., 2018).

### *Narrative Identity and the Making of Self*

Autobiographical memory has been described in a number of studies, with Welch-Ross (1995) defining it as “a collection of memories for personally experienced events that is relevant to one's sense of self and thus constitutes a person's life history” (p. 338). In describing the autobiographical memory, Howe and Courage (1997) note that this autobiographical shift occurs when children move from a basic understanding of I (subjective) to a more rudimentary understanding of me (objective); with the me including “within it all things, features, and characteristics that the ‘I’ may attribute to it— all that is me, all that is mine” (McAdams, 2003, p. 188). Further, this is theorized to be a result of a child's “...discovery of the cognitive self and [an] increase in the ability to maintain information in memory storage” (Howe & Courage, 1997, p. 514) which emerges and develops through a social context (Welch-Ross, 1995), relying heavily on language and a focus on recalling one's past.

This process of the self, being constructed in autobiographical narrative form through the social interactions and/or cultural frameworks available to an individual, helps them make sense of their past and what a *self* is (Oyserman & Markus, 1993). A vast amount of research in this area focuses on young children during development (Fivush & Haden, 2003; Nelson, 2003; Reese & Farrant, 2003) and specifically on the “impact [of] the linguistic and social ‘milieu’” (Fivush & Haden, 2003, p. ix) with some scholarship arguing that it is through a collaborative process that the self is constructed with language and memory playing a critical role (Fivush & Haden, 2003; Nelson, 2003). Research regarding selfhood and identity development holds an ontological belief that there is a narrative self-made up of temporal episodes woven together with our social milieu. This is premised on a belief that humans lead storied lives (McAdams, 2006), and the stories we tell (both to ourselves and to others) create the narrative acts of self-making without which “there would be no such thing as selfhood” (Bruner, 2003, p. 222).

While the terms self and identity are often used interchangeably, scholars such as Erikson (1995) and McAdams (2003) define them as separate, arguing that “the *self* is many things, but *identity* is a life story” (McAdams, 2003, p. 187). Other scholars further these distinctions in their varying definitions of self and identity. Hermans (1996), for example, compares the self to a polyphonic novel containing a mass of internalized voices in constant dialogue, while McAdams (1996) notes that the self is essentially a reflexive project worked on constantly by the individual. Giddens (1991), on the other hand, compares one’s identity to a “product or project that is fashioned and sculpted, not unlike a work of art or a technological artifact” (p. 297). Bruner (2003) argues that there is, in fact, no one single self to be portrayed in words; rather “we constantly construct and

reconstruct a self to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future” (p. 210).

Across this research no matter the metaphor used, is an ontological agreement that one’s identity is complex and always in process. Holland et al. (1998) argue that “identity represents a central means by which selves, and the sets of actions they organize, form and re-form over a personal lifetime and in the histories of social collectivities” (p. 270). This notion becomes especially important when considering opportunities for social change, as the stories one tells about themselves both to themselves and in collaboration with others in their social and cultural milieu are created contextually.

According to Haberman and Bluck (2000), the way one’s identity and understanding of self is formed, what Bruner (2003) argues is a narrative art, is predicated on temporal, biological, causal, and thematic coherence. McAdams (2003) provides context for this coherence by considering how children “narrate their own personal experiences in ways that conform to their implicit understandings of how good stories should be structured and what they should include” (p. 192). Therefore, the life story one tells about themselves based on their autobiographical memory is contingent upon, and constructed by, the social interactions and cultural frameworks in which they are immersed along with the “unspoken and implicit cultural models of what selfhood should be and what it might be- and, of course, what it should not be” (Bruner, 2003, p. 2010).

While there is an agreement regarding the intrinsic temporal link across scholarship, there is disagreement regarding the unity of self with discussions moving between the notion of identity providing unity (Erikson, 1995) and an understanding of

identity as dialectical in nature (McAdams, 2007). In opposition to Erikson's theory of a unified self, McAdams (2006) and Raggatt (2002) argue that the complexity and lack of consistency within day-to-day life make it impossible for "the kind of neat identity consolidation that Erikson once envisioned" (McAdams, 2006, p. 5). McAdams (2006) furthers this conclusion with his skepticism of an integrated unified self, arguing that the narrative self is rooted in an understanding that there "multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity" (p. 6). Thus, while early developmental psychologists such as Erikson saw identity as providing unity, other scholars have pushed back on this theory in considering a less consolidated and more complex understanding of unity. This is not to say that these scholars do not believe that one's identity "functions to organize and make more or less coherent a whole life, a life that otherwise might feel fragmented and diffuse" (McAdams, 2007, p. 5), rather that identity is always in process and constant change.

These conclusions are coupled with dichotomous beliefs about identity development, with some arguing that identity development is solely a psychological process (e.g., Erikson, 1995), others of the belief that identity is a product of individual agency (e.g., Baumeister & Muraven, 1986), and still others who believe that identity is a combination of individual agency and social and cultural norms and conventions (Cohler & Hammock, 2006; Tuval-Masliach, 2000). Newer research in the field of psychology aligns with the third set of beliefs in the argument that it is the social construction of self as developed in collaboration with others in one's social milieu as well as the "social and historical circumstances [that] provides the fabric through which life stories are woven" (Cohler & Hammock, 2006).

This understanding of narrative identity, then, moves beyond Erikson's psychological theory of identity development and toward a "performative or social practice theory of identity" (Cohler & Hammock, 2006), which supports the notion that identity is formed within the larger collective cultural and social discourses. This conclusion is furthered by the work of Tuval-Mashiach (2000), who brings to bear the importance of stories within identity development, arguing that "as much as the subjective experience of telling one's story is that of invention and agency, one is at the same time always also conforming to social norms and cultural conventions" (p. 266). These particular studies further an understanding that identity is socially constructed rather than solely a psychological process.

**Life-Story Theories.** In his life-story theory of identity McAdams (2003) employs an understanding of identity complete with a plot, setting, characters, and themes, all elements present within a narrative. His life-story theory positions identity development as beginning in early childhood and extending to the last years of one's life. In describing this theory, McAdams (2003) notes that,

Life stories are based on autobiographical facts, but they go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful (p. 187).

Haberman and Bluck (2000), who also engage with life story theories, make the argument that there are two very particular manifestations of a life story which become

important in understanding how an individual represents their own life story. They describe the first of these manifestations as life narratives which are “overt recountings of one’s life that are bound in time and social context... following syntactic and pragmatic rules” (p. 749). The second manifestation of life story, according to Haberman and Bluck (2000) is autobiographical reasoning which they describe as “the process by which the life story is formed and used” (p. 749). Each of these manifestations serve a very particular purpose within one’s life story and are integral to identity development and understanding of self.

Furthermore, Robinson and Taylor (1998) differentiate between autobiographical memories and self-narratives in theorizing that autobiographical memories contain a wide array of personal experience and connected information while self-narratives are temporally and thematically organized in ways that help to constitute one’s identity. They also suggest that self-narrative may include information about imagined futures which suggests that future-thinking is important in understanding the development of one’s identity.

### ***Future-Thinking***

Future-thinking refers to the ability to “‘pre-experience’ the future by simulating it in our minds” (p. 1352). Within scholarship on future thinking, there are various perspectives and approaches to understanding how thinking about the future impacts our present. The majority of this research focuses on understanding how imagining future goals can impact life trajectories (Oettingen et al., 2018). For example, scholars such as Dweck and Yeager (2018), Kimmelmeier and Oyserman (2001), and Oyserman (2015) ground their research in identity-based motivation asking questions about how one’s

imagination of their future affects their motivation and self-esteem in the present. A vast amount of this research is connected to students in K-12 and higher education (Hilpert et al., 2012; Horowitz et al., 2020; Husman et al., 2016; Husman & Lens, 1999; Nurra & Oyserman, 2018; Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2002) with the majority focusing on positive future identity outcomes (Oyserman, 2015). While there is some agreement surrounding this work particularly regarding a paradigmatic belief that thinking about the future does directly impact the present, this is not always the case, with mixed results in terms of whether or not future identities always impact present behavior (Oyserman, 2015).

Oettingen et al. (2018) identify three distinct functions for thinking about the future, with predicting the future through inferring from the past and the impact of goal setting on present behavior highly researched across the above scholarship. The third of these functions, which Oettingen et al. (2018) argue has been under researched, involves imagination and visualization through mental exploration. While this area is under studied, psychological researchers theorize that the imagination and mental exploration serve an important function in helping one conceptualize not only their future selves but the many possible futures that might exist, with Novitz (1997) arguing that “our individual identities and ideals of personhood are imaginative constructs” (p. 143).

The ability to imagine and explore the unknown future, referred to as mental time travel (Oyserman 2015; Tulving, 1985), involves both recalling who one was in the past as well as imagining a future, thus serving as the temporal process that intrinsically links the past, present, and future. This process has also been referred to as episodic future

thinking (Berntsen & Bohn, 2010), which is “a projection of the self into the future to pre-experience an event” (Atance & O’Neill, 2001, p. 533).

Berntsen and Bohn (2010) connect theories of mental time travel and autobiographical memory, noting that

imagined future events share many similarities with autobiographical memories of past events. As with memories, imagined future events can be about mundane experiences... as well as about highly significant personal events... As with memories, they can be temporally close as well as distant. Importantly, both memories and imagined future events involve mental time travel... (p. 265).

Further, Cole and Winkler (1994) argue that “...memory is not simply a matter of retrieving information aimed at empirical truth, it is an act of imagination, a creative process of crafting meaning making from the remnants of time” (p. 11). This conclusion points to the highly connected actions of both memory and thinking about the future in that both require an act of the imagination based on one’s lived experience. Randall and McKim (2004) argue that

in essence, we employ our imagination to remember our past, so much so that “memory” and “imagination” might be better seen as interdependent expressions of a single, creative consciousness; as two sides of the same interpreted coin, one oriented (prospectively) toward the future, the other (retrospectively) toward the past (p. 241).

To further theorize, Randall and McKim (2004) note that looking toward our past and imagining our future are directly affected by our present. This phenomenon has been



referred to as strange logic (Brook, 1985) and as a “a perceptual inter-rmingling of all three modes or modalities of human time” (Brockheimer, 2001, p. 250).

While much of this original work regarding future thinking is often credited to Tulving (1985; 2002), it has been taken up across scholarship by those who have begun to examine the relationship between episodic memory and episodic future thinking (Berntsen & Bohn, 2010) with studies suggesting that both of functions are supported by the same neurocognitive processes (Berntsen & Bohn, 2010). Although this work occurs within and across different disciplines, scholars such as Lombardo (2007) connect this particular theory to the field of education in considering learning, arguing that

learning reflects the past but is used in dealing with the present as well as anticipating the future. The phenomena of learning and memory illustrate that awareness of the past is tied to awareness of the future. As we acquire knowledge and understanding of the past, our capacity to anticipate and predict the future grows – the same areas of the brain are used in recollecting the past and anticipating the future (p. 3).

Building on this research, Berntsen and Bohn (2010) found that “episodic future thinking appears to require more constructive effort and is more emotionally positive and idyllic than episodic remembering” (p. 266). Reasons for this include the fact that imagined future events contain less sensory detail and a higher level of observer perspective than past memories (Berntsen & Both, 2010; Berntsen & Jacobsen, 2008). Further, research has found that people report that they are truer versions of themselves when mental time traveling to their future as they are not limited and weighed down by their everyday lives (Oyserman, 2015; Wakslak et al., 2008).

Scholars such as Szpunar et al. (2018) advance this understanding of future thinking and mental exploration by proposing that future thinking is broken down into episodic memory and semantic memory. They define episodic memory as “simulations, predictions, intentions, or plans in relation to specific autobiographical events that may take place in the future” (p. 52) and semantic memory as “simulations, predictions, intentions, or plans that relate to more general or abstract states of world that may arise in the future” (pp. 52-53). This distinction becomes essential specifically in the differentiation between concrete and abstract mental exploration.

### ***Opening Portals for Theories of Futuring***

In developing understandings of futuring and the ways in which identity is temporally constructed, Sools and Mooren (2012) push for a narrative psychological approach to futuring. Arguing for a more expanded understanding of futuring, they note that “imagining the future seems to have an all-over organising and motivating effect” (p. 219). While this conclusion is similar to others in the field, they define their theory as embracing a narrative approach, arguing that storytelling is a root metaphor for many aspects of the human experience, including human thought, human action, and the construction of identity. This becomes an important contribution to the field, as Sools and Moren (2012) push beyond understanding imagined futures in connection with goal-directed behavior (e.g. Destin et al., 2018; Duckworth et al., 2013) by providing a bridge to connect with identity scholars such as Bruner (1990), Polkinghorne, (1988) and Sarbin (1986) who engage in narrative understanding of lived experience, which to date, is under theorized (Sools, 2012; Sools & Moren, 2012; Squire, 2012).

Thus, work centered in narrative psychological approaches to futuring (Sools, 2012), highlights the important considerations of connecting futuring with narrative identity as a way to address the first function of future thinking as proposed by Oettingen et al. (2018): allowing us to imagine and visualize possibilities through mental exploration. This scholarship enables a pulling together of threads in terms of narrative identity development and storied experiences grounded in futuring as “futuring (imagining the future) is a capacity that defines who we are as human beings” (Sarbin, 1986, p. 206).

Previous studies that focus on understanding the influence of future thinking have found that engaging in mental exploration through positive fantasies without questioning the joy of the fantasy can hinder behavior change as these positive fantasies do not prepare individuals for possible barriers or a consideration of how to overcome those barriers (Oettingen, 1996; 2000; Oettingen et al., 2001). Considering these findings and seeking to understand the connection between expectations and fantasies, Oettingen and Mayer (2002) found that positive fantasies, which they refer to as daydreams (building off the work of Klinger, 1971; 1978), have both potential benefits and potential drawbacks on performance.

Benefits of positive fantasies include helping one to discover possible selves (as found in Markus & Nurius, 1985) as well as allowing people to explore the future without having to experience “the hardships of reality” (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002, p. 1209). Positive fantasies can also increase positive emotions and thought processes and “help people mentally experience the various possibilities and opportunities the future might

bring, thereby broadening and building a person's thought-action repertoire" (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002, p. 1209).

Drawbacks of positive fantasies, on the other hand, include a hindrance in performance because of one's acceptance of the daydream and lack of engaging in efforts to confront problems. This can be counter to individual growth as the increased focus on the daydream can result in a disregard of negative stimuli. In this, Oettingen and Mayer (2002) found that while positive fantasies can be enjoyable, they are less likely to lead to behavior change, as are positive expectations that "reflect past successes... [and] signal that investment in the future will pay off" (p. 1210).

### ***Mental Contrasting***

Across the field of psychology, scholars concerned with understanding the influence of future thinking have continually pointed to the benefits of imagined futures in terms of their impact on present performance and behavior (Hilpert et al., 2012; Horowitz et al., 2020; Husman et al., 2016; Husman & Lens, 1999; Nurra & Oyserman, 2018; Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2002). Research in this area, both with regards to fantasies (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002) as well as what is referred to as mental contrasting, provides evidence that supports the influence of future thinking on one's present actions and goal commitments (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al. 2001, 2009; Wright, 2008).

Research regarding imagined futures has been pushed forward by Oettingen (2000), who developed the model of fantasy realization. This model deconstructs the engagement with imagined future by identifying three modes of thought: (a) indulging, (b) dwelling, and (c) mental contrasting. All three modes of thought engage the

individual in self-regulatory practices, each with a distinct notion of future orientations and fantasy realization. According to Oettingen (2000), indulging occurs when an individual thinks deeply about the benefits of a desired future without considering the possible obstacles, while dwelling occurs when an individual thinks deeply about the present obstacles and thus is inhibited from fantasizing about an imagined future. Both of these modes of thought limit the benefits of engaging in thinking about imagined futures as the individual is limited in their ability to move their model of fantasy into their present reality.

Mental contrasting, on the other hand, as theorized by Oettingen (2000) as well as various other scholars interested in understanding goal-directed behavior, is defined as the “conjoint mental elaboration of a desired future and the present reality standing in the way of fantasy realization” (Duckworth et al., 2013, p. 746). Research has shown that mental contrasting has direct benefits to goal directed behavior change as it “creates a strong mental association between future and reality that signals the need to overcome the obstacles in order to attain the desired future” (Duckworth, et al., 2013, p. 746).

Mental contrasting makes possible the move from dreaming about imagined futures to being able to move those dreams into actionable behavior change in that it provides individuals with concrete ways to dream big and develop positive fantasies (Oettingen & Mayer, 2002) while still reaching their goals. Mental contrasting requires explicit engagement in identifying barriers to success in a shift away from self-indulgent or dwelling-oriented modes of thought. The self-regulatory ability to engage in mental contrasting further highlights “... that thoughts about the future can encourage action, goal commitment, and goal-directed effort” (Oettingen et al. 2001, 2009; Wright 2008;

cited in Destin et al., 2018, p. 322). When provided space and strategies to engage in mental contrasting, this mode of thought can create opportunities for transformation in self-confidence and future behavior.

### ***Putting the Pieces Together***

Each of the above concepts is important in that they help to form a more robust understanding of narrative identity and the ways the stories people construct about their future impact their present. When put together, these concepts create a fuller picture regarding why stories matter for individual development and behavior. As research makes clear that one's identity is complex and always in process, this positions stories and storied identity as both ontologically important and ontologically uncertain as identity is not fixed nor static, rather it is always in flux with individuals constantly in the process of becoming. Through an engagement with McAdams' (2003) life story theory and Sools and Mooren (2012) narrative psychological approach to futuring, there exist entry points for considering storied identity, as one both grapples with their autobiographical memories and engages in mental exploration to create new stories for their future selves. In this way, theories of futuring and particularly mental contrasting provide a lens by which to understand not only who one will become but what is guiding this process.

In connection to this particular research question, narrative theories of temporal identity development and the connection with mental contrasting help to provide a foundation by which to consider the influence of visionary pedagogy on teachers'

understanding of self as well as their perceptions of and goals for their own teaching practice.

## **Research Question #2: Indigenous Research Paradigms**

The second research question in this study asks how the instructional design of an in-service professional development influences teachers' engagement, learning, and sense of agency. Scholarship within the field of Indigenous Methodologies, and particularly that which centers relational ontologies serves as the theoretical framework for this question.

Drawing on the work of Wilson (2008), who theorizes relationality through his process of engaging in relationally accountable research, this question is rooted in his underlying concern over the desire for objective research. Wilson (2008) argues that objectivity does not allow for “the complexity of connections and relationships” (p. 56) to take root. This concern is expressed by others who push back against conventional social science research (St. Pierre et al., 2016), arguing that objectivity is not only inadequate but impossible. Wilson (2008) furthers this critique, noting that methodologies that seek objectivity are unrealistic, in that they require researchers to amputate aspects of their identity and life experience in order to maintain an objective stance. Thus, the theoretical framework for this particular question is grounded in the ontological belief that relational accountability to people, place, and ideas is paramount to engaging in relational research.

The theoretical framework for this question builds on the notion of “listening with your three ears” (Lewis, 2015) as a way to think about relationality as a practice, or pedagogy, of the heart. Lewis (2015), who identifies as an Aboriginal scholar-researcher, positions the responsibility of the researcher as needing to

be ready to sit down and listen, with our three ears. Recognizing that to engage in research as a respectful listener, to moving into ‘research as conversation.’ then to ‘research as chat’ and finally to ‘research as storytelling’ is to acknowledge the process of trust and relationship building, central to experiencing true story work (p. 21).

This paradigm presents a dramatic shift from traditional western research (Wilson, 2008), positivist paradigms, and conventional social science research (St. Pierre et al., 2016) which “extend from scientific inquiry [following] a linear movement” (Martin, 2017, p. 1393). Shifting research toward an ontology that is committed to an Indigenous research paradigm requires that researchers are engaged with all of their circles of relations and accountable to all those relations (Chilisa, 2012), rather than rooting their work in a commitment to a rigid scientific process.

### ***Indigenous Research Paradigms: Centering Relationality***

As with the desire to decolonize the imagination, as Imarisha (2015) discusses in her work and organizing practices, so too exists a need to decolonize research; to move beyond conventional social science paradigms that have structured traditional western research and move toward research that centers relationality as an ontology, epistemology, and axiology. A commitment to Indigenous research paradigms requires an understanding that the ontology, epistemology, and axiology grounding research are not separate entities; rather they are “inseparable and blend from one into the next [with]... Relationality seem[ing] to sum up the whole Indigenous research paradigm” (Wilson, 2008, p. 70).



The work in this dissertation is not engaging with decolonization in its truest sense, in working to repatriate the land that was stolen from Indigenous people and provide reparations for Indigenous people in the ongoing struggle against settler colonialism. Acknowledging this certitude, as well as taking to heart Tuck and Yang's (2014) argument that decolonization "is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools" (p. 1), my engagement with the term decolonization is done as a way to point to the particular commitments I am making in this work as a white woman, in terms of decentering Western research paradigms (Wilson, 2008) that have historically engaged in extraction and caused trauma for and within Indigenous communities. Thus, my commitment to this work is through my engagement with relational accountability throughout the entirety of this research. In this way, the decolonization I engage with is far from complete or adequate, but it is a step in considering how moving away from conventional social science research paradigms and toward Indigenous research paradigms that center relational accountability, can provide a path for more thoughtful, ethical, and relational research.

In this, I am engaging with an Indigenous research paradigm that is grounded in relationality (Wilson, 2008) rather than a positivist research paradigm which seeks objectivity and is "built on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained and therefore knowledge may be owned by an individual" (Wilson, 2008, p. 56). Acknowledging that an Indigenous research paradigm is comprised of varying philosophies, I draw here mainly on the Indigenous research paradigm articulated by

Shawn Wilson, Opaskwayak Cree (2008), and Bagele Chilisa, Bantu (2012) and in particular the ways in which each of these scholars theorize relationality.

Considering the work of Chilisa (2012) provides a helpful foundation for understanding what is required of relational research within an Indigenous research paradigm. Drawing on her framework of the 4 R's of Indigenous research is central to moving beyond an acknowledgment of relationality and toward a deep engagement and commitment to relational research. The 4 R's in Chilisa's (2012) framework include relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and right and regulations during the research process. Chilisa (2012) further this in her description of her framework.

Relational accountability refers to the fact that all parts of the research process are related and that the researcher is accountable to all relations. Respectful representation is about how the researcher listens, pays attention, acknowledges, and creates space for the voices and knowledge systems of the Other. Reciprocal appropriation refers to the fact that all research is appropriation and should thus be conducted so that benefits accrue to both the communities researched and the researcher. Rights and regulations refer to the need for ethical protocols that accord the colonized and the marginalized ownership of the research process and the knowledge produced (p. 22).

These understandings of relationality are central to how an Indigenous research paradigm is ontologically opposed to conventional paradigms.

In describing his theory of relationality, Wilson (2008) notes that the entirety of an Indigenous paradigm is grounded in relationality and similar to Chilisa (2012), he

positions respect, reciprocity, and responsibility as key features within an Indigenous research paradigm. According to Wilson (2008), “the ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships” (pp. 70-71). Foundational to Wilson’s (2008) conception of an Indigenous relational paradigm is an ontological belief that “reality is relationships or sets of relationships” (p. 73). Thus, for both Wilson (2008) and Chilisa (2012), there is an understanding that knowledge is relational rather than something to be obtained by an individual; something to be owned or commodified (Wilson, 2008). In this way, knowledge does not belong to an individual, rather it is part of one’s relations.

Wilson (2008) disentangles this paradigm on the basis of each element of the research paradigm acknowledging that each of these elements is drawn together through a commitment to relationality. For Wilson (2008), an Indigenous ontology, which is foundational to relationally accountable research, is grounded in an understanding that there is not one reality, rather there are different sets of relationships, and “reality is relationships or sets of relationships” (p. 74). An Indigenous epistemology, on the other hand “has systems of knowledge built upon relationships between things, rather than on the things themselves. These relationships are with the cosmos around us, as well as with concepts” (p. 74). When a research paradigm is grounded in an Indigenous ontology and epistemology, there is an emergence of Indigenous axiology that is rooted in relational accountability. Because relationality is central to all aspects of an Indigenous research paradigm, this understanding ensures a maintaining of relational accountability from the development of the research questions through the analysis of the data.

## Summary

While the literature for this project, as well as the theoretical underpinnings vary and are drawn from a variety of fields, scholars, activists, and philosophers, they each provide a foundation by which to understand and interrogate the current notions of teacher education within this nation. This literature, taken together, offers new ways to answer old questions regarding learning, and in particular learning within a neoliberal paradigm controlled by chrononormative logics. Diverse literature within the fields of teacher education, online learning, and storytelling pave the way for additional considerations and expanded possibilities for engaging with counterfuturisms and counterstorytelling to identify opportunities for transformation both individually and collectively.

Answering the companion research questions for this dissertation with two distinct theoretical frameworks in order to fully attend to the unique nature of each question, allows for a broadened perspective regarding (a) the individual experience of teachers through the lens of psychology and in particular temporal identity development and modes of future thinking, and (b) the influence of the design process on teacher' s engagement, learning, and sense of agency through the lens Indigenous research paradigms, and in particular relational accountability and an ontology of relationality. By moving against the grain and engaging with literature from a variety of different fields and ontologies, space is created to leverage curiosity and the imagination as a driving force in developing and transforming educational opportunities for teachers today and into the future.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESIGN METHODOLOGY

*Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it (Roy, 2020).*

Dear Jose,

Just as when I was your teacher, thinking deeply about relationships and community building were, and continue to be, at the heart of all that I do. While I know that our relationship early on was strained, likely in part due to the institutional betrayal you continually experienced at the hands of school personnel and other authority figures, I will never forget the day when you told me that I could call you by your street name. While I didn't take you up on this offer as it felt unprofessional, this was a turning point.

I remember spending many of my prep periods in the principal's office asking her to please not expel you; however, as the infractions continued and increased in severity, it seemed like day in and day out, I was fighting a losing battle. While I could convince her to not suspend you for minor offenses and a promise that I would walk you to classes to ensure that you weren't alone in the hallways, when you brought drugs on campus, the pleading fell on deaf ears as this was now out of her hands and into the hands of law enforcement.

This relational web, often called the school to prison nexus or pipeline before this point was invisible to me. While other students would talk about their stints in juvie, and it wasn't uncommon to see school police on campus checking lockers and backpacks, I hadn't realized until then, the insidious nature of the relationship between these two systems; systems that were supposed to teach, nurture and protect (albeit in their own ways), yet systems that, in reality, cast out those who did not fit the mold that society had set; a mold that I understand now to be grounded in white supremacy.

Can you believe that before your arrest, I was one of those people who would say things like, "I don't see race" and claim to be colorblind? The rhetoric is so cunning that I actually believed I was on the right side of history when I said those things. I didn't realize then how much I was erasing the lived experiences of those who had been oppressed and treated unjustly at the hands of systems rooted in white supremacy. I didn't realize this because systems like prisons and schools had only ever been positive in my privileged upbringing. Due to being raised in a white middle-class family and knowing no one personally who had ever been in jail for more than minor offenses, I had never had to consider the relationship between schools and prisons; the relationship that I know you learned about at a very young age.

I share this with you because this makes me think about relationships; not just relationships between people, like the relationship that we built over the few months you were in my class, but the relationship between systems and between ideas and the ways in which each system, idea, and person influences everything else. I share this with you because since you were arrested, I have learned deeply about those systems through relationships with others, who like you, were entangled in intersecting systems of injustice. While much of this learning is still

enmeshed in privilege as my whiteness allows me into spaces and conversations that might not be possible otherwise, so many of the conversations I have with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, are not filled with the anger that I have held onto for so many years. Instead, they are filled with possibility and a desire to catalyze change. They permeate with self-reflection and healing alongside the ability to imagine something different. These conversations, memories of conversations I had with you, and books I have read, written by activists who work day in and day out to dismantle these systems, have made me think about the importance of the imagination, of dreaming a different future and building those dreams into reality.

It is because of this work and this dream that as of July 2019, almost half of the states in this nation have passed bills to eliminate life without parole sentences for individuals who committed their offenses as juveniles (Wilson, 2020). While there is still a lot of work to be done, I share this with you because I remain hopeful that no matter how small this project might seem in comparison to the work being done to overturn the legislation that wrongly sealed your fate, I hold close that our ability to dream and create more just futures is at the heart of change in this nation.

### **Designing for Transformation**

While the research design is foundational to this dissertation, so too is the design of the professional development that is being studied. The professional development course at the heart of this work, referred to as the Visionary Equity Institute, was a summer institute for teachers interested in engaging more deeply in equity work. Centering a visionary pedagogical approach as a framework for supporting teachers in thinking about their own identity and teaching practice temporally, the professional

development employed this pedagogy as a heuristic for interrogating stories; stories of self, stock stories about students and families, and counterstories that provide an analytic for change. As Bell (2019) notes,

[stories] provide a roadmap for tracing how people make sense of social reality, helping us see where we connect with and where we differ from others in our reading of the world, and it defines the remedies that will be considered necessary and appropriate (p. 1).

The use of this visionary pedagogical approach and storied learning opportunities across the institute provided a way for teachers to think about how their autobiographical memory constructs their teaching identity as well as how thinking outside of time might create possibilities for (re)storying their teaching practice. By organizing the professional development in a way that intentionally centered stories and created space for understanding teaching practice as an embodied, opportunities for teachers to deconstruct their life stories (McAdams, 2003) were provided alongside with space to (re)imagine their schools, their classrooms, and (re)story themselves as transformative teachers.

As the research questions for this dissertation asked *(a) how visionary pedagogy might create a catalyst for teacher transformation and (b) how the design of the professional development might influence engagement, learning, sense of agency*, a key element of this professional development was to offer space and strategies for teachers to use storytelling practices to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) through relational learning opportunities. These design features were integral to the professional development as the ultimate goal was for teachers to imagine more just futures. Because



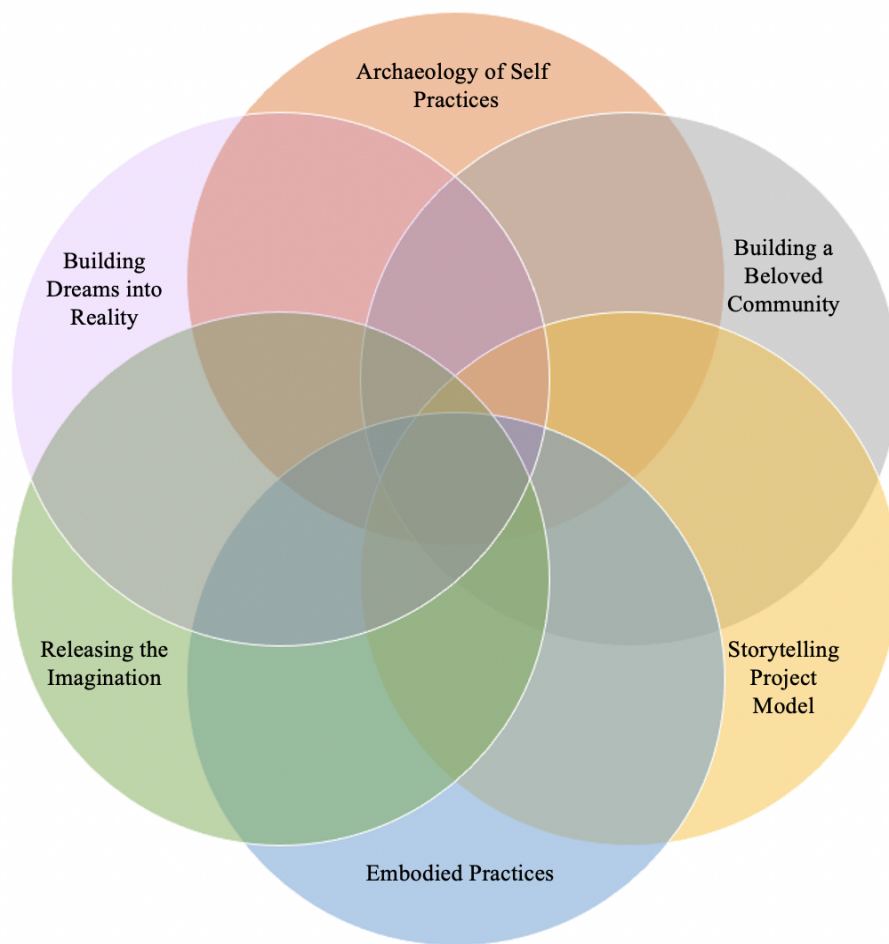
of this goal, there needed to be opportunities for them to critically recognize systemic injustice.

### **Visionary Pedagogy: The Interstices of Transformative Practices**

To be intentional about these outcomes, the professional development institute embedded a visionary pedagogy that engaged teachers in a variety of practices grounded in the work of scholars and activists. While each practice in Figure 1. A Heuristic for Visionary Pedagogy is represented by its own circle, it is the intersection of these practices where visionary pedagogy exists with an epistemological belief that while each of these strategies are powerful, is it at the interstices of these practices where teacher transformation becomes possible. The practices embedded in visionary pedagogy include:

1. Engaging teachers in archaeology of self practices (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019) which asked teachers to think deeply about their identity.
2. Learning about and thinking with Bell's (2019) Storytelling Project Model in connection with teacher's experiences and stories (of self, students, communities, and schools).
3. Engaging in continual opportunities to build a beloved community (hooks, 1996) through the construction of a homeplace (hooks, 2007).
4. Creating opportunities for embodied and somatic practices (Haines, 2019) to help teachers move against the Cartesian dualism present within a neoliberal social imaginary in order to *be* in their body and embrace teaching as an embodied practice.

5. Holding space and engaging in storytelling practices to support teachers in releasing their imaginations (Greene, 1995) in order to construct visionary stories.
6. Having opportunities to build dreams into reality through an engagement in collective mental contrasting through the development of concrete action plans (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al. 2001, 2009; Szpunar et al. 2018; Wright 2008).



**Figure 1.**

*A Heuristic for Visionary Pedagogy.*

The purpose of each of these distinct yet overlapping practices was to develop a space of praxis, which Freire (1970) and other scholars within the field of critical pedagogy describe as the blend of theory, reflection, and action. Thus, Table 1 maps the theory behind each of the practices grounding the professional development as well as the intentional engagement with praxis. Following Table 1 is an in-depth overview of each of the practices including the undergirding theory and connection with visionary pedagogy.

**Table 1**

*Mapping Theories to Practice*

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Praxis</b>
Archaeology of Self Practices (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019)	<p>During the opening module of the professional development, teachers were asked to reflect on their roots (values), shoots (hopes, dreams, and goals), and soil (the environment/context of their work).</p> <p>During the first session, teachers engaged in an activity around their social identity wheel as a way to (a) think about their identities and positionalities and (b) interrogate how their identities and positionalities might differ from the students with whom they work.</p> <p>During each module, teachers engaged in journal activities that asked them to connect with and reflect upon their readings in connection with their own identity and experiences. Prompts were provided in connection with the reading material and drawn from the main book for the course, <i>Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and to Students Every Day</i> (Pollock, 2017).</p>	<p>These activities were intentionally embedded throughout the professional development to create opportunities for teachers to think about their identities and positionalities in relation to the systems in which they are a part as well as hold space for a critical reflection regarding their racial identities in connection with the students whom they teach.</p> <p>These activities centered both personal identity and a reflection regarding the impact of identity on practice.</p>
Storytelling Project Model (Bell, 2019)	<p>During the first module, teachers were asked to identify stock stories present within their classrooms and schools and use data to interrogate the historical and cultural context behind the stock stories.</p> <p>Within their small groups, teachers were asked to develop a list of stock stories and discuss guiding questions that focused on (a) who is present in the stock story, (b) who is absent in the stock story, (c) who holds power in the stock story, (d) who benefits from the stock story, and (e) who pays from the stock story.</p>	<p>Beginning this professional development with an interrogation of stock stories set the stage for thinking about the impact of stories on students, families, and communities.</p>

**Table 1 (continued).**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Praxis</b>
Storytelling Project Model (Bell, 2019)	These questions showed up throughout the professional development as teachers were asked to consider how to dismantle stock stories, recognize concealed stories, and center resistance and emerging/transforming stories within their work.	This also created space to decode and interrogate stock stories to move toward rooting their work in emerging/transforming stories about students, families, and communities.
Building a Beloved Community (hooks, 1996; 2007)	<p>During the introduction to the professional development, teachers were asked to respond to the following question using an online word cloud generator: What comes to mind when you hear the word community? Using the co-constructed word cloud as a brainstorming tool, participants developed community agreements to ground their learning experience during the professional development. These agreements were drawn from a number of equity organizations (e.g., The National Equity Project, Courageous Conversations, and the Center for Adaptive Schools). Each subsequent whole group and small group session opened with these agreements. The notion of beloved community was discussed with the group to position the learning community as a space where all teachers could show up in their full humanity.</p> <p>During each Module, teachers met with the entire group as well as a small group outside of the whole group time. These small groups were consistent and intentionally created based on experience, grade level, and previous relationships.</p>	<p>Establishing community agreements created an opportunity for participants to construct their learning space to ensure that the community reflected their needs. By allowing for the community agreements to be developed by the community, rather than the facilitator, this provided for a flattening of power as well as a centering of participant voices. These agreements were not set in stone and could be revised at any time.</p> <p>Consistent groups were developed for participants to have deep conversations with others in a setting away from that which was led by the facilitator.</p>

**Table 1 (continued).**

Theory	Practice	Praxis
Building a Beloved Community (hooks, 1996; 2007)	During the whole group sessions, participants engaged in small group discussion in breakout rooms, always with the same consistent group.	This created opportunities for deep relationships and a homeplace (hooks, 2007) so that participants felt that they were learning in a brave space (Arao & Clemens, 2013).
Engaging in Embodied Practices (Haines, 2019)	At the beginning of each synchronous whole group session, teachers were guided through a somatic activity referred to as a grounding activity that asked them to turn off their cameras and ground themselves in their bodies.	This practice was intentionally designed to connect participants with their space and their body. Grounding practices were particularly important in the online setting so as to move away from the Cartesian mind/body split.
	During one of the synchronous sessions, teachers were asked to close their eyes and listen to a list of words. While listening, they were asked to <i>feel</i> the words, connect them with previous experiences, and reflect upon where they felt the words in their bodies. This was expanded upon during an asynchronous activity where participants engaged with a mind/body mapping activity that asked them to think about the way that language feels in their bodies and how this might impact their students.	This activity was intentionally designed to create space for participants to consider language as having somatic impacts. Discussions in connection with this activity asked that teachers share their own embodied experiences and consider the impact of language on students, and in particular, student outcomes.
Releasing the Imagination (Greene, 1995)	During the last Module of the professional development, teachers engaged in dialogue around what it would mean to imagine something different for schools. Drawing on brown and Imarisha’s (2015) notion of visionary fiction as a heuristic, participants looked at models of visioning as engaged by activists such as the Black Panther Party in order to consider the power of releasing the imagination and dreaming	This activity was intentionally embedded at the end of the professional development to ensure that participants had developed relationships with others as well as a strong understanding of equity and visionary storytelling. In having participants develop their own stories

**Table 1 (continued).**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Praxis</b>
Releasing the Imagination (Greene, 1995)	of more just futures. During the asynchronous portion of that Module, participants wrote their own visionary stories considering their learnings from throughout the previous Modules.	with very few parameters, this provided an opportunity to release their imagination.
	Within their small groups, teachers interrogated one another's stories to think deeply about identity, privilege, and power using the same guided questions as connected with the interrogation of stock stories: (a) who is present in this story, (b) and who is absent in this story, (c) who holds power in this story, (d) who benefits from this story, and (e) who pays from this story.	By sharing their stories with one another as well as discussing the strengths and limitations using the same guided questions from Module 1, this allowed for an interrogation of their stories and a consideration of how their stories are connected to their teacher identity and practice.
Building Dreams into Reality (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al., 2001, 2009; Szpunar et al., 2018; Wright 2008)	During the last Module, the closing synchronous session, and the focus groups, each small group of teachers identified the main themes present within their visionary stories and used these themes to develop action plans. Through dialogue, participants discussed the goals in depth including (a) potential obstacles, (b) people who would be involved, and (c) what specific steps it would take to meet the goals. These action plans were then given to the equity director in the district where this professional development took place.	This activity was intentionally embedded as a way for participants to not only dream of more just futures but to also think about what it might take in order to build these just future dreams into existence. Considering the theory of mental contrasting, action planning was embedded in order to provide concrete ways to dream, build, and transform practice.

**Archaeology of Self Practices**

Within traditional professional development settings, when discussions of race or disparities arise, the focus tends to be based on deficit understandings of students of color (García & Guerra, 2004; Matias, 2013); understandings that amount to identifying

reasons for the achievement gaps using colorblind discourse frames to dismiss the impact of racism (structural, institutional, individual) at play (Goode et al., 2020; Segall & Garret, 2013). Grounded in a belief that teacher transformation requires more than a toolkit of culturally responsive strategies (Utt & Tochluk, 2020), archaeology of self practices (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019) have the potential to help teachers critically reflect on their own biases, values, and assumptions in order to challenge white supremacy and systemic injustice. Archaeology of self practices provide teachers ways to interrogate their racial identities in order to increase their racial literacy and move toward action and commitments to racial justice (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019).

Milner (2003) refers to this practice of self-work as a “deep deliberative search” which requires that teachers, and specifically white teachers work “to understand their own and other individuals’ racial backgrounds, racial heritage, and consequences of race that cause oppression and privilege” (p. 207). This practice, as embedded within the Visionary Equity Institute was designed to provide teachers with curated opportunities to interrogate their complex racial identities, identities that are complicated and flawed yet essential (Utt & Tochluk, 2020) in transforming teacher practice.

Drawing on the work of both Sealey-Ruiz (2019) and Utt and Tochluk (2020), the Visionary Equity Institute began the process of engaging teachers in this self-work before the first whole group session as a way to support teachers in understanding themselves and engaging in accountable action within their communities (Utt & Tochluk, 2020). Both Sealey-Ruiz (2019; 2020) and Utt and Tochluk (2020) identify focus areas based on their theories of teacher transformation. In her model, which she calls The Racial Literacy Development Model, Sealey-Ruiz (2020), constructs a hierarchy of needs, with



racial literacy development being the ultimate transformative skill. Below racial literacy development, Sealey-Ruiz (2020), includes the following in ascending order (a) critical love, which requires a commitment of care on the part of teachers, (b) critical humility, which requires an understanding of the limitations of one's own ideologies, values, beliefs, and assumptions, (c) critical reflection, which requires that teachers interrogate their identity and considering the ways in which different positionality impact their teaching, (d) historical literacy, which requires a consideration of historical contexts of the intersecting systems impacting students, (e) the archaeology of self, which requires deep interrogation and excavation of oneself, and (f) interruption, which moves away from reflection and toward action.

Utt and Tochluk (2020), who are also concerned with racial literacy and a commitment to action, argue that “it is the integration of a new sense of self that supports transformational change in one's teaching practice” (p. 147). Within their model, which is designed specifically for white teachers in a move toward racial identity development, they identify six focus areas: (a) analyzing privilege and microaggressive behavior, (b) exploring ethnic and cultural identities, (c) engaging with history of white anti-racists and multiracial struggles for justice, (d) developing an intersectional identity; (e) building a white anti-racist community, and (f) demonstrating accountability across race.

While each of these models varies in their articulation of racial literacy development, both rely on the dimensions of race within teachers' lived experiences as a lever for transforming teaching practices. Considering these models in connection with the power of storytelling allows for both the lived experience of teachers and the

imaginative (or ideological) dimensions of race, “...how people imagine race in their daily lives” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 33) to story and (re)story the self.

The instructional design of the Visionary Institute considered each of the needs identified by Sealey-Ruiz (2020) to move toward racial literacy development as well as the six focus areas identified by Utt and Tochluk in consideration of teachers’ racial identity development, in an iterative attempt to support teachers in reconciling with their racial identities as well as reflecting upon how their racial identities impact their teacher identity, teaching practices, and students. In this, rather than centering the professional development institute on developing tools, instructional strategies, or teaching techniques, the central focus was on the individual teacher and their development of a critical consciousness through archaeology of self practices.

### **Storytelling Project Model**

The Storytelling Project Model grounding this study was designed to understand how race and racism function within stories. Drawing on Bell’s (2019) model as a way to consider the power of storytelling in examining race and racism, the Visionary Equity institute embedded the Storytelling Project Model to support teachers in grappling with (a) an understanding of the construction of race within the social imaginary, (b) the presence of colorblind discourse and frameworks that impede racial equity, and (c) an understanding of white supremacy as undergirding this nation’s institutions. Using stories as an analytic, Bell (2019) argues that

stories are one of the most powerful and personal ways we learn about the world, passed down from generation to generation through the family and cultural groups to which we belong...[and] because stories operate on both individual and

collective levels they can bridge the sociological, abstract with the psychological, personal contours of daily experience (p. 16).

Therefore, within this professional development, stories were used as a way to connect teacher's individual experiences with a systemic analysis of race and racism in order to interrogate and uncover patterns and use their experiences to (re)imagine new possibilities. Continuing to stay grounded in the pitfalls of stories as woven into dominant narratives of the neoliberal social imaginary, using the Storytelling Project Model provided teachers an analytic by which to consider and critically analyze school-based stories in order to learn ways to create a counter-storytelling community (Bell, 2019, p. 20).

Bell's (2019) Storytelling Project Model identifies multiple story types as a heuristic to deeply interrogate dominant narratives. Referring to dominant narratives as stock stories, the Storytelling Project model frames non-dominant stories, which are referred to in critical race theory as counterstories, as resistance stories, concealed stories, and emerging/transforming stories. These story types provide teachers a frame to recognize different stories in connection with their schools and their practice so that they can interrupt those stories that perpetuate dominant narratives in order to develop their own emerging/transforming stories and (re)story their practice and ultimately their classrooms and schools.

Within the Visionary Equity Institute, the use of Bell's (2019) Storytelling Project Model provided teachers with opportunities to grapple with their own stories as well as stories about their school, their students, and the surrounding community.

## **Building a Beloved Community**

In her scholarship and racial justice activism bell hooks (1996) forwarded the notion of beloved community to point to the need to be in a community with others who affirm your differences rather than seeking to find sameness. Drawing on the work of Martin Luther King Jr. and his dream for equality, hooks (1996) argues that this dream was in a sense flawed; “the flaw, however, was not in the imagining of a *beloved community*; it was the insistence that such a community could exist only if we erased and forgot racial difference” (hooks, 1996, p. 263). She goes on to argue that the commitment to a *beloved community* and the eradication of racism and white supremacy begins “in the mind and the heart, it is realized by concrete action, by anti-racist living and being” (hooks, 1996, p. 263).

Arguably, within and across schools, these ideals and affirmations are absent as there is a rhetorical desire toward colorblindness and colorblind discourse with manifestations in the development of curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and how students of color are treated (Goode et al., 2020; Loewen, 2018; Sleeter & Grant, 1991). Within the neoliberal social imaginary controlled by chrononormative logics, deep and authentic human engagement is not always valued as it is not easily measured or consistent with notions of individual progress and observable growth. These colorblind ideologies, which are ubiquitous in schools as well as educational policy and scholarship, discount the injustice and inequity students of color are subjected to at the hands of schooling systems, and the intersection of other systems such as the criminal justice system.

This tension makes a beloved community, as hooks (1996) theorizes, utterly impossible and as a result calls for the intentional creation of a space, and in particular a homeplace (hooks, 2007); a physical, psychological, and emotional “...site of resistance and liberation” (p. 268). While the initial homeplace that hooks (2007) describes was her grandmother’s physical home, she expands this to theorize homeplace as a place where Black women can *be* without having to encounter racism or sexism, arguing that the site of one’s homeplace is both fragile and transitional. As there were a number of teachers in this particular professional development who identified as teachers of color, the construction of a homeplace became a vital consideration in attempting to hold space for the cultivation of a beloved community.

This professional development was therefore designed to provide teachers with opportunities to build their beloved community through the construction of their homeplace while actively resisting the neoliberal push for the building of a teacher toolkits and the chrononormative logics of learning as linear. Within their beloved communities, teachers were given space to sit in discomfort, have difficult conversations, and learn and grow together through the affirmation of difference.

The creation of a homeplace was done in various ways through weekly small group book club discussions and activities as well as the use of open dialogue in whole group meetings and breakout rooms discussions to deepen conversations. Further, community agreements were designed by the teachers who called for 1) being open to outcome (not attached to outcome), 2) a commitment to (pausing) to presume positive intention and acknowledging impacts when they occur, 3) a commitment to paying attention to ourselves and others and staying engaged together and 4) being willing to

experience discomfort when speaking your truth and when listening to other. These community agreements speak to how the group of teachers in this professional development constructed agreements to hold each other accountable while acknowledging the importance of discomfort in the process of growth and the development of a beloved community.

The concept of homeplace (hooks, 2007) was particularly important yet also precarious given that the Visionary Equity Institute took place fully online. While we were unable to be together to create our homeplace, teachers could be in their own homeplaces and engage in learning that engaged their full humanity. This creation of a homeplace through online learning meant that teachers engaged from their homes with cameras on or off, in their backyards, in hammocks, on vacation, and on walks; all in the spirit of enabling teachers to *be* in a way that met their needs of safety when engaging in complex discussions of race and racism.

### **Engaging in Embodied Practices**

This professional development was grounded in somatics and embodiment practices as a way to move against the Cartesian dualism that is present in many teacher trainings, and particularly in online trainings, wherein the focus tends to be on the development of skills rather than the humanness of teacher experience (Brooks et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Moving toward somatic practices supported teachers in thinking about the embodiment of their own practices in order to engage with learning that intentionally makes space for the body rather than only considering the mind. Haines (2019), in her book focused on somatics, healing, and social justice notes that,

Somatics introduces us to an embodied life. It reminds us that we are organic and changing people. There are vast amounts of information within our bodies and sensations. When we learn to listen to the language of sensation, to live inside of our skins, a whole new world opens. What is most important to us, what we long for, is found and felt through our sensations, impulses, and an embodied knowing (p.18).

Somatics, and the engagement in embodied practices, are important theories of change to consider within professional development. Often, humanness is impossible within academic spaces, and particularly within neoliberal paradigms as the goal is to produce rather than to feel. Yet, we continually see the impact of this tension in thinking versus feeling in the high levels of stress that teachers face in their jobs, teacher attrition (Holme et al., 2018), and job satisfaction (Edinger & Edinger, 2018). Therefore, by intentionally centering somatic practices within a teacher learning space replete in storytelling for transformation (Bell, 2019), possibilities for change were able to take root.

In being intentional about helping teachers embody the practices they were trying to create through their visionary storytelling and critical reflection, space was created for holistic and sustainable practices grounded in an understanding of self rather than notions of learning being viewed through the lens of a measurable outcome. Somatic practices, referred to in the professional development, as grounding practices, followed the teachings of Dr. Anita Chari and Angelica Singh and were used to move teachers into their bodies at the beginning of sessions. These practices asked teachers to root themselves in their space and shift their focus away from the screen and toward their

bodies in connection with their surroundings. Outside of the grounding practice, activities around language were designed for teachers to think about how language feels in their body as a way to create intentional opportunities for the embodiment of their practice and ways of being in the world.

### **Releasing the Imagination**

Employing the notion of releasing the imagination, Maxine Greene (1995) spent much of her career discussing the benefits of the arts and social change while arguing against the view of teachers as clerks or technocrats. Her work engaged with an ontology of the imagination as the key to teaching and learning. In her work, Green (1995) draws on the poetic imagination employed by artists to reinvent new worlds and the social imagination which she believes provides teachers the “capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools” (p. 5). Greene (1995) implores educators to embrace their imaginations to create new possibilities. She positions these new possibilities as grounded in action and “moving into a future unseen” (p. 15), asking: “How can teachers intervene and say how *they* believe things ought to be? What can they do to affect restructuring? What can they do to transform their classrooms” (p. 9)?

Leveraging Greene’s (1995) metaphor of cul-de-sacs which she uses to describe a pathway to finding new possibilities rather than gravitating toward the narrow closings of cul-de-sacs, the professional development institute was built around the idea and act of imagining and releasing the imagination to support teachers in their ability to

see beyond what the imaginer has called normal or ‘common-sensible’ and to carve out new order in experience... [to] become free to glimpse what might be,



to form notions of what should be and what is not yet... and... at the same time, remain in touch with what presumably *is* (Greene, 1995, p. 19).

Furthering the importance of imagination, Dewey (1934) argues that “consciousness has always been an imaginative phase, and imagination, more than any other capacity, break through the ‘inertia of habit’” (cited in Greene, 1995, p. 21). In connecting the practice of imagination as theorized by Greene (1995) and Dewey (1934) with the work of Freire (1970) and his conception of praxis as rooted in the development of a critical consciousness, this professional development was designed to encourage imagination through dialogue and arts-based learning methods. Arts-based learning occurred through teachers’ development of a visionary narrative (brown & Imarisha, 2015), where teachers were asked to imagine and write about a compelling future of schools and subsequently engage in dialogue with their beloved community about their emerging/transforming stories. This allowed for both a creative process and in-depth and authentic dialogue around the limitations of the visionary stories which created openings for new possibilities in their classrooms and beyond.

### **Building Dreams into Reality**

Drawing on Greene’s (1995) theory of the social imaginary and her positioning that releasing the imagination is grounded in action rather than behavior, this professional development was designed to encourage a releasing of the imagination and provide a structure for action. Thinking with Oettingen et al. (2018) and their conception of the three functions of thinking about the future, this professional development focused on the first function, which considers the impact of imagining and visualizing possibilities through mental exploration. In asking teachers to engage in mental exploration through

developing a visionary story of their compelling future classroom, they were able to play and explore through acts of speculation and visionary fiction (brown & Imarisha, 2015). This visioning coupled with collectively developing action plans on the basis of their visionary stories, put into action opportunities for a future not yet possible.

Centering the work of activists adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha and drawing on the visionary storytelling workshops they facilitate, this professional development institute provided teachers with the space to engage in dreaming about new and more just futures. Coupling visionary storytelling with action planning and dialogue surrounding obstacles and possibilities engaged teachers in mental exploration and mental contrasting (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al., 2001, 2009; Wright 2008). Thus, this practice moved the imaginative and speculative process of visionary storytelling as a mere creative endeavor toward an action-oriented model of change allowing for an engagement with “collectively dream[ing] of [new] worlds... [and]... building a path to manifesting them in reality” (Imarisha, 2015b).

### **Visionary Equity Institute: Putting Theory to Practice**

Paulo Freire (1970), who is widely known for his work in education, particularly through the lens of critical theory, argues that

for apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (p. 72).

Thus, as a way to intentionally embrace the theory of praxis as forwarded by Freire (1970), the Visionary Equity Institute was designed with theory, action, and

reflection at the heart of each element. This created an intentional learning rooted in a space of teacher transformation and the development of critical consciousness. As Freire (1970) argues, developing critical consciousness is rooted in reflection and action, with action being fundamental to this process. Further, in order to truly engage in praxis, Freire (1970) positions a need for the work to be rooted in a collective commitment toward action rooted in the desire to catalyze change. These elements of reflection and action both at the independent and collective levels provide the framework for visionary pedagogy and the interweaving practices embedded within the professional development.

While Freire's (1970) notion of praxis and the development of a critical consciousness are not new in the world of education and specifically within professional development spaces (Darder, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2010), little research has been done regarding how this might look in an online learning environment specific to a centering of equity, social justice, and racial justice identity development. Additionally, while there exists extensive research on developing equity-oriented teachers through professional development (Goode et al., 2020), to date, little has focused on online professional development with even fewer examples of true praxis being studied. Rather, equity-oriented professional development often centers on strategies for teachers to embed in their classroom without opportunities for critical reflection or collective action. This professional development was therefore designed to fill those gaps building on theories and strategies from various fields and brilliant scholars and activists that hold space for individuals to understand their agency in catalyzing both small-scale and large-scale change.

## **Designing for Praxis**

The design research process (Edelson, 2002) served as a key element in ensuring that the design of the professional development was iterative and reflective of the learning experiences and learning needs of teachers. In this, while the essential questions, enduring understandings (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), and overall structure were developed prior to beginning the professional development, the specific readings and activities as well as the agenda for the synchronous sessions remained flexible and responded to the needs of participants. Genuinely engaging in the design research process enabled the design to be both cyclical and iterative while centering teacher voices in an effort to identify and offer opportunities for revisions (Eisenschmidt & Niglas, 2014). As it was important that this project led to innovative educational practices and a positive and transformative experience for teachers, the design research principles were helpful in their process orientation (Shavelson et al., 2003).

While the design research process created opportunities that opened possibilities for a flexible and learner-centered structure, in drawing on previous research in this field, there is seemingly a lack of studies that employ this process in connection with deep equity work. In this, most of the studies surrounding the design research process are focused on the academic achievement of students with little evidence of design research being used in an equity-oriented, social justice, or anti-racist pedagogical capacity (e.g., Dunn et al., 2019; Eisenschmidt & Niglas, 2014; Traga Phillippakos et al., 2019). Therefore, this particular professional development employed the design research process while charting a new course regarding what leveraging this structure might mean within a

learning space designed for equity through praxis and the building of individual and collective critical consciousness.

In considering praxis and the voices of teachers as the heart of the work, the design research framework was adapted from the work of Eisenschmidt and Niglas (2014) who draw on Edelson (2002) in order to include the following stages:

1. Understand the context of the school district (historical and cultural).
2. Center teacher voices and lived experience to identify gaps and opportunities for change.
3. Center teacher voices to evaluate practices, activities, and the influence of any revisions made.
4. Repeat throughout each Module of the professional development.
5. Engage in evaluation through interviews and focus groups.

These proposed changes to the stages of the design research process more intentionally center the voices of teachers while holding space for community engaged discussions and the creation of intentional opportunities for teachers to insert their own agency. As one of the key goals of this professional development was to support teachers in understanding the agency that they hold to enact change, this revised design research process allowed for teacher agency to take root in the hope of carry over to classrooms and districts.

### **Structure of Professional Development**

The Visionary Equity Institute took place during the summer of 2020 over the course of a five week period with four modules, five synchronous whole group sessions (including an introduction session and a concluding session), and four synchronous small

group sessions. The professional development institute was designed to ensure that teachers had various opportunities for engagement using both synchronous and asynchronous means.

Each module had multiple consistent components to decrease barriers to learning by utilizing both trauma-informed and universal design for learning practices (Minahan, 2019; Scutelnicu et al., 2019). See Table 2 for additional information. The components included:

1. Weekly sixty-to-seventy-five-minute whole group synchronous session with time spent in both whole group and breakout rooms. Within the breakout rooms, which were made up of consistent groupings, shared slides were used to ensure that all teachers were able to see and engage in expanded discussion opportunities and relational engagement beyond the small groups.
2. Weekly sixty-minute small group synchronous sessions to provide time for book club discussions based on the shared texts for the week and structured but fluid activities.
3. Weekly readings providing teachers varied and layered opportunities to immerse themselves in the content for the week, with the central readings drawn from *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About And to Students Every Day* (Pollock, 2017). Readings were layered as there were both required and optional readings based on the teacher's interests and time.
4. Weekly journal reflections which were done independently and asynchronously and asked teachers to reflect on specific questions in connection with the module themes and content as well as with the questions and prompts posed in

- Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About And to Students Every Day* (Pollock, 2017). Each module had a pre-reading, during, and post-reading set of prompts.
5. Weekly learn and reflect activities<sup>9</sup> that asked teachers to reflect upon and engage in learning around a specific topic or task. Teachers were asked to post their reflections on the course discussion board. Teachers were not asked to comment on other's posts but were encouraged to read through them as a way to build an understanding of the community and approaches to the questions and tasks.
  6. Weekly small group activities that were structured yet provided for fluid collective tasks. Each week, small groups were asked to review the community agreements, engage in a grounding activity, discuss of the readings for the week, and participate in an activity that connected with the Module content. The activities were posted to the discussion board and served as an opening discussion during subsequent synchronous whole group sessions.

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<sup>9</sup> The title of Learn and Reflect is drawn from the liberateandchill\* course that was facilitated by The Liberate and Chill Collective\* during the spring of 2020.

**Table 2***Professional Development Overview*

<b>Module # and Focus</b>	<b>Module Guiding Questions</b>	<b>Module Readings<sup>10</sup></b>	<b>Module Activities<sup>11</sup></b>
Introduction Module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we co-create a healing-centered learning environment with students where wounds become the wisdom needed to go forward?</li> <li>• What are our roots, shoots, and soil and how is this affected by our identities and positionalities?</li> <li>• Looking closely at the present you are constructed; does it look like the future you are dreaming?</li> <li>• Why story as a vehicle to explore school policies, pedagogies, and practices?</li> </ul>	Bell, 2019; Pollock, 2017	Development of Community Norms; Roots, Shoots, and Soil Self-Reflection Activity (posted on discussion board)
Module 1: Data Stories-Laying the Foundation for Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do stock stories show up in schools? How does “data” either support, refute, or perpetuate these stories?</li> <li>• How can we move beyond replicating stock stories in our own classrooms and schools?</li> </ul>	<u>Roots Readings:</u> (Love, 2019; Pollock, 2017; Simmons, 2019)	<u>Journal Reflections:</u> Questions in connection with the Module content re: roots, shoots, and soil as well as prompts provided in <i>Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About- And To- Students Every Day.</i>

<sup>10</sup> \*Beginning in Module 1, readings were organized into categories: roots readings provided roots/grounding for the module; soil readings provided participants additional ways to think about the larger context of equity work; and shoots readings included readings that provided additional opportunities for learning based on overarching hopes for their learning process. Participants were asked that they engage in roots readings for each module as these would be discussed with their Visionary Storytelling groups and provide the grounding for the module while soil and shoots readings were optional. Readings were added iteratively to each module based on the interests of teachers and discussions occurring during sessions. See Appendix B for the full reading list. This table includes only a sample of readings as additional readings were added over time.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix B for in-depth activity descriptions.



Table 2 (continued).

Module # and Focus	Module Guiding Questions	Module Readings	Module Activities
Module 1: Data Stories- Laying the Foundation for Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questions drawn from Dena Simmon’s article: How does your identity and positionality as well as power and privilege show up in your work with students, take up space, or silence others? What single narratives are you telling yourself about students, and how does that affect grading, behavior management, and other interactions?</li> </ul>	<p><u>Soil Readings:</u> (Adichie, 2009; Singh, 2019; Yosso, 2006)</p> <p><u>Shoots Readings</u> (NPR, 2016; Scene on Radio, 2017)</p>	<p><u>Learn &amp; Reflect:</u> Identify stock stories that show up around students in schools. Look at least one data source to think about how the story of the data. Take some time to analyze, ask questions of, and notice patterns/insights of the data and in a discussion post, discuss the story of the data: How do these data stories construct students? How might this be different than how students might construct themselves? How does “data” either support, refute, or perpetuate the stock stories you identified? What/whose story is missing from this data?</p> <p><u>Visionary Storytelling Group:</u> Revisit the community agreements, engage in a grounding activity around identity, discuss the Foundational Principles of Equity work centered in <i>Schooltalk</i>, and post examples of stock stories that show up in your classroom, school, and district and reflect upon these using guided questions.</p>

**Table 2 (continued).**

<b>Module # and Focus</b>	<b>Module Guiding Questions</b>	<b>Module Readings</b>	<b>Module Activities</b>
Module 2: Interrogating Language and Stories in a Move Toward Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What stories are constructed about students based on the language we use about them?</li> <li>• How does coded language show up in our classrooms and schools? How does this impact the way we talk about and to students every day?</li> <li>• How can we pivot in order to center concealed stories and resistance stories as a way to move beyond coded language?</li> <li>• How can an embodied pedagogy support give us new perspectives about why language matters?</li> <li>• How might an interrogation of the language help us to think about both how to dismantle and how to create?</li> </ul>	<p><u>Roots</u> <u>Readings:</u> (Cariaga, 2019; Pollock, 2017; Winn, 2018)</p> <p><u>Soil</u> <u>Readings:</u> (Gaffney, 2019; Gorski, 2019)</p> <p><u>Shoots</u> <u>Readings:</u> (McDonough et al., 2016; Zeus, 2004)</p>	<p><u>Journal Reflections:</u> Questions in connection with the Module content re: specific to classroom management and culture as well as prompts provided in <i>Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and to Students Every Day</i>.</p> <p><u>Learn &amp; Reflect:</u> Engage in a mind/body mapping activity drawing on open and closed words (Ginwright &amp; Winn) and coded words. Reflect on where the language in the activity falls on the Equity Line from <i>Schooltalk</i> and discuss how the words construct stories about students as well as how might this be changed/reimagined/disrupted.</p> <p><u>Visionary Storytelling Group:</u> Revisit the community agreements, engage in a grounding activity around emotions and mapping one’s role in a social change ecosystem; Identify coded language used in schools and create posters that changes, reimagines, and disrupts this language.</p>

**Table 2 (continued).**

<b>Module # and Focus</b>	<b>Module Guiding Questions</b>	<b>Module Readings</b>	<b>Module Activities</b>
Module 3: Visionary Storytelling: Schooltalking for Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we build and/or dismantle different stories for students?</li> <li>• (How) can we create anew with a lack of understanding of the roots of our current system?</li> <li>• How can we move from reimagining to abolitionist teaching that centers equity and social justice?</li> <li>• How can we move from dismantling to creation by turning challenges (walls) into possibilities (bridges)?</li> <li>• How can we center love and healing in our embodied pedagogies?</li> <li>• How can a pivot by focusing on what we can do rather than what we can't do transform our mindset, our practice, and schools?</li> </ul>	<p><u>Roots Readings:</u> (Love, 2020; Pollock, 2017)</p> <p><u>Soil Readings:</u> (Bang, 2020; brown &amp; Imarisha, 2015, Ginwright, 2018; Simmons, 2019)</p> <p><u>Shoots Readings:</u> (GLSEN, 2019; Gorski, 2014)</p>	<p><u>Journal Reflections:</u> Questions in connection with the Module content leveraging Davis' quote "walls turned sideways are bridges" as well as prompts provided in <i>Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and to Students Every Day</i>.</p> <p><u>Learn &amp; Reflect:</u> Write a visionary story that builds on Lee Anne Bell's notion of emerging/transforming stories and brown and Imarisha's visionary fiction strategy by radically imagining possibilities to transform schools to create classrooms and schools that truly "support each/all students' talent development."</p> <p><u>Visionary Storytelling Group:</u> Revisit the community agreements, engage in a grounding activity e.g. emergent strategies (2017), and reflect on the initial activity in the professional development around roots, shoots, and soil; discuss the possibilities of moving your stories into action including what steps you might take and ways this community can continue to support one another.</p>

## **The Heart of the Design Process**

At the heart of the design process was the notion of homeplace forwarded by hooks (2007) who argues that

It is no accident that this homeplace, as fragile and as transitional as it may be, a makeshift shed, a small bit of earth where one rests, is always subject to violation and destruction. For when a people no longer have the space to construct homeplace, we cannot build a meaningful community of resistance (p. 271).

As the creation of a homeplace and cultivation of a beloved community (Brosi & hooks, 2012; hooks, 1996) is difficult to find, and even harder to sustain within neoliberal institutions, this professional development institute was intentionally designed to provide teachers a homeplace. This homeplace was developed for teachers to build community with others who, too, wanted to resist the neoliberal, chrononormative, white supremacist structures of schooling in order to think intentionally about equity, social justice, and anti-racist practices. As hooks notes in conversation with Brosi (2012), it is institutions that we must work against, rather than people, as all people are capable of change when they are within a beloved community.

Thus, this professional development was designed in direct opposition to “sit and get” professional development (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002) and was curated with radical compassion (Breech, 2019) by providing teachers with a homeplaces and the support of a beloved communality so as to embrace the current moment as a portal for change (Osta, 2020). As the Visionary Equity Institute took place during the summer of 2020, a moment rife with barriers and heavy with emotions, this provided space for teachers to sit with “...curiosity, humility, and courage to [to claim their] own humanity

and help to heal... fractured communities [and] prepare now for the future [they] want[ed] beyond this pandemic” (Osta, 2020).

### **Summary**

The Visionary Equity Institute, which took place during the summer of 2020, was grounded in the design research process (Edelson, 2002) as a way to consider the importance of both iterative design and a centering of teacher voices. The institute was designed to help teachers cultivate their critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and see the value in their own agency. Drawing on theories of change and transformation of practice, the professional development institute leveraged a visionary pedagogy which includes the following practices: (a) engaging teachers in self and inner work and practices such as an archaeology of self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019), (b) learning and thinking about Bell’s (2019) Storytelling Project Model, (c) engaging in continual opportunities to build a beloved community, (d) participating in somatic practices (Haines, 2019) to move toward embodied teaching; (e) practicing the art of releasing the imagination (Greene, 1995) to construct visionary stories, and (f) having opportunities to build dreams into reality through the development of concrete action planning (Oettingen, 2018). These strategic practices were embedded across the professional development institute in order to design a space rooted in praxis for teacher development and, ultimately, teacher transformation.

## CHAPTER V

### STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY

*Strategies of inquiry build upon a methodology to fill in how you will arrive at the research destination. A strategy is like a roadmap that helps you to get to where you want to go. By including a strategy step in your research, it becomes possible to change methods as best suits the situation. Methods are the particular tools or techniques that you use to actually gather data. To continue the research journey analogy, methods are the means of transportation. These methods are only means to an end (your methodology) (Wilson, 2008, p. 39).*

Dear Jose,

Did you know that the year you were arrested was the last year I taught at the school where we met? It feels strange because while that was ten years ago now, it feels like yesterday because so much of who I am today was cultivated at that school. Stranger still is how clearly I remember when the news released information on your arrest. You hear people talk about how they remember exactly where they were when big events happened in their lives, and for me, your arrest was one of those events. I was sitting in the stands at my nephew's baseball game when a text came in from a friend telling me to check the news. I can still see the picture they posted of you. You were wearing a green shirt, and you looked so young, far younger than your thirteen years. And those eyes that were always full of mischief seemed so sad and scared. I realize that I'm reading a lot into a picture, but the emotions that you worked so hard at hiding seemed to bubble to the surface.

After the news of your arrest went public, I tried to see you, talk to you, and bring you books (I realize now that was probably not what you needed, but at the time it felt so important), but the district forbade it. I wish I would have pushed harder and asked more questions, but I blindly accepted the rules, and as a result, I only heard about how you were doing from what I saw on the news. In the judge's decision, when he said that you had "no redeeming value" it broke me apart. He said that this was the reason for trying you as an adult and sentencing you to life in prison. I hope you don't remember that portion of the sentencing, and that those words have been lost over time.

When I read those words in the news article discussing your trial, something clicked in me. I knew at that moment that I had failed you; had failed you because I had no understanding of the systems that could do this to a child. I hadn't thought it possible that you could be convicted; rather I had assured myself that your sentencing would give you a chance to learn and heal. Yet at that moment, I realized how naive I had been to believe this because it was evident in the judge's words, in the harsh sentencing, and the cruel comments responding to the article, that you were convicted before you ever stepped in that courtroom; condemned because of your last name, your brown skin, and your zip code.

So, I left. Some might say that I escaped. But in truth, I left because I wanted to learn. I wanted to understand the systems that had not only allowed this to happen but had caused this to happen. I left because I wanted to do right by you. I moved to Los Angeles and began working at a new school with students and colleagues who challenged me and pushed me to engage in self-reflection. I went to talks and met people who helped me understand the white supremacy at

the very foundation of the systems in which you were ensnared. I learned and I grew, and I made a commitment to doing my part in creating social change within schools.

I didn't know what that would look like, but I wanted to use my voice and all that I had learned to do something different for students who these systems had failed.

So, this project is, in many ways, a decade full of learning and growing coming full circle. While it has taken me ten years to get here, I have finally come to realize that so much of what I needed that I didn't have when we first met, was a community to learn with and a space where I could be vulnerable about my misgivings and misconceptions. What I needed was a sense of agency so that I could do something different, could have stepped up instead of back so many times along your journey. While this project was initially designed to take place at the school where we met, at the very spot where this story began, because of COVID-19, that was no longer possible. Still, the heart of this work, no matter where it takes place, is always the intersection of our stories.

### **From Research Methods to Strategies of Inquiry**

In his book, Wilson (2008) discusses a shift from research methods toward strategies of inquiry as a way to point to the commitments being made as part of the research process. He notes the following in the justification of his use of this concept.

By using the term “strategies of inquiry,” I am implying that one specific research method would not fit the subject being studied. Instead of writing down one (or several) chosen methods and planning to stick to them, I developed a general strategy of where I wanted to go. This strategy needed to allow for change and adaptation along the way. By having an end goal I would like to achieve and



perhaps a process or way by which I would like to get there, I hoped to remain open to any change that the situation required. In addition to the process changing in order to achieve the end goal, the end goal changed to meet the emerging process (p. 40).

Wilson's (2008) use of the term strategies of inquiry as opposed to research methods is particularly appealing due to the inductive approach to the research process that occurred within this dissertation, because of working with humans who are ever evolving as well as engaging in research amidst a global pandemic. Wilson (2008) employs the metaphor of a map to explain why strategies of inquiry are important within a research journey noting that "a strategy is like a roadmap that helps you get to where you want to go [making it] possible to change methods as best suits the situation" (p. 39). The following chapter is my road map, a road map grounded in a commitment to do right by Jose, with the final destination being to understand how an online professional development grounded in visionary storytelling and relational learning might offer a lever for teacher transformation. Each methodological strategy discussed herein acknowledges and pushes back against the theory/data binary by intentionally leveraging theoretical concepts that drive forward these strategies of inquiry with the ultimate desire to explore new openings and possibilities.

### **Guiding Research Questions**

With the notion of strategies of inquiry foregrounding the research process, the research questions provided a map with the methods occurring inductively throughout the research process.

The research questions undergirding this project are as follows:

*1) How might visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?*

*2) How does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?*

Each research questions is answered by a separate theoretical framework as the questions demand different approaches and knowledge sets. As each of the questions seeks to understand a different element of the overall research, the strategies of inquiry, while intersecting at points, each have their own road map. This road map becomes important because, like Wilson (2008), the “methods are the means of transportation” (p. 39), and as each of these questions has its own means of transportation with the final destination being to understand how to transform teacher learning, they each require their own road map and their own form of transportation.

Each of the two research questions are accompanied by analytic question(s), with the research questions doing the work of asking broad questions about the area of study and the analytic questions being used to read the data collected on the basis of the particular research question. While the research questions were developed prior to the research being conducted, the analytic questions were developed subsequent to the data collection in response to how I was approaching the data and how certain concepts and ideas began to manifest. The analytic questions do the work of homing in on the data in very particular ways to more deeply engage with the voices of the teachers in the study.

The chapter is structured as follows: a discussion of how I am grappling with my

insider/outsider in this research, a description the strategies of inquiry that were leveraged on the basis of each research question, and a discussion of the research design and considerations. Table 3 provides an overview of the project, including the literature, data collection, and data analysis associated with each of the research questions.

**Table 3**

*Study Overview*

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Research Questions	<i>Question #1: How can visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?</i>	<i>Question #2: How does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?</i>
Literature	Theories of identity development and futuring and storytelling as a form of identity development and sense making.	Teacher learning and teacher professional development and design research.
Theoretical Framework	<u>Psychology (Narrative Identity and Future Thinking including Mental Contrasting)</u> : this theoretical framework will be used to think about teacher identity and experience in this professional development as well as in their classrooms and schools.	<u>Indigenous Relationality</u> : this theoretical framework will engage Wilson’s (2008) conception of relationality alongside Chilisa’s (2012) 4 R’s of Indigenous research as a way to consider how relationality manifests through the data collected.
Analytic Question(s)	<i>1) How does a teacher’s autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice? 2) How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice? 3) In what ways can action planning concretize teacher’s future visions?</i>	<i>1) How can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?</i>
Data	Visionary Fiction Stories, Teacher Interviews, Focus Group Interviews, and Work Samples from the Visionary Equity Institute.	Teacher Interviews, Focus Group Interviews, and anonymous Post-Survey results.
Data Analysis	Data analysis occurred through the construction of case stories of three participants to understand the impact of visionary pedagogy on teacher identity and teacher practice.	Data will be analyzed using a “thinking with theory” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) approach which will plug the concept of Indigenous relationality (specifically the work of Wilson and Chilisa) into the data gathered.

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**Table 3 (continued).**

Data Analysis	Case stories are followed by a multiple case study analysis in order to answer the analytic questions by drawing on themes from across the case stories.	The analysis will be rooted in an analytic question designed to support in the understanding of the influence of the design of the professional development.
Unit of Analysis	Individual teachers	Teachers as a collective

### **Liminal Spaces: Being an Insider Outsider in the Research Puzzle**

In situating myself within this research puzzle (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), it becomes important to acknowledge my insider-outsider status (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) as both the designer and facilitator of the professional development course and the researcher conducting the research and analyzing the data. While some might suggest that this decreases the objectivity of the research, as Wilson (2008) argues, the presumption of objectivity present within positivist scientific approaches to research does not consider the fact that even when researchers claim to be objective, researchers still bring their own set of biases to the research, be it through their topic, questions, methodological approaches, or grounding literature.

Within the social sciences, the notion of insider/outside status of the researcher is a common phenomenon of discussion. This has been described through a particular stance of a researcher as either the Martian or the convert “with the Martian seeing distance as a passageway to knowing and the convert viewing it as a barrier” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, 22). While this metaphor is a helpful way to think about the potential drawbacks of both the insider and outsider status, the binary notion of either/or produces a tension that cannot be remedied by remaining solely the Martian or the convert.

I draw here on St. Pierre's (1997) work in her troubling of being both an insider and an outsider within educational research, wherein she uses Deleuze's (1988) metaphor of the fold to think about being both an insider and an outsider of the research process. She notes that "the construction of my own subjectivity that was folded into theirs in particularly fruitful and disturbing ways" (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 177). As I find myself to be in the fold between facilitator and researcher, this metaphor is an apt way to think differently and to "break apart humanist dualisms like inside/outside, self/other, identity/difference, and presence/absence... [because] like a fold, my subjectivity ha[s] no inside or outside; the boundary, the division, the violent binary partition was not there" (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 178).

Others have approached this notion of both insider and outsider as the space between (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) or in the middle (Breen, 2007). Yet, no matter the metaphor or the phrasing used to describe this liminal space, scholars argue that it is important to deeply reflect upon one's own positionality as the researcher as well as the power dynamics in place. As a teacher-researcher, who identifies as a white woman, the privilege and power associated with my race and role as the researcher, is an important consideration and requires a high level of reflexivity and authenticity (Glesne, 1999) on my part. Kerstetter (2012) argues that acknowledging and reflecting upon one's identity and how this identify may affect relationships with participants is vital to the qualitative research process. Therefore, acknowledging my positionality and in particular my insider outsider identity is an important first step in moving toward reflexivity and authenticity in order to "dissolve the traditional boundaries between 'researcher' and 'subject'"

(Kerstetter, 2012, p. 99). This requires that just as I am asking the teachers to engage in self-facing work, that I, too, do the same.

In navigating my role in this research, I was deeply aware of the direct engagement with the professional development and the space of compromise regarding my ability to be objective. Yet, in these moments, I found myself being drawn to the words of Rose (1995), who notes that “...if detachment can sharpen vision, it can also limit what is seen and what is felt” (p. 435). Therefore, to truly understand the complex stories of the teachers and the messy task that is teaching, this requires that I engage in a way that is authentic and reflective and holds true to my values and beliefs about education, research, and ultimately relationships.

### **Stories as Inquiry**

The first research question in this study asks: *How might visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?* Embedded in this question is an ontological assumption that learning and transformation occurs through stories and storytelling. Thus, the road map for this particular question is a storied road map with the strategies of inquiry grounded in reading and interrogating stories, reflecting on our stories and the stories of others, writing our own stories, and building those stories into existence. As Glesne and Pugach (2018) remind us, stories “... provide frameworks for finding meanings in lives and the world. And they can help shape beliefs and actions that are inclusive and supporting or exclusive and destructive” (p. 31). This storied road map is not novel as researchers and scholars across disciplines and paradigms have used this road map (Bruner, 1987; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hendry et al., 2019; McAdams, 2003).

While the epistemological approaches vary across these paradigms and researchers, there exists an ontological understanding that stories matter as all people live storied lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

This particular research question draws primarily on literature within narrative identity to think about how people construct their personal and collective identities through stories, acknowledging an assumption that if teacher practice is to change, teachers must engage in the complex process of (re)storying their identities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Utt & Tochluk, 2020). This also brings to bear the notion of episodic memories and future thinking in that there is an assumption being made, based on research in the field of psychology, that one's temporal understandings of self, and the ability to imagine and explore future possibilities impacts present behavior (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al., 2001, 2009; Wright, 2000). Embedded therein is an ontological assumption that thinking toward the future can impact one's present situation and in particular for teachers, that prospection will have an impact on teacher's identities, values, and practices.

As this storied road map centers the individual's experience, and therefore the individual as the unit of study, there is an epistemological assumption regarding learning in that the type of learning valued within a neoliberal paradigm that is evaluated based on metrics of standardization does not readily support teacher learning and knowledge production. Instead, a more personalistic (Zeichner, 1983) inquiry-based (Cochran-Smith, & Lytle, 1990) approach to teacher learning which allows for personal reflection and embodied practices is essential if a radical imaginary and a transforming of teacher practice are to be possible. Embedded within this epistemological assumption is the belief



that neither learning nor identity development occur in isolation. Rather, deep levels of learning occur when one is surrounded by a trusting beloved community (hooks, 1996), particularly because the self is socially constructed in collaboration with others in their social milieu (Cohler & Hammock, 2006).

Further, this study holds the epistemological assumption that learning is not a linear process. By disrupting chrononormative notions of time through visionary storytelling there exist possibilities to transform teacher practice. As data has repeatedly shown, the way schools are currently organized does not work for many students (Love, 2020; Milner, 2012). Thus, this study assumes that the story of schools, the story of those who can achieve in schools, and those who are storied as having no future (Lothian, 2018) have material effects.

### **Case Stories: Dreaming New Futures**

A process of coding as a methodological approach to qualitative data analysis is commonly employed across research and provides a way in which to unpack the data and discover common themes across data (Saldana, 2015). While common, for research question #1, which asks *how visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development might offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice*, dissecting the data and stories of the teachers, felt like a rather disingenuous process. As this particular question is grounded in the transformative nature of stories and storytelling, a case study methodology was used to think with and respond to the following analytic questions: (a) *How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?* (b) *How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice?* (c) *In what ways can action planning*

*concretize teacher's future visions?* These analytic questions helped me look at my data more fully, as I could read it with these analytic questions grounding my analysis.

While case study as a methodological approach varies with regards to both definition and practice (Given, 2008), within the social sciences, the strategy of thick description (Geertz, 1973) is a defining feature of case studies with the strength of a case study being the ability to study one specific case, phenomena, or unit of analysis in depth (Given, 2008). In taking a constructivist approach to case study, the cases “focused on narrowing the gap between concrete observations and abstract meanings using interpretive techniques... using a plurality of theories to understand and analyze cases” (Given, 2008, p. 69). This constructivist approach provided a framework for choosing “theoretically crucial” (Given, 2008, p. 69) cases that enabled the analytic questions to be answered through the teacher’s stories in connection with the theoretical framework grounding this research question.

### ***Case Study Methodology***

Case studies which are often viewed as a catch-all are more intricately described as “gain[ing] an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved [with] the interest [being] in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Across case study literature, the defining feature of is that each case is bounded (Merriam, 1998); “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). For this specific research question, the cases are individual teachers who participated in the professional development institute. As the teachers are “a specific, a complex function

thing” (Stake, 1995, p. 2), the cases are bound as the focus is on understanding the varied and complex experiences of the teachers in connection with understanding how dreaming about a future not yet possible might transform teacher practice.

This particular focus of this research question lends itself to case study due to an interest in understanding the process of learning and teacher transformation present as one engages with visionary pedagogy. Process over outcome is an essential feature of case study methodology, with Sanders (1981) noting that “case studies help us to understand processes of events, projects, and programs and to discover context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object” (p. 44). Engaging in case study methodology through offering numerous cases of teachers provides an analytic tool by which to shed light on the function and influence of visionary pedagogy on teacher’s beliefs about teaching, their teacher identity, and ultimately, teacher practice.

**Features of Case Studies.** In working to understand the ways that case studies differ from other qualitative methodological approaches, Merriam (1995) identifies three defining features of case studies, which are shared across literature, noting that they are (a) particularistic, meaning that they “focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon (Merriam, 1995, p. 29), (b) descriptive, in that each case provides a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the bounded system, and (c) heuristic in that “case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1995, p. 30).

Stake (1995) claims that a further defining characteristic of case studies is the knowledge which he argues is less abstract than other approaches. According to Stake

(1995), this is due to the concrete nature and sensory images evoked through vivid thick description and the contextual situatedness of the cases. Being that cases are contextual in nature, this allows readers to connect the cases with their own experiences, which both Merriam (1995) and Stake (1995) argue is a meaningful difference in case study research as opposed to other methodological approaches. It is important to note that while one critique of case studies is that they yield less generalizable results on the basis of only deeply studying a few cases, according to Merriam (1995) and Stake (1995), case studies are generalizable in the connection that readers make with the stories being told.

Finally, scholarship understands case studies as serving various intents based on the purpose of presenting the case study. Merriam (1995) describes three possible intents: (a) a descriptive case study which presents basic information about a particular case, (b) an interpretive case study which presents information for the purpose of analysis and interpretation, and (c) an evaluative case study presents information for the purposes of evaluating the phenomenon. As the goal of this particular research question is to understand the influence of visionary pedagogy on teacher's beliefs about their teaching practice, the cases will be interpretive in nature by moving beyond simple description and toward developing a conception of understanding how this particular pedagogy can serve as a lever of change for teacher practice.

The table below maps the features identified by Merriam (1995) and Stake (1995) onto the present study's methodological approach to consider the application of the case study methodology on the strategies of inquiry applied herein.

**Table 4**

*Application of Case Study Methodology Features to Present Study*

<b>Case Study Feature</b>	<b>Application to Present Study</b>
Particularistic	The case studies presented in this study focus on the stories of three individual teachers including the story of their experiences as students, the story of their teaching, and the way that they imagine possible futures impacting their teaching identity and practice.
Descriptive	The case studies draw on elements of narratives and stories in order to center each teachers' stories, and words, as told through the interviews, focus groups, journal reflections, and visionary stories.
Heuristic	Each case is designed to highlight the nuances of the storied lives of teachers with differing positionalities while telling the story of the impact of a visionary pedagogy on teacher's understanding of their practice.
Intent	The intent of these case studies is interpretive in nature as they will be written to tell the stories of individual teachers while interpreting the impact of visionary pedagogy on teacher's understanding of their practice.

***Methodological Approach***

Taking a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006), Chapter VI: Storied Findings seeks to understand the individual cases as well as reflect on the analytic questions in order to study the impact of visionary pedagogy on the teachers in the study. Within a multiple case study analysis, the collection of cases, which are categorically bound, is referred to as a quintain. Both the quintain and the individual cases are of interest on the basis of their common characteristics (Stake, 2006). While each individual case is deserving of attention and analysis, a key goal will be to understand the quintain. To do this, the analytic questions guiding the data analysis for this research question will be answered by reading the data through the following questions: (a) *How does a*

*teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice? (b) How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice? (c) In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?*

### **Harnessing the Power of Storytelling through Case Stories**

As the defining feature associated with research question #1 focuses on stories and storytelling, the strategies of inquiry for this question combine the traditional methodological approach of case studies with the power of storytelling to tell the stories of three teachers who participated in the professional development. Thus, the road map for Chapter VI: Storied Findings engages with the traditional methodological approach of case studies through the lens of stories by leveraging a case story methodology.

This methodology, often used in narrative inquiry (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Shulman, 1987) "... blends the power of narrative analysis with the meaning and theory construction potential of cases" (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001). The case stories themselves are crafted from field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), with the field texts being situated within the study's larger narrative. In crafting case stories, I do this by drawing on multiple field texts to move away from a neat resolution to the research question posed and instead to "suggest complexity, even contradiction..." (Rose, 1995, p. 435). This particular methodological approach lends itself to understanding the individual teacher as the unit of analysis and as the agent of change in their own lives and practice.

To develop case stories based on the analytic questions posed for the first research question, all of the data sources became the field texts for this chapter. Thus, the field

texts were comprised of teacher interviews, focus group interviews, visionary fiction stories written by the teachers, and work samples gathered from the professional development, including journal responses, learn and reflect activities, and visionary storytelling discussion posts (see Chapter IV: Design Methodology for descriptions of these activities).

After reading all of the field notes, three cases were chosen on the basis of being “theoretically crucial” (Given, 2008, p. 69) in their capacity to fully answer the analytic questions for this research question. As the analytic questions guiding this particular research question focused on understanding how the use of visionary pedagogy impacted teacher’s understanding of their practice, the field notes for each teacher were read together to develop a case story that both responded to the analytic questions and provided an in-depth and nuanced narrative of the participant. This particular strategy of inquiry provided an in-depth and nuanced understanding of teachers’ stories instead of reducing the stories to codes and themes. Subsequent to the construction of the case stories, the quintain was read as a narrative and the analytic questions were answered as a way to understand the quintain as a whole.

### **Design as Inquiry**

The second research question in this study asks: *How does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?* Embedded within this question is an epistemological assumption that the design of a learning experience directly influences one’s ability to engage and learn. This question assumes that learning design is an important factor in the learning

experience for all learners as is represented in the literature on universal design for learning (Craig et al., 2019; Davies et al., 2013).

This research question also assumes that the cultivation of teacher agency is an essential element in the learning process and aligns with research that argues that teachers should be respected as professionals (Apple, 1995; Apple & Jungck, 1990; Pinar, 2012). This assumption is coupled with the belief that a teacher's role is to enact change rather than simply follow instructional programs and practices (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Further, as this research question and road map center on the collective experiences of the teachers within the professional development institute, there is an epistemological assumption regarding the generalizability of learning experiences on the part of teachers. While the experiences of the teachers in this study are not generalizable across all contexts, identities, and perspectives, there is an assumption being made that the collective experiences of these teachers can be loosely understood as a path by which to guide future learning design for online professional development courses and institutes.

### **Thinking with Theory to Open Possibilities**

As the second research question asks how the instructional design of an in-service professional development influences teacher learning, the road map for this particular question draws on the thinking with theory method developed by Jackson and Mazzei (2012). In engaging more readily with theory rather than codes, this enabled me to “hone in on specific data episodes” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5) according to the analytic question posed by plugging a particular concept into the data gathered. This process allowed me to embrace the messiness and complicated nature of teacher voices in order



to move toward “a more nuanced, complicated, and productive story...” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. xx).

Chapter VII: Design Findings will thus be organized around an analytic question used to think both “methodologically and philosophically” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, vii). The analytic question guiding this analysis asks, *how can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?* The data used to understand and respond to this question draws on the concept of relationality within Indigenous research paradigms and in particular to the work of Chilisa (2012) and Wilson (2008). This analytic question was developed after reading all of the data collected from this research. While I was interested in relationships a priori, the theory of relationality and the connection with Indigenous research paradigms came out of the process of reading and working with my data. This is an important distinction, particularly when engaging with thinking with theory, as the analytic question and the theoretical framework were not used to interpret the data in a particular way, rather as I started looking at the data relationally (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson, 2008) a new opening was created.

### **Engaging with Indigenous Paradigms as a White Scholar**

As a white scholar doing this work, it is important for me to acknowledge my positionality in embedding an Indigenous paradigm as my theory of analysis. As a white scholar engaging Indigenous ontology and specifically the concept of relationality as understood by Indigenous scholars, this is not a concept that I use simply for the purposes

of analysis. Rather it is a concept that was and continues to ground my ontological beliefs about research. As Wilson (2008) discusses in his book,

...the shared aspect of an Indigenous ontology and epistemology is relationality (relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality). The shared aspect of an Indigenous axiology and methodology is accountability to relationships... The shared aspects of relationality and relational accountability can be put into practice through choice of research topic, methods of data collection, form of analysis and presentation of information (p. 7).

Holding a deep commitment to relational accountability and a belief that relational accountability includes a commitment to all elements of the research puzzle, relationships in all facets (with people, place, and ideas) were central in the choice of the research topic, the development of the professional learning experience, the ways in which data was collected, and the forms of analysis. While the particular moves that I made as a researcher felt intuitive due to my deep beliefs regarding community-oriented research, reading this road map through the lens of relationality ala Wilson (2008), enabled me to think more deeply about both the process and the destination.

As discussed throughout this dissertation, the research topic was chosen due to my relationship with my students while I was a classroom teacher, and in particular, my relationship with Jose. This topic was also chosen due to my relationship with place, particularly with the place where I met Jose, and being pushed toward a sense of wide-awakeness (Greene, 1978) regarding the systemic injustice at the root of school systems and my part in upholding this injustice.

While my relationship with place drove my initial road map, the COVID-19 pandemic put a fork in the road. Thus, as Wilson (2008) reminds us with his metaphor of

a strategies of inquiry, this particular method allows for change and adaptation, therefore, I forged a new path that engaged my relationship with the Equity Director at River School District and my previous engagement with teachers in this district.

Further, the construction of the professional development course in this study included content in direct response to the work being done in River District in accordance with the district initiatives around equity and social justice. The professional development was intentionally designed based on these initiatives as well as the place where this professional development took place by centering historically and culturally contextual conversations about the Indigenous curriculum that was being rolled out across the state, movements toward removing school resource officers at the district level, and the impacts anti-Black racism and racist policies at the state and local levels.

Data collection was done primarily through conversational means within semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The focus groups were intentionally included on the road map for this question as the intent was to hold space for relationship building amongst teachers while providing opportunities to build sustained professional and personal relationships. While the data collected served as the foundation for this research project, it also served as an action planning opportunity to ensure that the teacher's ideas held meaning beyond the professional development institute.

It was also crucial that reciprocity was central to this work both in terms of reciprocity of learning and time. In this, teachers were paid for their engagement in the data collection. While one teacher, Marnie, let me know during her interview that she did not need to be paid as she noted, "I feel like I get compensated really, really well for the work that I love doing," providing teachers compensation in the form of a stipend, two

books,<sup>12</sup> and a bound book that included each teacher's visionary story as well as their group action plans, became a vital aspect of this research in that I wanted to ensure that teachers knew that this research was done in relationship and in service of their work.

As Wilson (2008) exemplifies in his work, relationship and relational accountability are more than concepts to be used within the research, rather relationality *is* research, as relationships themselves are reality. Therefore, relationships with people, place, and ideas were, and continue to serve as the building blocks of this research and my overarching research ontology. This ontology is furthered in opposition to conventional research paradigms (St. Pierre et al., 2016) that are built on the belief that knowledge belongs to the individual, in that the road map for this research question understands that knowledge is relational and thus this work would not be possible without all of the relations to which I am accountable.

Therefore, prior to the data analysis, all teachers were sent their transcripts for both their individual interviews and the focus groups and were given the opportunity to read through them and ensure that their words and beliefs were honored. This process served as an opportunity for continued conversation with teachers in that if there were pieces of the transcripts that did not feel honoring, these parts were not used. Several teachers also asked to see drafts along the way, and these were shared with them as desired. For those individuals whose stories were included as case stories, each teacher was asked permission prior to constructing the case story to ensure that they felt comfortable with their story being told. Teachers were then sent drafts of the case stories

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<sup>12</sup> Teachers were provided copies of both *Schooltalk: Rethinking what we say about and to students every day* (Pollock, 2017) as well as a book of choice based on their interests.

and asked to ensure that this represented their story in a way that made them feel seen, heard, and honored.

### **Thinking with Theory: Plugging into Indigenous Research Paradigms of Relational Accountability**

The data analysis for research question #2, which asks *how the instructional design of an in-service professional development influences teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency* represents what Jackson and Mazzei (2012) discuss as the emergence of the threshold. They describe this emergence of a threshold in that there is no longer a binary understanding of theory and data, rather “theory and data constitute or make one another” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 6). The data gathered, the theory undergirding the research, and the memories associated with the interviews, focus groups, and professional development experience “when plugged in while in the threshold, produce something new, something different from mere themes and patterns generated by coding” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 6).

As a way to “keep meaning on the move in the threshold” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 6), the analytic question grounded the analysis through a process of plugging the data into the concept of Indigenous relationality holistically, and more specifically drawing primarily on the work of Wilson (2008) and Chilisa (2012). Modeled after Wilson’s (2008) structure of relationality which he employs to discuss the different spaces of relations in his work, the analytic question makes clear the way that relationality manifests within and across the data. In this, the Chapter VII: Design Findings will be structured similar to Wilson’s (2008) work in thinking with relationality

as well as attending specifically to the following analytic question *1) How can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?*

### **Wilson and Chilisa: Thinking with Indigenous Relationality**

Thinking with theories of Indigenous relationality, I center specifically on the work of Chilisa (2012), who identifies as belonging to the Bantu people of Africa and Shawn Wilson (2008), who identifies as Opaskwayak Cree. In her work, Chilisa articulates her theory of Indigenous research as being grounded in the 4 R's: relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulations during the research process. In his work, Wilson (2008) articulates the difference between an Indigenous research paradigm and dominant research paradigms in describing the ways in which Indigenous paradigms view knowledge not as something to be owned or commodified, but instead as relational. In thinking with both Chilisa and Wilson's articulation of relationality, it is important to understand the ways that relationality is understood not as a mere concept nor as an act of being in relationship with another, rather as Wilson (2008) notes, "we are the relationships that we hold and are part of" (p. 80).

Intentionally leveraging this concept enables me to differently engage with the data drawn from the teacher's experiences as I am not entering this road map with the final destination being a surface-level analysis of understanding the influence of relationships on teachers. Rather, I am considering the influence of relationality as a way

to more deeply understand the web of relations, and a recognition that “research and thinking need to be (and are) culturally based” (Wilson, 2008, p. 91).

### ***“Plugging In” to Open New Possibilities***

In embodying relationality and relationally accountable research as well as being mindful of the 4 R’s discussed across Indigenous methodology literature: relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and right and regulations during the research process (Chilisa, 2012 referencing Ellis & Earley, 2006; Louis, 2007; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2008), the analysis for this particular research question moves outside of the bounds of the dominant qualitative methodologies which can often give “simplistic treatment of research narratives... that have no connection with ‘life’ from which they are stripped” (Mazzei, 2016, p. 151). This shift in the transportation taking me on my research journey is furthered by a desire to move away from mechanistic forms of coding that do not allow for a complex and rich analysis of data and toward a “multi-layered treatment of data” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, vii). In order to “avoid being seduced by the desire to create a coherent and interesting narrative that is bound by themes and patterns” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. viii), this methodological shift toward thinking with relationality allows for new possibilities to emerge within the threshold.

The data gathered for this particular research question, which included teacher interviews and focus groups as well as an anonymous post-survey, were plugged into the philosophical theory of Indigenous relationality in order to put the concept to work. The analytic process engaged with the structure of Wilson’s (2008) book as a model, wherein

he identified different ways in which relationality was present in his data by reading the data through the presence of relations with people, relations with the environment and the land, relations with the cosmos, relations with ideas. As the presence of relationality manifested in my data, the sections were organized into the following categories: (a) relations with self, (b) relations with others, (c) relations with knowledge/experience/agency, and (d) intersections of relationality. Each of these sections intentionally considered the analytic question for this research question and the ways in which relationality manifested in accordance with these identified spaces.

In engaging in the thinking with theory process by putting the concept of Indigenous relationality to work, this allowed for a more relational consideration of what is possible within professional development spaces and how influential the learning design is on teacher learning, engagement, and sense of agency. This process created space for an understanding of not just similarities and differences of the experiences of teachers within the professional development based on categorical coding, but instead provided a more robust understanding of the ambiguity and multiplicity represented between and across participants (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

### **Research Design**

The professional development under study, referred to as the “Visionary Equity Institute” occurred over a 5-week period in the summer of 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this institute took place fully online and provided teachers with weekly modules consisting of synchronous and asynchronous online learning opportunities. The professional development was designed specifically for the teacher participants based on



district initiatives and an embedding of visionary pedagogy (see Chapter IV: Design Methodology) as a learning and design tool.

## **Study Participants**

### ***District Demographics***

Teachers were recruited from a small district in the Pacific Northwest, which will be referred to as River District. This district had 5,468 K-12 students enrolled during the 2016-2017 school year<sup>13</sup>. This district is more diverse than the surrounding city, wherein, according to the 2019 census, 83.3% of the population identified as white. Within River district during the 2016-2017 school year, 66.3% of students identifies as white, 20.5% identifies as Latinx, 2% identifies as Black, 2.1% identifies as Asian, 1.3% identifies as American Indian/Alaskan native, 0.7% identifies as Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 7.2% identifies as two or more races. During this same school year, 51.6% of the student population identified as male and 48.4% identified as female<sup>14</sup> with 16.3% of students qualifying for special education services under IDEA, 6% of students receiving supports through 504 plans, 4.4% of students having limited English proficiency, and 57% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Seven schools in the district received Title I funding and ten of the schools had talented and gifted programs. At that time, there were 240.6 teachers working at River district (based on FTE, full time equivalency) and 11.4 counselors creating a student to teacher of 22.73

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<sup>13</sup> This data is drawn from the Civil Rights Database. At the time this dissertation was written the 2017-2018 school year was the most recent data available.

<sup>14</sup> I acknowledge that the binary understandings of gender, as provided on the Civil Rights Database, are limiting and discount many individual experiences.

students for every one teacher. Three of the schools in River District employed school resource officers.

**Table 5**

*Research Design Overview*

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Recruitment Process	This process used a snowball recruitment method drawing from a small school district on the west coast. Teachers were recruited by River District’s Equity Director on the basis of their involvement with the district equity committee.
Participants	Participants are teachers who teach a variety of levels (K-8) and content areas with varied levels of experience.
Teacher Demographics	n= 9  5 teachers identify as white women, 2 identify as Indigenous women, 1 identifies as an Asian woman, 1 identifies as biracial, 2 identify as queer women; all 9 use the pronouns she/her
Timeframe of Professional Development	The professional development took place over a five-week period with both synchronous (whole group & small group) and asynchronous work. The total time spent was approximately 30 hours.
Participant Compensation	Participating teachers received a copy of the book <i>Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and to Students Every Day</i> , 30 hours toward their continuing education, a stipend, a book of choice to continue their learning, and a bound book with each teacher’s visionary story and collective action plans.
Data Collection	Participating teachers had choice regarding their level of participation with all teachers engaging fully in the research project in its entirety which included: a pre- and post- survey through Qualtrics; module tasks and activities; a 45–60-minute interview, and a 90-minute focus group.

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## Recruitment Methods

Teachers were recruited for this study from River District (see Appendix A for recruitment flyer). The Equity Director for River District identified teachers for the professional development based on the connections between the professional development and the alignment River District's equity initiatives. As I am in relationship with the Equity Director for River School District, I worked with her to ensure continued alignment.<sup>15</sup> Six of the teachers recruited served on the district equity committee during the year prior and have engaged in work around equity-based pedagogies and therefore have experience with concepts such as restorative justice and culturally responsive-sustaining pedagogies. The remaining three teachers did not serve on the equity committee, however, two were in relationship with River District's Equity Director and were therefore recruited to participate while the final teacher was recruited by a teacher colleague who had agreed to participate.

Teachers choosing to engage in the professional development institute had the option of participating in the research project and were able to continue participation in the professional development institute and receive continuing education credits and a copy of anchor text even if they chose not to participate in the research. A total of nine teachers opted to participate in the research, two teachers chose to engage solely in the professional development, and two teachers who had initially opted into both the research and the professional development needed to drop the course for personal reasons (see Table 6 for participant information).

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<sup>15</sup> An example of alignment was the use of the anchor text, *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and To Students Every Day* (Pollock, 2017) which was chosen as this book had been used for administrator training within the district during the previous summer.

**Table 6***Participant Information*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Self-Identified Information</b>	<b>Teaching Information</b>
Marnie	German with Jewish Ashkenazi ancestry; mother Pronouns: she/her	17 years teaching; currently teaches at the middle school level and is working on a graduate degree in educational administration
Helen	Asian American Pronouns: she/her	11 years teaching; currently teaches upper elementary school; works to develop district and school level equity professional development. Has served on the district equity committee since its inception; always looking for a good book recommendation
Jennifer	Tillamook Chinook; Finish Pronouns: she/her	13 years teaching; currently teaches middle school Humanities
Michelle	White; mother Pronouns: she/her	4 years teaching; currently teaches middle school Humanities
Kate	White; queer; fat; left-handed Pronouns: she/her	7 years teaching; currently teaches upper elementary school
Lesly	Cis, White Queer Human mom and cat mom Pronouns: she/her	3 years teaching; is currently a reading specialist the elementary level
Claire	Biracial mother; mother Pronouns: she/her	10 years teaching; currently teaches upper elementary school
Elena	White; mother Pronouns: she/her	5 years teaching; currently teaches kindergarten
Nelle	Warm Springs; dog mom Pronouns: she/her	4 years teaching; currently teaches upper elementary school

## Data Collection

Data for this study was collected throughout July and August of 2020, with data collected during and after the professional development. The specific data sources were determined on the basis of the research question as each research question drew on a different body of data. While some data was used for both research questions, each question engaged differently with the data on the basis of the research question, theoretical framework, and strategy of inquiry.

For research question #1 which asks *how visionary pedagogy can offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice*, teacher interviews, focus groups, visionary stories written during module 3, and other work samples were collected and became the field texts for this question. For research question #2 which asks *how the professional development's instructional design influenced teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency*, teacher interviews, focus groups, and post-survey results were collected and plugged into the threshold for deeper analysis.

For the purposes of data collection for both research question #1 and research question #2, all teachers were interviewed subsequent to their involvement in the professional development. Interviews occurred both individually and within a focus group with the small group of teachers with whom they had worked throughout the entirety of the professional development. Teacher interviews focused on the teacher's identities and in particular their experiences as students as well as their visionary stories, as well as how they thought about their teaching differently after the creation of their visionary stories and experience in the professional development. Focus groups served a two-fold purpose including holding a space to collectively discuss the power and

limitations of each person's visionary story as well as an engagement in an action planning session to strategically build action plans which were sent to the Equity Director upon the close of the data collection.

Interviews and focus groups used a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix D for interview guides). Interviews and focus groups took place over Zoom with individual interviews lasting between forty minutes and one hour and twenty minutes and focus group interviews lasting between one hour and twenty minutes and one hour and forty minutes. Interviews and focus groups were recorded using an external recording device with permission provided by participants.

These particular data collection techniques were chosen for this study as they provided an opportunity to understand the learning and self-reflection at an individual level as well as through a collective learning space (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019). As Longhurst (2003) notes, "semi-structured interviews and focus groups are similar in that they are informal and conversational in tone. Both allow for an open response in the participants' own words..." (p. 145). Focus groups, in particular, offered teachers an opportunity to engage in dialogue with one another through agreeing, disagreeing, or modifying their claims (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Along with this, focus groups allowed space for a "co-construction of meanings" (Morgan, 2012, p. 163 as cited in Warren and Karner, 2015, p. 131) which is essential to understanding the collective learnings of the group rather than only individual learning and development. While research around asynchronous virtual focus groups through online discussion groups have been found fruitful in learning from and engaging participants (Moloney et al., 2003; Turney & Pocknee, 2005), this study

instead employed synchronous focus groups using Zoom as the online platform in order to allow for more authentic and dynamic discussions.

Interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed and sent to participants for member checking (Birt et al., 2016) to ensure trust between the researcher and participants. This was an important stage of data collection as I wanted to ensure that teachers' stories were honored through this process which was an integral to the ontology of this research. In drawing on others' work within education wherein accountability to participants is central (e.g., Rose, 1995), there was an internal desire to ensure that the representation of teachers was honoring of their teaching and did not create deficit-oriented narratives. By engaging in conversations with the participating teachers, I was able to hold their expertise and stories as central to this work.

For research question #1, data sources outside of interviews included work completed by teachers during the professional (see Appendix B for a description of activities) which were stored on Canvas, the Learning Management System (LMS) for the professional development. These data included private writing (journal reflections) and public writing (learn and reflects activities). Teachers were all given the option of having their work samples included in the analysis. Four of the nine teachers provided consent for the use of their work samples. The activities submitted with their visionary storytelling group were not used as it was not discernable which member of the group completed which part of the activity.

For research question #2, the data source outside of interviews included the final piece of data collected which was an anonymous qualitative survey conducted through Qualtrics that teachers completed before and after the professional development. Both the

pre- and post-survey asked similar questions, with only the post-survey being used for the purposes of this dissertation. Questions on the post-survey included the following:

1. Do you think that the stories we tell about students matter? Explain.
2. Do you believe that the language we use with and about students impacts their futures? Explain.
3. What learnings will you take away from this professional development that you will apply to your practice?

Questions 1 and 2 on the survey were designed in response to the anchor text of the course *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and To Students Every Day* (Pollock, 2017), with the final question designed to understand how teachers would apply their learning beyond the close of the course.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Mountain University was received. Once approval was received, the Equity Director at River School District was contacted in order to discuss possible participants, with subsequent discussions occurring with both her and my co-facilitator in order to ensure course and district alignment. Upon the close of recruitment for the professional development, teachers and River District's Equity Director were then invited to the Summer Visionary Equity Institute Canvas course (hosted by the public/open-sourced version of Canvas).

Prior to beginning module 1, teachers were provided additional information about the structure of the professional development and the research project and asked to complete and submit the Informed Consent document via Canvas and complete the pre-



survey if they were opting into the research aspect of the professional development. A total of eleven teachers completed the informed consent. Further, ten teachers completed the anonymous pre-survey, and eight complete the post-survey via Qualtrics using a predetermined code so as to assess growth across the professional development as the same code was used for the post-survey.<sup>16</sup>

All synchronous sessions took place through Zoom with recordings of sessions posted on Canvas for teachers to revisit or watch if they were unable to attend the session. These session recordings were not used for the purposes of this research. A total of nine teachers engaged in one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions through Zoom both which were recorded on an external recording device and transcribed using otter.ai. All transcripts were uploaded to Microsoft OneDrive according to the data safety plan submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Upon interviews and focus groups being transcribed, copies were sent to the teachers for member checking for review. Teachers were asked to remove any portions of the interview and focus group transcript that they felt did not reflect their intent as well as add anything that they felt required further information. While several participants noted in response to emails that they had looked through the transcripts, no additional information was added, and no sections were removed. While the intent was to ensure that the edits and revisions made by the participants fully reflected participant's experience and intent, this was not deemed necessary.

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<sup>16</sup> While the surveys were initially designed to look at change over time on the basis of involvement in the professional development, this was determined, on the basis of the strategies of inquiry to be outside the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, only one question that was asked on the post-survey will be included in the data analysis.

The individuals featured in the case stories in Chapter VI: Storied Findings, were asked permission prior to writing their case story with their completed section sent to them for review. Each individual was told that they had full reign on the final version and could remove or add anything that they did not feel honored their story. As I am committed to holding these stories with care and representing each teacher in a way that shows deep appreciation, creating this dialogue was integral to the research process. No revisions were made to the content of the case stories by any of the three teachers.

To thank the teachers for their participation in the professional development and research, they were compensated for their time and commitment in multiple ways. For their involvement in the professional development, teachers were provided continuing education hours and a copy of the book *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About and to Students Every Day* (Pollock, 2017). Teachers who opted into the research were given a copy of a book of their stories and collection action plans as a thank you and a reminder of the dreaming and action planning that took place during the summer. For participating in the interview process, teachers were given a \$50 stipend, and for their participation in the focus groups, teachers were given a book of choice. The books of choice varied widely and included the following: *Indigenous Children's Survivance in Public Schools* (Sabzalian, 2019), *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* (Muhammed, 2020), *We Got This: Equity, Access, and the Quest to Be Who Our Students Need Us to Be* (Minor, 2018) *So You Want to Talk About Race* (Oluo, 2018), *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education Through Restorative Justice* (Winn, 2018), *How to Be an Antiracist* (Kendi, 2019), and *Seedfolks* (Fleischmann, 1997).

## Data Analysis

The data analysis process for this project occurred in two stages, with the analysis for each research question occurring in its own stage and requiring a different process based on the approach and strategy of inquiry. Each research question drew on different data and interacted with the data according to the analytic questions and theoretical framework.

### Research Question #1: Storied Learning Analysis

The first research question, which asks *how visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development might offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice* employed a case story approach (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001). Data analysis involved a multi-step process of reading and analyzing the interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, visionary stories, and work samples as a way to (a) identify three cases that provided in-depth narratives of the participant's experiences in connection with the analytic questions, (b) deeply read all transcripts and the work samples associated with the three identified teachers, (c) construct case stories for each teacher, and (d) answer the analytic questions specific to this research question drawing on common characteristics across case stories. The analytic questions guiding the multiple case study analysis are as follows: (a) *How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?* (b) *How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice?* (c) *In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?* These analytic questions provided a process by which to understand how teachers construct their own stories of

personal experiences as well as to consider common threads across teachers in connection with visionary pedagogy.

### **Research Question #2: Design Learning Analysis**

The data analysis approach for the second research question, which asks *how the instructional design of an in-service professional development influences teacher's engagement, learning, and sense of agency*, engaged with Jackson & Mazzei's (2012) method of thinking with theory in order to plug the theoretical concept of Indigenous relationality into the data. This occurred in a multi-step process by (a) reading the data through the theories of Indigenous relationality as discussed by Wilson (2008) and Chilisa (2012), (b) considering the ways in which relationality manifested through the data, and in particular, how relationality showed up across different spaces of relations as modeled after Wilson's (2008) structure, and (c) engaging with the analytic question in order to read the data through the above theoretical framework. The analytic question for this research question asks *how can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?* This process provided a more nuanced and less curated way to think about data by challenging interpretive modes of qualitative analysis which are relegated to organizing the data into chunks to develop codes and themes which oftentimes provides information that is already known.

### **Study Limitations**

This study has several limitations with regards to both methodology and recruitment. In terms of the methodology, for research question #1, which utilizes a case story methodology, while there are many strengths for using this particular methodology,

this methodology is not without its limitations. For example, as case studies position the “researcher...[as]... the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 1995, p. 42), this can be limiting as case studies can reflect a high degree of bias as the case studies can be chosen to reflect the interests of the researcher. Other scholars (e.g., Hamel, 1993) have argued that case study lacks rigor with regards to data collection and analysis. With these limitations in mind, it is important that as the researcher I am aware of, and deeply reflective about my own biases throughout the entire research process as well as ground each step of the methodological process in theory and a strong and cohesive conceptual framework.

In terms of the methodology for research question #2, as this particular research question draws on teacher voice through the use of interviews and focus groups, there is an inherent limitation in data used for this research question; data that privileges voice. In their work, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) discuss the ways in which a “...privileging of voice in traditional qualitative research assumes that voice makes present the truth and reflects the meaning of experience that has already happened” (p. xx). Acknowledging this, the thinking with theory approach as a methodology allows for an understanding of the data, and in this case, voice, being understood as transgressive data rather than normative which moves outside of the bounds of easy knowing (St. Pierre, 1997).

This draws on the work of St. Pierre and the ways that she engages in moving outside of traditional qualitative methodology arguing that “the notion that there is some correct interpretation out there that the researcher can reproduce and that members and peers can recognize and verify, however, is suspect in postpositivist research” (p. 184). In this way, leveraging a thinking with theory approach and reading the transgressive data

through the theory of relationality provides openings for new possibilities as meaning is kept on the move (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) rather than making normative conclusions regarding teacher voice.

In terms of the limitations regarding recruitment, as this study engaged with teachers who volunteered for this professional development, an assumption can be made that there was a high level of vested interest on the part of the teachers. This limitation is coupled with the fact that as the majority of the recruited teachers were already deeply engaged in equity work, the findings are likely not representative of all teachers across the nation.

This limitation could be exacerbated by the fact that teachers were made aware that they would receive continuing education credits for their involvement upon agreeing to participate in this professional development. While it is essential that teachers are shown that their time and knowledge are valued, this could lead to teachers choosing to be involved simply because of the need for credits to put toward their license renewal. Further, as this professional development only engaged a small sample of teachers, these teacher's beliefs, values, and learnings are not representative of all teachers and positions, identities, and outcomes.

Another possible limitation in recruitment is the online nature of this professional development institute which perhaps created hesitation for teachers due to their experience with distance learning during the spring of 2020 and their previous experience in online courses.

Finally, as this professional development was offered during the summer, and during this time, the governor of the state where River district is located announced a

shift to full online learning indefinitely; this had the potential to deter teachers from continued participation due to an increase in upcoming trainings for online learning platforms as well as a shift in curricular development. This limitation was confounded by teacher's general health and well-being during the summer of 2020 with continued increase in COVID-19 numbers and deaths locally, and across the state and nation. Thus, for those teachers who did participate and were able to continue their participation throughout the entirety of the professional development series, their level of engagement and emotional capacity was likely impacted by the larger state of the nation.

### **Summary**

As the theoretical framework for each of the research questions varied, so did the research methodology, referred to within this project as strategies of inquiry (Wilson, 2008). This roadmap of strategies becomes important as the methodology for this dissertation provides a pathway by which to be able to reach the destination of understanding the impact of visionary pedagogy on teacher practice and the influence of the design of the professional development on teacher learning, engagement, and sense of agency.

For research question #1, the strategy of inquiry employed was a case story analysis (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001) which combines traditional case study methodology (Merriam 1998) and narrative analysis. In addition, to reflect on the analytic questions guiding this chapter, which were developed post-data collection, and connect with literature in the field of psychology, a multiple case study analysis was conducted drawing on common threads from across the case studies.

For research question #2, the strategy of inquiry employed engaged with a thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) approach to reading the data through the lens of relationality (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson, 2008). The analytic question for this research question, which was developed post-data collection, served to open new possibilities for considering how relationality manifested in the data.

The teachers for this study were recruited from River District, which is a small district in the Pacific Northwest, with a total of nine teachers participating in the research study. While there are several limitations based on the strategies of inquiry leveraged within this dissertation as well as the recruitment process, the guiding literature, theoretical frameworks, and methodological underpinnings guided each of the methodology decisions and lines of inquiry explored.



## CHAPTER VI

### STORIED FINDINGS

*[Storytelling] resembles something like a spiderweb- with many little threads radiating from the center, criss-crossing each other. As with the web, the structure [of the story] will emerge as it is made and you must simply listen and trust... that meaning will be made (Silko, 1979, p 79).*

Dear Jose,

Much of the work that went into this project was grounded in the unjust nature of your future being taken from you at such a young age. As I don't know where you are, or if you are okay, I often imagine a future for you in my head; one where law enforcement and school personnel listened to your mom's pleading and responded before it was too late, where you were given the supports you needed in order to be able to stay in school, and where these letters could be conversations.

While I know this imagined future exists only in my head, attending high school graduation where you would have graduated and seeing the friends you walked the halls in sixth grade, yet not seeing you, grounded my imagination in reality. It was not only the absence of you at graduation but the realization that you never even had a chance to imagine your life differently. I often wonder what you saw of your future and desperately wish that I would have asked the question that so many grown-ups ask, what do you want to be when you grow up? Yet, I didn't ask, as I didn't do so many things that I wish I would have, and now I am left with a half story of you, one made up of what I remember and the pieces my mind has filled in over time, pieces heavy with emotion and regret for the future that was stolen from you.

This regret is met with a sense of curiosity-- what would it have taken for you to stay in school, for you to go home at night rather than running around with your crew? I wonder how things might have been different had school been a place where you wanted to be rather than one where you had to be. I wish I could ask you these questions now, to learn from you and with you. As I cannot, I continue to imagine a different future where on the fall day you walked into my class in the sixth-grade, new beginnings were forged, where you were seen as more than a static representation of the storied life you had lived, and where you were really and truly given the future you deserved.

### **Framing the Story**

This chapter centers on research question #1 of this dissertation which asks *how visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development can offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?* This research question is guided by literature concerned with theories of the future (Bell, 1992; brown & Imarisha, 2013; Lothian, 2018; Springgay & Truman, 2019; Thomas, 2019), the power of the imagination (Greene, 1995), and storytelling as a form of identity development and sense-making (Bell, 2019; Lewis 2007; 2011). The analysis for this chapter is grounded in a psychology-oriented theoretical framework drawing particularly on the field of social psychology connected to narrative identity, autobiographical memories, and future thinking (Fivush & Haden, 2003; McAdams, 2003; Oettingen et al., 2018). The analytic questions leveraged to read the field texts in connection with this research question are as follows: (a) *How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?* (b) *How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to*

*transform teacher practice? (c) In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?*

The strategy of inquiry employed for this particular analysis was a case story methodology that combines the traditional method of case study with narrative analysis (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001). Three teachers were identified for the case stories on the basis of being “theoretically crucial” (Given, 2008, p. 69) in connection with the analytic questions grounding the analysis. As this chapter also employs a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2006), at the close of the individual case stories, the analytic questions are responded to on the basis of the theoretical framework guiding this research question.

### **Co-Conspirators in this Research Journey**

In her book, *We Want to do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*, Bettina Love (2019) introduces the notion of co-conspirators. She does this to push back against the commonly used term ally that is ubiquitous in racial justice work to center a more active form of allyship. Love (2019) describes the difference between these two terms in an interview with Stoltzfus (2019) arguing that “a co-conspirator says, ‘I know the terms; I know what white privilege and white supremacy mean; now, what risks am I willing to take?’ It’s saying, ‘I’m going to put my privilege on the line for somebody.’” When thinking about the group of teachers I worked with during the Visionary Equity Institute, I see each of them as co-conspirators in the work against inequity and racial injustice in their schools and communities in a commitment to not only reading the book, which has become synonymous with surface

level racial justice work after the murder of George Floyd, but instead to doing the work and taking risks.

As the notion of *beloved community* (hooks, 1996) is at the heart of this dissertation, it is important to introduce the people who were on this research journey with me, who shared their stories and their visions for a more just future and who spent their sunny summer afternoons (which are especially exciting in the Pacific Northwest), in front of a computer screen for no other purpose than wanting to learn and grow as educators. While each individual below has their own powerful story, I acknowledge that my introduction of them will be wholly inadequate as their vibrant storied lives are more beautiful and full than the words on this page. In an effort to center their stories, however, I will begin each case story with how our paths crossed and how our relational journey began.

### **Creation of Emerging/Transforming Stories Counter-Case Stories**

In developing these case stories, I draw on the work of Solorzano and Yosso (2002) in their creation of counter-stories which they argue differ from fictional stories in that they “are grounded in real-life experiences and actual empirical data and are contextualized in social situations that are also grounded in real life, not fiction” (p. 36). They outline the functions of these counter-stories as having the ability to (a) build community by connecting education theory and practice, (b) challenge dominant knowledge within the social imaginary in order to both “understand and transform established belief systems” (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 36), (c) create new possible

futures for those in marginalized communities through seeing others with their positionality, and (d) teach through creating an amalgamation of story and reality.

The below case stories developed from the field texts gathered as part of this research study, serve similar functions as discussed by Solorzano and Yosso (2002) in that they were created to (a) build community among those teachers who are often viewed as being on the margin on the basis of their anti-racist and equity commitments, (b) challenge the perception that the future of education is fixed and teachers do not have the imagination or agency to transform schools and catalyze change, (c) open windows into the possibilities within education if only we allow for the centering of teacher voices, and (d) to teach others that the act of imagining a different future for our students by drawing on experiential knowledge and lived reality offers a lever for change.

Embedded within these stories is the operationalizing of Bell's (2019) storytelling framework and a consideration of counterfuturisms (Springgay & Truman, 2019) through a process of visioning. As a way to story the complex lives and identities of teachers as well as tell the story of the radical dreaming that was central to this process, it is important to center teacher's words while acknowledging that my voice is not, and will not ever be an adequate representation of the full heart and beauty of each storied individual.

These case stories are not by any means objective, rather they are subjective and oftentimes emotional representation of the stories I was told, the stories I hold, and the stories I now tell, a process that I hold sacred.

In her storytelling framework, Bell (2019) positions emerging/transforming stories as counterstories<sup>17</sup> that “speak to broader truths about social conditions, contribute to a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of racism today, and suggest ways to counter racism and act toward justice” (p. 2). Arguing that emerging/transforming stories “are deliberately constructed to challenge the stock stories, build on and amplify concealed and resistance stories, and create new stories to interrupt the status quo and energize change” (Bell, 2019, p. 20), these stories can help to provide news ways to (re)imagine more just futures of schools. Thus, the case stories told below will operationalize Bell’s (2019) storytelling framework and, in particular, her notion of emerging/transforming stories to describe the process of teachers uncovering their own stories and teacher identities while considering their role in the classroom and as change agents. By moving outside of present time to intentionally consider a future not yet here, these emerging/transforming case stories play with an engagement in counterfuturisms through an intentional consideration of telling the stories of those who have been storied as having no future (Lothian, 2018). These case stories are thus grounded in an ontological belief that a visionary pedagogy is only transformative if teachers are given space and support to engage in self-reflection around their own stories, leverage their stories and experiences to dream big and imagine new futures, and build these stories into existence through embodied learning processes.

Bell (2019) tells us that as stories operate on both the individual and collective levels, they offer a way to bridge the abstract with the concrete experiences of life.

Because of this unique quality of stories, they provide us with an analytic by which to

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<sup>17</sup> As discussed in Chapter III: Review of Literature, counterstories are derived from critical race theory and forwarded by critical race scholars such as (Delgado, 1989) and Bell (1992).

understand experience at a more complex level than when being presented in solely abstract form. By leveraging a case story methodology through the creation of emerging/transforming counterstories, a possibility is opened for creating a complex and nuanced picture of the ways in these teachers' experiences as students impact their teacher identity and classroom practice. The emerging/transforming counterstories also build on these autobiographical memories and narrative identity development to consider how teachers might imagine different futures for their students creating temporal bridges along the way. These case stories thus provide a heuristic by which to highlight the individual experiences of teachers while through a storied understanding of the connection between autobiographical memories, narrative identity, and future thinking.

### **Emerging/Transforming Story: Helen**

I first met Helen when I was invited to sit in on an equity committee meeting at River district the year prior to the professional development under study. It was clear, even during that first meeting, that Helen was deeply committed to equity work. While I was struck by her commitments that shone even during that brief first encounter, it wasn't until I continued seeing her in other spaces that her pedagogy and desire for catalyzing change within her classroom, school, and district became apparent. It was clear that she had strong connections to her local community as well as to Mountain University as she was consistently invited to speak to pre-service teachers about her classroom instruction (often specific to equity and social justice work). It was therefore, not surprising when during the meet and greet for the professional development institute, Helen was one of the first people I saw. During this first session, Helen's leadership came through in very

quiet ways, and her role as a change-maker in the group became instantly evident. While Helen was often quiet during the whole group sessions, during breakout rooms, she facilitated conversations making introspective comments and connections, and asking questions that pushed people to think deeply about their positionality and their classroom pedagogy.

Throughout the professional development, I was able to learn more about Helen and her teaching story, as well as the depth of her commitments to equity. I learned that Helen had taught for eleven years, with her career starting in a large urban city on the east coast with demographics very different than her current school, demographics that she was more culturally aligned to as she identifies as Asian American. Currently, Helen teaches in River District, which is in the community where she was born and raised. This community is far less culturally aligned to her positionality on part of both students and the teachers, with Helen being one of the few teachers of color in the district. Helen's parents immigrated to the United States and are in the restaurant business, which led Helen to spend much of her time as a child in restaurants and stores, a pastime that was one of the many reasons why she decided to become a teacher.

Helen is an avid learner and is constantly engaged in professional development opportunities to learn and grow in her practice. For Helen, COVID-19 offered additional professional development opportunities as she was able to engage with teachers doing equity and social justice work across the United States due to online professional development opportunities. This increase in access to both content and community differed from Helen's previously localized learning experiences. For Helen, her passion



for learning extends beyond her teaching identity in that she is a fervent reader and is always seeking book recommendations.

### ***Roots, Shoots, and Soil***

Prior to the first professional development session, teachers were asked to think through their roots, shoots, and soil. This activity was designed as a way for teachers to think about what keeps them grounded in their work (roots), the environment that their work sits in (soil), and the goals of their teaching (shoots). As teachers had autonomy in terms of how they thought through their roots, shoots, and soil, Helen chose to construct an image to help her reflect on her teaching (see Figure 2.).

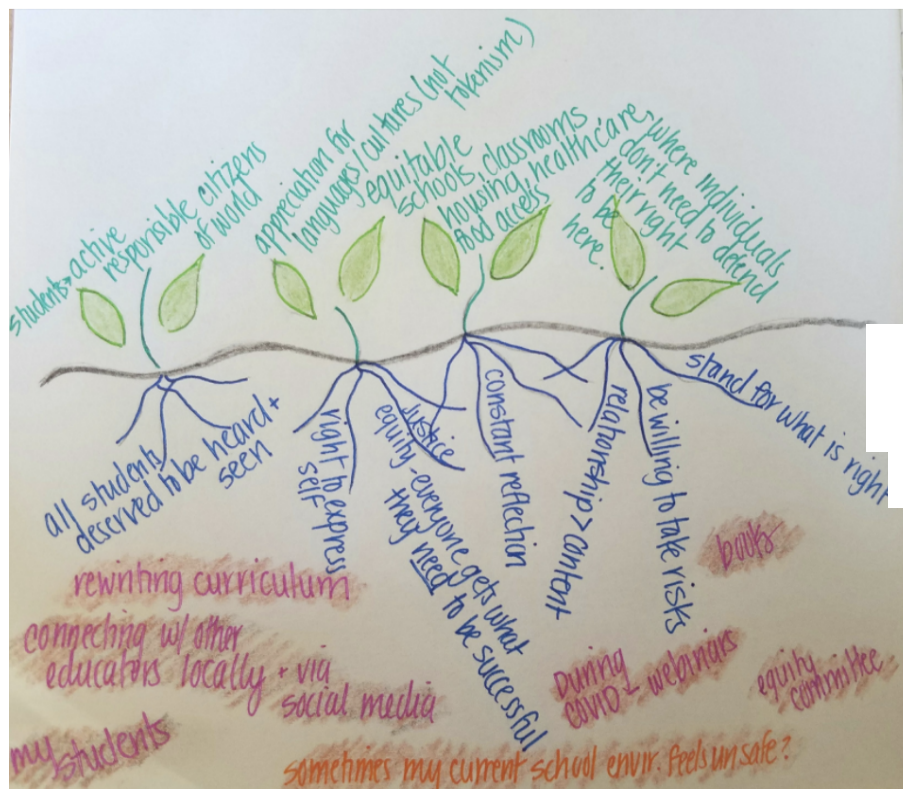
She prefaced this image by noting that

[I've] been thinking a lot about soil. Since soil is about the environment, there's so many parts to this - one part that I'm reflecting on and trying to figure out is the larger school environment outside of my classroom. This environment does not always feel safe to me and I'm willing to risk teaching the way I do, speaking out about what I believe in for kids and yet, it's draining. Essentially, I think my soil has lots of great things in it yet, it's not the most healthy of soils.

While the soil in the activity was not specific in terms of local environment or the larger educational system, as Helen constantly reflects on systemic concerns and how systems of inequity play out in her classroom and inform her instruction, this became an integral part of her roots, shoots, and soil.

The themes highlighted in this statement continued to show up throughout the professional development as well as in the interviews and focus groups in the ways that

Helen constantly considers the tension of wanting to speak out yet wanting to ensure her safety. As one of the few teachers of color in her school district, as well as teaching and living in a primarily white city, these concerns could have the ability to paralyze Helen in her social justice desires; however, in many ways, they seem to motivate her to cultivate her own teacher identity and ensure that her roots are strong in grounding her teaching. When considering Helen’s roots, shoots, and soil holistically, I am reminded of Love’s (2019) use of the metaphor of north star which she describes as the guide for social justice work in a deep understanding of how theories function to move toward action. For Helen, her north star guiding her work toward theories of social and racial justice is evident in all that she does and all that she is.



**Figure 2**

*Helen’s roots, shoots, and soil visual*

This visual is important in beginning to peel back the layers of Helen's storied identity as her roots connect to experiences that Helen had as a student and that have been deepened throughout her eleven-year teaching career. In addition, the shoots that Helen includes on her visual are aligned with her visionary story regarding her hopes and dreams for her practice as well as schools at large.

### ***Cultivating a Social Justice Teacher Identity***

Helen's story of her experiences in K-12 schools as a student is integral in understanding her commitments to social justice pedagogy and equity orientations that she cultivates today. Wanting to be a teacher since she was eight years old, this decision was in many ways motivated by her family being in the restaurant business and knowing that she did not want to follow in their footsteps (it helped that her family approved of her not wanting to take over the family business). For Helen, school was always a place that she found comforting and she loved the idea that at the end of the day, teachers were able to go home. She contrasts that with staying late at her family's restaurant, and grocery store business as a child, wherein her family often didn't go home until late in evening. As her family is prominent in her local community, she has had to work hard to continue on her teaching path in an effort to demonstrate that the work that she does is separate from her parents.

As a student, several events painted Helen's memories in ways that connect to her roots, shoots, and soil and the teacher identity she has cultivated. In her K-12 schooling experience, Helen never had an Asian teacher outside of the school she attended on the

weekend. While she did well in school, even without mirrors in her teachers (Bishop, 1990), she feels that she benefited from the model minority myth as she was able to assimilate into white culture. During her schooling experience, Helen never really thought about her race but instead focused on her parent's expectations of her in school. However, as an adult, she is now curious about what her teachers actually thought of her, especially as she is currently teaching in her hometown and thus crosses paths with teachers she had in the past.

Along with this, Helen remembers an experience of writing about how her family immigrated to America, noting that they were "boat people." This piece of writing was passed around by her teachers, with her being viewed as a novelty and her teachers pitying her because her parents were forced to leave their home country because of war. Often feeling exoticized as a student, and even throughout her undergraduate studies, her desire to use these experiences as motivation to ensure that her classroom is culturally responsive and moves beyond multiculturalism is very much intertwined with her shoots and the teacher identity she has so carefully and thoughtfully cultivated.

While Helen knew that she would to be a teacher from a young age, after graduating with her undergraduate degree from Mountain University, she decided to get her Masters' Degree at a university that was some distance from her hometown. This decision was in many ways motivated by professors at her alma mater who convinced her to study elsewhere to expand her horizons. While she had initially intended to stay away from her hometown only for school, she ended up teaching in this new city for five years, where she taught in a building with poor ventilation in a basement room with no windows. The environment, however, did not deter Helen from teaching, in some ways in

fact, it made her more aware of systemic inequities and ways in which she could build her classroom to address those inequities. This came through in her desire to disrupt stock stories about Asian Americans both regarding the model minority myth as well as which roles/positions in schools Asian Americans were able to access. Due to her experiences as a student and her internal drive to do well in school, Helen holds high expectations for her students, and when they do not meet those expectations, she often reflects deeply on her own teaching, wondering what she has done wrong.

During her first year of teaching, Helen was a push-in ESOL (English as a second language) teacher. While she loved her role and enjoyed having continued opportunities to learn from other teachers, it was important to her that her students saw that an Asian American teacher could have their own classroom rather than always being in the role of an educational assistant or paraprofessional.

While each of these pieces of Helen's identity are strong today, this did not happen magically at the beginning of her career; rather she refers to her identity today as "a very cultivated teacher identity." Having strong co-teachers at the beginning of her career with solid teacher identities helped her see mirrors for her own teacher identity. She was also able to see mirrors in her students and families which enabled Helen to allow her identity to be central to her teaching. She did not feel that she needed to hide her culture because the students in her first school and classrooms engaged in similar cultural experiences.

While teaching in her first school, Helen did not often center race and social justice as the students were so like her in many ways, yet, after teaching there for five years, she decided to move home and realized then that unlike the school where she

began her career, she was the only Asian teacher. When she entered her new classroom in her hometown, she experienced culture shock experiencing questions in her school building such as where she was from. This type of questioning points to the ways in which Helen was exoticized and othered as a student and this exoticization continued to show even as an adult in her role as a teacher in the town where she was raised.

This shift in the demographics of her colleagues and her students, as well as comments like this, made Helen realize that she needed to talk about race and social justice because many of her “students now have the privilege of just walking through life and not realizing it.” She notes that while centering social justice in her classroom was not always an explicit goal, it was a long time coming, and she regrets having not taught this to her first cohorts of students (many of whom she is still in touch with today).

Helen describes social justice as always being part of her identity; her skin color, race, and culture all part of the tapestry that create her cultivated teacher identity when woven together. Beneath are her ideals which in many ways (some more explicit than others) overlap with her identity in that she describes her work as being grounded in critical thinking, social justice, and equity. Because of Helen’s drive to center social justice and equity in her classroom, she is often viewed as a leader at her school and across the district with consistent invitations to join school and district committees. While these leadership roles have the potential to move Helen into other positions outside of the classroom, she is very adamant about continuing in her role as a classroom teacher as she deeply believes that even if she is to move into an instructional coach role, it is important that she has own classroom to practice strategies and techniques prior to teaching them to others.

Helen's classroom instruction is very nested in her roots, shoots, and soil in creating space for conversations about social justice concerns. However, her identity as an Asian American woman often creates barriers for this work as she is impacted by stock stories about Asian American women being quiet, neutral, and apolitical. Because of this, when Helen includes curriculum in her classroom focusing on climate change or Black Lives Matter (which she often does), parents question her curricular choices and are often shocked that a female Asian American teacher would engage in these types of conversations.

Having a diverse administrative team at the district level has helped Helen feel comforted in her commitments to social justice pedagogies in her classroom, as well as her growing leadership roles in her district. However, she often wonders if there is a point wherein she should step back from these roles and let other teachers be involved. As Helen is concerned both with ensuring that others understand how much she values the work that she does and ensuring that other teachers' voices are centered, this tension and constant reflection are central to Helen's identity as a teacher leader in her district. Unfortunately, Helen's commitment to centering social justice within her curriculum and talking explicitly about race in her classroom has caused her to feel siloed within her school building because even though she has a supportive administrative team, she works with teachers who have very different teaching philosophies and political commitments. For instance, some colleagues, base success on test scores rather than creating a student-centered dialogic classroom.

For Helen, COVID-19 has actually opened possibilities that have allowed her to feel less siloed and isolated in her work as it has offered her time and the ability to

connect with other educators through the move to online learning. Although she is not keen on using social media, by engaging in platforms such as Twitter, she has learned from, and connected with so many other educators who are doing the social justice work she is doing in her own district. For Helen, being able to attend virtual conferences and listen to incredible speakers across the nation, as well as be exposed to new ideas, have helped her to dream bigger about the potential of her own district to catalyze the change that she thinks is possible.

### ***Radical Dreaming: Toward Community Centered Learning***

While imagining her future classroom was not an activity that Helen often engaged in when she was younger, she did engage in imaginative play around school. She remembers making her sister and her stuffed animals play school, always having in mind the “musts” of a classroom which included desks seated in rows facing a chalkboard. When she started field experiences during her undergraduate degree as well as her student teaching, however, this shifted, and she began to imagine her future classroom. This imagined classroom was in many ways motivated by her own experiences as a student and the stories that she heard from her parents about their experiences attending school in Vietnam, which required sitting still and not wandering around the classroom.

The idea of the classroom environment was crucial for Helen as she imagined her future classroom as she was able to consider her experiences as a student and use these to fuel her imagined future classroom community. Helen shared examples of this connection to her own experiences, such as her third-grade teacher, who had very complex and creative seating charts, as well the classroom where she did her student teaching where



the students sat in large communal tables rather than individual desks. This idea of community was, and continues to be central to the dream of her classroom in her desire to ensure that all students are able to get learning tools rather than certain students having fancy supplies purchased by their families. Here, the importance of equity shows up in Helen's dream for her future classroom as being a central component.

While Helen's imagined future classroom as a community hub is very similar to her classroom today, what does differ for Helen is that she never thought she would be in leadership roles when she imagined herself as a teacher. Now that Helen has had continued opportunities to serve in leadership roles within her district, she realizes that she really enjoys it; however, she also finds leadership exhausting. Shared leadership is therefore important to Helen both due to a desire to ensure that learning is communal as well as that she is not the "sole resource" for teachers. For Helen, this means that there is space for resource creation and sharing wherein she can share resources with others who will then join in on this work. In many ways, this, too, speaks of the idea of equity as well as brings forth notions of reciprocity which speak to her justice-oriented roots.

**Visionary Storytelling: School as a Community Center for Everyone.** While Helen did not explicitly engage in imagined futures before entering her classroom, as part of the professional development, all teachers were asked to write a story about their visionary school. There were no requirements for how this needed to be written or the scope in which it should be written. Because Helen's classroom pedagogy is central to the work that she believes in, she chose to create her visionary story connected with her own

classroom while also thinking more broadly about the school as a community hub (see Figure 3).



Not shown but must also be included – medical services for all (physical/ emotional health, dental) legal services (i.e. notary, rental help, employment)

Visionary Story – School as Community Center for Everyone

**Figure 3**

*Helen’s Visionary Story: School as a Community Center for Everyone.*

Imagining school as more than only a place for academics, in her visionary story, Helen considered the importance of equity on a larger scale in thinking about the importance of medical and legal services as embedded within schools. In this, her vision of school as a community center extended beyond a community center for students and instead encompassed a community center for all.

Looking at the visual of her visionary school, many of the pieces of Helen's story also showed up in her interview remarks, including (a) a centering of all cultures and languages which connects with her own experiences of being exoticized in school due to being Asian American, (b) the importance of food, and not only food while at school but also opportunities to grow food as well as take food home which connects to her experiences growing up in the restaurant business, and (c) a feeling of home and belonging in that relationships are more important than content. This grounding of relationship connects with her own wonders about what her teachers thought of her beyond the model minority myth, as well as her acknowledgment that the soil at her school can sometimes feel unsafe.

During her reflection regarding her visionary story, Helen brought up other points connected to her story of being one of the only Asian American teachers in her district. Helen noted that in her visionary school, there would be more teachers and administrators of color placed strategically throughout the district. Helen also explained how she envisioned co-teaching to be a common practice in her visionary school going on to explain that in her vision co-teaching is not synonymous with thirty minutes of push-in support as is the practice in her current school. Instead, co-teaching would occur all day, every day. This desire for co-teaching very clearly connects to Helen's experiences during her early years in teaching, wherein she was able to learn and grow as a teacher and cultivate her teacher identity because of the co-teachers with whom she worked.

While there are many pieces to reflect upon within Helen's visionary school, the central-most part of her story is her belief in

the idea is that schools are community centers [that] the building is accessible seven days a week for various needs including early morning and late evenings to accommodate families who work outside ‘normal’ work hours [with] community outreach people... legal [services], employment [services], housing service experts, outdoor education specialists, health and dental, nutritionists, chefs, childcare, etc.

This vision, while unique, is in many ways modeled after the school where Helen first began teaching as many of these community services were being offered to families, something that she believes would be possible (and impactful) in her current district.

Helen passionately noted that as

school buildings take up a significant part of a neighborhood... [they] should be utilized as community center[s] so everyone is able to get access to services without having to stress about how to get there or where to go. There are classes for families to learn about healthy habits, there are meals to go for anyone who needs it, the library is open to everyone to use, translators & interpreters are always available.

She also added that recreational opportunities for students and community members would be included with opportunities for students to learn how to swim.

One tension that showed up within our conversation was Helen’s concern with a push toward multiculturalism without a systems lens and understanding of race. She discussed previous practices in the district and her concern regarding these practices noting that in the past there were

assemblies where they're like, we had powwow and like once a month there were like, powwow assemblies or like different cultures were showcasing, like, that sounds problematic to me, but like, nobody can recognize the problem or sees it and they're just like, no, it's for good. It's really good so that everyone can experience culture. So, I don't think we're ready because I feel like we're still in this, "we want to do more than multiculturalism" and yet there's still a misunderstanding between equal and equity.

Because of this concern, within her visionary story, Helen highlighted the fact that she wants to ensure that all cultures are authentically incorporated to ensure that no one feels exoticized. This insight is drawn directly from her experience of being exoticized by her teachers as a student. She spoke about this in direct opposition to a multicultural fair that takes place in her current district, noting that she has deep "internal conflicts" with it as it is "just showcasing cultures for one night." While she does not know whether or not the teachers in her district are ready for the conversation around (re)imagining multicultural night, she is hopeful that there can be a shift toward embedding cultures within the curriculum in more authentic and meaningful ways.

Much of this shift comes from Helen (re)imagining relationships with families in order to listen to and have relationships with families first. She believes that connections should be built between teachers and families when students enter the school so that each year is less of a mystery and more of a family experience. The notion of relationships first was ever-present in Helen's story as well as during continued conversations with her. This came out in her discussion around families, where she expressed the following,

Yes, relationships first...Really having like, family's voices be first because like teachers are just privileged to have kids for a few hours and families have kids for the rest of the time and we just get a tiny little glimpse.

Connecting this with her experiences growing up in the restaurant business, Helen centered the importance of food in her future school. She discussed the fact that currently, the students at her school get snacks in the form of vegetables every day, but often they go to waste. Rather than letting that happen, she encourages interested students to take the vegetables home to share with their families. While COVID-19 has forced schools to close, Helen believes that schools still have an obligation to feed families. This commitment to well-being is an important part of her visionary story.

### ***Moving from Dreaming to Action***

Although Helen's visionary school took to heart the direction to dream big, she was also very thoughtful about how her visionary story would impact her classroom and what it would take for her story to move off the page. While many of the pieces of her visionary story were based in Helen's own classroom, she felt that those portions of her story that were on a systems level, would require money along with "community buy-in. Like a real investment in the community." These dreams would also require her to move outside of a classroom position, which is not something that she is currently interested in doing. She was, however, quick to note that while it would take planning, her visionary story is entirely possible. She has seen it and knows it can happen it would just take "people who can get things done."

At the classroom level, Helen seamlessly translated her story to her pedagogical commitments and classroom practices. As “relationships first” was a central tenet to her story, she discussed her action plan for engaging with families during this coming school year through virtual home visits or video conferences. Helen also discussed revisiting the practice of writing letters to all of her students’ families as she has been doing for quite some time. Connecting with her desire to ensure that she is not the sole resource for others, Helen discussed how she would expand on her relationship with families to be the bridge between families and office staff, noting that if she engages in Zoom meetings with families, inviting office staff to attend is an important shift as she noted “I think it is community... I can’t do this by myself.”

This shift was paired with a plan to continue working to convince other people that the families of the students at her school are more than the stock stories that are believed about them. For Helen, centering relationships exceeds traditional notions of connecting with families. During her interview, she noted that

families have to feel safe in building in order to come in so like rebuilding that culture first when you come to the school building, you’re safe. Not even just like I think overall but I’m also thinking like ICE, like this is a safe place and you’re not going to get deported.

For Helen, building a community center starts with the school community in creating a place where all people are seen as more than their stock stories and are listened to authentically. She believes that this begins in the classroom and includes not only connecting with and listening to families, but also considering the curriculum that is being centered. Helen is committed to social justice in her classroom, as is represented in

her visionary story through an appreciation for all cultures and languages. The importance of her curriculum was present both in her story as well as her interview reflection. For Helen just having access to a community center is not enough; rather the content and pedagogy of the classroom is a key element of the work that needs to be done for this visionary story to come off the page. She observed that

there isn't an excuse to not cover social justice standards in the work, there's not an excuse to like, not get not bring multiple perspectives in. And thinking about right now, we're doing some planning and we're pulling out like priority standards... and before I realized I was on the team, I was actually rethinking [the state's] Social Studies curriculum and layering in the ethnic studies curriculum because I really wanted that to be there as Tribal History is coming in. I've been trying these lessons and I'm excited to see that everyone has to do it because of the mandate.

Helen is already planning how she will (re)imagine her curriculum to move toward the community center that she envisioned. In particular, Helen reflected that she will more intentionally focus on the Asian American experience this coming year, because while she has done a lot of racial justice curricular work, what has been missing are the ways that Asian Americans "have done significant work and impact[ed] on our world." She reflected on this noting that

as much as I have brought myself in, I'm also still not bringing my whole self in, my own history.... and I think it's partially because when we talk about race right like, it's always black and white first. And then we talk about Indigenous. And



then everyone else comes in later. It's, I feel like I fell into that trap doing that as well.

The activity of constructing her visionary story caused Helen to revisit other equity work she had done in the past, including her equity statement that she had written as part of an activity on the district equity committee. As the curriculum, and her focus on social justice teaching, has been more explicitly central to her work, Helen noted that she changed her previous equity statement to “be more clear about [how] ABAR [anti-bias anti-racist] work is lifelong work and it's for everyone.”

In her story and her reflections, Helen clearly articulated the ways that her autobiographical memories have created the teacher she is today and that opportunities to think about the future and imagine new possibilities directly impact how she plans to approach her teaching during this coming school year. Presenting multiple concrete strategies that she will implement in her classroom demonstrates the impact of dreaming about a future that is not yet here while having the space and agency to build that future into action. As Helen has strong relationships with her building and district administrators and is on several district leadership teams, her capacity to create this change and her potential to invite others on board are strong. As she noted in her interview “...we're a tiny district but we can do so much.”

### **Emerging/Transforming Story: Kate**

As with Helen, I first met Kate during the spring of 2019 during an equity committee meeting at River District. While I sat on the sidelines of this meeting as I was new to this group and still trying to negotiate my role as a researcher rather than a

teacher, something that did not, and still does not come naturally to me, Kate's passion for teaching became instantly evident. Her energy and quick smile, as well as her commitments to her students and families, were clear in all of her engagements with the group during that meeting. I was able to see Kate again during a subsequent equity group training at River District, and while this group was larger, Kate's spark for teaching and her passion for developing equitable learning opportunities for students were not diminished. As with Helen, it was therefore not a surprise when I saw Kate at the meet and greet as this professional development opportunity seemed well-aligned with her goals as an educator. During the meet and greet session, it was immediately evident that Kate had strong relationships with several people in the professional development and was very confident in making connections while sharing space with others in the group. Throughout the remainder of the whole group sessions, Kate often served as a facilitator in breakout rooms and could always be counted on to share insights and ideas with the whole group.

Throughout the professional development, I was able to get to know Kate as she and Helen often stayed on after the calls to chat. I learned that Kate attended Mountain University where she received her master's degree in teaching and soon after began teaching at River School District. Kate identifies as a white, queer, fat, left-handed female who attends therapy; all elements of her identity that are important to who she is as a person and a teacher. Kate is dedicated to learning and growing personally and professionally and exhibits this through her ongoing engagement in professional development opportunities, book clubs, and speaking engagements at Mountain University where she tells her story to pre-service teachers. Kate is a teacher who holds

her relationships with students very close to her heart, with those relationships continually motivating her growth as a teacher.

### ***Roots, Shoots, and Soil***

For Kate, her roots, shoots, and soil are so embedded in who she is as a teacher that the connections she made in this initial activity shone through every subsequent activity and discussion. Her roots, arguably connected to her own identity work and desire to center the voices of those with traditionally marginalized identities, thoughtfully and adamantly focus on ensuring that students have educators who reflect their experiences through serving as mirrors rather than only windows (Bishop, 1990). Integral to her roots are a desire to ensure that educators “advocate for and uplift their [student] voices [because] students of traditionally marginalized identities need to matter explicitly - students with disabilities, Black students, queer and gender diverse students.” Moving from beliefs to action, her roots hold the “need to establish structures and systems that support and validate their experiences” noting that “it *is* [emphasis added] a matter of life and death.”

Kate’s roots, and her intentional voicing of the unjust design of schools and the impact on students, became a common thread throughout the professional development, which pointed to the soil that she identified (the environment in which her work sits). Building on the work of Love (2019), who calls for a move away from allies and toward co-conspirators, Kate identified a network of colleagues whom she considers to be her co-conspirators, those teachers who keep her accountable to doing anti-racist work. Acknowledging that without this network, she likely “would have slipped into what is

comfortable, what doesn't 'rock the boat,'" because of the network she has cultivated, her soil does not allow her to feel comfortable in the status quo, and instead, her soil "feel[s] supported and challenged." This community of co-conspirators is important to Kate as her soil, while always in the process of becoming healthier, "has given [her] ropes and nets to climb to or fall down in."

The work Kate has done to create a network of co-conspirators has provided her with support to do the work she wants while supporting her in solidifying her shoots, the goals that she wants to see come to fruition for students and families. An overarching theme within Kate's shoots was her desire to "understand [and help families understand] that this work is political, teaching is political, and silence is complicity." Noting that while she does not want to offend her more conservative communities, her shoots actively focus on "stand[ing] up against racist teaching, bigoted practices, [and] problematic traditions." She furthers this by asserting that

Black lives matter at school. White supremacy is entrenched in our curriculums. I may be the first dissenting voice that students from white conservative households encounter and I am trying to remember that is a good thing...even when accused of having a liberal agenda. The angry critics are louder, but when I look closer, I have a lot of ongoing support from families who are feeling represented and listened to finally.

This desire to stand up against those practices that are problematic and harmful to students has led Kate to move toward action within her shoots, including establishing queer support groups across the district. While she does not feel "publicly queer enough to take it on [her]self," by holding strong to her roots and connecting with her co-

conspirators, they have begun the steps to create an official group which led to Kate coming out publicly. Thus, her “shoots are [her] own queerness and the complex journey, and the determination to do better for the queer youth in [her] school, of all ages.”

***Childhood Memories to Grown up Dreams: Teacher Identity as a Process of Becoming***

During our professional development sessions and through the interviews and focus groups, I was able to learn more about Kate, and her teacher story, all of which helped to paint a fuller picture of the vibrant storied teacher identity of Kate, an identity that she is both secure in, and yet acknowledges is always in process.

Kate’s desire to become a teacher is very much rooted in a stock story that she told herself as a child. While she had a number of “magical” experiences as a student with teachers with whom she felt “validated and valued,” during her second-grade year, she had a negative experience with a teacher who made her feel the very opposite from her previous teachers. This negative learning experience continued throughout third and fourth grade, and as Kate tells it,

there was something that all three of those teachers had in common that became a stock story I told myself, and a mission for why I wanted to teach to prove this stock story wrong. And it was that they were all overweight and... in my 10-year-old mind, bitches. So, I had created this story that fat teachers were mean and so as a chubby 10 year old, I was like, I’m going to be a teacher and I’m going to do it better. I’m going to prove me wrong.

While this stock story motivated Kate to become a teacher, it is very much intertwined with her teacher identity as she often thinks back to these teachers when she

feels like she is acting like them, which is difficult for Kate as she wants to “prove that... fat teachers can have joy and love their job and be nice.” While she acknowledges that the behavior that she equated with mean on the part of these teachers was “a little simple in the child perspective... [and] shrouded in complications that [she] see[s] now as an adult... it was a motivator” making her decide at a young age that she was “going to be a teacher and... going to do better than [them].” This motivating factor connects with Kate’s roots in regard to ensuring that there are structures for all students to be heard and feel safe as she acknowledged that

There’s a lot of societal messaging about what it is to be in a fat body and, and that’s part of [her] identity still and that particular element from [her] childhood and [her] relationship to education, and now being a fat adult in education, that’s... still such a prominent experience in [her] life and trying to undo so social stories, societal messaging about that.

Having done an extensive amount of identity work during her first six years of teaching through therapy and in conversation with her co-conspirators (very much connecting back to her soil), this work actually began before entering her own classroom. During college, Kate double-majored in education and theater which she describes as being comprised of very different groups of people. In the education department,

the students... were primarily straight white females that were either engaged or settling down, maybe already having children, right, very stable, very two and a half kids in a white picket fence [while] ...in theater, even in college people weren’t out yet but it’s a very queer space already just bubbling up under the

surface and very sexualized and very, you know, debauchery and drinking and partying.

To Kate, this often felt like she was almost “liv[ing] in two worlds. While she tried to merge them where she could, she felt “very split in the middle in that identity.” This is still present for Kate today, as her identity often,

makes [her] feel rare in education... [in particular] the intersecting identities of a soon to be out queer, fat, female in education, which is very predominant, but not matching the other females in education [and she is] single, unpartnered, no children, no desire to have children.

While Kate acknowledges that this aspect of her identity, primarily in terms of her body, is marginalized within society, she has also come to think deeply about her identity as white, and “really come to understand that identity and its intersections and the privilege that it has given [her]” noting that she has “a lot of privilege as a white body.”

All of these roots of Kate’s identity impact who she is as a classroom teacher and the type of curriculum and pedagogy she employs with her students. Often thinking deeply about her classroom management, her experiences as a child, and her desire to be different from the “fat” teachers whom she viewed as mean, Kate is very thoughtful and reflective about the way she structures her classroom as her goal is “to cultivate a... family feeling in the classroom.” This goal, or root to her work, can at times be difficult for Kate because when she is struggling with behavior in her classroom and up against the normative modeling regarding “how to handle management is so punitive” it “pushes [her] towards that fat mean teacher in ways that [she’s] not willing to be.” This often leaves Kate feeling inconsistent “because of this identity crisis and unwillingness to be

mean” and wondering where the “line [is] between mean and firm.” For Kate, this is an ongoing question and tension that she has not yet resolved which can cause her to feel a sense of imposter syndrome.

This feeling of imposter syndrome, in many ways, stems from an experience during Kate’s third year of teaching when her “administrator at the time was determining that [she] was not good enough to keep and that [her] contract would not be renewed.” This was after being deemed proficient during her first two years of teaching. While Kate was able to advocate for herself and get support from the union and instructional coaches in her district (as is now very prevalent in her roots in terms of ensuring that educators advocate for their students and students have the support they need), this experience directly impacts Kate’s teaching as it is something she thinks about often. This concern comes in the form of being “worried that [she is] establishing bad habits” as the “middle school team doesn’t match... in [her] flexibility, ...empathy and understanding.” This causes her to “worry that [she’s] not giving them the habits that they’ll need to succeed in middle school.”

As ensuring that she does not feel that she is being mean like the mean “fat” teachers she had as a student, Kate talked about how COVID-19 actually offered a portal to possibilities that would not have otherwise been possible. In the spring of 2020, when schools were forced to move online, Kate “didn’t have to write a single referral...” While there are a number of reasons as to why this might have been the case, she loved that “she didn’t have to write any referrals... didn’t have to document anybody’s bad behavior.” Instead, she was able to confront behavior in ways wherein there was not an “impending sense of punishment yet to come.” For Kate, continuing to think of ways to center



relationships and a sense of family in the classroom where all students feel validated is both a dream and a possibility; one that she has seen as possible during the spring of 2020 with the shift to online instruction and one that she hopes to continue to pursue through increased relationship building and identity work.

### ***Embodying Miss Frizzle: Dreams Come to Life***

As Kate decided that she wanted to be a teacher at a young age and had very clear models of who she wanted and did not want to be as a teacher, she began imagining and dreaming about her future classroom early on. In her dreaming, she imagined her future classroom as “very colorful... [with] books everywhere and art projects like evidence that there’s art going on.” While Kate could not be in her classroom during our interview, she showed me pictures of her classroom, and the pictures very clearly represented the classroom she had imagined.

Along with her classroom environment, Kate did a lot of imagining at a young age around who she would be as a teacher imagining in many ways her first-grade teacher who was very passionate and energetic. She imagined pleated skirts (crimp 90’s pleats) and the embodiment of Miss Frizzle, who she has “always admired”. While Kate feels like she is letting Miss Frizzle down with how much she is teaching science, she recently adopted a chameleon and often wears print dresses, “successfully finish[ing] [her] Miss Frizzle transformation”. Kate, however, acknowledges that she “had a lot of mirrors to look at as a white elementary teacher,” noting that

There [were] many representations that I could look at, that may not have matched me body wise, but I also envisioned myself being exactly the size I am

and simultaneously like Britney Spears in that music video where she's in a red leather suit (Not in the classroom. That's just also how I pictured).

In her classroom today, there are many pieces that are reflective of Kate's childhood dreams, including animals, colorful and comfortable spaces, and an inviting library. As Kate is always reflective about her teaching and the space where her students are learning, she noted that she is "mindful [of] ... students with neurodiversity that they don't walk into the class and have a "overstimulated sensory overload situation," but she does want her classroom to make students feel lifted.

### ***Visionary Storytelling: Dreaming Beyond the Fear of Disappointment***

While Kate spent a lot of time as a child imagining the type of teacher she would be and the classroom she would have, when asked to think about her visionary story, this was not something that came as easy for her as it had when she was a child. Instead, in preface to her story she asked

Why is this so difficult? Why is it [so] hard to imagine this science fiction world...do I hesitate to dream for fear of disappointment? Is it a coping strategy to limit my imagination? I've been rattling around in my brain for days, contemplating this visionary fiction.

For Kate, engaging in visionary fiction was not an easy task as it was an emotional process and tied up in a fear of disappointment of not being able to move those dreams off the page. Much of this tension, as represented in Kate's roots, shoots, and soil, and her own experiences as a student, connect to her desire to have school be a place where students feel safe and supported by educators who will advocate for them. Yet, as

Kate asked above, why is this so difficult to imagine? Could it be because, for many students who have marginalized identities, they have never experienced school as this place that Kate dreams about, so there is not necessarily a model to look to resulting in an imagination gap (Thomas, 2019)? Could it be that imagining a future that has never existed makes it feel impossible? While Kate acknowledged that this activity was more difficult than she might have imagined it to be, what follows is her story of the future of schools, a story that highlights possibility and openings for radical dreaming and radical action.

*I dream of an educational system that is entirely anti-racist, because racism truly no longer exists. All the racist structures, systems, and policies have been dismantled. I dream of schools as a community center (thanks Helen) where students and families can come to be nourished....calorically and emotionally. The community supports one another, everyone welcome to be authentically themselves and all needs being met (in a non-capitalist type of way, somehow.) Gardens, food, community meals and celebrations. Students are not held to standardized tests. It's probably a bit montessori really...but my knowledge of that is surface. There would be no stigmas for differences...cognitively, physically, socially. We'd all be the weird kids and cool kids, we'd all be queer and welcome. There would be trust, all stakeholders would be valued, students would be involved in decision making that directly impacts them and their community. Collaboration would be constant and flowing...perhaps no hierarchical structure of evaluation....? So much funding. NFL level funding & positive regard.*

*Universal basic income. Arts education prioritized. Mental health and wellness isn't optional, but embedded within and throughout...student mental health is soaring...what suicide? None here. Students are flourishing engineers, social activists, artisans, authors, caregivers...they're filling roles, meeting needs they see in the world...just like the adult models around them.*

*We discuss history. All of it. Critically. We discuss identities, all of them, and the many intersections, and the strengths we all bring to our community. There are so many languages flowing vibrantly through the halls - language is celebrated. We haven't heard the term "gun violence" in decades. We don't need school resource officers or metal detectors. The carceral state has long been abolished.*

*There are puppies. And rabbits.*

When reading through Kate's story, there are so many connections to her roots, shoots, and soil and the dreams of her own teacher identity and classroom that began when she was a child. The notion of anti-racism and a celebration of queer identities speaks to her desire to create structures that support all students which are tied to her identity work in her acknowledgement of her white privilege as well as coming out as queer. Her dream of abolishing the carceral state is very distinctly connected to the core of who she is as a teacher and her desire to be different from the "fat" and mean teachers she had as a child. Through the abolishment of the carceral state, Kate would be able to more fully create the family environment within her classroom without feeling the fear of

standardized assessments and teacher evaluation scores that have tainted her ability to feel confident in her teaching.

Kate speaks intentionally about curriculum through her articulation of arts-based education, social emotional learning, and trauma informed practices as embedded through the curriculum rather than an add-on, which draws on the stories of Miss Frizzle that she loved as a child. This articulation is coupled with moving toward a more critical understanding of history through strengths-based learning and the disruption of stock stories that are ingrained in white-washed versions of history. Kate's visionary story is a clear example of the radical dreaming that has been integral to her work; radical dreaming that holds each individual in schools as valued and important and creates space for them to be anything, no matter their intersecting identities. Thus, while this activity was initially challenging for Kate, through connecting with her roots, shoots, and soil that ground her teacher identity, she was able to produce a beautiful (re)imagining of schools.

### ***Moving from Dreaming to Action***

Kate's visionary story represents a need for systemic shifts in education and a plan for moving away from a system that was *not* designed for all students. There are elements of Kate's story that can start at the classroom level, and in many ways, need to start at the classroom level to consider the impact that these pivots can have in creating the systemic change Kate wants to see come to fruition. One piece of this application is Kate's desire to abolish the carceral state. While she acknowledges that this "is important... and still feels a little far away," Kate is intent on ensuring that she is not "a teacher that participates in sending kids to the office or sending them out particularly

when [she] know[s] the statistics of who those kids are disproportionate.” Instead, she sees this as an opportunity to “collect the information that we’re having that struggle without sending [students] home with a piece of paper that will cause a fight.” Kate’s follow-through in this regard and the need to not “respond in the ways that [she] see[s] mirrored by law enforcement” is a way that she sees her role in moving against the carceral system as a whole.

Another piece of her story that Kate feels directly impacts her classroom is her concerns around community is the presence of food for all. As community is important to Kate, and she sees food as one way to build community, she acknowledges the importance of ensuring that kids have enough food so that they can engage in learning “because it has a direct impact on how they’re doing and [what they’re] able to access.” While this has been a priority in her classroom prior, it is something that she recognizes as wanting to continue as it provides a “nice community moment”.

### **Emerging/Transforming Story: Lesly**

Unlike Helen and Kate, I did not meet Lesly until the professional development institute began. As Lesly was not on the district equity committee, she was invited to participate by a teacher who thought that she might be interested. While Lesly missed the initial meet and greet, it was evident in our first interaction how passionate she was about equity work and providing rich learning experiences for students. During this interaction, Lesly and I were able to meet one on one, which allowed me to get to know her more quickly than might have been possible only within the larger group. As this professional

development took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine, our first interaction beyond an email was through a Zoom screen.

While this can be a difficult way to get to know someone for the first time, upon meeting Lesly, her contagious smile, deep commitments to her students, and desire to learn and grow as a teacher were evident. While Lesly was often quiet in the main room of our sessions, when she did speak, she immediately garnered respect from the group as she always had very thoughtful and deeply considerate and equity-oriented comments. It was clear that she was not only focused on growing in her role as a teacher but that she had a critical lens by which to view systemic inequities in schools and beyond. This insight provided the group with additional food for thought throughout each of our sessions and conversations.

Throughout the professional development, I was continually inspired by Lesly's insights and the questions she posed to the group. Throughout this time, I learned a number of important things about Lesly that helped to paint the picture of who she is as a teacher. I learned that Lesly was a mom-to-be and that her experiences as a student who grew up in poverty and attended a variety of different schools had a direct impact on her teacher identity.

### ***Roots, Shoots, and Soil***

Lesly's roots, shoots, and soil were aligned with a deep belief in student-centered learning experiences with her values grounded in students "being given every opportunity and resource that they need." These roots were furthered by a belief in schools where students feel safe and comfortable with their voices being heard.

Lesly acknowledged that she intentionally cultivates her soil to center her relationships with coworkers and her students. Fostering a community has allowed her to be intentional in ensuring that she is surrounded by “coworkers and community that believe in the same things as [she does], who advocate for... students, and who work to help others towards these goals for... students.”

In thinking about what this means for her shoots, those things she is trying to grow, she contended that she wants to grow a school environment where opportunity gaps are eliminated, and curriculum is not a “one size fits all” approach. Instead, she hopes that schools can be a place where all students have “access to the materials and spaces” that they need. This desire is grounded in a dream to have schools be places where all children (and teachers) are able to thrive and “be who they really are without fear of judgment.” As I got to know Lesly more deeply throughout the professional development through conversations and engaging with her writing, the shoots that she was growing became more focused and intent on disrupting practices and patterns in schools that do not hold space for students to thrive.

### ***Planting Seeds for Change: Developing a Grounded Teacher Identity***

The process of getting to know Lesly came bit by bit with each conversation and interaction highlighting the tenacity and passion that grounded her work and desire to support her students. For Lesly, she “always kind of want[ed] to be one [a teacher].” One root of this desire had to do with having many negative experiences with teachers growing up. Having attended “every type of school you could think of, like public private, charter, homeschool, all of that” and therefore having a “pretty wide array of



experiences... with [all] types of teachers,” Lesly was motivated to be different than those teachers. While she admitted that she had negative experiences with teachers, she also acknowledged that she “had a lot of really great teachers” that inspired her and continue to inspire her today. So, for Lesly, she just always saw herself as a teacher getting to be creative and making connections with her students.

The desire for connection that grounds Lesly’s teacher identity is rooted in her upbringing. Talking about her experiences in the various schools she attended, she discussed how she moved around a lot as a child because she “was in a lower socioeconomic status” which led to “living situations [that] were never fully stable.” For Lesly, this experience as a student living in inconsistent circumstances provides her with “a good sense of empathy towards the same kids, because [she’s] been through a lot of what they’re going through.” Her experiences as a student also create a heightened sense of empathy for students who have high rates of transiency in that rather than being frustrated about students leaving and re-entering her class, she makes it a point to ensure that they do not feel alone rather that they feel “extra, extra welcome every time they come back.”

Lesly also acknowledged that because of needing to quickly adapt to new situations, she has developed a sense of resilience that she brings to her role as a teacher. As she does not want the students in her classroom to experience what she experienced throughout her own education, Lesly works hard to use her experiences to think deeply about what worked and what did not work for her and others in her classes over the years with the hope of being able to apply those learnings to her classroom practice. Sharing

stories about particular experiences that both did and did not work for her highlighted how much her experiences as a student impact her teacher identity and practice.

In one charter school Lesly attended, she spent her school days in a “gray cubicle with packets where she... [couldn’t] talk to anybody.” In another, she engaged in “the homeschool experience where [she got] to choose what classes” to take. She also had more typical experiences in public schools. While each of the teachers at these schools were “working in a different frame and... a different type of setting” Lesly was able to parse out the benefits and drawbacks from each of these pedagogies.

One particular instance Lesly talked about as being integral to her pedagogy is her interaction with her students, particularly when they are not focusing as expected. As a student, she remembers having poor experiences with teachers who would call her “out publicly constantly... to where other students noticed.” This was often a result of not paying attention or *doing* school in the way that was expected. Because of these experiences throughout her youth, Lesly ensures that she does not “call out any student by name in that way” as she wants her classroom to be safe rather than humiliating for students.

While Lesly started her educational pathway wanting to be in the role of a traditional classroom teacher, after engaging in several practicum experiences and her student teaching, she realized how much she loved teaching reading and working with small groups of students. She decided to obtain her Reading Endorsement so that she would be able to make deeper connections through small group conversations and individualized work with students.

Within her classroom, keeping the environment upbeat is very important, particularly because the reading instruction that she engages in with students can be “very intense.” Lesly acknowledged that “... a lot of kids probably don’t think it’s very fun”. Understanding students’ hesitance with reading, Lesly tries to bring positive energy to her classroom space through singing and gamifying her lessons in order to increase engagement and build rapport with students.

As Lesly sees small groups of students for thirty-minute time periods throughout the day, this allows her to have high levels of energy and an upbeat attitude for the entirety of her group. She notes that, unlike a traditional classroom teacher, she can “put that humongous happy on for those thirty-minutes and just really focus on positive.” Lesly expressed feeling like having “freedom to find other ways” to engage with students allows her to structure her classroom around the ability to start over every thirty-minutes so that even “if there is something that’s... drained [her], [she] can perk up and start anew with the next group.”

She does, however, acknowledge the need to find a balance within her classroom in terms of “not being like a police but then also not being too soft” which feels more possible in her position which “fits... [her] personality and style”.

### ***(Re)Imagining Learning as a Life-Long and Flexible Process***

As Lesly always knew that she wanted to be a teacher, in many ways, her dream of her future classroom was part of her learning experience growing up as a student in the many school buildings where she was enrolled with every new experience adding to her understanding of what a school could be. While this dreaming did not necessarily start

prior to the beginning of her career in teaching, it served as an ongoing process as Lesly moved through her teaching journey and encountered new students and new situations. As her experience as a student was not often stable, as a teacher, she embodies this perhaps implicit dream, of being flexible in her acknowledgement that in education “we have to flow like water”. For Lesly, her imagining of her future teacher self is shrouded in the experiences she had as a student and the need to be a flexible and life-long learner.

### ***Harnessing the Radical Imagination: Holding System Accountable for Change***

As Lesly entered her teaching career with a vast array of experiences in schools; those that worked and those that did not, along with an understanding of the impact of poverty on a child’s stability, when thinking about a vision of the future, she moved directly to holding systems accountable for the change that needs to take place. While she acknowledged the importance of classroom instruction in catalyzing change, Lesly positioned this change as starting from the top in calling for a government that supports the whole child. What follows is Lesly’s story of the future of schools, a story that calls for urgent and radical change.

*In my ideal world, the government does its job. The people are taken care of. Food, medical care, shelter, water, education, and clothing are human rights. Schools are actual safe places for students. When they walk in the door, they are immediately greeted with warmth and smiles from all staff they come across. Two meals and a snack are provided for all students, regardless of income. These*

*meals are healthy and provide students with the actual nutrients they need to get through the day.*

*Schools are not laid out only in a 8:00-3:00 model from Monday-Friday. There are some classrooms that work in the afternoons, and some that work on weekends. The teachers who teach these classes are not there for the entire day as well, they are just on different shifts. This helps the families that have a difficult time getting to school during the day. This is great for the students who need to take care of their siblings while their parents are at work, or for the high school student who needs to work a part-time job during the day to help their family out with bills and food. Childcare is provided outside of school hours for any family who needs it. This is a government funded program so there is no cost to families, and the childcare providers are paid a living wage.*

*Class sizes are capped at 15 students per room, and each teacher also has a full time aide. The schools have been remodeled to accommodate this space. The update of the schools also makes them a physically safer environment. There are no more ceiling leaks or faulty HVAC systems. When a problem arises with the structural integrity of any part of the buildings, there are funds to fix them and the issue is resolved ASAP.*

*Each classroom has the time to focus teaching to the whole child. Math and reading are vital, but so are art, music, science, history (actual history, not white*

*history), and life skills. Standardized tests is an unknown phrase. Students are still assessed to see if they have mastered content, but on an individual basis.*

*Teachers look at overall growth. When students are assessed, they are allowed grace and can study the mistakes they made and then be re-evaluated. This can happen for as many times as it takes until they have reached mastery. Mistakes are encouraged in this environment.*

*There are students who will need additional services than what is offered in the classroom. These students will not be removed from their room to receive these services, so they will not miss out on being with their peers throughout the whole day. Specialists will come to them. Specialists and classroom teachers will work closely to make sure that each individual student's needs are met. There are multiple licensed specialists available per intervention need, so that all students who need these services are receiving the best possible care.*

*Since there are no standardized tests, there is also no standardized teaching.*

*Teachers are trusted to provide students with the highest quality education.*

*Teachers are not told to teach the curriculum to fidelity in a general education classroom. Teachers are given time to collaborate with their colleagues on best practice, intervention, and individual student needs. Classroom instruction is centered on anti-racist practices, gender inclusivity, and overall accepting and praising our differences and uplifting each other.*

When reading through Lesly's story, it is evident that she is considering both the micro and the macro levels when calling for radical dreaming and radical change. She does this through moving from the roles and responsibilities of the government to reconsidering the ways in which schools are structured, and finally to (re)imagining classroom instruction and opportunities for teacher and student learning. Reflecting on her visionary story, Lesly noted that she is "always thinking about [her first few] sentences. It's a constant thing." This critical lens and call to action regarding government responsibility is integral to Lesly's identity both within and outside of the classroom. For her, it's

something that's always on [her] mind [as she] sees it every day... kids that aren't getting their actual needs met and then [being] expect[ed] them to come into this classroom, and then just sit in their chairs and, you know, learn how to read and learn how to do math and everything...

She furthers this noting that

We talk about teaching to the whole student and we can't teach the whole student because we don't have the resources to offer all of these things that they need in their hierarchy of needs. And so, it really boils down to is capitalism is our main problem, I feel like, and getting on maybe a political thing about it, but it's the government's [job] to me. I believe the government's job is to take care of the people and it's not doing that. And so, it's not taking care of our schools either, and if those needs aren't met, then our kids aren't going to get what they need from us. So we have such a high amount of kids graduating in our country that are still illiterate, like functionally illiterate, and that's like not okay, like, there's so

many things that as a teacher I want to control and I want to make this thinking like, okay, only the schools can, I like the idea of the community center and I like the idea of offering all the meals and offering all the everything but also understanding that that's not necessarily our jobs, it's become our jobs. Because we've just been picking up the pieces.

While these feelings are not new for Lesly, and in fact, they started during her graduate school experience, when she began researching the role of providing food for students, the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened her awareness. She notes that “we’re seeing all the inequalities... across all workforces, and everything like racial injustice, all the inequalities that are just like showing their face right now because they can.” Arguing that we no longer have the choice whether or not to accept the injustice that is happening in this nation, her visionary story is very much grounded in the current historical and cultural context in which her story is told.

Beyond a call to action for the government to take care of its people is a call to action to schools, both in terms of their role in upholding different services and ensuring that students’ needs are met (physically, socially, emotionally, and academically). These concerns, which Lesly believes have been heightened surrounding conversations urging for the reopening school buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic, have pushed Lesly toward asking critical questions about the role of schools particularly in terms of childcare, food services, and mandatory reporting needs. Lesly noted that the pandemic has made people realize, “wow, teachers have so many jobs and... it’s because we’re making up for other places that are lacking in the system and that’s why we get burnt out so quickly.”



This concern is represented in her story through her first three sentences in that she believes that if the government is doing what they need to do, then schools will no longer be relied on to pick up all of the pieces. She compared this to “countries that have really successful school systems [which also] have UBIs [universal basic income] ... [and] basic health care as a human right... so their schools can be really focused on education.” While Lesly acknowledges that this nation has a long way to go for her visionary story to move from words on the page to reality, the COVID-19 pandemic has given her hope, both in terms of no longer being able to ignore the inequities and injustices as well as providing opportunities for change.

### ***Moving from Dreaming to Action***

Although widespread systemic change is integral to the possibility of Lesly’s story being built into existence, she acknowledges that schools and classrooms have a role and responsibility in catalyzing change and creating more equitable opportunities for students. She sees COVID-19 as an opportunity to create some of this change and has thought deeply about what she sees as possible at the school level and how she will change her instruction to create space for the story that she wrote to come off the page.

One opportunity Lesly identified was the end of standardized testing. Noting in her story that “standardized test is an unknown phrase... [and] students are... assessed on an individual basis,” she was able to feel excited about the possibility of that happening as “standardized testing [is] being booted... this year.” For Lesly, this shift is in regard to both large-scale standardized tests as well as those that she is required to administer in her role as a reading specialist. As they have not figured out a way to administer these

assessments through distance learning, she has been able to dream about new ways to teach and assess her students and put those ideas into practice. Because of this change in requirements, she will now “get to actually work with the kids [she] worked with last year, and... assess them in different ways.” While she is still in the process of figuring out exactly what her new curriculum and pedagogy will look like, she has been working on moving from dreaming to action by engaging in different learning opportunities.

These learnings have opened her ability to radically dream about her plan to “actually teach kids how to read... like... actually focus on skills, on actual, reading skills and not on how fast they’re reading.” For Lesly, this instructional shift means that her students will get to focus on their reading skills with lessened pressure to perform on a standardized assessment. She expressed frustration with these assessments as they cause high levels of stress for students, with students often asking “what did I do wrong? What did I do wrong? What did I do wrong? Was my number, a big number, a small number...” rather than focusing on their skills growth and building confidence in their reading.

Lesly also sees her story as more possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic in that one dream she identified was to ensure that “specialists and classroom teachers will work closely to make sure that each individual student’s needs are met,” which feels more possible now than in prior years. Due to the focus on standardized testing in her current role, the conversations that Lesly previously had with classroom teachers focused on assessment scores and tended to be brief. Because standardized tests will not be required during the upcoming school year, Lesly plans to capitalize on this by moving her words into action through being able to “sit down and get to know the kids instead of...

talking about a kid for literally five seconds about his reading scores [being] low.” This moment of possibility is both exciting and closer to reality than in previous years.

Another aspect of her story that Lesly plans to move into action is considering online learning as a way for students to “not miss out on being with their peers throughout the whole day” because of needing additional intervention support. She believes that being removed from the classroom can be detrimental for students both socially and academically as reading intervention is imbued with the stock story of being “the dumb class.” During traditional school years, students are pulled out of their classes to attend reading intervention, and therefore all students in a given class are aware of who needs extra help. However, during distance learning, this process would stay between her, the student, and their families. Therefore, in the online learning space students “don’t have to announce to [their] whole class like, oh, I’m gonna go off to go see these teachers” and instead “it’s planned with the family.” This shift in perspective, along with her plan to change the name of her class to something that is more community-based, holds grounded and action-oriented steps to build her story into goal commitments.

### **Excavating, Dreaming, and Acting: Seeking to Understand the Quintain**

While each of the above cases is powerful and presents an important story about the teachers in this study in considering the connection between autobiographical memory, narrative identity, and future thinking, as one of the goals of this chapter is to consider the quintain as a whole, the following section will engage in a multiple case study analysis (Stake, 2006). While the research question grounding this chapter, which asks *how visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional*

*development can offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice* provides a larger frame to consider the area of study, the analytic questions that emerged on the basis of reading the field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) do the work of putting the theoretical concepts of autobiographical memory, narrative identity, and future thinking to work. The quintain will therefore be read through the analytic questions to consider patterns across the cases as well as point to the nuances of this work and the contextual importance of a visionary pedagogy. The analytic questions rooting this multiple case study analysis are as following:

1. *How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?*
2. *How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice?*
3. *In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?*

### **How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice?**

Narrative psychologists have argued for decades that the self and the autobiographical memory are intrinsically linked (Fivush & Haden, 2003) and it is through the intertwining of one's memory and their construction of life stories (e.g., McAdams, 2003) that their identities are formed. Further, is an acknowledgment that one's construction of self is created not in isolation rather it is created on the basis of "social interactions and/or cultural frameworks" (Fivush & Haden, 2003, p. vii). This

literature provides a foundation to consider the above case stories as highly contextually specific, with the identities represented being fluid (McAdams, 2003).

Considering the memories shared and the belief that humans lead stories lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McAdams, 2006), the themes within this quintain highlight the necessity of engaging in self-work and self-reflective processes as identity is “constantly construct[ed] and reconstruct[ed]...” (McAdams, 1996, p. 210). The construction and reconstruction of identity and life stories are intertwined with “our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future” (McAdams, 1996, p. 210). This points to the importance of teachers being intentional about reflecting on the impact of their autobiographical memories and past selves as foundational to their teacher identity and their hopes and fears for the future.

Each of the teachers highlighted in the above case stories shared very particular experiences as students that motivated them to become teachers and formed their teacher identities. Helen’s experiences growing up with immigrant parents in the restaurant business motivated her to become a teacher as this offered her a way to set her work apart from her parents and forge her own pathway. Furthermore, Helen’s experience as one of few Asian American students in her schools growing up, and having a lack of mirrors (Bishop, 1990) in her teachers while being exoticized, led her to consider her race as central to her teacher identity and the work of curriculum building and anti-racist pedagogies that she engages in as a teacher.

For Kate, her experiences growing up in a “fat” body and experiencing “fat” teachers as mean, motivated her to become a teacher with her teacher identity being cultivated in opposition to the treatment she experienced as a child in classrooms with

“fat” teachers. As a teacher, these autobiographical memories and stories impact the way Kate approaches her students as relationship is central to her work with a constant underlying tension of wanting to engage in practices that hold students accountable yet do not amount to her being viewed as mean. Kate did not see mirrors of openly queer teachers within the students in her teacher education program, and as a result, has pushed to advocate for GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliance) across her district in order to ensure that all students feel seen and heard and can be themselves without fear. This experience has helped Kate to feel comfortable in her identity and coming out publicly as queer.

For Lesly, her experiences growing up in poverty and having to move schools often and therefore having few trusting relationships with adults, led her to become a teacher as she wanted to create a space for her students that did not replicate the negative experiences she had in school. In her work as a teacher, this comes out in her positive teacher identity grounded in flexibility and her desire to ensure that students are valued and welcomed, no matter their attendance rates. This desire is coupled with having a keen eye on systemic inequities that create unjust learning opportunities for students.

As McAdams (2003) tells us, the life story one tells about themselves based on their autobiographical memory is contingent upon and constructed by the social interactions and cultural frameworks in which one is immersed. Considering this theory alongside the quintain demonstrates the importance of creating beloved communities where teachers can share their life stories with others in ways that will help them both unearth their own memories and consider how these memories impact both their teacher identity and teacher practice.

The importance of social interactions and the ways in which one's interactions impact their narrative teacher identity showed up in the ways that each individual talked about their soil. For Helen, her teacher identity has been carefully cultivated over her eleven-year teaching career and is modeled after the co-teachers she draws inspiration from. Helen's teacher identity was not created solely by her experiences as a student but also her cultural and social milieu in which she was immersed during her first years of teaching. For Helen, this also shows up in the ways that she centers race and social justice in her own classroom. Being one of the only Asian American teachers in her district has pushed Helen toward cultivating a social justice narrative teacher identity grounded in a commitment to ensuring that her students understand the impacts of racial privilege. This is furthered in Helen's excitement for learning through online means as this has broadened her social interactions to allow her to build community with other teachers of color who are engaging in the work that is integral to who she is within and outside of the classroom.

For Kate, her teacher identity has been impacted by her social milieu in the way that she has very carefully curated her soil to engage with co-conspirators who challenge her and hold her accountable. These co-conspirators ensure that she is not just going with the status quo and have helped Kate to cultivate a teacher identity that is grounded in a commitment to anti-racist, anti-bias pedagogies, dismantling the carceral state, and creating spaces where all students, no matter their identities, can thrive. As Kate is a white teacher, her carefully cultivated community has provided her with cultural and social interactions that challenge her to consider her white privilege and be intentional

about who she is in her classroom and how her curriculum and pedagogies align with her commitments to challenging the systemic racism.

Unlike Helen and Kate, who reflect on their adult community as being integral to the cultivation of their teacher identity, Lesly's narrative teacher identity and her cultural and social interactions that form this teacher identity are more closely aligned with her relationships with her students. Speaking about how her students are central to her work in that she wants to ensure that they have different experiences in schools than she had as a student, Lesly's teacher identity is both a product of her autobiographical memories as a student and her social interactions with students in her classroom, particularly students with high levels of chronic absenteeism, students who do not focus in the "expected" way, and students who struggle with reading.

**Dreamwork as Teacher Identity Development.** For each of these teachers, their autobiographical memory, particular to their experiences as students and cultural frameworks in which they are immersed, construct their narrative teacher identity. This, in turn, impacts the way they view education, develop their curriculum, approach their classroom pedagogies, and understand their role as teachers. Drawing of the work of Sonu et al. (2020), who argue that "childhood memories bring to the pedagogical present traces of the past yet also telegraph dreams about how structures of schooling and society might be imagined otherwise" (p. 15), each of the autobiographical memories centered in the case stories shines a light on the ways in which childhood memories of schooling coalesce to form these teacher's identities.



In their work, Sonu et al. (2020) identify three processes of what they term *dreamwork*, to determine the “specific processes through which teachers resignify the meaning of the schooling past in the imagination of the future” (p. 18). These processes include empathy, which they describe as memories which push future teachers toward a “common belief that the children of their future classrooms will eventually mirror the struggles felt in their own childhoods” (p. 20); replication which involves aspiring toward heroic teacher role models which move future teachers toward “idealiz[ing] teachers leav[ing] unexamined the ways pedagogy is bracketed and limited by the structures, contexts, and relations in which teachers actually work” (p. 21); and refusal which can “give representation to the specific contexts and circumstances shaping educational relationships and the elusive qualities of emotional life” (p. 23).

Given these three processes and the consideration of the ways in which the teachers in the above case stories engaged in their own *dreamwork* processes through the interviews and visionary stories, their continued engagement with the process of refusal was resonant. This refusal showed up in the each of their desires to develop their teacher identity and dream about a future for school contingent upon a restructuring of the conditions that caused socially unjust and inequitable practices to take root. The teachers did not seek replication of their teachers; rather, they engaged in the process of refusal in their understanding and critique of the systems that othered them based on their narrative identity.

For Helen, this showed up in her race and culture being exoticized by teachers which led her toward cultivating a teacher identity that pushed back against these stereotypes. For Kate this showed up in the pain of experiencing mean “fat” teachers

and seeing herself in their bodies, therefore curating her teacher identity to be distinct from these teachers, grounded in authentic relationships. Finally, for Lesly, this showed up in constantly moving due to her family's socioeconomic status and having to continually be the new student at school, which motivated her toward a teacher identity grounded in flexibility.

As highlighted in the case stories, the teacher's *dreamwork* and process of refusal moved them beyond only understanding their individual schooling experiences and autobiographical memories as part of their teacher identity, and instead toward a larger systemic analysis with their cultivated teacher identities being "rooted in care, critique, and social change" (Sonu et al., 2020, p. 21).

### **How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice?**

While research regarding the impact of future thinking on present behavior is vast, much of this research focuses on K-12 students through quantitative measures. This existing research, however, highlights the ways in which goal setting and future thinking directly impact one's ability to feel, and *be*, successful in the present (Hilpert et al., 2012; Horowitz et al., 2020; Husman & Lens, 1999; Husman et al., 2016; Nurra & Oyserman, 2018; Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2002).

Research in this area argues that thinking about the future has three distinct functions, with the most understudied function focusing on the importance of imagination and visualization through mental exploration (Oettingen et al., 2018). This particular analytic question therefore considers the impact of mental exploration as a function of

thinking about the future through the process of engaging in the construction of a visionary fiction story (brown & Imarisha, 2015). Building on the work of Springgay and Truman (2019) and their conceptualization of counterfuturisms, these case stories consider what it might mean to intentionally think outside of chrononormativity and humanist notions of time in order to mentally explore possible (and more just) futures.

Drawing on a narrative psychological approach to futuring and, in particular Sools and Moren's (2009) heuristic for understanding the imagination as guiding us toward a better future and having motivating effects on current behavior, the quintain offers a consideration of the impact of future thinking on teacher practice. While Sarbin (1986) argues that "futuring (imagining the future) is a capacity that defines who we are as human beings" (p. 206), this is rarely an activity that teachers are asked to engage with. For some teachers, like Kate, this activity was particularly challenging as there can be a fear of disappointment. This act of mental time travel can also be challenging for teachers like Lesly, who want to be creative yet have had few opportunities past elementary school to engage in creative endeavors. While a challenging and unfamiliar endeavor, the case stories highlight how these teachers were considering both big and small dreams for their futures, as well as dreams both in their control (within their classroom pedagogy) and dreams beyond their control (systemic considerations).

For Helen, this meant focusing on how she might (re)imagine schools as community centers where all members of the community are able to get their basic needs met. While she acknowledged that this was very much built on the basis of schools she had taught in during her past, she recognized that creating these community centers was very possible within the current structure of their district. Helen also recognized the

importance of broadening how schools are used in that they take up so much space in a community but are often empty. In Helen's perspective, this creates an opportunity to transform schools into community centers that provide families with services beyond traditional academics. At the classroom level, thinking about the future helped her be explicit about her classroom pedagogy and ways she could be intentional about creating community (with families and other staff members). This shift showed up in her intentional embedding of social justice standards in her curriculum as well as not only bringing in Black and Indigenous perspectives but also Asian perspectives so as to ensure that she is "bringing in [her] whole self".

For Kate, this meant disrupting the carceral system by considering the impact of a punitive mentality on students and teachers. In her classroom, this means attending to unjust nature of the referral process as well as the way that classroom management and teacher evaluation processes are often punitive with Kate thinking broadly about how removing standardization (through tests, teacher performance evaluations, and behavior management) might help to bridge the gap between reality and her visionary story. Within her classroom, this means being more consistent with her own classroom management and being reflective of her fear of becoming like one of her "fat" teachers. It also means being intentional about building her network of co-conspirators who hold her accountable and challenge her to be better and do better while ensuring that she is grounded in her role of supporting others.

For Lesly, this meant thinking about the role of the government in providing basic needs to the people in this country so that schools (and teachers) are not held responsible for things that should be the government's responsibility. This shift of responsibility

would mean an increase in the teacher's time and ability to truly focus on education. Within her own classroom, this meant thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to put into practice the change that she desired since she began teaching. These changes included considering different ways to assess student learning coupled with more holistic instructional strategies and the ability to collaborate with general education teachers. All of these shifts helped Lesly to consider ways to engage students in reading that were less stressful and more joyful.

For each of the teachers highlighted in these case stories, their future thinking was not only focused on their own actions and behavior; rather, it was grounded in an understanding of the systemic inequities at the root of schools; systemic inequities that in many ways were barriers to them being able to create the future that they so desperately wanted. As they were given the space to reflect, analyze, and engage in dialogue, each of these teachers could see these walls as a bridge to think about ways that their own practice might mitigate some of the effects of social injustice that they identified.

In reading the quintain through the analytic question, an understanding is highlighted regarding how thinking intentionally about the future through the process of visionary storytelling is transformative, but only within certain parameters. For one, as the neoliberal social imaginary controlled by chrononormative logics constructs teachers in very particular ways, giving teachers a space to dream big and act as change agents can be unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Kate mentioned this in the opening of her story acknowledging that this was far more challenging than she expected. Therefore, teachers need to be provided space to dream and engage in creative arts-based practices while being seen as change agents rather than "managers of student learning" (Pinar, 2012, p.

6). Creating these spaces will require a shift social imaginary in order to position teachers as agents of change in their own classrooms and beyond. This shift introduces the importance of providing teachers with space, support, and the agency to think through and reflect on these levels of analysis both individually and collectively.

Second, if teachers are to engage in future thinking, there must be a direct and explicit connection with counterfuturisms (Springgay & Truman, 2019) wherein teachers consider the stories of those students who are often storied as having no future (Lothian, 2018). This points to the need for thinking about the future to move beyond a creative act of indulgence and toward a more robust and critical understanding of the systems in which they are enmeshed. While the above case stories highlight the beauty of radical dreaming, if teachers are given an opportunity to dream big and imagine new futures without explicitly considering systemic inequities and injustices, this pedagogical approach, like many others before will fall short.

These strengths and parameters of future thinking through visionary pedagogy are represented by Oettingen's (2000) model of fantasy realization which highlight the detrimental effects of engaging indulging modes of thought by only thinking about what is desired without considering possible barriers. Thus, if visionary pedagogy is to be a transformative practice, this must move teachers toward mental contrasting (Oettingen, 2000) to both engage in the visionary process while attending to systemic barriers.

### **In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?**

While researchers within the field of psychology have studied the impact of future thinking on present behavior, they have also identified contrasting engagements, with

future thinking highlighting that indulging and dwelling, for example, do not impact behavior. Mental contrasting, on the other hand, which involves moving from future thinking to creating action plans and goal commitments (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen, 2000; Oettingen et al., 2001, 2009; Wright, 2008), can create opportunities for transformation in self-confidence and future behavior.

In this particular study, as teachers were initially asked only to construct a visionary story, they were in many ways directed toward indulging (Oettingen, 2000) as they were not intentionally considering the possible obstacles or barriers. Although this activity provided teachers the opportunity to dream big and create futures that did not yet feel possible, there were no limitations on the dreams. While visionary fiction can be empowering for teachers to engage in as it allows them to imagine and be creative, as research demonstrates, indulging without considering the barriers to implementation will likely not lead to a change in behavior (Oettingen, 2000).

Acknowledging this as a concern, teachers were asked to share their visionary stories both their small groups as well as on the course discussion board. They then used their stories to consider common themes, use these themes to identify goals, and finally construct action plans (see Table 7). These initial action plans were used as part of the focus group discussions to provide space for teachers to move from dreaming to action. During the focus group conversations, teachers identified possible barriers and discussed how they could remove those barriers through direct plans for implementation. This activity moved the visionary process from indulging toward mental contrasting in an effort to ensure that this activity resulted in behavior change rather than serving simply as a creative endeavor.

Duckworth et al. (2013) elaborate on the act of mental contrasting in describing it as the combined act of

mental elaboration of a desired future and the present reality standing in the way of fantasy realization [therefore] creat[ing] a strong mental association between future and reality that signals the need to overcome the obstacles in order to attain the desired future (p. 746).

By moving away from an indulging mode of future thought and toward mental contrasting, this practice allowed teachers to create a desired future while also identifying potential obstacles that may prevent this future from occurring. While research in this area focuses primarily on the effects of mental contrasting at an individual level, as this mental contrasting occurred in collaboration with others in their beloved community, it extends previous findings in considering the benefit of this mode of thought as being both an individual and collective effort.

For Helen, this meant creating intentional and explicit ways to build community with families. Helen's visionary story was focused on relationships first, with listening to families as central to the functioning of her community center; developing ways to do this authentically was important to her. While home visits were a common practice and an activity that Helen thought might help to create her desired community, she also identified this practice as a barrier. During her focus group discussion, Helen noted that home visits could be stressful for families and in some ways invasive. Although Helen communicated this as a clear barrier to implementation as she wanted to ensure that her families felt respected, she was able to think about other ways to connect with families through writing individual letters to students, engaging in virtual home visits, and



scheduling conference calls. She acknowledged that “if you’re taking time to meet with families, that will give them more latitude” which is important in building a strong connected community. Being very clear about the fact that “this work that we do is not a sprint, it’s a marathon,” Helen engaged in mental contrasting through setting a goal to create authentic partnerships with families while also identifying potential barriers to implementation including stress for families and a desire to move too quickly on the part of teachers. Finally, Helen was able to think through ways to turn this barrier into a bridge which allowed her visionary story to move from abstract to concrete.

During Kate’s focus group discussion, she expressed concern around carceral responses noting that “as teachers... we choose to respond to behavior.” Yet, Kate also recognized that while this impacts the classroom, in order to create larger change, the school board would need to reconsider the use of school resource officers in buildings. While she noted this as a barrier to implementation, she was able to draw on other examples of teacher activism such as the ways in which teachers have been vocal in the form of letter writing to stop standardized testing in order to consider ways to dismantle this barrier in order to reach her imagined future in dismantling the carceral state. In this way, Kate was engaging in mental contrasting as she was able to express a goal of disrupting the carceral state, identify a barrier to implementing that goal as being outside of the classroom, and discuss ways in which to overcome this barrier through advocacy efforts on the part of teachers. Kate furthered this in centering her own commitments to her pedagogical approach in the classroom and ensuring that she develops a classroom culture that understands behaviors as an opportunity for conversation and deeper learning rather than a move toward punishment. For Kate, as her imagined future engaged with

systemic injustices outside of her control, her engagement with mental contrasting shifted her goal commitments toward that which she could change within the bounds of her classroom.

The action plan developed by Lesly's group included goals focused on the removal of standardized testing. As Lesly recognized that this was a common practice (and therefore a barrier) not only in her district but at a national level, and that many of the meetings she attended focused on discussions of standardized assessments, particularly around how to assess kindergarten students, she knew that her ability to advocate for change was important in moving from a goal to action. This realization meant that she would need to be more vocal in meetings with district administrators and that she would need to use this year to gather data in order to understand how things function when standardized tests cannot be implemented. Lesly engaged in mental contrasting as her goal was to eliminate standardized testing to have more authentic and holistic means for assessing student understanding. Yet, she was also able to recognize the dominant practice of administering standardized tests as a barrier while simultaneously discussing how she could overcome this barrier by collecting data to show other ways to assess students.

When considering each of these examples of mental contrasting, the quintain highlights how visionary pedagogy through self-work, building a beloved community, releasing the imagination through visionary storytelling, and building dreams into reality through action planning and mental contrasting, truly has the ability to transform teacher practice. Visionary pedagogy as a practice, however, would be remiss if not to consider the ways that teacher agency plays into the practice of mental contrasting. Providing

teachers space to engage in mental exploration and mental contrasting without giving them the agency to actually create change would make this practice a mere creative outlet. Further, if teachers are given the opportunities to dream big, but they do not then have the agency to move their goal commitments into practice, this has the potential to both not change behavior and be detrimental as this would lead to dwelling on what seems impossible rather than being able to put into place new possibilities. If visionary pedagogy is to move toward a transformative (re)imagining of teacher learning, teacher voices need to be valued and teachers need to have access to conversations where decisions are made.

In this particular study, the action plans (highlighted in Table 7) were given to the River District's Equity Director both directly after the professional development as well as within the book created for teachers in gratitude. As River District's Equity Director was intentional about centering teacher voices and listening to teachers, their engagement with visionary storytelling and action planning became an opportunity for transforming teacher practice.

**Table 7**

*Moving from Dreaming to Action*

Group	Equity Goals	What steps will need to occur for this equity goal to be reached and who will be involved
Roots Group (Helen, Marnie, Nelle, & Elena)	<p><u>Equity Goal #1:</u> Home Visits/Meeting with Families</p> <p><u>Equity Goal #2:</u> Include more teachers and staff in this work</p> <p><u>Equity Goal #3:</u> Community Outreach/moving towards building community centers</p>	<p><u>Equity Goal #1:</u> Talk to administration and use the extra week to connect with families via zoom, move to a SmartStart* model for all grades. <i>This will require both teacher and administrative discussions.</i></p> <p><u>Equity Goal #2:</u> Infuse the work into the established teacher leader groups, equity teams, &amp; staff led PDs [professional developments]. <i>This will involve engagement of teachers at individual buildings as well as within district leadership positions.</i></p> <p><u>Equity Goal #3:</u> Connect with PTO to be more of a partnership instead of silos. <i>This will require discussions at staff meetings as well as district equity committees.</i></p>
Shoots (Kate, Claire, & Lesly)	<p><u>Equity Goal #1:</u> No state or standardized testing</p> <p><u>Equity Goal #2:</u> Non-carceral behavior responses in order to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline</p> <p><u>Equity Goal #3:</u> Project based learning, Student choice in learning</p>	<p><u>Equity Goal #1:</u> Use more teacher input and classroom teacher collaboration to identify students who need services rather than standardized measures. <i>This will engage district administration, classroom teachers, Title teachers.</i></p> <p><u>Equity Goal #2:</u> Remove SRO's (school resources officers) from all school districts. Add in more mental health and counselors. <i>This will involve teachers in regard to classroom management as well as the School Board regarding SRO decision.</i></p> <p><u>Equity Goal #3:</u> Have district conversations, planning, and training in project-based learning. <i>This will require engagement from teachers, administration, and teacher leadership team.</i></p>

**Table 7 (continued).**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Equity Goals</b>	<b>What steps will need to occur for this equity goal to be reached and who will be involved</b>
Soil (Jennifer & Michelle)	<p><u>Equity Goal #1:</u> Every student assigned (or picks!) an advisor/mentor to meet with consistently</p> <p><u>Equity Goal #2:</u> Supports for all students regardless of qualification under special services.</p> <p><u>Equity Goal #3:</u> Students are active in school community to mirror responsibilities in the larger community</p> <p><u>Equity Goal #4:</u> Community Connections</p>	<p><u>Equity Goal #1:</u> Designate staff mentors and assign to all school staff mentees and plan for mentor/mentee events. <i>This will require district level restructuring</i></p> <p><u>Equity Goal #2:</u> Use more than standardized tests to identify support needs for students; allow for student self-advocacy. <i>This will require that building staff collaborate to achieve a workable student-centered schedule.</i></p> <p><u>Equity Goal #3:</u> Work with group agreements to practice community class values and identify different schedules for more time spent eating, &amp; self-care time. <i>This will require the creation of a student learning community for each student.</i></p> <p><u>Equity Goal #4:</u> CTO (Community Teacher Organization instead of PTO (Parent Teacher Organization to serve and support students - change the focus to give voice to student learning communities. <i>This will require administrative support.</i></p>

**Growing a Beloved Counterstorytelling Visionary Community**

Reading the quintain highlights the need for teachers to be listened to and provided spaces where they can be their authentic selves, where their differences are not seen as a problem but instead centered as a strength. I draw here on Audre Lorde’s (1978) poem *A Litany for Survival* to think about silence as survival, a tactic often used by teachers so as to feel safe in their jobs, safe against neoliberal teacher evaluations, as

expressed by Kate, and safe against parents and staff members who question their background if their skin is not white, as expressed by Helen.

and when we speak we are afraid  
our words will not be heard  
nor welcomed/ but when we are silent  
we are still afraid  
So it is better to speak  
remembering  
we were never meant to survive (Lorde, 1978, pp. 31-32)

But, what if, instead of forcing teachers to be silent, we created spaces that welcomed their voices, that centered their stories, and that left them not afraid to resist and dream and build new futures?

Reading the quintain shows the ways in which theories of futuring have the power to encourage radical dreaming and a resistance to societal structures that force compliance and assimilation. This consideration moves toward understanding how theories of futuring might be leveraged to support teachers in speaking up and resisting rather than staying silent and afraid. Across literature on theories of futuring, queer theorists, Afrofuturists, and Indigenous futurists ground their work in an ontology of speculation and imagination to create different and more just futures. Theories of futuring offer us a framework to consider how visionary pedagogy offers new possibilities and futures (Edelman, 2004) for those who are traditionally denied access to the future based on the dominant social imaginaries (Lothian, 2018).

Within schools, this denial of futures shows up in the very structure of schooling grounded in chrononormative logics and notions of linear progress. For Lesly, her consideration of breaking down the barriers of progress that denote particular students as achieving on the basis of standardized assessments provides a way to offer new possibilities in breaking down the structures of schooling that inherently story people outside of time. As Brown and Lothian (2012) remind us "...the act of speculation, is also to play, to invent, to engage, in the practice of imagining" (para. 2). In Lesly's visionary story, she was able to play with the idea of different futures through imagining and experimenting with unseen futures. Through this visionary process, Lesly realized that speaking up and advocating for these changes is what is required in order for her to stay grounded in her dreams of "radically different and better elsewheres" (Lothian, 2018, p. 22).

In her case story, Kate talks about choosing to be childless, a choice that was unlike the other education students with whom she studied during her Masters' program. While this choice renders Kate differently in the heteronormative social imaginary, her ability to take a nonlinear approach to future dreaming (Lothian, 2018) disrupts approaches to futurity that legitimize reproduction and situate those who are non-heteronormative as existing outside of time (Halberstrom, 2005; Freeman, 2010; Lothian, 2018; Springgay & Truman, 2019). In this way, Kate is engaging in active resistance by cultivating her own story through the power of (re)imagining future possibilities for herself and her students. This is represented by her commitment to starting GSAs across the district as well as creating a community of co-conspirators who hold her accountable in radical dreaming and resisting chrononormative logics.

Finally, for Helen, theories of futuring come through in the way that she positions her work as a social and racial justice educator. In her commitments to education, Helen clearly articulates the ways that she ensures that Black and Indigenous people are present within her curriculum in connection with historical context and the sociopolitical climate. While in many ways, this causes barriers for Helen as her students' families hold a single stock story about Asian woman as quiet and apolitical, which Thomas (2019) might argue is caused by a lack of diverse imagery in media, thus "confin[ing kids and future adults] to single stories about the world around them" (p. 6), this does not deter Helen from her commitments to imagining more just futures while supporting her students in understandings of Black liberation and Indigenous decolonization. These commitments to disrupting these stock stories about her on the basis of her identity have allowed Helen to radically dream of more just and community-oriented futures while resisting the silence and neutral political stance that is expected of her on the basis of the dominant social imaginary.

### **Contending with our Roots and Soil**

In thinking about the patterns that showed up across the case stories and the ways in which these stories help us to think about the impact of stories on teacher's identities and practice, I am drawn to the words of Strong-Wilson (2008). She contends:

a 'compleat' teacher actually walks with not one stone but at least two or more troubling her step. One stone would represent the stories and beliefs she cherishes. The other stone would represent others' stories, which may also be cherished (by those others) but not necessarily by the teacher. They are stones with which the



teacher has come into contact and with which she now needs to contend. The fact that the stones come to inhabit the same shoe prevents a chafing, such that the teacher's touchstone cannot remain as it was, inviolate, preserved on a shelf; its edges and contours become worn away- challenged- through contact and friction (p. 2).

Strong-Wilson (2008) goes on to help us think about how the recognition of these stones, what she refers to as touchstones are “central to social justice education, and that we also cannot help but come back to touchstones, even after reaching a certain critical awareness” (p. 3). While Strong-Wilson (2008) is thinking very intentionally about white teachers, I am drawn to her ideas of touchstones and the ways in which she theorizes these touchstones form who we are as teachers. In my work with this group of teachers, and, in particular, the three teachers featured in these case stories, I thought of these touchstones as the roots and soil of one's work; with the roots being values and beliefs and the stories that ground them in their role as teachers and the soil being the environment and space in which their work exists. No matter the metaphor used, Strong-Wilson's (2008) words offer an important reminder of these stones or these roots and soil to a teacher's identity and practice.

Thus, if we are to truly do equity work, to hold space for teachers to dream new more just futures and build them into existence, we must also create opportunities for teachers to engage in archaeology of self-practices (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019; 2020) to “excavate” (a term used by Strong-Wilson drawing on the work of Madeleine Grumet, 1976) and identify the stones (stories) that ground the landscape of their teaching.

We, too, must provide support for teachers as they excavate their teaching stories as the work of excavation is not an easy or comfortable task; rather it requires that teachers think deeply about their own identities and positionalities and the stories that layer the landscape of their teaching. Embedded in work around visioning and storytelling, there must be opportunities to process both individually and collectively. Within beloved communities, there exist these opportunities for deep and embodied excavation to occur in ways that lead not to feeling immobilized and silenced but rather to feeling empowered to dream big, notice barriers, and tear those barriers down. These case stories highlight the ways that the teachers in this study were able “to imagine beyond the boundaries of ‘the real’ and then do the hard work of sculpting reality from [their] dreams” (Imarisha, 2015a, p. 5).

### **Case Stories Methodology: Considering the Missing Pieces**

While these case stories highlight important themes connected to identity work, the process of visionary storytelling, and moving from dreaming to action planning, they fail to center all of the teacher’s stories in ways that demonstrate that the work done by these three incredible teachers is not unlike the work done by the other teachers in this study. Instead, they also only tell the story of three teachers instead of the stories of all of the teachers who, like these three, engaged in deep levels of self-reflection, dreaming, and action planning during the course of this professional development institute.

As Picower and Kohli (2017) note, in reference to stories featured in their edited collection about social justice educators, that the stories reveal “... not just personal stories – rather ... patterns of how institutional racism operates to maintain the

permanence of racism” (p. 10). In a similar vein, while each of these emerging/transforming case stories shines a light on the storied lives of each of these three teachers, they represent only a small piece of their story and are therefore in many ways incomplete. This positions these findings, while valuable in considering the impact of visionary pedagogy on teacher identity and practice, as limited in their representation of the beautiful and complex lives of teachers through words on a page.

### **Summary**

Written through a case story methodology (Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001), these emerging/transforming case stories highlight the transformative power of visionary pedagogy when teachers are given the space and agency to engage in self-work, critical reflection, radical dreaming (Love, 2019) and world building (brown & Imarisha, 2015). Arguing that these elements are essential for teacher transformation, this chapter highlights the complexity of this work in considering the function of autobiographical memories and life stories on teacher identity, the importance of systemic analysis when engaging in visionary fiction practices, and the important (though limited) practice of mental contrasting for transforming in teacher practice. As Max Richter (2020), the world-renowned composer, reminds us in connection with his newest album “at such times it is easy to feel hopeless but, just as the problems of our world are of our own making, so the solutions can be. While the past is fixed, the future is yet unwritten.” This chapter therefore highlights that the teachers in this study, and arguably teachers across this nation have the solutions to rewrite the future of schools; they just need to be given a platform.

CHAPTER VII  
DESIGN FINDINGS

*All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you. The only lasting truth is change (Butler, 1995, p. 1).*

Dear Jose,

It's strange to think about what an integral role you have played in my life and how meeting you changed the plot of my life story. For you, I'm sure I am but a blip on your radar, while for me, you are a huge part of who I am. Each year, I tell my students about you. You often come through in my writing because no matter the topic, you seem to sneak in.

I'm sure many people don't understand why you left such an impression on me because at this point in my career, I have taught and coached hundreds, maybe even thousands, of students. Yet when I think about people who changed me, students who were central to my learning and growth as a teacher, you are it. I believe that so much of this is because of how important relationships are to me as a teacher. I am a teacher not because I love English and Social Studies (which I do) but because I love people; I love getting to know people and learning their stories. As a teacher, I love students who challenge me and who don't just blindly love school, but instead ask questions and push boundaries. What I love about this process is the resulting relationship and having the opportunity to show students a deep level of care.

While I have taught many students throughout my years as a teacher, many of whom I think about often, and even some who I still talk to, with you, I felt like we were on the cusp of that

relationship. Yet, before that was able to happen, you were ripped away and I was left with an omnipresent shadow in your wake. I, however, have learned through my career that so much of the work of a teacher is this dance, a dance that I like to think I'm just a little more experienced at because I had the fortune of having you as a student.

### **Framing the Relations**

This chapter centers on research question #2 of this dissertation which asks: *how does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?* This research question is guided by literature concerned with teacher learning and teacher professional development generally (Borko et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995), and more specifically, learning within the bounds of a neoliberal paradigm and chrononormative logics of control (Freeman, 2012; Lipman, 2011; Springgay & Truman, 2019). Along with this, as the professional development under study took place online, the undergirding literature is guided by that which studies online learning practices and design (Kentnor, 2015; King, 2002) as well as community development (hooks, 1996).

The theoretical framework for the data analysis within this chapter is grounded in understandings of Indigenous relationality as expressed by Wilson (2008) and Chilisa (2012). The analytic question that emerged through the data is as follows: *how can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?*

The strategy of inquiry employed for this particular analysis used a thinking with theory approach (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) by plugging the concept of Indigenous

relationality into the data gathered to understand the influence of the design of the professional development on teacher's engagement, learning, and sense of agency.

### **Plugging in to Theories of Indigenous Relationality**

In this chapter, I plugged my data into Wilson's (2008) and Chilisa's (2012) theories of relationality as expressed through Indigenous research paradigms to produce new possibilities for understanding teacher professional development. I engaged with the analytic question through a consideration of the different layers of relationship that manifested through the data: 1) relations with self, 2) relations with others, 3) relations with knowledge, ideas, and agency, and 4) intersections of relationality (see Table 8).

As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) argue, analytic questions "are used to think with to emerge in the middle of plugging in" (p. 9), which allow new questions to be asked and different ways of thinking about data to be considered. These manifestations of relationality, and a consideration of the analytic question, enabled me to see my data differently and the professional development differently in moving me toward a more thorough understanding of relationality and relational paradigms of learning. Reading this data through this theoretical framework makes possible a deep analysis of the ways in which relationality materializes in various forms.

Each of the following sections includes a brief discussion of the theory informing this particular understanding of relationality, specific manifestations of relationality as understood through reading the data through the analytic question, and a reflection/analysis of the findings in connection with the theory discussed.

**Table 8***Learning as Relational*

<b>Feature of Philosophical Concept: Indigenous Relationality</b>	<b>Professional Development Design Features (Theories)</b>	<b>Data</b>
Relations with self	Archaeology of self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2019; 2020), Grounding Practices/Somatics (Haines, 2019)	Interviews and Journal Reflections
Relations with others	Beloved Community (hooks, 1996), Action Planning/Mental Contrasting (Destin, Manzo, & Townsend, 2018; Oettingen, 2000; Oettingen et al., 2001, 2009; Wright 2008)	Interviews and Focus Groups
Relations with knowledge/experience/agency	Storytelling Project Model (Bell, 2019), Releasing the imagination (Greene, 1995), Action Planning (Oettingen et al., 2018)	Interviews, Focus Groups
Intersections of relationality	Design research process (Edelson, 2002)	Post-Survey

**Relations with self*****Theory Informing Findings and Reflection***

The notion and practice of self-work were integral to the design of the professional development as the design drew on research that argues transformation of self is key to changing teacher practice (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Utt & Tochluk, 2020, p. 147). As a considerable amount of professional development supports strategy development (Guskey & Huberman, 1995) which can position teachers as “managers of student learning” (Pinar, 2012, p. 6), there exists a need to (re)imagine the ways that teacher professional development is designed, both theoretically and pedagogically. This professional development was therefore designed to move beyond

the traditional strategy-based approach to professional development and toward professional development grounded in opportunities to engage in excavation and explorations of self through being in community with others.

Reading this particular design through the lens of Wilson's (2008) relational paradigm helps me consider the ways in which relations with self are integral to understanding who one is and how they fit within their communities. Drawing on the work of Atkinson (2001), Wilson (2008) articulates the concept of self as relationship as integral to Indigenous research noting that one principle of Indigenous research is "listening and observing the self as well as in relationship to others" (p. 59). While these concepts are specific to Indigenous research, in discussing his own research findings, Wilson (2008) shares the importance of being grounded in one's self, which is in opposition of being outside of one's self, a common practice in neoliberal spaces when one is not reflective of the embodied experience of selfhood (Brooks et al., 2017). Wilson (2008) notes that

I think that part of relational accountability too is that you are accountable to yourself, not just other people. You have to be true to yourself and put your own true voice in there, and those stories that speak to you. That is retaining your integrity; it's honouring the lessons you've learned through saying that they have become a part of who you are (p. 123).

These elements of relations with self demonstrate that when seeking to understand the knot of relations (Wilson, 2008) that both surround us and form us, reflecting on one's self as an integral part of that knot is important in understanding who they are in the web of relations. Reading the design of the professional development through this



understanding of relationality helps me think differently about relations with self and the need to understand what is true for each individual so that the learning is more than adding to one's toolbox, rather that the learning is relational allowing for it to become a part of who one is.

### *Findings drawn from Teacher Interviews and Journal Reflections*

In plugging this concept of relations with self (Wilson, 2008) into the data gathered through teacher interviews and focus groups, there are particular ways that new possibilities for relations with self manifested further highlighting the move toward learning becoming a part of who one is rather than an expansion of skills, strategies, or knowledge. In considering the manifestation of learning as relational, this moves away from neoliberal notions of learning and knowledge production as belonging to the individual. These self-relations manifested through the data in interesting ways, some more explicit and some more implicit with some teachers discussing identity and self-work as integral to teacher transformation. In conversation with Helen about the move away from strategy-based professional development, she explained that

... there needs to be more internal work. Like, regardless of whether or not you're conscious of it, you bring a lot of yourself into the classroom... if you have a strong sense of yourself... you can focus on strategies because it's not the strategies that students will remember years later, it's the person.

This brings to bear the notion of relational learning being embedded with transforming teacher practice as relational learning that starts with the self. Jennifer furthered this understanding of the importance of inner, self-work in considering how we

think about identity noting that “...our stories... they don’t get parked into neat little spots, that they’re just always with us.” Kate elaborated on the storied nature of self-work in her discussion of the ongoing identity and personal work that she engages in both within and outside of the classroom. Within one of her journal reflections, she noted that

my major vulnerability as an educator is my behavior management and it is a documented weakness in my professional file...I had to mimic certain expectations that did not come naturally to me in order to save my job in 2017. I’ve felt like a split personality ever since...trying to do what is expected of me by admin but trying to do what feels humane to me...and as a result I think I leave students feeling confused and frustrated by the inconsistency.

Both of these examples when read through Wilson’s (2008) concept of relationality move toward a deeper understanding of the embodied practice of teaching and reflecting on who one is and how the process of teacher’s understanding their story is an integral part of how they show up in the classroom.

All of this data highlights the ways in which excavating and exploring one’s beliefs, biases, and ideas shape the ways in which we work, and that if there is a desire to shift teacher practice, the design of a professional development must hold space for this self-work as this is integral to teacher transformation; integral because if one ignores this knot of relations, they are not able to be true to themselves and live within integrity in their own story (Wilson, 2008). If one engages in a professional development experience and the learning does not in turn become a part of who they are, this lacks the power to transform teacher practice in any real and sustainable way. Therefore, in the design process, if learning is shifted from a commodity to be gained by an individual and toward

learning as relational, teachers need space to engage in embodied work that moves toward a more grounded selfhood (Wilson, 2008).

**Individualized Pace as Embodied Relational Learning.** Throughout the interviews, the ability to work at one's own pace became an important element in being able to engage in deep self-work with an acknowledgement that the ability to do the deep dives into their own beliefs, biases, values, and ideas that shape their work would not have been possible otherwise. In each of the below examples, Wilson's (2008) conception of relations with self as requiring a shift toward learning as relational with learning becoming part of one's story shows up in albeit different and powerful ways.

Within her interview, Lesly noted that,

...like free write time, you know, I've had to do it like in person classes or in PD and stuff like that, I feel like I'm always kind of looking at other people and being like, oh no, my brain is stuck and I only have fifteen minutes to write this and like, they already have like a page... and it's like, oh gosh, and then I get in my head about it and when sitting at home, I can do it piece by piece through...

This notion of lessened pressure as being an important part of moving this learning toward a more internally relational process was furthered by Elena who noted that

... the pressure to read as fast as everyone and be like ready when other people are ready can be frustrating and so being able to do it at like 12 o'clock at night when I can't sleep but my kids are asleep, so it's quiet, it's really nice... [and] I could engage with it on my own terms and not like someone else's terms because I'm always the slowest reader in the group and so I'm always like the last one and

so I always have to finish because everyone else is [finished] and I don't want to disrupt the flow of the group. For me to be able to finish on my own time is really, actually better for me.

Both Lesly and Elena highlight the ways that the online nature of the professional development and the particular design allowed for deeper engagement due to a release of pressure. While there was less pressure in this environment, Elena noted that increased time to engage did not equate to a lack of accountability, rather it allowed for deeper levels of engagement and in many ways accountability, noting that "...there's still accountability, but... I'm not in a room and no one's waiting for me right now." For Elena, this shift provided her the ability to spend more time to engage in self-work and deeper processing.

Michelle also shared how the space to work at her own pace deepened her engagement with the learning and allowed her increased creativity. With regards to the creation of her visionary fiction story, Michelle noted

I think if we had done the writing in person in the class, I would not have gotten as deep. I would have had more brief answers and things like that... so if I'm in a room, I'm thinking to myself, okay, like I want to get deep, I want to dive in but like we have this much time. Whereas when I find myself upstairs, I'm all like yes, I can write a visionary fiction novel... I would probably never have come up with anything like that personally, probably because I would have read the requirements a little better to realize that you're not really doing a sci-fi novel...

While Michelle's story did take a different angle than others in the professional development institute, as she was able to work at her own pace and construct her story in

a way that moved her toward deeper engagement, the story that she produced was honoring the work that she had been doing during that summer. In her interview, Michelle expressed a shift in her teaching after the murder of George Floyd, acknowledging that she no longer had an excuse to not teach about systemic racism. These themes very explicitly showed up in Michelle's story as she was able to work at her own pace and develop a visionary story that honored the lessons she has learned about white privilege, police brutality, and systemic racism, in ways that have become a part of who Michelle is as a teacher.

In this way, the ability to work at one's own pace as a feature of the design of the professional development allowed for deeper levels of learning and increased space to feel more grounded and embodied in this learning space; creating a shift toward learning as relational with the relations being self-reflection and contemplation at a pace that was meaningful for each individual.

Another design element that teachers spoke about that aligned with Wilson's (2008) notion of relations with self was the space to have away time. While multiple teachers discussed how they approached their learning, with some doing things bit by bit when they were able and others working late into the night when their kids were asleep, the ability to process the information in their own environment became an important feature of the professional development when moving from surface levels of engagement toward relational learning. For the teachers in this study, this away time, which was offered because of the nature of this professional development institute taking place online, allowed for the learning to become more internalized and in turn part of their teacher identity and practice. This insight was expressed as being a result of the slower

pace that allowed for processing and ruminating on how this learning could become a part of their own story, rather than the quick pace of traditional professional development courses, which is very much a product of neoliberal ideals and chrononormative logics of progress and urgency.

In her interview, Jennifer expressed this notion of away time in contrasting it with the instructional technique of wait time. She noted

that's that whole wait time... when [online]... it is actually away time. Like separate from the group as opposed to trying to structure and squeeze it in like ... I can get five minutes for this type of work because then we need to keep rolling because we only have, you know, an hour or we only have a half an hour. I'm wondering if the digital platform allows for kind of a more natural time away for that work.

By having away time, teachers were able to reflect on their own learning and stories, and their relations with both their learning and stories based on their internal and individualized needs. When reading the presence of away time through Wilson's (2008) conceptions of relations with self, relationality manifested as each teacher had the space to listen and observe while holding themselves accountable in ways that would grow their learning. This shifted the accountability inward rather than outward creating space for embodied relational learning.

For example, in her interview Nelle discussed how she used this away time as a way to further engage with friends and family about the ideas discussed in the professional development. She noted that

...being virtual I was able to utilize other avenues. I mean, I had conversations with my family members about the text and I posted questions on social media. I was really just trying to find different avenues to have those kinds of conversations with my family... I posted questions on my Instagram feed and got quite a bit of feedback... I don't think I would have done that otherwise, like if I was in a class [not online], I would have just been like, oh, it's in class that the only context I'm going to think about versus like now, it's like opening to exploring like all these other different options, like why not, you know?

For Nelle, her self-work came in the way of processing, excavating, and exploring with her web of relations. She discussed how interesting it was to see who responded and what kind of stories they shared noting that she had more people of color respond with “appreciation of point of views [and] experiences [they] had in this type of setting or school,” which she found really nice. While she did have some white identifying people respond, their experiences with school tended to be more positive.

Therefore, for Nelle, this away time provided her the space to engage in her own inquiry project which likely would not have taken place otherwise. While each of the teachers' away time looked different, in reading this through the lens of relationality as theorized by Wilson (2008), the presence of away time allowed for learning to become a part of the relational process consistent with moving away from external accountability and toward internal accountability.

This notion of accountability showed up in other very explicit ways, with teachers engaging with their learning in ways that allowed them to hold themselves accountable rather than being held accountable by an external and arbitrary factor. This internal

accountability as relational emerged through the presence of unmoderated discussion boards and ungraded journal responses. While traditional discussion boards in online courses often ask that each individual posts their own response and then responds to a minimum number of colleagues, in talking to teachers who have taken online courses, they continually expressed their disdain for this practice as they felt that it served as a surface level activity in accountability rather than a deep engagement with concepts. Therefore, discussion boards in this professional development course were structured to be used in the way that teachers best saw fit for their learning with no requirements beyond an initial post.

Along with this, each module included journal reflections that were submitted using a link to an ongoing document. These journal reflections were private between me and the teacher and thus each individual had the freedom to engage in their own way based on their learning needs.

During Lesly's interview, this shift to internal relational accountability emerged when she discussed the shift from more traditional discussion boards and graded journal reflections.

I think like this is probably the best online class I've taken just because... there wasn't like a forced discussion board... it wasn't like you have to respond to two people... because at that point, you're just trying to make up stuff and really, you know, just like okay, can I say? I agree with you, [and] let me add one more point. And so, I think like, having that option... where I can just read through and then like, oh, I get excited about one I can respond to have a discussion... or I can just read it and like, soak it in.



Helen, on the other hand found that even with this requirement removed, she did not utilize the discussion board to the fullest as she often posted late. While each individual teacher engaged in their own way based on their own learning needs, as the external requirements and validation were removed, relationality emerged from the data in a shift toward internal relational accountability, with teachers expressing increased space to differently engage with their learning in ways that met their needs.

This sense of internal relational accountability emerged when talking about the journals as well with Lesly furthering her above comment noting that the journals allowed for a free-flowing learning opportunity.

Part of the thing that felt really freeing about the journals too is that I didn't have to worry about anyone else reading it but you so that I could just like, flow because I felt like... if [I'm] not completely grammatically correct, it's not a big deal, I can just [put] it on paper and then just get it out of my head and that's kind of the way I process things.

For Lesly, the journals provided a processing space. Teachers used this freeing processing space in varied ways with some writing extended responses and moving past the questions posed, others creating tables to process their learning, others sticking strictly to the questions, and finally others embedding visuals to support their thinking. Kate noted that for her, she "didn't give... near what [she] thought [she] would... in [her] journals... and that ha[d] more to do with [her] capacity in the summer." Yet, she "was able to be vulnerable in the face-to-face synchronous stuff more because it's conversational, and [she's] a vulnerable conversationalist."

While each of the teachers used their journals in different ways, some more than others, they expressed that journaling was important. Reading this particular data through Wilson's (2008) theory of relationality allows me to understand these insights as more than simply having freedom away from strict requirements. Instead, as teachers were given the agency to engage with these activities on the basis of their own learning needs, this allowed ideas to take shape contextually and for the learning to become internalized. As teachers did not receive external validation, such as a grade or digital badges which have become popular within professional development spaces (Shields & Chugh, 2017), nor were there specific rules to follow, the learning became relational in that teachers were accountable for their own learning and process and were able to be true to their individualized needs while honoring the lessons learned through this relational learning process.

### ***Reflection and Analysis of Findings: Moving Toward Relational Embodied Learning***

While the relations one has with themselves is challenging to uncover within interviews as much of this work is internal and private to the individual, when reading the interview and focus group data through the theory of relationality, this opened new possibilities for considering the ways that learning is structured. In the above examples, relations with one's self manifested through the data in ways that showed the importance of self-accountability and creating learning opportunities that allow for learning to become part of one's story.

Teachers' words, then, when read through Wilson's (2008) theory of Indigenous relationality, demonstrate that for one to engage in self-work, which research has shown

is an important part of transforming teacher practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Utt & Tochluk, 2019), professional development needs to be intentionally designed. This intentionality in the design, must consider learning as relational rather than learning as transaction and as an individual feat.

This shift will require that teachers are provided opportunities to work at their own pace with embedded away time for them to reflect and engage with their learning in ways that hold them accountable to themselves, rather an external level of accountability that is often the feature of learning, particularly through neoliberal forms of measurement and evaluation. This shift toward considering the importance of relations with self, have the potential to allow for learning to become integrated within teacher's practice and embodied in their teaching by giving them the ability for the learning to "become a part of who [they] are" (Wilson, 2008, p. 123).

## **Relations with others**

### ***Theory Informing Findings and Reflection***

Integral to theories of Indigenous relationality are the relationships we hold with one another. For Wilson (2008), existing relationships, as well as the forming of new relationships, are an integral part of being in this world. In fact, they are the root of being in this world, as relationships are reality. An important aspect of relationships with others, then, for Wilson (2008), is the presence of relational accountability, which comes through thoughtful communication with those with whom you share a cultural background and those who come from different cultural backgrounds. Through this communication comes the sharing of ideas which occur through relationship. In this way,

relationality is reciprocal. Chilisa (2012) furthers the presence of relationality in speaking to the notion of reciprocal appropriation in connection with her 4 R's framework, specifically considering the role of reciprocal appropriation within research. She argues that all research is appropriation and should therefore be conducted so that benefits accrue to both the communities researched and the researcher.

While I read literature focused on Indigenous research paradigms prior to conducting my dissertation research, I had not engaged in the literature deeply enough to consider the 4 R's within either my research design or the design of the professional development. Instead, as my research ontology is inherently grounded in relationships, it was my intention to develop research that benefited the community with whom I was working.

Upon completing my data collection, however, I had a conversation with Jimmy (personal communication, October 9, 2020) an Indigenous classmate, and shared the tension I felt with research and the lack of relationships as central to the research process. Jimmy pointed me to Wilson's (2008) work quoting Wilson from memory as saying, "relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality" (p. 7). After our conversation, I immediately bought Wilson's (2008) book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. While reading this book, I felt that the way he theorized relationships and relationality as more than an act of connection, but reality itself, spoke so profoundly to the tension I had felt within research for so long. Jimmy's gift of this work, have shaped me, my relationship with this research, and all of my relations.

As I did not engage with the work of Wilson (2008) before designing the professional development under study or the associated research, it was only after the

conclusion of the institute and my data collection that I was able to more thoroughly consider the design elements through the work of Wilson (2008) and his conception of relationality. For Wilson (2008), one's identity is grounded in relationship. He argues that for Indigenous people, there is a shift in how relationships are viewed in that one does not consider "being in relationship with other people or things [rather they] are the relationships that we hold and are part of" (p. 80).

When reading the design of the professional development through Wilson's (2008) concept of relationship as reality, a few key features manifested as being grounded in this more complex and deeper understanding of relationality. For one, Wilson's (2008) conception of community shows up in the design of this professional development through the intentional creation of a homeplace which is a physical, psychological, and emotional "...site of resistance and liberation" (hooks, 2007, p. 268). This intentional creation of a homeplace became essential within the online space especially given the high levels of isolation that people were experiencing as a result of being quarantined. Through engagement with hooks' (1996; 2007) theories, learning and knowledge were shifted from belonging to an individual toward an ethic of knowledge as relational (Wilson, 2008), with relationships being so integral to the professional development institute that it would not have been possible otherwise.

Further, as Wilson (2008) discusses the importance of communication, and not only communication with others with whom you share a culture, but also those outside of your culture, relations with others manifested in the intentional embeddedness of beloved community (explicitly discussed during the first module of the professional development). As argued by hooks (1996), a beloved communication is formed by

acknowledging rather than eradicating differences. This manifestation of relationality as expressed through communication with others within and outside of one's cultural group also came through in the development of community norms, each of which was chosen and developed by the teachers to center relationality and relational accountability to others based on what each individual identified as needed to be in community with others<sup>18</sup>.

### ***Findings drawn from Teacher Interviews and Focus Groups***

During their interviews and focus group discussions, teachers continually expressed the deepening of relationships during the professional development and a belief that the online space in no way inhibited their ability to engage with one another. In fact, Michelle who has worked next door to Jennifer for a number of years, noted

I love seeing this side of Jennifer and I feel like here we are in a position where we can't be talking every day like we normally would. But then having this during the summer has me getting to know parts of Jennifer that I didn't even know before.

The presence of deepening relationships with colleagues was expressed by other teachers as well. For example, Elena discussed the benefit of these intentional groupings noting that "...a really important part was that a lot of people... at least in my group were

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<sup>18</sup> The community agreements, discussed thoroughly in Chapter IV: Design Methodology were as follows: 1) being able to do hard things through collaboration and support, 2) friendship grounded in love and respect, and 3) valuing diversity and vulnerability and the community agreements co-constructed by the group were 1) be open to outcome, not attached to outcome, 2) a commitment to pausing to presume positive intention and acknowledging impacts when they occur, 3) a commitment to paying attention to ourselves and others and staying engaged together, and 4) being willing to experience discomfort when speaking your truth and when listening to others.

at the same school... and that made it a little bit easier for me.”<sup>19</sup> Kate furthered this acknowledging “... my group happened to be people who I’m already comfortable with... I had a lot of colleagues that I care about, trust, and feel vulnerable with already on the day to day that were in here...”

While this experience is consistent with other professional development structures that provide space for teachers to build community, reading these insights through Wilson’s (2008) understanding of relations with others shows how creating intentional opportunities that move beyond day-to-day curriculum planning and teacher tasks, allows for a deepening of already established relationships; work that is integral to teacher development and a transformation of teacher practice.

Relationality further manifested in considering Wilson’s (2008) discussion of the importance of both existing relationships and new relationships as all being important to the overall web of relations in which one is part of. While Michelle and Jennifer had an existing relationship, communication and relational accountability allowed for that relationship to deepen. This is particularly important in teaching, as Wilson’s (2008) conception of relationality opens new understandings of the importance of learning occurring in collaboration with others in the same building as this creates opportunities for deeper and sustained learning and accountability which in turn increases the potential for transforming teacher practice.

The practice of learning in collaboration with others has been shown to strongly impact teacher practice (Curry, 2008; Lord, 1994; Stoll et al., 2006). Therefore, this

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<sup>19</sup> The small groups for this professional development institute were created in relationship with River District’s Equity Director who provided insight on who would benefit from working together with many groups being comprised of teachers working at the same school site.

research extends previous research in this area to more critically consider offering space for teachers to grapple with complex issues and have difficult conversations around concepts, values, beliefs, and biases that might not have a readily available answer. Therefore, understanding these complex spaces as relational learning opportunities provides a new way to understand how learning design can be influential in ways that move beyond individual toolboxes being built and filled.

Across interviews, teachers continually expressed the importance of community within the professional development and how this allowed them to truly *be* themselves. Kate discussed the importance of the creation of an online space where people feel brave and ready to deeply engage with others. She explained that

there's a fear that if we let people be who they need to be mental health wise at the time, they won't follow through or won't produce quality thinking or output, but I felt able to access your class because I knew I didn't have to perform like I was a professional and polished, and you know, come to your meetings fully dressed with makeup on.

For Kate, being in relationship with others comes with both an acceptance of difference and the intentional creation of a space where people can fully be themselves. In plugging this insight into Wilson's (2008) conception of relationality, this broadens the understanding of community in that a community that is relationally accountable does not just require a space to come together physically, rather it is an intentional creation of a space that values each individual and the needs that they show up with on any given day. Wilson (2008) explains that while relationality is not always visible, it is nonetheless real. For Kate, this invisible notion of relationality within the community manifested through



feeling like she could fully be herself and still be seen and heard. Therefore, thinking about this data with Wilson's (2008) notion of relationality allows for a deeper understanding of the often invisible yet integral manifestations of relational accountability within communities and the influence of that accountability on learning.

While the building of a homeplace and the cultivation of a beloved community was an important and arguably vital part of the professional development experience, the relationships were maintained and extended beyond the professional in really powerful and interesting ways. Nelle noted that

it fed really well into the teacher leaders curriculum development that we did, like literally the week after... I didn't know Elena before our equity class, and then we were paired a lot together in the Teacher Leaders, which is a group we're going to be working with for the rest of the year.

Elena also expressed this sentiment noting that

... I find myself getting excited when I see someone from [this] group in another meeting. I mean we have all worked in the district for so long, but sometimes you don't have the opportunity to sit with each other so that was kind of the space you set up in a way that was really comfortable so folks can be really honest and genuine and be really vulnerable... I think in this group and in other groups it's not that comfortable, like particularly when there like maybe administrators or something, and so it was nice to be able to be vulnerable, and like, say something that was embarrassing but I feel like people were supportive and caring of your thoughts.

While this professional development was only a five-week commitment for teachers, they expressed in their interviews and focus groups that these relationships both new and existing, extend beyond the professional development institute. With existing relationships deepening and new relationships blossoming, this created profound ways to more thoroughly consider the manifestation of relationality present within the data. In many ways, the relationships formed and deepened within this professional development did not shape the teacher's engagement, but instead were the teacher's engagement (Wilson, 2008) with each interview and focus group discussion explicitly and implicitly circling around the powerful web of relations in impacting learning, engagement, and a sense of agency.

***Reflection and Analysis of Findings: Beloved Community as a Transformative Paradigm***

These findings highlight the profound effect of learning when there is an intentional shift toward learning as relational rather than learning as an individual commodity. This shift demonstrates that committing to designing relational learning opportunities for teachers supports teacher transformation. Considering the ways in which Indigenous relationality opens new possibilities and ways of reading this data, Wilson's (2008) conception of relationality, and in particular, relationships with others, makes a difference in the way that I think about designing professional development for teachers. Broadening the understanding of learning as relational rather than learning as transactional requires that professional development for teachers moves outside of the bounds of neoliberalism and the promotion of individual self-interest and efficiency

(Lipman, 2011) as well as chrononormative, linear notions of success. This structural shift requires a circular rather than linear approach (Wilson, 2008) that returns to relationality and relational accountability within and through learning.

In moving toward a circular approach to relational learning, this means that the forming of relationships and community need to be more than a box that is checked on an evaluation of professional development. Instead, designers of professional development courses and institutes need to consider relationality as the very fabric of learning (Wilson, 2008) by creating space for beloved communities to flourish and listening with three ears (Lewis, 2015) to be at the root of the design. As hooks (1996) argues, it is only through a beloved community that we can challenge each other and work through the differences that will enable us to engage in work to dismantle racism. Therefore, if there is a true commitment to engaging in the deep work of teacher transformation and a dismantling of inequitable and unjust structures, this requires a move beyond neoliberal notions of knowledge commodification. Instead, the forming of a beloved community is imperative and yet possible, even within an online space.

This shift in considering relational learning as the fabric of teacher professional development, however, requires holding space for each person in the beloved community to be their whole and authentic selves and to not feel like they need to park their identity at the door, as Jennifer noted in her interview. As Wilson (2008) reminds us, identities are built in our webs or knots of relations, and therefore, “we could not *be* [emphasis added] without being in relationship with everything that surrounds us and is within us. Our reality, our ontology is the relationships” (p. 76). Therefore, if relationships and relationality are not central to the design of the professional development, the self of the

teacher will drift away and all that will be left is a “manager of student learning” (Pinar, 2012, p. 6) without a sense of agency to catalyze change.

## **Relations with Knowledge, Ideas, and Agency**

### ***Theory Informing Findings and Reflection***

As Wilson (2008) notes, the shift from a dominant paradigm to an Indigenous paradigm is grounded in shifting toward an ontology of knowledge and ideas as relational, rather than being gained or owned by an individual. Fundamental to an Indigenous theory of relationality then is the belief that it is not only relations with others and place that are foundational, but it is also the idea that ideas and knowledge are relational and are thus culturally mediated and culturally based. Wilson (2008) furthers this pointing to the following:

...because an idea is formed by relationships within a specific context, knowledge of what the listener or reader brings to the relationship-or their context -is needed in order to transmit the process of the idea in addition to the content. Writing ideas down fixes them as objects that can be taken out of context of time and relationship. As fixed objects, ideas lose the ability to grow and change, as those who hold relations with the ideas grow and change themselves. They lose their relational accountability (p. 123).

Thus, when considering the relational nature of ideas and learning within this professional development, engaging in the process of thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) allows the theory of relationality to be foundational to “keep[ing] meaning on the move in the threshold” (p. 7). Considering the emergence of this threshold helps

me to differently understand learning as relational particularly centering knowledge and ideas as relational bodies. While the previous two sections have engaged with relations with self and others, this section extends these readings to consider how Wilson's (2008) theory of relationality can open portals for (re)imagining the positivist view of teacher professional development; a view that is grounded in a desire to standardize and scale-up learning without considering the cultural and social context wherein the learning takes place (Desimone, 2011; Garet, 2001).

The positivist view of teacher professional development as needing to be evaluated on an externally validated scale is antithetical to Wilson's (2008) consideration that "knowledge itself is held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us" (p. 8). Furthering this tension between relational learning spaces and externally evaluated learning is Wilson's (2008) conception that "an idea cannot be taken out of this relational context and still maintain its shape" (p. 8). In this way, reading the data collected from this study through a relational lens in considering all knowledge and ideas as being in relation broadens the way in which relationality of knowledge and ideas manifests through the design of this professional development.

### ***Findings drawn from Teacher Interviews and Focus Groups***

During interviews and focus groups, teachers continued to make explicit connections between their learning and their ability to both imagine new possibilities for more just futures and to build those futures into existence. This was in part due to the relations with self and the beloved community that had been cultivated. Reading these findings with Wilson's (2008) and Chilisa's (2012) understandings of knowledge as

relational provides an expanded understanding of how an online professional development might be designed to shift the way that learning is understood. In plugging in the data collected, relational learning manifested in two particular ways (a) understanding COVID-19 dreaming as relational and (b) the relationship between dreaming and action.

**COVID-19 Dreaming as Relational.** Throughout the interviews and focus groups, teachers continually expressed the ways that COVID-19 served as an opening toward new possibilities within education as it created unique opportunities for transformation that would not have been otherwise possible. This insight, in many ways, altered teachers' relationship with COVID-19 in that it pushed them to reconsider their role and agency in enacting change. Michelle connected this moment with the reading from Love (2020) noting that

... it is like Bettina Love's idea that, like the current system that we are utilizing for public education, and education on the whole in the country, just isn't working for all students, and especially students of color and underserved students... and so it's time for us, I mean, I think we could use this opportunity to kind of turn everything on its head and change the systems we're working in.

Nelle furthered this point in noting that this gives us a chance to stop and create change; change that for Nelle is both long due and more possible because of the pandemic. She goes on to explain,

So, I don't know, I just really see the pandemic and this moment being like, the best, like, red light, like pausing moment to be able to make change... because we

don't have enough time in the day to serve all the students through the computer, all of the sudden, now we're able to break apart the curriculum. I mean, the standards we're allowed to take out like, I don't know, thirty, forty, fifty standards because we can't reach them, when before the pandemic, we couldn't reach all those standards with the class sizes we had, so I think it's a blessing in disguise... in the past two weeks we started putting in Teaching Tolerance standards and like equity-based standards... whereas before the pandemic, they were there, and it was an idea to do but we just had other things for whoever and whatever reason, and that wasn't a priority.

Both Michelle and Nelle highlight a shift in how they viewed their learning during the professional development institute and, in particular, during the pandemic, in that for both of them, these ideas were relational and took shape because of their cultural situatedness (Wilson, 2008). As both Michelle and Nelle spoke intentionally about the work that is done in relationship with others, relationality manifests in their consideration of these ideas as formed through the relationships and connections with their environment, the current moment in history, and the cultural situatedness of this time. For Michelle, this was through a particular reading that was discussed during the professional development, and for Nelle, this was through the work being done at her school site to more intentionally consider the standards being taught to students during this moment of pause.

For other teachers, these ideas were formed in direct relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and the portals that the pandemic opened for them to explore new ideas and knowledge sets. For example, Elena noted that online learning "... speaks to creating

greater partnership with families and helping them feel like they have all the skills and power to do that [help their students].” This idea of family partnerships was brought forth by several other teachers in their discussions of calling families to check-in as well as engaging in home visits. In a conversation about home visits discussed during one of the focus groups, Marnie and Helen identified the ways that the pandemic had changed their relationship with home visits. Helen started by noting

I think in talking about home visits, like I see the path ahead of them, but I also remember having the burden of having my teacher come, like it’s really cool, [but] you’re talking about like, I have to clean up and like present things to look ok, you know... I thought it was really cool that my teacher came but I also remember the stress of like, like I don’t think my parents ever told me it was stressful, but it definitely felt stressful and it was almost invasive in a way that my teacher was sitting in my bedroom.

Marnie followed this up with the following,

Yeah, I think it could be like, we were talking about before like COVID is giving us an opportunity to have choice right. You could offer different ways of meeting with people, you know, would you prefer a zoom meeting, a phone call, or you know FaceTime... I don’t know, Google Meets?

While home visits had a very specific structure prior to COVID-19, the cultural increase of online platforms altered the narrow conception of home visits that was previously present. In this way, relationality manifested in how teachers began to consider complicated ideas and tensions which took shape because of their relationships with the environment, a relationship that was highly altered because of COVID-19 and



the shift to online learning. Expanding the understanding of knowledge to consider “knowledge itself [as] held in the relationships and connections formed with the environment that surrounds us” (Wilson, 2008, p. 8) opens new ways to consider knowledge as relational.

This points to the need to create intentional opportunities for teachers to engage in reflection and dialogue in connection with the environment, place, and culture in order to shift knowledge away from an ontology of standardization and toward being understood as relationally situated.

In many ways, throughout the professional development, teachers shifted their view of COVID-19 in considering it as an opportunity. It changed teacher’s relationship with knowledge, ideas, schools, as well as their understanding of their own agency to (re)imagine and build new worlds. This portal and change in the relationship with ideas seemed to increase teachers’ sense of their own agency to enact change on part of their students. Nelle noted

it’s exciting because at the beginning of our course, I was like, oh, I feel like I’ve imagined the classroom that I want, you know, the school I want, I feel like I’ve done that project, like that written assignment before, but it’s different in the sense that we are taking action and, you know, keeping those connections and stuff, so I’m really excited.

Jennifer also expressed this increased desire to both change her practice and advocate for change expressing the following:

I mean I get pretty excited about the idea that something like this could exist... I could imagine how my students would feel just hearing all these choices and kind

of that excitement that comes with when we have choices... I feel empowered to make changes and with... student voice and student choice. You know, there are a lot more opportunities and pathways that aren't locked to that, there aren't barriers to that, I just haven't taken the opportunity.

Reading these two examples through the theory of relationality (Wilson, 2008) opens ways to consider Nelle and Jennifer's commitment regarding using their agency to take action. This builds on a consideration of strengthening relations with others and acknowledging the intersection of the relations with people and ideas.

While this increased sense of agency was new for some teachers, for others, who had served on the district equity teams and other district committees prior to the professional development, using their voices to advocate for change was a practiced skill. It is important to note, however, that the positioning of teachers as agents of change and their relationship with their own agency, was in part because of the work of River District's Equity Director. She served an integral role in encouraging teacher agency within this project due to looking through the action plans teachers developed as a closing activity as well as her being committed to letting teachers know throughout the professional development that their voices and ideas mattered. These practices are furthered in her engagements with teachers throughout the district in consistently and intentionally centering teacher voices. Through each of her engagements with this group of teachers, she modeled that knowledge is relational.

Relationality also manifested in Michelle's interview when she discussed the relational nature of knowledge that directly impacts her teaching and her commitments to her students.

This year has been a super wake up call for me and it definitely was for me to say, like, none of these excuses that I've had for not including more diverse work is cutting it at all. It's just my fears that I have and fears of a privileged person that gets to make these decisions because that is a luxury I have. And of course, I do fit that very typical white teacher, teacher role and so that's something I think about actually quite a bit... [but] my wakeup call was the murder of George Floyd and the protests and also my co-workers in River District. They were doing such great things to educate sixth graders about the protests and things like that, and I felt so emboldened to do that because they were also doing that... I just think it's a hope that I have that like, these systems will be broken down... the fundamentals of white supremacy... the cycles of inequity ... and it's all linked to public education in many ways... [and] I think all of these systems need to be dismantled.

Wilson's (2008) theory of relationality allows for a different understanding of Michelle's insights specific to her culturally specific relationship with white supremacy and her commitments to holding relational accountability at the core of her work. This notion of relational accountability allowed for her "ideas [to] grow and change themselves" (Wilson, 2008, p. 132) so that she could move her dreams toward concrete commitments within her classroom instruction and pedagogy.

**The Relationship between Dreaming and Action.** During their interviews, teachers continually expressed how they were planning to apply the ideas, knowledge, and experiences gained during the professional development to transform their practice.

Nelle noted that she and Marnie would be starting virtual home visits while also developing a professional development for their staff noting

the thought to that is, at least part of my thought is like less waiting, and more action, and at least like a step in that direction. So, like, why not make a PD [professional development]? We had the idea and then just decided like, well let's actually make this happen.

Marnie also expressed that she would be embedding journals her classroom as modeled within the professional development in order for students to

talk about [their] goal... for that term, or what [they] imagine [they]'ll be able to know by the end of this week... and then looking to see if it's happened...to explicitly model for them so that they can realize their visions, you know, their goals.

While both of the above examples are important in considering the transfer of learning to classroom practice, which is a consistent focus within the literature on teacher professional development (Marrongelle et al., 2013; Yoon et al., 2007), when read through the theory of relationality, this opens ways to consider why these ideas were transferable versus being confined within the course.

Literature within a positivist paradigm considers strong implementation and application to classroom instruction as a marker of effective professional development (Yoon et al., 2007), yet, what this body of research considers strong implementation is confined to a set of strategies transferred to classroom instruction, rather than a way of *being* in the classroom. This conception of transfer is limited, as it only evaluates direct implementation without understanding these new ideas as being relationally situated.

Understanding transfer in this sense through the theories of relationality, positions this transfer as lacking in sustainability because if/when the environment changes, the idea will lose shape, thus rendering the learning lacking in long-term implementation. For this reason, if knowledge is situated as decontextualized rather than relational, teacher practice is never truly transformed.

This notion of learning as relational further manifested during the final session of the professional development and the focus group sessions where teachers were asked to construct and talk through the action plans they developed based on the visionary stories they constructed. This activity was done in relation with others to encourage collaboration in moving dreams into action (see Table 7, Moving from Dreaming to Action).

For Nelle, moving her dreams off of the page was important as this moved the activity from one of imagining and toward having the ability to take action beyond the close of the course with the ideas being connected to larger decisions and systems. Relationality therefore manifested in Nelle's comment in how she considers the web of relationships as all being connected; her relationship with herself as she reflected on where she has been, her relationship with others as she considers the community formed as part of this professional development, and her relationship with her ideas as they have taken shape specific to the cultural context in which she is committed to changing.

During the focus groups, teachers continually discussed the ways in which they were already working toward their group's equity goals at their own building site or across the district. For example, Marnie, Nelle, and Lesly talked about how they would reach out to the district equity coordinator so that they could join the district equity team,

while Helen expressed that she had already planned on doing home visits and “planning to ask for forgiveness later.” Lesly, who continually expressed concern around the standardized assessments used for reading assessments in the district, was already imagining new ways of creating opportunities for collaboration to differently and more equitably assess students, while Kate discussed the ways that she was thinking intentionally about relationship and community building in order to move away from carceral responses to behavior.

Both Kate and Claire discussed their involvement on the project-based learning team that is helping to plan how project-based learning might look within a comprehensive distance learning model and were thinking deeply about how to infuse equity in this process. Further, Marnie and Nelle had already begun developing their own professional development for their staff in tandem with the work we were engaging in around the anchor text of the professional development. Finally, Jennifer found the process of writing a visionary story so transformative that she discussed the activity with her school administrator and will be working in a leadership capacity to roll this out with the staff at her school.

These specific examples build on the ways that relationality manifested in teachers’ ideas as they began to grow and take shape through self-reflection and connections with others. As teachers found the learning within the professional development course to be relational, their ideas were able to hold their shape as they intentionally considered how this new knowledge would transform their practice. While these findings do not demonstrate sustainability on the part of the implementation of these practices, as this is outside the scope of this dissertation, they do speak to how

positioning learning as relational might have the ability to offer new possibilities for how we understand learning as transferable to teacher practice.

### ***Reflections and Analysis of Findings***

Throughout the final focus groups, it became evident that the teacher's relationship with their own agency was evolving into a feeling of empowerment toward creating change not only in their classrooms but at their school sites and the district as a whole. As highlighted in Table 7 as well as the discussion that follows, for the teachers in this professional development, the building of a beloved community embedded with both dreaming and building their dreams into existence provided concrete ways to move from dreaming to action. This finding brings to bear the importance of the relationship with one's own knowledge and ideas as well as the ability to express these ideas in relationship with others who will listen without judgement.

In his discussion of the relation of ideas, Wilson (2008) notes "if reality is based upon relationships, then judgement of another's viewpoint is inconceivable. One person cannot possibly know all of the relationships that brought about another's ideas. Making judgement of others' worth or values then is also impossible" (p. 92). Reading the data gathered for research question #2 through this understanding of relational learning rather than judgmental learning becomes an important element in considering the influence of design on teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency. As the teachers in this group felt that they could be their whole selves in this relational space and simultaneously felt that they had a beloved community to learn and grow with outside of fear of judgment, they were able to stay grounded in their own worth, values, and integrity so

that their ideas took shape, and their sense of agency was strong and honored the lessons learned. This process shifted the learning to being relationally situated and contextually bound.

### **Intersections of Relationality**

It is important to consider how each of these manifestations of relationality shows up across the data in terms of how each teacher within this web of relations considers the influence of the professional development on their practice. Reading the post-survey results through the lens of relationality provides ways to consider the intersections of relationality and how as teachers think toward their future classrooms relationally.

Within their anonymous post-surveys, teachers were asked the following question: *What learnings will you take away from this professional development that you will apply to your practice?* While responses varied, relationality manifested through the teachers feeling of security and safety in their web of relations as well as their ability to strengthen their knot, a metaphor used by Wilson (2008) to theorize relationality. Wilson describes this knot, noting that

forming and strengthening these connections gives power to and helps the knot between to grow larger and stronger. We must ensure that both sides in the relationship are sharing the power going into these new connections. Without this reciprocity, one side of the relationship may gain power and substance at the expense of the other (p. 79).

Teachers expressed throughout their interviews and focus groups that this sharing and strengthening was present in many different ways through their ideas taking shape



relationally, the strengthening of their own agency, and transforming their practice through continual self-work and the building and cultivation of their beloved community. As I call into question myself as a reliable narrator and do not want to “give voice” to the teachers in this study (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 750), I think that it is important to include all responses from the teachers in their full and authentic form (all but 1 teacher had a response recorded for this question). Table 9 attempts to center the voices of the teachers while highlighting the intersections of relationality at the heart of their responses.

**Table 9**

*Relational Paradigm Embodied*

Post-Survey Response	Webs of Relationality
<p>When there is a crack that keeps widening, we get to fill it. Our soil, roots, shoots...they have room! - I plan to take away a little bravery to question the labels we use, or don't use, with and about students. - I plan to engage in conversations with my administrator, district, and colleagues about practices that support each and all students' talent development and advocate for student support systems which may include mentors/advisors/community members. It is truly empowering to have a support system and as educators I believe we call on many of these professional and friend groups at different times, should students not be ensured the same feeling of support and be able to call upon a team whenever needed? We need to be, and I plan to be, explicit about forming support for each and every student and being clear they know who their team is. This should not only occur when students meet a threshold or data mark, this should be provided freely the moment they walk into our buildings. - I plan to chip away at some walls! For me presently that will be: *advocating and implementing project-based learning *finding ways for students to have a louder voice in school (I'd like to lead a student group of sorts)</p>	<p><u>Relations with others:</u> developing support systems both professionally and personally.</p> <p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> feeling an increased sense of agency toward advocating for change and centering student voice</p>
<p>I'm really excited about the examples laid out in this book. It gives you tangible "practice" with <i>Schooltalk</i>. I was able to look internally and "think/discuss" my own personal bias's and feelings around <i>Schooltalk</i>. Also, there are plenty of <i>Schooltalk</i> scenarios that I was able to think/discuss with family members- also I gave a few of the scenarios a go on my Instagram Story with a question/response feature. That was a fun way to get a conversation started and I was surprised by the information that came back my way. Another take away - is that even though I practice asset-based language, there's always room for improvement and a refresher. Leaving this specific practice, I hope to challenge and have meaningful conversations with counter narratives and different POV's in support of students and <i>Schooltalk</i>.</p>	<p><u>Relations with self:</u> looking internal to uncover biases</p> <p><u>Relations with others:</u> building a community of learners through social media</p> <p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> feeling agency to challenge dominant narratives about students</p>

**Table 9 (continued).**

Post-Survey Response	Webs of Relationality
<p>I will take so much from this! As a Reading Specialist, it is part of my job to look at stock stories and administer standardized tests in order to choose which students need my services. I have only been doing this for a couple of years, so I have been going with the flow of what I was told is expected of me. However, I feel I now have the tools to advocate for my students and find better ways to assist them by speaking up on their behalf. I also have more knowledge on what my own actions, words, and biases do to negatively impact my students. I will work harder to make sure that I am not using coded language, and I will encourage my colleagues to rethink the way they speak to and about our students.</p>	<p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> feeling an increased sense of agency to advocate for students and encourage colleagues to move away from coded language</p> <p><u>Relations with self:</u> engaging in internal work to not use coded language</p>
<p>I will continue to learn and grow so that I am contributing positively and effectively to my mission of bringing equity to my practice as a teacher, parent, community member, and human being.</p>	<p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> making a continued commitment to equity in all roles</p> <p><u>Relations with others:</u> considering their role as a lifelong learner in all spheres of their lives (both personally and professionally)</p>
<p>I want to be conscious about the language I used about, with, around students. I want to work on pointing out the language that we use in schools is problematic and work to get colleagues to recognize it and change it. I want to continue writing my visionary fiction and hopefully putting parts of it in action. Overall, this PD [professional development] has made me reflect on the stories I tell of students, colleagues and of myself. Everyone has multiple stories that intersect. I find myself only telling certain stories of myself almost like a shield and it's only when someone has really earned my trust that I'll tell the rest. How many students come to school with their personal "stock" stories to share and never get a chance to share their full stories because teachers didn't take time to listen?</p>	<p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> encouraging colleagues to recognize and change problematic language</p> <p><u>Relations with self:</u> being conscious of the language used about, with, and around students, reflecting on everyone's multiples stories</p>

**Table 9 (continued).**

Post-Survey Response	Webs of Relationality
<p>I have realized how delicate our daily language in school can be. We use words like “Title” so often that they become normalized, but we forget those labels may feel like a punch in the gut to someone each time they are said aloud. We must be more caring with our words and labels for students and remember that each student is different and talented in individual ways. Words are important. Students are more than labels.</p>	<p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> realizing the delicate nature of language in schools</p> <p><u>Relations with others:</u> considering the students as within their sphere of support and reflecting on the impact of words on students</p>
<p>Dream big. Dream crazy things that could never be and believe in them. Be willing to speak your dreams until they are plans and move forward with them.</p>	<p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> continuing to dream and build dreams into reality</p> <p><u>Relations with self:</u> reflecting on being willing to speak up in order to be vocal about their dreams</p>
<p>Language matters. I will recall the power of using labels in both negative and positive ways, overall reducing label use unless it is a way the student identifies themselves. Barriers to learning should be labeled accurately as social structures instead of using identifiers as deficit language - for example, being female is not the barrier, patriarchy is the barrier. Being a student of color is not the barrier, white supremacy is the barrier.</p>	<p><u>Relations with knowledge/ideas/agency:</u> being mindful of deficit language and identifying the system, rather than the individual as the barrier</p> <p><u>Relations with self:</u> reflecting on their role in the use of using language intentionally</p>

The words from the teachers read through Wilson's (2008) theory of relationality point to the notion that relationality is not a strategy to be learned or a tool to add to one's teacher toolkit, rather it is a way of being in the world. It is a move away from disembodied learning and linear notions of progress and toward learning as relational. In this move away from dominant neoliberal notions of learning and knowledge production and toward an Indigenous axiology that is accountable and grounded in relationships, there is a need for professional development to be designed to give space to teachers to not to chase a product, but to engage in a process of learning. As this positioning of process over product is antithetical to chrononormative logics, this understanding of learning provides a way to consider how these logics might be disrupted in order to more fully center relationality over linear and individualized learning.

While the research question for this chapter asks specifically about *how the design of an online professional development influences teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency*, in reading the data through the theory of relationality (Wilson, 2008), the environment in which the professional development takes place e.g., online or in-person does not seem to influence teachers' engagement with the material. Rather, the importance lies in creating space for teachers to process their learning in ways that allows for them to be accountable to all their relations. Therefore, whether or not professional development takes place in an online setting, an understanding that learning is relational is vital to attend to if the desire is to engage teachers in deep, sustainable, and transformative shifts in practice.

This notion of the learning environment was highlighted in Nelle's discussion wherein she connected with another online professional development taken by many of

the teachers in this study after the close of the professional development under study.

Nelle noted that this was not a positive experience as

... the vibes were just off and defensive and negative and so it was just automatically. That's how this trainer set up the environment. So yeah, I was like, okay, so you can still feel that stuff, whether it's positive or negative through this screen.

This particular example highlights the ways in which moving toward this embodied relational work requires a space to be created that allows for people's identities not to be parked in boxes and that this requires the creation of a relational environment.

### Summary

Thinking with Wilson's (2008) and Chilisa's (2012) theories of Indigenous relationality offers a way to consider how important relationships are to teacher learning and the transformation of teacher practice. By moving beyond codes and themes and instead reading this data through the theory of relationality and the analytic question for this chapter which asks *how an online professional development can be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning*, new openings were created. These openings offered ways to understand learning as existing outside of the bounds of neoliberal paradigms and chrononormative logics. By engaging in a thinking with theory process (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) of reading the data, new understandings of teacher learning, and professional development design manifested, pointing to a deeper engagement with the data and an understanding that learning is relational.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

*The [corona]virus is rewriting our imaginations. What felt impossible has become thinkable. We're getting a different sense of our place in history. We know we're entering a new world, a new era. We seem to be learning our way into a new structure of feeling (Stanley-Robinson, 2020).*

Dear Jose,

During the winter of 2020, I had the opportunity to enroll in a course that took place inside of a state correctional center. This course, which was held in a large room at the back of the correctional center, was harder for me than I would have imagined. The difficulty was not rooted in the content, rather the emotional toll that this took when each Tuesday afternoon for ten weeks, I entered the building where I went through a metal detector, walked through the concrete walls of the institution in a silent single-file line, and sat in a classroom with a group of incredible men, many of whom, like you, had been incarcerated when they were kids.

There were a couple of men in the class who reminded me so much of you, who spoke about the way that teachers treated them in school, the messages that schools sent to them about how they didn't belong, and the ways in which those messages, even as adults, shape who they are and how they see themselves in this world. I am reminded of one man in particular who was outspoken in class and seemed to be friends with everyone in the group, always smiling and laughing. During class one evening, he asked me to read his story aloud to the group as he didn't feel comfortable. At this moment, I was instantly transformed back to 2010, thinking about your

boisterous personality, the way that you commanded presence, and yet how you would shrink when it came time to engage in reading or writing. I saw so much of you in him.

It made me wonder how deeply the scars of childhood show on your body and in your heart. I left that class each night unable to speak and unable to sleep because all I could do was wonder where you were at that very moment, hoping that maybe, just maybe, you, too, had the opportunity to engage in school again on your own terms, that you had a group of friends who you loved and trusted, and that you found joy. I only hope that one day, our paths will cross again, so that you can tell me your own story and I can tell you mine.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings in this dissertation align with previous research that highlights that learning new strategies does not transform teacher's practice, rather it is a deeper consideration and reflection of who one is, and in a sense, an intentional cultivation of their teacher identity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Utt & Tochluk, 2020). Extending previous literature in this area, this study found that supporting transformative teaching requires that teachers are given opportunities to (a) confront and interrogate who they are in this world and in their community, (b) engage with relational learning in a beloved community of educators, (c) have opportunities to radically dream new futures, and (d) have the agency to build their dreams into existence. COVID-19, while putting a hold on many of our routines and sense of normalcy, has, as Nelle noted in her interview, given us a red light to slow down and rethink the policies and practices at the root of our schools and classrooms.



This professional development has been a byproduct of that red light, a space for a radical and collective (re)imagining of how teacher learning can occur more widely through an online platform by increasing accessibility while holding space for self-work, beloved community, and collective dreaming. As schools reopen, this research offers a portal for radically (re)imagining teacher learning through the consideration of visionary pedagogy and relational learning as praxis for teacher development.

This dissertation study asked two overarching questions:

1. *How can visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?*
2. *How does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?*

Each of these questions was explored to better understand the ways teacher learning might be (re)imagined, as well as to consider how the design of a learning experience might create space for visionary pedagogy and relational learning to flourish. As the research questions served as companion questions, each engaged with a distinct theoretical framework to think deeply with theory, to ask new and expanded questions, and to move away from a theory, data binary (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

### **Radical (Re)imaginings of Teacher Professional Development**

The first research question in this study engaged with theory in the field of psychology to consider how autobiographical memory, narrative identity, and future thinking impact teacher practice. The findings chapter associated with this question provided three case stories of teachers engaged in the professional development as well

as a multiple case study analysis which considered common themes by reading the case stories (quintain) through the following analytic questions: *(a) How does a teacher's autobiographical memory and identity impact their teaching practice? (b) How can dreaming about a future not yet possible help to transform teacher practice? (c) In what ways can action planning concretize teacher's future visions?* While several important insights can be drawn from the data, key findings include:

1. Teacher's autobiographical memories (McAdams, 2003) are intrinsically linked to how teachers show up in the classroom, therefore, they need to be in beloved communities (hooks, 1996) where they can engage in archaeology of self practices (Sealey-Ruiz, 2020) and processes of excavation (Strong-Wilson, 2008) to reflect on how these memories impact both their teacher identity and teacher practice.
2. Storied learning and leveraging stories as an analytic to interrogate racism and injustice provides a powerful framework for learning, particularly when considering Bell's (2019) Storytelling Project Model in connection with arts-based methods of imagination (Greene, 1995) through visionary fiction (brown & Imarisha, 2015).
3. An engagement with visionary pedagogy can be leveraged as a way to think and *be* outside of the neoliberal social imaginary and chrononormative logics through a shifting toward embodied learning and radical imagination through grounding learning in a process rather than product orientation. This provides powerful opportunities to leverage theories of futuring which allow for radically

(re)imagining and (re)storying teacher practice while cultivating a critical consciousness through reflection and action.

4. If teachers are given the opportunity to dream big and imagine new futures without explicitly attending systemic barriers through a process of engaging with counterfuturisms (Springgay & Truman, 2019), visionary pedagogy will fall short, as indulging without considering the barriers to implementation does not often lead to change in behavior (Oettingen, 2000).
5. Mental contrasting (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al., 2001; 2009; Szpunar et al., 2018; Wright, 2008) is a powerful mode of thought for enacting change and can occur at both the individual and collective level. Engaging in mental contrasting is highly productive through the convergence of storytelling, constructive dialogue, and collective action planning.
6. Providing teachers space to engage in mental exploration and mental contrasting without supporting teachers as agents of change lacks transformative power. At the same time, if teachers are not given the agency to create change in their classrooms and buildings, this can lead to dwelling on all that is not possible which is unlikely to lead to behavior change but has the potential to have negative impacts on self-worth and motivation (Oettingen, 2000). Instead, teacher voices need to be valued, and they need to have access to conversations where decisions are made.

### *Contribution to the field of Professional Development*

When taking these findings together, this study aims to contribute to scholarship in the field of teacher professional development in calling for radically (re)imagining how we construct and enact teacher learning. This study highlights a number of important findings in considering the design of a professional development and the pedagogical shifts that allow for storied and relational learning to take root. Arguing that this requires a shift away from professional development that seeks to standardized teacher learning through decontextualized skills building, these findings build on research that calls for professional development to more intentionally consider the person of the teacher (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) rather than solely providing teachers with technical support for predetermined and preassembled curriculum (Milner, 2012).

Drawing on Springgay and Truman's (2019) understanding of counterfuturisms, which they describe as countering progressive notions of time, the findings in this study in connection with the first research question demonstrate that when visionary pedagogy is embedded within an online professional development course, spaces of possibility are opened through the creation of visionary stories and collective action planning. In the case of this particular research, these possibilities moved teachers into a space of embracing social justice and liberation while working to interrogate and dismantle white supremacy and systems of oppression (brown & Imarisha, 2015; Lothian, 2018).

Further, findings show that visionary pedagogy provides teachers with a framework to push back against neoliberal paradigms and chrononormative logics that structure the social imaginary of teaching as requiring standardization through serving as managers of learning rather than dreamers and creators. This points to the need to ensure

that teachers stories, dreams, and goal commitments are considered as paving the way for change at the classroom, school, and district level.

**Impact on Professional Development Practice.** Although research continues to demonstrate the importance of high-quality teachers (DeMonte 2013; Polly et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2007), the investment in teacher education, and particularly, teacher professional development, remains neglected with the focus on programmatic efforts and curricula (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Korthagan, 2017; Marrongelle et al., 2013). Wilson and Berne (1999) argue that often professional development is a dissemination activity with the goal being to locate new knowledge, package knowledge, and put knowledge in teachers' hands. This presents an underlying epistemological assumption that teacher knowledge can be simply translated with little to no consideration of the stories of the teachers or their roots, shoots, and soil building on a belief that "teacher's beliefs, prior learning, and attitudes [as] an essential ingredient and [instead believing] that teaching can be controlled by prescriptions for practice" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 344).

While there are many examples of research in the field of professional development that readily considers more humanizing understandings of teacher learning (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Shulman, 1987), a continued interest in teacher evaluation and performance measures for professional development have guided the conversation away from narrative accounts of teacher learning and toward a positivist and neoliberal framework of success (Desimone, 2011; Garet, 2011; Yoon, 2007).

The findings from this dissertation research, and in particular research question #1, push back against this particular line of research and offer a new vision for how we might (re)imagine teacher learning as a relational and embodied practice that considers teachers' stories central to learning. This requires moving away from the dominant social imaginary that positions the goal of teacher professional development as gaining a decontextualized set of skills and toward the goal of teacher learning as storied with teachers being given agency to dream big, build their dreams into existence, and pave the way for future change in schools that will benefit all of our relations.

One possible way to move toward this notion of storied learning is through an arts-based approach (Greene, 1995) that engages teachers in critically analyzing stories and developing their own stories. As Bell (2019) highlights in her work, stories provide a powerful analytic for creating a bridge between the sociological underpinnings of society and more abstract concepts thus serving as a powerful way to interrogate larger societal concerns. As presented in this research study, engaging teachers in the use of Storytelling Project Model (Bell, 2019), provides access to a framework to identify different story types as well as deeply analyze them in order to both disrupt and create anew.

Findings highlight that engaging with this framework allowed teachers to have a more accurate understanding of complex societal injustices as represented through the creation of their visionary stories which attended to both personal as well as systemic shifts. Further, creating visionary fiction (brown & Imarisha, 2015) stories grounded in counterfuturisms (Springgay & Truman, 2019) provided a more comprehensive way for teachers to develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) as they were able to construct

stories and interrogate these stories through collective dialogue to make sense of the social reality and commit to action.

**Visionary Pedagogy as Praxis for Teacher Development.** Visionary pedagogy was designed to support teachers in thinking about their own identity and teaching practices temporally through an overall interrogation of stories as embedded in the social imaginary. Findings from this research show that this pedagogical approach, which includes six intentional and intersecting practices allowed teachers to develop a new sense of self and can be understood as holding a space of praxis for teacher development.

The practices included (a) engaging teachers in an archaeology of self (Sealey Ruiz, 2019) which asked teachers to think deeply about their identity; (b) learning and thinking about Bell's (2019) storytelling project model in connection with teacher's own experiences and stories; (c) engaging in continued opportunities to build a beloved community (hooks, 1996); (d) participating in somatic practices (Haines, 2019) to move toward understanding teaching as an embodied practice; (e) holding space for teachers to release their imaginations (Greene, 1995) in order to construct visionary stories; and (f) having opportunities to build dreams into reality through the development of concrete action planning (Oettingen, 2018)<sup>20</sup>.

While previous research has demonstrated the transformative power of each of these practices, this dissertation research found that considering the intersection of these six practices as highlighted in the heuristic for Visionary Pedagogy (see Figure 1), has the power to more radically transform teacher practice. This radical transformation is due to

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<sup>20</sup> Each of these practices and the foregrounding theory are more thoroughly discussed in Chapter IV: Design Methodology of this dissertation.

teachers having space to consider their own stories through building deep relationships with colleagues and engaging more intentionally with their stories through mental exploration and mental contrasting. Through a visionary pedagogy, teachers are given the space to radically dream and engage in world building through the thoughtful consideration of systemic inequities, barriers and possibilities, and their own positionality and identity in the classroom.

*Teachers' roles in dreaming and enacting change.* The findings drawn directly from the implementation of visionary pedagogy highlight the power of this pedagogy in moving teachers toward integrating their learning with a sense of self while also highlighting that it is essential that teachers are viewed as professionals, at their school, within their district, and nation-wide. For too long, teachers have been deprofessionalized (Apple, 1995; Apple & Jungck, 1990; Pinar, 2012) and have been given little voice or agency to catalyze change. Therefore, if visionary pedagogy is to help us to (re)imagine teacher learning and create opportunities for teacher transformation, teachers must be viewed as professionals and given agency at their school sites, within their districts, and on a larger scale to both imagine change and put that change into action.

Along with this, there must be opportunities for teachers to build meaningful relationships with their colleagues so that they are part of a beloved community where they are able to do the deep identity work and reflection needed for the transformation of practice and the cultivation of a critical consciousness. As previous research on PLCs and CFGs has highlighted, deep levels of learning occur when teachers are in community with others and are able to learn in authentic and meaningful ways. Yet, this research



extends previous understandings of teacher learning communities in order to consider the need for teachers to be in beloved community, drawing particularly on hooks' (1996) conceptualization, as the work of radical change and disruption of injustice does not happen at the individual level; it happens as a collective. This speaks to the need to ensure that teachers are listened to and valued, with their voices being central to educational decision-making. As the findings in this study show, teachers have the solutions, they just need to be given a platform.

***The Role of District leadership in Supporting Changemaking.*** The findings in this study also point to the importance of district leadership teams that listen to teachers and create authentic and meaningful learning opportunities; opportunities not only grounded in what the district feels is important but also what the teachers feel is important. River District's Equity Director embodied this ideology through the intentional creation of committees readily accessible to all teachers, listening to teachers and holding their voices and ideas in high esteem, and providing teachers with the agency to interact and engage with district leadership to develop partnerships for change.

School and district administrators are vital to ensuring that teachers feel heard and valued and are able to dream big and write different futures for schools with teacher voices being crucial within discussions regarding both micro-level levers as macro-level levers for change. Further, findings implicitly demonstrate that visionary pedagogy will be as ineffective as the (re)imagined professional development that this dissertation is calling for if there is not a shift in the way that teachers are viewed, with their voices being central to school and district change.

## Designing Relational Learning Opportunities

The second research question in this study engaged with an Indigenous research paradigm to consider a more thoughtful and deepened understanding of relational learning design. The findings chapter associated with this question plugged the data gathered into Wilson's (2008) theory of relationality by engaging with Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) thinking with theory practice. This approach allowed for new understandings of relational learning, making it possible to think about teacher learning in a different way, through a relational rather than transactional lens. This chapter considered the associated analytic question by attending to the manifestation of relationality as read through the data, asking: *how can an online professional development be designed in a way that holds relationship as central to learning?* This analytic question provided expanded ways to understand teacher learning, and in fact, all learning as relational. While several important insights can be drawn from the data, key findings include:

1. If learning does not happen relationally, it is less likely that the learning will become a part of teachers' relations, therefore lacking the power to transform teacher practice in any real and sustainable way.
2. Shifting accountability from external pressure to an internally relational accountable process creates deepened learning opportunities and space for embodied learning.
3. Learning happens through one's web of relations and therefore requires spaces where people can be their full and authentic selves.

4. Forming new relationships, as well as deepening existing relationships, are integral to shifting toward relational learning, a process that is grounded in thoughtful and intentional communication.
5. Ideas lose their shape when they are not in relation; therefore, all learning needs to be culturally, contextually, and socially situated.
6. For the transformation of teaching practice to occur, the ontological understanding of learning must be shifted from decontextualized and transactional toward learning as relational.
7. The setting of the professional development (e.g., online, hybrid, or in-person), while impactful to the overall design and pedagogy, does not limit the ability to create spaces for relational learning to take root.

### ***Contribution to the Field of Design Learning***

In considering the research questions grounding this dissertation, and the call to action regarding a (re)imagining of professional development, the findings associated with research question #2 demonstrate that while research in the field of teacher professional development has long-since realized the benefits of collaboration amongst teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Pella, 2015; Polly & Hannafin, 2011), what is missing is an understanding that relationality is more than simply a relationship, rather it is a way of being in this world. It is further understanding that reality is relationships and each of us are part of a web of relationships comprised of ideas, people, the land, and the cosmos (Wilson, 2018).

This ontological and epistemological shift requires one to be “accountable to the relationships that we form in our search for enlightenment” (Wilson, 2008, p. 95). Therefore, in designing professional development opportunities for teachers, the notion of learning as relational becomes critical, in that this shift in our understanding of learning enables a different type of engagement with designing and facilitating meaningful, and arguably critical, learning experiences for teachers. These findings highlight the drawbacks of using external validation and accountability measures such as digital badges (Shields & Chugh, 2017) within teacher learning spaces as this can lead to surface level engagement which is in direct opposition to deep levels of relational learning.

Throughout the interviews and focus groups as part of this dissertation, relationality manifested in ways that highlighted the importance of designing professional development that (a) holds space for teachers to engage in self-reflection in an effort to deepen an understanding of teaching as embodied in order to move toward internal rather than external relational accountability, (b) creates meaningful opportunities to both deepen existing relationships and build new relationships with others through relational rather than judgmental communication, and (c) understands that ideas and knowledge are relational as well as culturally specific and socially situated, and if taken out of context, are not able to maintain their shape. These three key ideas move toward an expanded understanding of relationality, an understanding that considers learning as relational and makes possible new ways to develop professional development opportunities for teachers; opportunities that attend to all of the teachers’ relations.

In his book, Wilson (2008) provides a set of questions that he encourages all researchers to ask if engaging in research within an Indigenous paradigm. I find these

questions helpful in considering the design process of professional development courses and institutes. While not a roadmap, or a set of expectations, these questions provide individuals designing and/or facilitating professional development to do so in ways that are rooted in relational accountability. Table 10 includes Wilson's (2008) set of questions for researchers as well as questions that build on and adapt these initial questions to consider designing and/or facilitating relationally accountable professional development. These questions are designed to be considered before, during, and after professional development so as to ensure that learning experiences are grounded in relationality and accountable to all the web of relations throughout the entirety of the professional development design process; a process that is iterative and ever-changing.

**Table 10**

*Moving Toward Relationally Accountable Professional Development*

<b>Wilson's (2008) Questions for Researchers Doing Research Within an Indigenous Paradigm (p. 77)</b>	<b>Questions for Professional Development Designers Engaging in Relational Work adapted from Wilson (2008)</b>
How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between the topic that I am studying and myself as researcher (on multiple levels)?	How does the design of the learning build respectful relationships between the content of the professional development and the teachers (on multiple levels e.g., relationship with self, relationship with others- existing and new, and relationships with knowledge, ideas, and sense of agency, relationship with place <sup>21</sup> , etc.)?
How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between myself and the other research participants?	How does my instructional design and pedagogy build respectful relationships between myself (as the facilitator) and the teachers as well as between teachers?
How can I relate respectfully to the other participants involved in this research so that together we can form a stronger relationship with the idea that we will share?	How can my instructional design hold space for teacher ownership of the pedagogy and knowledge produced? (Chilisa, 2012)
What is my role as researcher in this relationship, and what are my responsibilities?	What is my role as an instructional designer/facilitator in this relationship, what are my responsibilities, and how am I engaging in relational accountability?
Am I being responsible in fulfilling my role and obligations to the other participants, to the topic and to all of my relations?	Am I being responsible in designing (and/or facilitating) a professional development for teachers that fulfills my role and obligation to all teachers and all of my relations?
What am I contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal?	What am I contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal?

<sup>21</sup> When reading the data gathered for this particular study, relationship with place did not manifest, however, this is important for designers and facilitators to deeply consider as all relations are contextually and socially situated.

## Research Implications

This study highlighted the ways that visionary pedagogy and relational learning can set the foundation for transforming teacher practice. By embedding two distinct theoretical frameworks to answer the two research questions, this study provides a rich pedagogical approach to (re)imagine teacher learning. This study set out to understand the following:

- 1) *How might visionary pedagogy embedded within an online teacher professional development offer a lever of change for transforming teacher practice?*
- 2) *How does the instructional design of an in-service professional development influence teacher engagement, learning, and sense of agency?*

With regards to the first research question, this study found that visionary fiction was effective in supporting the transformation of teacher practice, particularly in the ways that teachers understood their roles in the classroom and their ability, and in many cases, responsibility to enact change. Through an engagement with narrative identity work within the field of psychology, this study found that teacher's life stories and experiences as students directly impact both their teacher identity and the practices they employ in their classrooms. As expressed through the interviews, the identities that teachers cultivated were a product of relationships with other teachers, their co-conspirators, their social networks, and their students. This builds on previous research that suggests that identity emerges through a social context (Welch-Ross, 1995). This positions this particular research as extending this work to consider how teachers' identities are in many ways developed collectively through their social milieu (Cohler & Hammock, 2006).

Thinking specifically with the work of Oettingen et al. (2018) around the three functions of future thinking, this study found that imagining and visualizing possibilities through mental exploration and mental time travel (Oyserman, 2015; Tulving, 1985), through the practice of visionary storytelling is an impactful way for teachers to consider their future goals for schools. However, the study found that mental exploration through visionary storytelling without a systemic analysis does not provide leverage for teacher transformation and instead serves as a creative activity and an act of indulgence (Oettingen, 2000).

Further, this study found that engaging in a narrative approach to futuring through the convergence of psychological theories of autobiographical memories and future thinking and storytelling, this provided a deeply profound way to understand how teachers were making temporal connections between their past, present and future. This builds on the work of Sools and Moren (2012) in the way that they conceptualize story as being the root of identity construction.

This study also found that mental exploration of positive fantasies when connected to mental contrasting is beneficial in that the teachers are able to consider their future possible selves (Markus, & Nurius, 1986) within the visionary storytelling process. This process occurred in very explicit ways with teachers considering both short and long-term shifts that could occur within their classrooms based on their visionary story thus building goal commitments toward change. These findings build on Klinger's (1971; 1978) conception of daydreams and further an understanding that high expectations of success of a future event influence present behavior.



As the teachers in this study felt a sense of agency in terms of their ability to catalyze change in their classroom, their high expectations of success positively impacted their visionary stories and commitments to change. In this, the findings presented here align with an argument that if the teachers would not have felt a sense of agency in their classrooms or district, these future fantasies could have been detrimental for teachers in that they would not have had realistic ways to overcome identified obstacles (Oettingen, 1996, 2000; Oettingen et al., 2001).

Further, building off previous work around mental contrasting (Destin et al., 2018; Oettingen et al., 2001; 2009; Wright, 2008), this study highlights the importance of teachers being able to think through possible barriers to implementation regarding their visionary stories as well as having space to talk through these barriers and develop action plans. This study found that mental contrasting as a mode of thought is impactful when engaged with both individually and collectively, therefore extending work within this field to highlight the benefits of mental exploration and mental contrasting as a community-oriented activity.

Considering the work of theories of futuring and in particular the visionary fiction work of Brown and Imarisha (2015), this study found that providing teachers with the space to play, invent, and engage in (re)imagining new futures for schools before having to deal with the actual implementation of their future visions was both productive and freeing. As teachers were able to sit in a place of imagination while building new worlds on paper, this allowed them to consider compelling futures of schools based on their experiences, the sociopolitical landscape, and the current moment in time. Building on the writing process of Octavia Butler and the visionary fiction and world building of

adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha, the findings in this study highlight the power of speculation in the opening of possibilities for imagining “radically different and better elsewhere” (Lothian, 2018, p. 22). Findings also further the work of Maxine Greene in her arts-based approach to learning in providing a particular framework to support teachers in “...look[ing] beyond the given, beyond what appears to be unchangeable” (Greene, 2009, p. 397),

In terms of the second research question, this study found that unlike previous research that highlights the isolated nature of online learning (Hill et al., 2002), online professional development, if grounded in theories of relational learning (Wilson, 2008), has the potential to not only expand access for teachers, but also provide authentic learning opportunities that move outside of hyper localized experiences (Dede et al., 2009) with the possibility for embodied and transformative teacher learning. These findings coincide with the need for professional development to move beyond considering only skills building and toward professional development that centers the humanness of teacher experience (Brooks et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Moving teachers toward embodied relational learning demonstrates the potential for teachers to more intentionally consider their relationship with their body, stories, knowledge, and needs in order to engage in embodied knowing (Haines, 2019). This shift toward relational embodied learning provides an important analytic by which to confront and disrupt the neoliberal social imaginary in which teachers work.

Building on the work of Wilson (2008) and his theory of Indigenous relationality, the findings from this study highlight that relationship is not only important to learning, rather relationship *is* learning and learning *is* relationship. Therefore, if teacher

professional development is structured in a way that does not hold relationship as a foundational tenet, there are missed opportunities for deep learning and transformation of teacher practice. As a result, neoliberal ideas of learning as individualized and linear expressed solely through standardized and chrononormative measures will continue to overpower authentic and transformative learning for teachers, learning needed if we are to rewrite the social imaginary.

Along with this, in considering previous work within the field of professional development that seeks to evaluate professional development on the basis of particular features e.g. content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (Desimone, 2011; Garet, 2001), the findings from this study demonstrate that no matter the evaluation process used to determine effectiveness, if the learning is not relational, and ideas are decontextualized, they will lose their shape and lack the ability to transform teacher practice in any sustainable way.

With regards to the research design, findings highlight the ways in which the adapted principles of design research (Edelson, 2002) can provide a powerful framework for centering the voices of participants within the design process. As this particular research question considered the design of the professional development, findings highlight the effectiveness of adapting the design research process for consideration when designing professional development courses or institutes. These findings further highlight the benefits of using such a process within equity-oriented research frameworks and the creation of equity-oriented professional development.

## **Areas of Future Research**

While the findings highlight the positive impact of visionary pedagogy, it is important to understand the context in which this research took place. As visionary pedagogy asks teachers to (re)imagine new futures of schools, it is possible that the depth of the imagining taking place was in part due to the fact that as teachers in this study were constructing their stories, their previous reality had been pulled out from under them due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this, teachers were already having to (re)imagine their curricula and pedagogy as they shifted outside of the four walls of their classrooms and toward online learning spaces. Therefore, future research should more thoroughly consider the impact of the cultural and temporal reality in which the research is taking place in order to understand how visionary pedagogy impacts teacher practice outside of a year where (re)imagining learning spaces is a job requirement.

Further, as this research highlighted the benefits of mental contrasting for moving teachers toward equity-oriented goal commitments, it is important that future research builds on this work in order to better understand the context in which mental contrasting is in fact beneficial. In this particular district, teachers' voices were central to decision-making and therefore teachers had agency in their classrooms, buildings, and district-wide to catalyze change. In this way, the conversations surrounding action planning were filled with possibility and a commitment to transformation (personally and systemically). It would be remiss, however, to assume that teachers in districts across this nation feel that they have the agency to engage in change-making. In this way, visionary pedagogy, specific to the construction of visionary stories and action planning, could lead to teachers engaging in the act of dwelling (Oettingen, 2000) if they feel powerless to enact

change. In this, future research should engage more intentionally with teachers in a variety of districts with varying leadership styles in order to understand what they see as the benefits or drawbacks of this practice. These conclusions can further inform the ways that mental contrasting is understood to impact goal commitments and behaviors.

Further, as many of the visionary stories written by teachers included elements regarding change at the building level, it would be generative for future research to engage administrators at the school, district, and state levels with visionary pedagogy. This would allow administrators to potentially experience this pedagogical shift in considering both their engagement with visionary pedagogy as well as how they offer, or do not offer, the teachers in their building with opportunities to catalyze change.

The findings highlighted in this study center the stories of teachers who had begun their equity journey prior to engaging in this professional development institute. Therefore, while the engagement with visionary pedagogy and relational learning highlighted important findings, the work that these teachers were asked to do was for some, quite familiar. In this, one future area of research should include engaging in visionary pedagogical work with teachers who are in the early stages of equity work; those who have not had opportunities for extended discourse around equity and social justice. Understanding the impact of teachers' previous experience with these concepts and ideologies will be helpful in both tightening the features of visionary pedagogy as well as extending this research.

In a similar vein, engaging in this work with non-white teachers as well as teachers who work with primarily non-white student populations is an important area of future research. While four of the nine teachers in this study identified as people of color,

the majority of teachers identified as white. Although the percentage of teachers of color in this study is higher than teachers of color nationwide, it is important to understand the impact of visionary pedagogy on the practice of teachers of color, as much of the theory undergirding this work has been developed by Black women (e.g., bell hooks, Bettina Love, adrienne maree brown, and Walidah Imarisha). Engaging in this work within different populations of teachers as well as through an engagement with a non-white facilitator is an important area for future research.<sup>22</sup> Along with this, all of the teachers in this study identified as cisgender females and no teachers discussed being neurodivergent or dis/abled. It is thus important that the identity groups engaging in this work are expanded.

Along with this, as this particular study engaged in research around the ways in which visionary pedagogy impacts teaching identity and perception of practice, it is important that future studies consider the application of learning regarding how this pedagogy affects the actual production and embodiment of teaching practices within the classroom. Future research can expand on this initial research through participant observations, follow-up interviews, and focus groups to learn about short- and long-term impacts regarding goal commitments.

Finally, in considering the design findings in connection with the theory of relational learning (Wilson, 2008), future research that engages with professional development designers and facilitators will be an important way to better understand the impact of the questions for professional development facilitators interested in developing

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<sup>22</sup> Within this professional development, there were two facilitators, myself who is white and my co-facilitator who racially- the government forms refer to as white or mixed ethnicity, while she identifies as mixed heritage and Arab American. During the professional development, her race did not become a topic of discussion, therefore, it is unclear as to whether participants viewed her as white or a person of color.

relational learning opportunities. A further consideration would include future research that engages with these questions in a variety of formats e.g., online, hybrid, and in-person in order to understand the function of relationality across each of these unique spaces.

### **Chrononormativity and Counterfuturisms as Praxis**

Through the process of engaging with visionary pedagogy and thinking about the ways in which this particular pedagogical approach might be able to do the work of disrupting chrononormativity, I am left grappling with questions and wonderings in both a theoretical and practical sense. While visionary pedagogy aims to understand how thinking temporally might provide ways to move outside of chrononormative logics in a disruption of linear notions of production, it feels difficult, and in many ways, impossible to truly disrupt chrononormativity as our society and the way we mark the passage of time is chrononormative in nature. With that being said, what visionary pedagogy does offer is a way by which to disrupt the ideologies that promote self-interest and productivity over embodied teaching and learning while also providing teachers with a space to sit in the messiness and discomfort of the learning *process* rather than pushing for the *product* of learning to be the central goal.

Further, while visionary pedagogy offers an engagement with counterfuturisms and other theories of futuring, it holds onto a theoretical orientation that understands that the past, present, and future are all intertwined; a theoretical orientation that crosses bounds of scholarship in an effort to understand how we might counter progressive and chronological time in order to open space for new possibilities.

In considering the theories of chrononormativity, it is an important distinction to understand the interconnectedness of time not only within society's structures but also on the body. Therefore, just as theories of futuring through the lens of queer temporalities, Afrofuturism, and Indigenous futurities, understand the importance of history on the ways that we think about the future, so, too, does the field of psychology. As Lombardo (2007) reminds us, the past is tied to the future and in this way, the more we understand of the past, the more our capacity to engage in future thinking is impacted as both past recollection and future thinking engage the same areas in the brain.

In this way, while visionary pedagogy does not have the power to truly disrupt chrononormative logics, it does provide a framework for teachers and teacher leaders to engage more thoughtfully with learning as process and with an understanding that while schools and learning are bound up in hegemony of chrononormativity, moving toward an embodied learning process and away from a decontextualized learning products is a starting point in building more just futures.

This pedagogy thus has the potential to (re)story teachers not as individually successful due to their intellectual pursuits, but as a whole person with a mind and a body, therefore shifting the narrative away from one as dualistic progress and towards one as embodied learning, knowing, and being. In this way, future research can more intentionally consider embodied learning as a through line for asking questions about the ways in which understandings of autobiographical memories, future thinking, and chrononormative logics through the lens of embodiment can expand ways to move toward deeper levels of praxis.



## **Cultivating Critical Consciousness through Radical Dreaming**

In the conclusion of the book *Growing Critically Conscious Teachers: A Social Justice Curriculum for Educators of Latino/a Youth*, Angela Valenzuela (2016) connects with the work of Greene (1988), noting that

... our society and educational system advance ways of knowing and achieving freedom in the world that promote individualistic, consumeristic, and privatized identities in which 'freedom' often extends little beyond personal and limited notions of gain. Moreover, these narrow notions of profit and gain deprive us of a full awareness of who we are and what we can become. If we are not critically reflective, we may opt for *having*, rather than *being* more. In so doing, we risk becoming unwitting conspirators in the diminishment of our own power, and thusly, our sense of selves. A diminished sense of self both serves the interests of current constellations of power rob us of a conscious awareness not only of our personal and individual possibilities, but also the enormous potential that is literally within our grasp to transform our schools and communities in all the ways that we envision (p. 108)

This understanding of cultivating critical consciousness is in direct opposition to neoliberal paradigms and chrononormative logics, in direct opposition to using in-service professional development to *only* build a teacher's toolbox of strategies, and in direct opposition to evaluating professional development and teaching on a standardized scale disconnected from the storied lives of teachers. Instead, if we are to cultivate critically conscious teachers, we must cultivate and (re)imagine a new understanding and vision for teacher learning. A vision that embraces storied and relational learning and individual

and collective possibilities to hold and create change, gives agency to teachers to dream big and have their voices heard, and holds space for praxis through opportunities for reflection and action.

This (re)imagining of teacher learning moves us toward abolitionist teaching which “starts with freedom dreaming, dreams grounded in a critique of injustice... not whimsical, unattainable daydreams, [but] critical and imaginative dreams of collective resistance” (Love, 2019, p. 101). The teachers in this study engaged in freedom dreaming through their ability to radically (re)imagine schools as places where all students can thrive. As Octavia Butler reminds us, radical imagination is vital to building new worlds, so, if we, as educators truly want to heed Bettina Love’s (2020) argument that we cannot go back, we need to hold space for teachers to radically imagine and have the agency in their classrooms, school, and district to build their dreams into existence.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITING DOCUMENTS



**Mindset**

Learn what it takes to have a restorative/transformative mindset.



**Storytelling**

Engage in storytelling for social justice practices as a way to reimagine your classroom/school.



**Pedagogy**

Learn about healing discipline practices & classroom application.

This virtual professional development will take place over a 3 week period starting at the beginning of July and will require approximately 8 hours per week with both asynchronous with synchronous opportunities. Each week will offer: 1) a variety of readings; 2) activities and reflection; 3) engagement in activities and planning; and 4) connecting/dialoguing with colleagues.

For more information, contact Allie Ivey at [aekert@uoregon.edu](mailto:aekert@uoregon.edu)

## APPENDIX B

### VISIONARY EQUITY INSTITUTE MODULE OVERVIEW

This section provides additional detail about the Modules within the Professional Development including the Introduction pages for each of the Modules which provide information about the goals, readings, and activities. Along with this, the cited reading list is included with all required and optional readings for participants.

#### **Overview of the Professional Development Introduction Page**

Welcome to the Visionary Equity Summer Institute, an online learning space grounded in leveraging the power of storytelling for transformation in our schools, our classrooms, and ourselves. This professional development is a space for us to radically imagine our classrooms and schools in ways that address the current inequities and vast disparities that plague the system of education in this nation. It is grounded in the call by Bettina Love in acknowledging that “we cannot go back to the way things were” by calling us into action to dream and imagine schools as spaces of possibility for all students (1) through pedagogies that are culturally sustaining, anti-racist, healing, and transformative (2). Building off of the work of Lee Anne Bell and Mica Pollock as well as other scholars committed to equity and racial justice in education, this online space will provide us with ways to reflect on ourselves and our practice while engaging deeply with each other to form a visionary counterstorytelling community (3).

This professional development will invite you to engage in a variety of ways- both synchronously and asynchronously. Each Module will have readings and activities to provide you with multiple opportunities to engage deeply with the concepts as well as

additional optional resources and synchronous meetups for those who are interested. This model recognizes the importance of self-care, self-work, and self-love within an online learning space in order for us to get what we need to learn and grow. Drawing on the words of Angela Davis, “walls turned sideways are bridges” this will provide us with space to see barriers as opportunities and embrace not what feels impossible but what might be possible.

For each of the Modules, we will ask that you engage in the following:

### **Journal Reflections**

Each Module will ask that you engage in self-reflection both before you dig into the readings and activities, during the readings, as well as at the end of the Module with the goal being that you are being both a reflective and reflexive learner. As this will ask you to do some deep self-facing work, we acknowledge that what you submit might only be a partial representation of your thinking and processing. We feel that these journals are an essential element of this process as this work is grounded in the belief that in order to transform practice, we must first transform ourselves (3). This journal will be uploaded to Canvas as a Google Doc link during Module 1 and you will add to it during each Module. It will include a Journal Reflection, the “Think and Discuss” questions (those that you find meaningful to write about and reflect upon), and Action Assignment reflections (from *Schooltalk*), and an end of Module Reflection. As this journal will be for your reflection purposes, use this in a way that is beneficial to your learning.

### **Learn and Reflect Activities**

Each Module will ask that you read and interact with text and videos and apply your

learning to an activity. These activities will differ throughout the professional development with multiple options embedded throughout. These are set-up with a low floor/high-ceiling structure that you are able to engage in a way that best supports your learning and your needs. Each Module will ask that you read 1-2 chapters from *School talk: Rethinking What We Say About- And To- Students Every Day* (4) as well as a variety of other readings that will be posted within the Modules. In order to engage with the entire group, you will post your learnings on the Discussion board and spend time looking at and learning from others.

### **Visionary Storytelling Group**

Each Module will ask that you engage synchronously with your Visionary Storytelling group in the way that works best for those in the group i.e. through Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, etc. Each group will have their own page on Canvas in order to connect, communicate, and plan. Each of these meetings will have a focus and an activity for you to collaboratively engage with as a group. This is built off of the premise that we learn and grow when we are surrounded by and engaged with a community. During each meeting, you will engage in a grounding activity, a discussion of the reading material (most will include a discussion protocol which you can use in the way you see fit), and an activity that asks you to “do” something or create something with your group. You will be asked to bring your created products or insights to the live session during the next Module.

### **Synchronous Sessions**

As we would love to be in a space with you all in person in order to build community, we

will be holding two Zoom synchronous sessions each week to dig in deeper to the content from the Module, discuss new ideas and insights, or just hang out and get to know each other. This session will have a loose structure with guided questions and topics for consideration as well as offer modeling and support for the activities in the Module. These will all be recorded so that you are able to watch them after the fact if you are unable to join.

We will also hold a second session which will be more of a Q&A open format for leaning into whatever sparked your joy or you wanted to learn more about.

We will spend time talking about all of these pieces in our Introductory synchronous session this week so if you have questions or concerns, please bring these to our time so that we can get you started!

### **References.**

(1) Bettina Love (2020) “Teachers, We Cannot Go Back to the Way Things Were”

EdWeek: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/04/30/teachers-we-cannot-go-back-to-the.html>

(2) These various pedagogical approaches will be embedded within the course Modules as well as the additional resources in each Module. If you are interested in learning more about any of these, let us know and we will structure our live sessions around these.

(3) Lee Ann Bell (2019), *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*.

(4) Much of this idea of self-transformation being at the root of change in practice comes

from Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly in their work on narrative inquiry.

### **An Introduction to the Visionary Equity Institute**

This Module will set the foundation/tone for thinking about what we are up to in this course- why now, why you, why us? Our intention here is to invite you to begin thinking about the texts that will ground us in moving forward as well as consider questions/wonderings that are coming up for you. As this professional development is also guided by an interest in thinking about and understanding ways in which stories can be leveraged to support teacher learning, this Module will also ask that you learn more about the research to see if this aligns with your interests.

#### **Grounding Questions**

- How can we co-create a healing-centered learning environment with students where wounds become the wisdom needed to go forward?
- What are our roots, shoots, and soil and how is this affected by our identities and positionalities?
- Looking closely at the present you are constructed; does it look like the future you are dreaming?
- Why story as a vehicle to explore school policies, pedagogies, and practices?

#### **Module Activities**

##### ***Readings***

Engage in introductory readings that will serve as the foundation for the Modules.



- Introduction of *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*.
- Introduction and ch. 1 of *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say- About and to Students Every Day*

### ***Activities***

- Look through the Community Norms and identify 3-5 that you believe will help ground our community (this will be done collaboratively through asynchronous means).
- Engage in grounding activities around identity, positionality, and values.

### ***Optional Readings***

- “Willing to Be Disturbed”
- Lessons from crisis: trauma-responsive teaching tools for the work ahead

## **Module 1: Data Stories- Laying the Foundation for Equity**

During this Module, we will be exploring the way in which the talk we use in schools creates not only “Schooltalk” but “school stock stories” -- stories that have a historical grounding and are inherently political. We will do this by engaging in a variety of readings, activities, and written reflections as a way to think about our role in creating, perpetuating, and interrupting “school stock stories” and the way in which our talk and stories either supports equity for all students’ or does not (referring to The Equity Line in *Schooltalk* on p. 8).

## **Guiding Questions**

- How do stock stories show up in schools? How does “data” either support, refute, or perpetuate these stories?
- How can we move beyond replicating stock stories in our own classrooms and schools?

## **Questions drawn from Dena Simmons’ article**

- How does your identity and positionality as well as power and privilege show up in your work with students, take up space, or silence others?
- What single narratives are you telling yourself about students, and how does that affect grading, behavior management, and other interactions?

## **Module Activities**

### ***Readings***

#### **Roots Readings.**

- Ch. 2 of *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About- And To- Students Every Day* by Mica Pollock
- How to be an Antiracist Educator by Dena Simmons
- Ch. 1 *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* by Bettina Love

#### **Soil Readings.**

- Ch. 3 of *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About- And To- Students Every Day* by Mica Pollock
- The Danger of a Single Story a TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- Ch. 1 of *The Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism, and Engage in Collective Healing* by Annelise E. Singh
- Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth by Tara Yosso

### **Shoots Readings.**

- Seeing White: Scene on Radio Podcast
- Codeswitch: Can We Talk about Whiteness Podcast
- The Storytelling Project Curriculum, Racial Equity Tools

### ***Journal Reflection***

Here you will have a pre-Module journal reflection, an end of Module journal reflection as well as reflections on the “Think and Discuss” prompts in the *Schooltalk* book.

Remember to use your journal in a way that supports your learning (additional details will be within the journal reflection portion of this Module).

### ***Learn and Reflect***

In order to reconceive of a different future for our schools, we must first understand where our schools and classrooms are now. In this, you will do a critical data analysis of national, state, district, school, and/or classroom-based data and think about the Module's guiding questions.

### ***Visionary Storytelling Groups***

During this Module, we invite you to meet with your group for a minimum of one hour. During this time, you will engage in a grounding activity and a discussion of the overarching Module questions.

## **Module 2: Interrogating Language and Stories in a Move Toward Equity**

During this Module, we will spend time thinking about what stories are constructed about students based on the language we use about them? You will do this by exploring different frameworks of language that show up within our schools and classrooms as a way to understand why inequities show up across educational spaces (e.g., assessment scores, discipline outcomes, graduation rates, etc.). We will also think about how centering resistance stories and stories that are traditionally concealed within schools (regarding schooltalk, curriculum, policies, etc.) can help to transform coded or closed language into open language of possibility, action, and change.

We will focus this Module on the notion that coded language and coded stories help to perpetuate inequities and injustice within our schools, and therefore interrogating this

language and the stories that this language creates is an important step in being able to disrupt and transform.

### **Guiding Questions**

- What stories are constructed about students based on the language we use about them?
- How does coded language show up in our classrooms and schools? How does this impact the way we talk about and to students every day?
- How can we pivot in order to center concealed stories and resistance stories as a way to move beyond coded language?
- How can an embodied pedagogy support give us new perspectives about why language matters?
- How might an interrogation of the language help us to think about both how to dismantle and how to create?

### **Module Activities**

#### ***Readings***

##### **Roots Readings.**

- Ch. 4 of *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About- And To- Students Every Day* by Mica Pollock
- Excerpt from: *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice* by Maisha Winn
- The Pedagogy of the Mind, Body, Spirit with Dr. Stephanie Cariaga

### **Soil Readings.**

- When Schools Cause Trauma by Carey Gaffney
- Changing the Discourse in Schools and Discourse I & II “T” Chart, Network for College Success
- Avoiding Racial Equity Detours by Paul Gorski

### **Shoots Readings.**

- All brain and still no body: Moving towards a pedagogy of embodiment in teacher education by Sharon McDonough, Rachel Forgasz, Amanda Berry, & Monica Taylor
- The Social Construction of a Disability by Susan Wendell
- The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of White Privilege by Zeus Leonardo

### ***Journal Reflection***

Here you will have a pre-Module journal reflection, an end of Module journal reflection as well as reflections on the “Think and Discuss” prompts in the book. Remember to use your journal in a way that supports your learning (additional details will be within the journal reflection portion of this Module).

### ***Learn and Reflect***

Connecting with the notion of an embodied pedagogy, you will be expanding on this to engage in an embodied activity around the language and stories (coded, concealed, and resistance) that are used in schools with and about students as a way to think about both

how to interrupt the stories that do not “support each/all students’ talent development” and move toward stories that do “support each/all students’ talent development.”

*(Thinking about the Equity Line in Schooltalk.)*

### ***Visionary Storytelling Groups***

Spend time in your group discussing A Guide to Coded Language in Education Vol. I & II article and the Subversive.Thread posters discussing the following questions: What do you notice? What do these words and phrases bring up for you? What might they bring up for students? With your group, create additional posters with added coded language e.g., student success, the achievement gap, etc. that show up in your spaces. Discuss how you might use this knowledge in your school or classroom to disrupt inequity and create new possibilities that center traditionally concealed stories about students.

### **Module 3: Visionary Storytelling Schooltalking for Equity**

During this Module, we will be centering Bettina Love’s article “Teachers, We Cannot Go Back to the Way Things Were” where she tells us that “We cannot go back. We now have the opportunity not to just reimagine schooling or try to reform injustice but to start over. Starting over is hard but not impossible; we now have a skeleton of a playbook. It starts with creativity, teacher-student relationships, and teacher autonomy. The alternative ways educators are learning to exist in our new world cannot be lost when we reopen our society because that world only worked for some and was consumed by racism. What was said to be impossible in education is now here, and we must act for it to stay our reality.”

We will draw on the work of Monique Morris' documentary *Pushout* which argues that in order to schools to be places of learning, they must be places of healing. In this, we ask that you think deeply about your/our classroom practices and the ways that you/we engage in “schooltalk” and “stock stories” in your/our teaching, in your/our hallways, and in your/our communities. Drawing on the work of adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha, this will ask that you engage in a visionary fiction project that allows you space to be creative and center a transformative mindset and healing practices and pedagogy that lay the foundation equity in your classrooms and beyond.

This will ask you to dream and shift your thought process and your imagination to consider how schools might be healing and humanizing for all students rather than replicating oppression.

### **Guiding Questions**

- How do we build and/or dismantle different stories for students?
- (How) Can we create anew with a lack of understanding of the roots of our current system?
- How can we move from reimagining to abolitionist teaching that centers equity and social justice?
- How can we move from dismantling to creation by turning challenges (walls) into possibilities (bridges)?
- How can we center love and healing in our embodied pedagogies?
- How can a pivot by focusing on what we can do rather than what we can't do transform our mindset, our practice, and schools?



## Module Activities

### Readings

#### Roots Readings.

- Ch. 6, of *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About- And To- Students Every Day* (Life Talk) by Mica Pollock
- “Teachers, We Cannot Go Back to the Way Things Were” by Bettina Love
- “Better Futures: Visioning in a Time of Crisis” by Walidah Imarisha

#### Soil Readings.

- Introduction to *Octavia’s Brood* by adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha
- Learning on the Move Toward Just, Sustainable, and Culturally Thriving Futures by Megan Bang
- Ch. 7 and conclusion, of *Schooltalk: Rethinking What We Say About- And To- Students Every Day* by Mica Pollock
- “The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement” by Shawn Ginwright
- “Why We Can’t Afford Whitewashed Social-Emotional Learning” by Dena Simmons

#### Shoots Readings.

- A Summer WORKbook for Educators by Tamisha Williams
- Imagining an Equity Pedagogy for Students in Poverty by Paul Gorski
- Advocate for Inclusive & Affirming Curriculum (GLSEN)

### ***Journal Reflection***

Here you will have a pre-Module journal reflection, an end of Module journal reflection as well as reflections on the “Think and Discuss” prompts in the book. Remember to use your journal in a way that supports your learning (additional details will be within the journal reflection portion of this Module).

### ***Learn and Reflect***

For this week you will take time exploring practices, talk, and pedagogy that center equity, justice, and abolitionist teaching. You will use this as well as the insight from your readings and journal reflections from this week to write a “visionary” story that builds on Lee Anne Bell’s notion of emerging transforming stories.

### ***Visionary Storytelling Groups***

In your groups this week, you will dig into thinking about your visionary narrative in connecting this with your roots, shoots, and soil grounding from the Introduction Module.

You will share your stories and spend time thinking about/discussing:

- What values show up in this story (roots)?
- What are the short-term and long-term outcomes of this story (shoots)?
- What does this story need to grow (soil)?

We then invite you to use this information to develop an action plan for thinking about what needs to be in place for this story to come to fruition.

## APPENDIX C

### VISIONARY STORIES AND ACTION PLANS

#### **Visionary Story Sample 1**

In my ideal world, the government does its job. The people are taken care of. Food, medical care, shelter, water, education, and clothing are human rights.

Schools are actual safe places for students. When they walk in the door, they are immediately greeted with warmth and smiles from all staff they come across. Two meals and a snack are provided for all students, regardless of income. These meals are healthy and provide students with the actual nutrients they need to get through the day.

Schools are not laid out only in a 8:00-3:00 model from Monday-Friday. There are some classrooms that work in the afternoons, and some that work on weekends. The teachers who teach these classes are not there for the entire day as well, they are just on different shifts. This helps the families that have a difficult time getting to school during the day. This is great for the students who need to take care of their siblings while their parents are at work, or for the high school student who needs to work a part-time job during the day to help their family out with bills and food. Childcare is provided outside of school hours for any family who needs it. This is a government funded program so there is no cost to families, and the childcare providers are paid a living wage.

Class sizes are capped at 15 students per room, and each teacher also has a full time aide. The schools have been remodeled to accommodate this space. The update of the schools also makes them a physically safer environment. There are no more ceiling leaks or faulty HVAC systems. When a problem arises with the structural integrity of any part of the buildings, there are funds to fix them and the issue is resolved ASAP.

Each classroom has the time to focus teaching to the whole child. Math and reading are vital, but so are art, music, science, history (actual history, not white history), and life skills. Standardized tests is an unknown phrase. Students are still assessed to see if they have mastered content, but on an individual basis. Teachers look at overall growth. When students are assessed, they are allowed grace and can study the mistakes they made and then be re-evaluated. This can happen for as many times as it takes until they have reached mastery. Mistakes are encouraged in this environment.

There are students who will need additional services than what is offered in the classroom. These students will not be removed from their room to receive these services, so they will not miss out on being with their peers throughout the whole day. Specialists will come to them. Specialists and classroom teachers will work closely to make sure that each individual student's needs are met. There are multiple licensed specialists available per intervention need, so that all students who need these services are receiving the best possible care.

Since there are no standardized tests, there is also no standardized teaching. Teachers are trusted to provide students with the highest quality education. Teachers are not told to teach the curriculum to fidelity in a general education classroom. Teachers are given time to collaborate with their colleagues on best practice, intervention, and individual student needs. Classroom instruction is centered on anti-racist practices, gender inclusivity, and overall accepting and praising our differences and uplifting each other.

## Visionary Story Sample 2

Below you will find 5 days of journal entries written by a 6th grade student during the first week of school. My visionary story focuses on creating a community hub within the classroom along with partnering with families outside of the classroom. Further goals are centered around heterogeneous classrooms, smaller groups within the classroom and heavy community building activities for the first few weeks of school while also working writing skills (LA classroom.) I also want to practice not labeling students right away by forming groups based on shared interests in a fluid way so that groups are ever changing with the impetus of finding common ground through listening skills and care for each other. I plan to incorporate Cluster Grouping within my classroom which is system developed by Bertie Kingore that supports all students in their learning by creating smaller academic support groups of a diverse group of students. Again, this is fluid and groups change as students grow and branch out.

Day 1:

Today was my first day of 6th grade! It was such a wonderful experience even though I didn't even leave my house. My teacher met my family and me last week during a Zoom meeting. My 5th grade teacher was there as well, and they said so many nice things about me. I was embarrassed but felt so good, too. My new 6th grade teacher really listened to me and my family as we talked about our culture and what we valued about learning and about being a family. We even kept talking about it after the meeting. I learned that my parents were scared for me to start middle school because they had such bad experiences. I felt sad about that but am glad to know that I am going to be OK. The

best part of today was meeting my “support group” which will be my inner circle of learning and social support throughout the year. I was really scared about this because I didn’t recognize any of the names before we went into break out groups. We made up a name for our group and I found out that I have so much in common with my new friends. We named ourselves “The Lizards” because we all love reptiles! We even could change our first names if we wanted to. Some people chose to keep their name, but I went with Chameleon, “Cam” for short. It was so fun:) BTW, our support group leader was the school counselor from last year!

Day 2:

Today we got to write letters to ourselves! We wrote first about things that we were good at or proud of. I enjoyed writing about my drawing. I never really thought it was anything special before today but realized that a lot of people don’t draw the way I do. When I showed some of my pictures to The Lizards, they were really impressed and said lots of kind things. We also practiced listening in our groups as we shared so that we made sure we “showed our care” by being present. Then we wrote about things we wanted to work on, and we weren’t allowed to share that out yet with our groups, but we could with our families if we wanted. I talked to my parents about being “bad at math” and they said that they will help me. I feel so relieved!

Day 3:

I loved the writing prompt for today. It was not about the future, like I expected but what we can do each and every moment in the present. The question was “How do we make

each moment a “gift” to ourselves.: Get it? Gift? Like Present? LOL! When I talked with my group about this later, I realized that I am always afraid to raise my hand in class when I have a question because I don’t want to look stupid. Everyone else in my group felt the same way! We made a pact that every time we have a question or are confused, we will be brave and raise our virtual hands. We made a secret hand motion so that we could show each other support during Zoom meetings. I wrote this down as my answer and when the teacher read it, they asked if I would mind if they shared it with the whole class. Everyone liked my strategy and people texted me later, telling me they were scared, too!

Day 4:

The teacher put us in a different group today based on what we thought we were good at from the first day of school. There was this kid in my new group that can draw amazing pictures only in black and white. I was so impressed and asked them if we could share drawings and learn from each other. They even told me about some drawing websites that I can go to learn more about drawing. When my parents came home that evening, I showed them my new friend’s work and they gave me permission to text with them and share my drawings. I am so excited about this year!

Day 5:

This was the best day ever! After talking with our Study Groups about what we liked about Language Arts, the teacher asked us to do a 30 minute writing assignment where we wrote about our dream school. When I asked them if I could draw pictures with

captions instead, they said “Go for it!” Other students liked my idea and at the end of class, many of us volunteered to share our ideas. It was so fun, and I realized how many other students in my class liked to draw. My teacher called my family this evening and told them how proud they were of me and my work this week and asked us if they had any questions from the first week of school. They also showed my parents a Google Classroom just for them to ask questions and support each other as parents. It was in Spanish and English. We were amazed! Also, my parents were having trouble seeing my assignments in Google Classroom and the teacher helped them to log in and access my account. They were so relieved because, guess what? They were afraid to ask the teacher questions, too! I can’t wait for next week:)

### **Visionary Story Sample 3**

I dream of an educational system that is entirely anti-racist, because racism truly no longer exists. All the racist structures, systems, and policies have been dismantled. I dream of schools as a community center where students and families can come to be nourished.... calorically and emotionally. The community supports one another, everyone welcome to be authentically themselves and all needs being met (in a non-capitalist type of way, somehow.) Gardens, food, community meals and celebrations. Students are not held to standardized tests. It’s probably a bit Montessori really...but my knowledge of that is surface. There would be no stigmas for differences...cognitively, physically, socially. We’d all be the weird kids and cool kids, we’d all be queer and welcome. There would be trust, all stakeholders would be valued, students would be involved in decision making that directly impacts them and their community. Collaboration would be constant and



flowing...perhaps no hierarchical structure of evaluation...? So much funding. NFL level funding & positive regard. Universal basic income. Arts education prioritized. Mental health and wellness isn't optional, but embedded within and throughout...student mental health is soaring...what suicide? None here. Students are flourishing engineers, social activists, artisans, authors, care-givers...they're filling roles, meeting needs they see in the world...just like the adult models around them.

We discuss history. All of it. Critically. We discuss identities, all of them, and the many intersections, and the strengths we all bring to our community.

There are so many languages flowing vibrantly through the halls - language is celebrated.

We haven't heard the term "gun violence" in decades. We don't need school resource officers or metal detectors. The carceral state has long been abolished.

There are puppies. And rabbits.

#### **Visionary Story Sample 4**

Three big school takeaways for OUTCOMES are: 1. Learning is community value and community need-based. 2. Learning style is with small classroom numbers and student-driven in choice. 3. Later secondary education is more trade based driven by students in their self-chosen community roles.

(Beginning)

"Everyone knows the planet is dying," said Shonta's little brother, only to be quickly shushed by their parents. Children weren't supposed to be at the meeting, let alone talk, let alone talk about the end of the world, which everyone knew was coming

but didn't want to talk about. Shonta's mother looked at her. Without speaking, Shonta quietly rose from the bleachers and began leading her little brother, Abeli, out of the silvery-chrome warehouse where the meeting was being held. Shonta had wanted to hear what the representatives would vote on. Instead, the drone of giant ventilation tubes lining the ceiling was all she heard as she made her way toward the only exit she knew: oversized, heavily reinforced metal doors. Annoyed by the sound, Shonta looked up toward the shining ventilation tubes, her eyes tracing their maze-like paths along the warehouse rafters. She almost tripped over her brother when he quickly stopped before they reached the exit. Shonta glared at him, but her hard look softened into curiosity when she saw an urgent, questioning look in Abeli's eyes. His eyes left her face, and she followed his gaze toward a small door she hadn't noticed as they'd entered with the crowds. The little door was open, and a short, stooped creature was motioning to them from the other side. "Abeli," she whispered, lowering her head down near her brother's ear, "is that an Evielus?" Abeli didn't answer, but he reached out and took his sister's hand.

As they moved closer to the small door, Shonta saw she'd been right. Still, she could hardly believe her eyes. She had thought all the Evielus had died off with the last of the "white race," as modern people called those who had ruled from the First Colonization of free land until just before the Civil Rights War of the second millennia. Shonta briefly recalled all she knew about post-Civil Rights War history. She herself had chosen to teach Voting Rights as her Graduation Lesson. After the war, Shonta recalled that the first true progress toward economic equity began. Initially, it centered on establishing a true democratic voting system. First, she knew the electoral college, law

enforcement, and for-profit prison systems were each abolished. Advanced ideology had shifted from individual to community centered; education was re-structured, and eventually, economic reparations were both facilitated and enforced. The world had come so far since then, Shonta knew. Her own ancestors, many of them scientists, had managed to slow down climate change and create economic balance at the same time. For youth, education became an economic necessity for the survival of the human species. priority was given to trade schools, specific to youth interests. Those who refused reparations work formed an underground terrorist group. They called themselves many names - the Ku Klux Klan, the Proud Boys, the Police - but after the Civil Rights War, history knew them all as the Evielus.

Maybe he was working undercover, and survived to work with us, Shonta thought. She looked down at Abeli and said, “Come on - let’s just see what’s outside the door.”

### **Visionary Story Sample 5**

The idea is that schools are community centers. The building is accessible 7 days a week for various needs including early morning & late evenings to accommodate families who work outside “normal” work hours.

While there will still be school & teachers, counselors, admin, there are also community outreach people. I am thinking about legal, employment, housing services experts, outdoor education specialists, health & dental, nutritionists, chefs.

School buildings take up a significant part of a neighborhood, so it should be utilized as community center, so everyone is able to get access to services without having

to stress about how to get there or where to go. There are classes for families to learn about healthy habits, there are meals to go for anyone who needs it, the library is open to everyone to use, translators & interpreters are always available.



### Visionary Story Sample 6

My visionary storytelling is based around project based learning and student choice. It is based on forming goals with students that are centered around state standards and allowing students true proficiency based grading in that all goals are year long and not tied to anyone assignment. It ignores the barrier of funding and dismantles our idea of schedules, class periods, curriculum, and feedback.

Teacher talking to their classroom of students:

“Students, next week we start the new trimester. Report cards will not be final, you will continue to work on this years’ skills that you have seen posted all around the school and will get to try a new approach and new topics. This trimester you can choose to focus on rivers, music, food industry, or television. You will have the opportunity to learn all core subjects under the topic you choose.”

“For example, if you choose music, you will explore music reading, fractions and symbols, and patterns to fulfill your math goals. You will explore music history, how music was used for different purposes throughout history and how today’s music has been inspired by music from the past, utilizing timelines and exploring social structures to fulfill your Social Sciences skills. To fulfill your science goals for the 6th grade year, you will look at how we perceive and hear sounds, what makes some sounds pleasant and others hard to hear. You will look at how the brain reacts to music and explore scientific students that have used music. Finally, to fulfill your Language Arts goals, you will be note taking, comparing and contrasting genres, and writing your own music (sheet music and lyrics). Remember each topic available to you has been carefully planned and no matter which topic you choose, you will have the support to meet your yearly goals. Once you have all chosen your interest, classes, teachers and classrooms will be posted. If you all choose music as a focus, we will all teach that topic and if only a handful of students choose the food industry topic (baking for math wink wink), we will accommodate that as well by assigning you a small group instructor.”

“Please schedule a meeting with your advisor by the end of the week to discuss your current progress towards your year goals, revise your goals, discuss your choice for

this trimester, and what supports you would like to be/need to be able to access during your next trimester. Advisors will be setting up groups to provide the support needed to include mentors, tutors, specialists, and peer support. If you are interested in leading a peer group, make sure to make your voice heard! Choose what you feel will most help you reach your goals this year; we are here to support you! Now, in a moment we will be called to the gym to set up our final projects from this trimester. I am proud of your hard work and learning and can't wait to hear your project presentations, to see your friends, family, and the community.”

### **Visionary Story Sample 7**

My visionary story includes schools as community centers (I love this idea) and comes from the belief that relationships are crucial to the human experience. Everyone needs to feel that they have value and are important. This is something I know schools can do much to improve.

After the pandemic was over everyone seemed to agree that what we missed most of all was each other. We realized that relationships were what was most needed for happy and healthy communities. Beautiful schools were being built with the direction from families, teachers, and kids too! Everyone's voice was heard. These schools had everything we could ever dream of... including a slide from the second floor of the library to the first! We had a librarian that loved to read and share books that showed real kids and wild adventures. There were bright colors and student art in the halls not just in the art studio! Everyone was committed to putting the fun back in fundamentals. The art teacher always

lets us work on projects after school if we want to. In fact, there are so many after school activities that we could stay at school all the time and never get bored. Everything about school was brighter and all of the teachers were happier too! Every teacher had an educational assistant to help kids with their learning. We only had ten kids in a class, so we got to know each other really well and even got to spend time with everyone's family. It also meant that if we needed to talk about something our teacher always had time to listen. It was awesome that all the teachers loop too. That meant that I had the same teacher for k-1, 2-3, and 4-5. I loved getting to meet everyone's family. It was like our school was part of our family! School is a place where I can be exactly who I am and feel like my best self.

Key Outcomes:

All students and families feel heard and valued.

Schools as community centers.

School staff are professionalized and are passionate about teaching.

### **Visionary Story Sample 8**

Interview with 5th grade student July 2020:

Me: "How do you feel about going into this next school year?"

Student: "I'm sad that I'll be missing my friends, and won't get to actually see them in class but I learned a lot from online learning last Spring... I've been gaming a lot with my friends this summer, so I've been able to talk to them, and hang out for social distancing hang outs in the park. I'm actually ready to get back to school even if it's online because

I'm bored of doing the same thing every day. Going back to school will help keep my mind off how stressful COVID-19 is."

Me: "Do you feel prepared to go back to school, distance learning?"

Student: "Yes, last week my guardian picked up my Chromebook that I'm borrowing from school and it has Zoom already set-up on it- I got to meet with my new teacher already and ask some questions. My family was worried about me going back to school online, but we've talked and e-mailed with our principal about me and my sister's schedule. She's in 3rd grade. So, my grandma is going to watch my sister and I while my guardian's go to work. I also have weekly social distance hangouts with my friends on Tuesdays and Thursdays so that I have something to look forward to. We were worried about food also, and since my Mom is working, we don't have a way to get to school to pick up our lunches. Luckily, there is a school bus that is going to drive out to our neighborhood, and we can walk with our grandma to pick up our lunches. I think I'll be able to see some of my friends there too."

Me: "How do you feel about wearing a mask?"

Student: "It sucks, but I'm getting used to it."

Me: "What are you looking forward to when we are back to school "in" the classroom?"

Student: "Man, I cannot wait to see my friends again and actually learn with them. I think before COVID-19 I "didn't" like school, but I actually do like learning with my friends. Learning can be hard sometimes, but my teacher does their best to make sure everyone is seen and heard. I'm looking forward to the mornings. I'm always tired in the morning but honestly, I get pumped when my teacher greets me at the door and gives us time to wake up. I'm looking forward to making projects with friends from different classes. I'm



looking forward to reading about people that look like me. I'm looking forward to working on projects that actually matter and make a difference in our local community. I'm looking forward to building things. I'm looking forward to having a choice in what I want to learn- I'm most interested in earth science and ecosystems; I like that our teacher listens to us and asks us what WE want to learn and goes from there."

Continuing interview with Student Post-Covid 2021:

Me: "Is there anything new or different from before COVID-19 now that COVID-19 has passed, and you are FINALLY back in the classroom?"

Student: "Yeah- before COVID-19 school seemed boring and rigid. Rigid means not flexible and straight. Before COVID-19 we had to take so many tests and didn't even really get to see how we did on them or why we were taking them. I think that was the worst part of school. Tests made me so nervous. My guardians were wondering how I'm going to get grades if there are no tests- our teacher told us that we will be graded on multiple aspects of a project. They gave us a "rubric" which is a grid and tells us what she is looking for. In one project, we can be graded on writing, math, speaking, creativity, and effort. Being graded this way makes me feel better because I'm not that great at speaking, but my creativity is "fire" so that will help my grade."

"Also, the building looks totally different. The library has new books, there are TWO new playgrounds and an outdoor roof- a space for outdoor learning even when it's raining, there's an indoor rock-climbing wall, a gaming room, two new art rooms for small groups, a garden, more classrooms/teachers, and a LONGER LUNCH- for the past

5 years I've been trying to eat lunch in 12 minutes and it's just not enough time to actually eat all my food let alone chat with my friends and chill out. & Two Friday's out of every month we can buy NDN Taco's (the proceeds are donated to local native sports) AND I've learned how to meditate. Everyone seems happier. The teachers especially, before COVID they seemed so stressed out, but now everyone is taking their time, working together, eating, resting, and learning. I often see my teacher sitting and reading in her hammock during our lunch and her break. School is fun, I like that I can be more active, it makes things easier when I need to lock it down and learn. I really like learning about people that look like me and learning about people that look like my friends. I feel comfortable in my skin, and there is less bullying in school. I'm still choosing to wear a mask to school, it's actually not that bad anymore and keeps germs out. My grandma made me some that match my sneakers, she made some for my friends too. I'm so happy to be back at school."

### **Visionary Story Sample 9**

I have so many ideas on how schools could be better used spaces and time, however I felt it was easier writing these views instead of from the point of view of a student. :-)

#### **My Ideal School**

My school reminds me of a cross between a Montessori/Waldorf/STEM/ and small rural school. Students are gathered not by grade or age, but in groups where interest based, project based, and inquiry-based learning thrives. It is a place where students do

hands on learning that they are interested in, while combining it with cross-curricular studies. They are able to team up and learn with and from students of different ages and abilities while engaging actively in their learning.

My school focuses on engagement, not only with the work, but also with the peers, staff, and community. Students rely on experts in fields they have not even heard of, learning and realizing their new interests through connections. They converse about current events in our community, state, country, and world, inquiring and doing work around what can be done about specific issues facing people.

Check-ins will be done in a way that helps the students rather than the finality that current grades imply. They will learn that although things aren't there yet, we will learn together to get closer to our goal and check in often.

Students in my school will learn about multiple cultures, languages, etc. They will have hands on, involved learning, comparing and contrasting all aspects of those cultures. They will connect, construct, and reconstruct their ideas and views about other cultures and groups of people, learning to check biases they may have heard along the way.

Specialists and EA's will be an active part of our classroom community, co-teaching and learning alongside teacher and students.

Students will receive breakfasts, 2 snacks, and lunches for free, creating less stress on both families as well as kids. There will also be the option of take-home meals on days when school is not in session for ALL students. Every day there will be a new fruit or vegetable for them to try during these snack times, allowing for healthier eating habits in the future.

Outdoor spaces will be celebrated and used often for learning about nature and our surroundings. Classes will be held in these settings often; utilizing covered outdoor classroom spaces to engage the senses of natural occurrences and reimagine how a classroom might look.

All classes will have a maximum of 20 students in them. This will allow all students to get the attention of teachers without feeling the need to gain attention through negative means. Space will be ample in these classrooms, allowing several different environments for kids to sit or stand and do activities and work.

Weekly there will be guest speakers that are experts in their field. On weeks that guest speakers are unavailable, field trips or nature walks will be substituted. This allows students to feel connected to their physical and community space.

Administrators will also be teachers, using time to connect with students to engage in lessons or connections.

Families will be actively involved through learning nights, presentations from students, and celebrations. Learning and activity nights will occur once a month to maintain school to family connections.

Childcare will be provided for all staff, allowing teachers to stay involved with their own children as well as provide a safe space for education for their students. There will also be a preschool within the school for community members that offers lower cost preschool than most other community preschools.

The building will be a community center during non-school hours, allowing the community to use it in many different ways instead of leaving it as an unused community space.

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW GUIDES

#### **Individual Interview Guide**

The individual interviews were semi-structured and designed to last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interviews consisted of the following questions:

#### **Part I: Teacher Identity**

1. Using the iceberg, how would you describe your identity?
  - a. What elements are part of your teaching identity? What elements are not?  
Why do you think that is?
  - b. Do you think the stories you tell your students about yourself impacts them?
    - i. The parts that are transparent? The parts that remain hidden?
2. What is the story of your teaching?
  - a. Why did you become a teacher?
  - b. How would you describe your teacher identity?
  - c. Has this changed at all since the beginning of the school year? Since you started teaching? Since you started at this school?
  - d. If so, what do you attribute this to?
3. How does your experience as a student impact your teacher identity?
  - a. Your teaching practice?
4. When you first became a teacher, did you ever think about your future classroom?

- a. What did you imagine?
- b. Is your classroom similar or different than those future imaginings?
- c. How did the story you told yourself about you, about students, or about school impact this future vision?

## **Part II: Storytelling Project Model**

5. Why do the stories we tell matter? What purposes do they serve?
6. What stock stories exist about you? Your students? Your school? The school community?
  - a. What is the impact of these stories on you? On your practice? On your teacher identity? On those whom they are about?
7. What concealed stories exist about you? Your students? Your school? The school community?
  - a. What is the impact of these stories on you? On your practice? On your teacher identity? On those whom they are about?
8. What resistance stories exist about you? Your students? Your school? The school community?
  - a. What is the impact of these stories on you? On your practice? On your teacher identity? On those whom they are about?
9. What do you see as the relationship between these types of stories?
10. What language do you commonly hear used about students at your school by other teachers? By other students? By parents? By those in the community? By media?

- a. How do you think this impacts students?
  - b. How does this impact you? Your teacher identity? Your practice?
11. Can you think of an example of coded language that is used to story your school?
- a. How does this make you feel?
  - b. How does this impact your teacher identity? Your student's identities? The stories students tell about themselves?
  - c. How does this impact your practice?

### **Part III: Visionary Storytelling**

12. Tell me about a student with whom you have behavior problems- what is your story of this student? What is this student's story of themselves? What do you see this student doing beyond middle school? Beyond high school?
13. Tell me about a student with whom you have a strong relationship- what is your story of this student? What is this student's story of themselves? What do you see this student doing beyond middle school? Beyond high school?
- a. How are these students similar? How are they different?
  - b. How is your relationship with these students similar? Different?
  - c. Do you think that the story you hold about this student impacts your relationship with them? How so?
14. Do you think the stories we tell about students impact their behavior? Their identity? Their futures?
15. What stories have you unearthed about yourself and your students through this process?

- a. Has this changed your teacher identity?
  - b. Who is this assessment from? (Is this a self-assessment or have others noticed?)
  - c. How has this made you feel? How has this changed your practice?
16. Tell me about the visionary fiction story you created.
- a. What was this process like? Walk me through your story and why you included what you included.
  - b. What story does this tell about your own beliefs and values about school? About students? About teachers? About families? About your community?
  - c. Who is present in your story? Who is absent?
  - d. Who holds power in your story?
  - e. Whose values and beliefs are privileged?
  - f. Who benefits from this story? Who pays?
  - g. How do different identities show up in this story? (Race? Gender Identity? Sexual Orientation? Indigeneity? Socioeconomics? Housing?)
  - h. Were there any specific stock stories that you drew from when creating your story? If so, which stories and why? If not, why?
  - i. Did you have any specific students or groups of students in mind when creating your story? If so, who and why? If not, why?
  - j. Are there shifts or pivots that could be made in your story to more intentionally and explicitly center equity and social justice? What might those be? What would be the impact of those shifts on your students? Families? Communities?



- k. What would it take for this story to come to fruition? (Moving toward action and change.)
  - l. What is your role in this?
17. What needs to happen, change, remain in your classroom for these possible futures to remain or become possible?
18. Thinking back to LeAnne Bell's Storytelling Project Model, what actions/change can you commit to as a way to (re)story your practice?
19. How do you think that this action will impact your students? Their families? The community?

#### **Part IV: Reflection and Feedback**

20. What did you find to be beneficial? (Activities, Readings, etc.)
21. What would you like to see that wasn't present? (Activities, Readings, etc.)
22. What would you like to see changed? (Activities, Readings, etc.)
23. Did the structure of the PD [professional development] work? If so, what worked?  
If not, how might you change this to better support growth?
24. What do you think needs to be in place for teachers to do deep reflection and self work alongside developing their practice?
- a. Would this be different if the teachers had not engaged in equity work prior to taking this PD [professional development]? Are there specific scaffolds that you think should be in place for teachers who are new to this work? What about those who have done some of this work already? Are

there ways that you think would be helpful in terms of creating additional options?

### **Focus Group Interview Guide**

The focus group interviews were semi-structured and designed to last approximately 90 minutes. Within the focus groups, there was time allotted to discuss one another's visionary stories (which they were asked to have read prior to the focus group) as well as time to do action planning which built off of the work their group engaged in during Module 3). The focus group interviews consisted of the following questions:

#### **Part I: Visionary Stories**

1. What story does this tell about the writer's beliefs and values about school? About students? About teachers? About families? About the school community?
2. Who is present in this story?
3. Who is absent?
4. Who holds power in this story?
5. Whose values and beliefs are privileged?
6. Who benefits from this story? Who pays?
7. How do different identities show up in this story? (Race? Gender Identity? Sexual Orientation? Indigeneity? Socioeconomics? Housing?
  - a. If they do not show up, why do you think this is?
8. Were there any specific stock stories that connect with when reading this story?

9. Are there shifts or pivots that could be made in this story to more intentionally and explicitly center equity and social justice? What might those be? What would be the impact of those shifts on your students? Families? Communities?
10. What would it take for this story to come to fruition? (Moving toward action and change.)

## **Part II: Reflections and Action Plan**

11. Looking at each of the stories, identify two elements that you think would be powerful to embed within a school-based action plan. We will discuss this in a “circle” fashion using the following protocol.
  - a. Round 1: Share one element and a brief explanation of why.
  - b. Round 2: Responses to anything shared during round 1.
  - c. Round 3: Share your second element and a brief explanation of why.
  - d. Round 4: Responses to anything shared during round 3.
  - e. Round 5: What would it take to move from ideas to action? What is your role in this? How can you support each other?
  - f. Round 6: If needed, responses to and continuing from round 5.
  - g. Closing: Facilitator will share out notes with additional comments if desired.

Additional Guiding Questions (if needed)

12. What might be the impact of this on students? On families? On the community?  
How can you interrupt the stock and concealed stories that exist about your students and your school?
13. What actions can you commit to (re)story your practice?
14. What actions can you commit to (re)story your school?

**Part III: Feedback**

15. What did you find to be beneficial? (Activities, Readings, etc.)
16. What would you like to see that wasn't present? (Activities, Readings, etc.)
17. What would you like to see changed? (Activities, Readings, etc.)
18. Did the structure of the PD [professional development] work? If so, what worked?  
If not, how might you change this to better support growth?
19. What do you think needs to be in place for teachers to do deep reflection and self work alongside developing their practice?
20. Would this be different if the teachers had not engaged in equity work prior to taking this PD [professional development]?
21. Are there specific scaffolds that you think should be in place for teachers who are new to this work? What about those who have done some of this work already?  
Are there ways that you think would be helpful in terms of creating additional options?

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