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DYNAMIC CONTEXTUALIZATION OF LEARNERS WITHIN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS
THROUGH A VYGOTSKIAN LENS: A TELLING CASE OF
JESUS CHRIST AS AN EDUCATOR

by

Nathan B. Meidell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Curriculum and Instruction

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2022

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ABSTRACT

Dynamic Contextualization of Learners Within Educational Systems

Through a Vygotskian Lens: A Telling Case of

Jesus Christ as an Educator

by

Nathan B. Meidell, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2022

Major Professor: Dr. Suzanne H. Jones

Department: School of Teacher Education and Leadership

This study explored how patterns of influence consistent with Vygotskian educational theory were identified within the instructional approach Jesus Christ took with his disciples. Through Christ's educational methodology, these instructional pathway patterns became evident as he considered existing meanings understood by his disciples. He further redirected his disciples from their particular ways of seeing, believing and interacting with environments and ideas toward alternative ways that reflected new and desired pathway meanings. Based on how these meanings are increasingly understood to be operating with learners within these systems, educational practitioners and administrators should consider afresh how content is prepared,

approved, and presented to learners. This study further illustrates how learners respond based on their unique lived experience and how educators and educational systems can anticipate or make allowance for certain learner responses in an instructional pathway.

(88 pages)

Keywords: social situation of development, word meaning, mediation, domain analysis, Vygotsky, Jesus Christ, telling case study

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Dynamic Contextualization of Learners Within Educational Systems

Through a Vygotskian Lens: A Telling Case of

Jesus Christ as an Educator

Nathan B. Meidell

This study looked at Jesus Christ as a telling example of how transformative patterns of influence are exerted on learners by educators in educational systems. Based on concepts found in L.S. Vygotsky's work, this study found these patterns acting as a current or stream of consistent aims and meanings introduced and reinforced by educators in the form of practices and methods that generated momentum toward/around desired learner responses. This study's insights into these patterns of influence as employed by Christ during his ministry and as experienced by his learners provided new means of both interpreting their success and potentially replicating elements of that methodology in contemporary educational practice.

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Nathan Meidell

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Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

A universal process of change underpinning all human activity is being levied in educational systems to great effect. Consider a child's first entry into educational systems like stepping into a river and being swept up in the current. Within an instructional pathway of new physical, intellectual, cultural, and emotional stimuli, learners encounter curricular structures that move them to continually reconcile their own backgrounds, experiences, ways of seeing the world, and ways of "being" in the world to those which are presented to them within the educational environment.

They are swept up by teacher interactions and expectations, new associations with peers and other adults, instructional methods and devices, and the curriculum with their assortment of content. Within such a dynamic system, learners are situated and contextualized, evaluated, sorted, categorized, weighed, checked, measured, and assigned value in relation to the systemic intellectual, ideological, and behavioral expectations. Those behavioral expectations have effects on learners ranging from a confirmation of values and identities to demanding nothing less than the continual reconfiguration and reconstruction of values and identities.

Every educational structure that intentionally or unintentionally moves learners in any direction carries certain ideological assumptions and expectations assigned by their first originators on down to their more recent stakeholders and designers. Not only is every educational structure pointing learners toward immediate outcomes for a given assignment, unit, course, or grade, but potentially well beyond that by orienting them

conceptually toward certain ideological assumptions and worldviews. So, while teaching a scientific understanding of the natural world to a child, we also communicate additional information about which ideas and experiences have value to society and which do not (Beyer & Liston, 1996).

Through a careful consideration of these educational contexts and the methods, influences, and meanings used by educators within them, clear patterns start to emerge. An increased understanding of these underlying patterns can give everyone with stakes in education another roadmap for reaching new levels of consciousness and being capable of taking more deliberate action. One possible avenue to gaining such mastery, which will be explored in this study, is to get at the roots of these ideological assumptions. According to Vygotsky (1962), this takes place at the level of *word meaning* (p. 5), which is also the primary unit of analysis for this study.

A secondary, but essential and complementary, unit of analysis is *perezhivanie*, or lived experience, which grants the researcher access to the learner's interaction with those meanings (Vygotsky, 1994). Instructional pathways are established based on particular ideological worldviews, both implicitly and explicitly held, expressed and purveyed, which manifest themselves through structures created within educational systems. At the foundation of these structures are fundamental meanings assigned to operative words and concepts which generate momentum around those ideologies.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored how patterns of influence consistent with Vygotskian educational theory were identified within the instructional approach Jesus Christ took

with his disciples. Additionally, I examined the initial impact Christ had on individuals through this theoretical lens.

Whether researchers and scholars accept these events as true matters less than their acknowledgment that believers throughout history to varying degrees have accepted them as truths and have subsequently enacted and exerted very real influence on the world as a direct result of those beliefs. Therefore, the most compelling reason for selecting Jesus Christ as my case study is this undeniable historic and contemporary influence of Christianity in society. Even the veracity and verifiability of the actual events of Jesus Christ's life and ministry become of secondary importance for the purposes of this study given the influence of the Christian religious movement that has grown up around these texts, and which marks Jesus Christ as an ideologically unique and compelling subject for my purposes.

According to a study by Hackett & McClendon (2017) for the Pew Research Center, in 2015 there were 2.3B Christians worldwide, comprising 31.2% of the world population, making it the single largest religious group on the globe (para. 1). Considering that Jesus Christ's educational philosophy was the catalytic influence for centuries of human learning, my application of a telling case study to the teacher/learner interactions present at the foundations of this religious movement will not only further illuminate the methodology, but also potentially demarcate some of its avenues of influence in contemporary society. Lastly, the selection of Jesus Christ as a telling case study aligns with my own ontological and epistemological background as a lifelong Christian theologian and religious scholar, seminary teacher, vocational trainer, and curriculum developer for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Research Questions

This study explored Jesus Christ's instructional approach with his disciples as a telling case of the Vygotskian educational theory perspective of instructional pathway patterns of influence. This perspective helped make visible the scope of impact Christ had on his followers during selected events. Further, this information led to new insights regarding the ways teachers may understand the lived experience of learners in any educational system or context. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does Jesus Christ establish a learning context for followers during three key instructional events?
2. How does Jesus Christ mediate learning in these events?
3. How do Jesus Christ's followers respond initially to his instructional strategies during the three instructional events?

Definition of Terms

1. Systems. Systems are viewed as any cohesive network of processes or ideas within education designed to influence learning outcomes. Though somewhat broader, this definition encompasses Goodlad's (1966) description of "a carefully engineered framework designed to identify and reveal relationships among complex, related, interacting phenomena" (p. 1).
2. Conceptual Framework. A conceptual framework can help to minimize "the possibility of omission of relevant data without compromising the assumptions of the natural environment" (Ennis, 1986, p. 26). This is reminiscent of Vygotsky's (1962) emphasis on analysis through units which "[retain] all the basic properties of the whole" (p. 4). Such authentic units of

analysis more accurately reflect the reality they represent rather than risking what John Dewey (1897) describes as a violation of nature through presenting things out of relation or context with social life (p. 10). The development of a conceptual framework provides us with vantage points for taking in a more accurate and comprehensive conception of student influences within educational systems.

3. **Context.** Context refers to the relationships between people, ideas, and things. Corbin and Strauss (2015) explain that “action-interaction [has] to be linked to the conditions that people are responding to and trying to manage or shape when they interact” (p. 172). Wink and Putney (2002) also state, “one cannot separate the individual from the context and still have a complete understanding of either” (p. xii). These networks of embedded and interrelated meanings are carried in every concept as they have been derived from their surrounding contexts.
4. **Sociocultural Context.** According to Wink and Putney (2002), “Vygotsky did not view students and teachers as separate entities. Instead, he worked to identify ‘the social environment that linked the two together’” (p. 63). Learning and development thus constitute a dynamic process comprised of social, cultural, and historical aspects “in a dialectical relationship with each other” (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 62-63). Learners become “interactive agents in communicative, socially-situated relationships” and teaching becomes “an active process of exploring student activity, while guiding students to levels beyond their current ability to solve problems” (Ibid).

5. Zone of Proximal Development. Vygotsky describes a zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 86).

Hence, if someone more advanced provides guidance to a learner, the learner’s capabilities can exceed their actual developmental levels.

Positionality

A researcher’s understanding is inevitably “...shaped by who they are, which is in turn shaped by the world around them” (Ravitch & Riggin, 2017, p. 25). This study is therefore a record of my choices regarding what is important or interesting, which “are reflections of who [I am] as a person” (Ravitch & Riggin, 2017, p. 105). I have a post-positivist epistemological leaning and operate on the basis that there are absolute truths we can all comprehend to varying degrees. All knowledge, every position taken, and idea conceived by any individual, represents our respective reach for those truths.

Chapter II

Conceptual Framework

One of the main issues giving rise to this study comes from growing attention to the intriguing role of context throughout academic works. Context can be seen exerting its influence when manifest through culture and the structure of a school day (Eisner, 2002). Context includes physical location, curricular structures, policies, and ideologies all linking together in a constellation of influence (Au, Brown & Calderon, 2016). Vygotsky (1962) describes an unnatural separation of things from their natural contexts which blinds learners to the true interfunctional relations and unity of consciousness by which children naturally organize their world. This arises for him from the adoption of “atomistic and functional modes of analysis” that “[treat] psychic processes in isolation” (p. 1).

Dewey (1897) argued the need for introducing subject matter when students are developmentally equipped to understand the concepts. Otherwise, educators may “violate the child’s nature and render difficult the best ethical results” when content is introduced prematurely or as isolated topics of study (p. 37). This is because, for children, the social life of the child gives “unconscious unity and the background” to all they do (Ibid). Moreover, Kliebard (1992) quoted Dewey on this topic, indicating how “The child starts... before he goes to school at least, with a unity of experience, not with a number of different subjects or studies” (p. 178). Subsequently, schooling becomes a fulcrum of pedagogical mediation that reorients learners to artificially atomized concepts and may provoke actions based on impractical conceptual contexts.

For Vygotsky (1962), this controlled transfer of meanings moves knowledge from its naturally contextualized location in one's consciousness into a new context, "a certain category which, by tacit convention, human society regards as a unit" (p. 6-7). These units of accepted meaning help make up contextual structures within educational systems that corral the learner's understanding and application of knowledge according to prescribed parameters. These contexts ensure that the meanings held by a few mature members of society come to be shared by many, a process Dewey (1916/1926) describes as initiating learners "into the interests, purposes, information, skill, and practices of the mature members" (p. 3).

Vygotsky (1962) refers to mediating contexts, or systems, in which all such transfers of meaning take place through enabling "rational, intentional conveying of experience and thought to others" (p. 6). Such contexts make understanding between minds possible for new learners, and facilitate the optimal transfer of meanings, and transformation of being in new learners who enter educational systems. Bringing back the idea of an integrating and unifying context, Vygotsky (1962) painted this process of meaning making or concept formation as one where "all the existing functions are incorporated into a new structure, form a new synthesis, become parts of a new complex whole" (p. 59). Without this *recontextualization*, "thinking fails to reach the highest stages, or reaches them with great delay" (Ibid). This results in cascading delays in understanding as opposed to a spreading and expanding consciousness (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 115).

In this regard, parallels may also be drawn between contextualization and Vygotsky's attempts to unravel the "social situation of development, where individuals

and environments are taken “as a single complex unity rather than two separate parts” (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 91). In this conception, learner potentialities become integrated as part of larger contextual landscapes. Additionally, the concept of *perezhivanie*, or lived experience, becomes distinguished alongside word-meaning as a unit of analysis for understanding these landscapes. The learner’s unique lived experience becomes a refracting mirror through which such contextualizing actions can be observed. This experience becomes evident in “how a child becomes aware of, interprets, and emotionally relates to a certain event” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 340-341), as well as “which characteristics of the environment affected development, and...which personal characteristics participated in a particular *perezhivanie*” (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 91).

The use of *perezhivanie* supplements the original unit of analysis by allowing researchers another avenue for getting at how these contextualizing structures are being reconciled by the learners themselves. In other words, it serves as a natural complement to my exploration of these influencing structures between an educator and learners, where one end directs focus toward the word meanings being imposed by the contextualizing structures while on the other the *perezhivanie* directs attention to how learners actually interact with those meanings, which becomes most visible through their responses or lived experience with those meanings.

This theoretical approach was developed from a conceptual analysis of Vygotsky’s (1962) work by picking up the threads of his conversation around the core theme of context and weaving them together. The opening sentence of his work, and preliminary statements about “The Problem” center on tacit assumptions in the field of

psychology that treat thought and word as isolated, decontextualized, and therefore unnaturally developing based on “the autonomous development of the single functions” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 1-2). The new focus for his study centered instead on the interfunctional structure of consciousness, making “these relations and their developmental changes the main problem” (Ibid). Further research of Vygotsky’s (1962) work, as well as the broader field of curriculum theory, uncovered the occurrence of consistent patterns within a process of dynamic human contextualization.

Dynamic human contextualization is based around two principal concepts, instructional pathways and curricular structures that are built around fundamental word meanings. The instructional pathways and curricular structures are further complemented by consideration of the learner’s *perezhivanie* or lived experience. The learner’s lived experience, based around their unique social situation of development, helps account for the inevitable variability in learner outcomes.

The terms *instructional pathway* and *curricular structure* relate to Vygotsky’s (1962) emphasis on word meaning, or semiotic mediation (Wink & Putney, 2002), which Vygotsky takes as his primary unit of analysis. In studying word meaning, signs and symbols are assigned values that tip them from neutrality toward purposeful/meaningful engagement with individuals who come within their sphere of influence. Therefore, the simple act of ascribing meaning to words begins establishing corresponding conceptual trajectories for those who then interact with those meanings and the structures built up around and under them. When an accumulation of these structures combines with shared meanings it forms an instructional pathway, where each structure contributes to the generation of a broader ideological current.

The label of curricular structures is suggestive of the way a structure's imbued meanings (unconscious or deliberately utilized) are meant to operate with learners in particular ways, or direct learners along specific trajectories or toward specific potentialities. These resulting learning trajectories are repeatedly reinforced for learners by the incorporation of value-laden structures which developers, educators, and administrators situate throughout educational systems. Through their interactions with these structures, learners begin to accept word meanings and their ramifications, a necessary precursor to getting at the sense of the word, or "the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 146).

Dewey (1916/1926) describes a major task in education as being "to discover the method by which the young assimilate the point of view of the old, where the older bring the young into like-mindedness with themselves" (p. 13). Traditionally, the structures and processes of changing learners is a desirable state of affairs, the very essence of education, but this transfer of views from educator to educated is not always benign. Dewey states that the synchronization of values between young and old occurs,

By means of the action of the environment in calling out certain responses...the particular medium in which an individual exists leads him to see and feel one thing rather than another; it leads him to have certain plans in order that he may act successfully with others; it strengthens some beliefs and weakens others as a condition of winning the approval of others. Thus it gradually produces in him a certain system of behavior, a certain disposition of action. (Ibid)

The way curriculum workers and educators mobilize facts to serve the aims of educational endeavors is of particular importance for this study, as it relates to how instructional pathways are established using curricular structures built around value-laden meanings that generate corresponding conceptual currents that shape the trajectories of their participants.

The assignment of values within instructional pathways is a subjective exercise, tying this process as much to beliefs as to facts. Vygotsky refers to this by saying how “...every idea contains a transmuted affective attitude toward the bit of reality to which it refers” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 8). So, every idea comes packaged with subjective attitudes projected onto it by its authors. This subjectivity directs emphasis toward the receiving end of these influences, where every ideologically charged structure reacts with or impacts learners differently depending on each learner’s “unique social situation of development,” or *perezhivanie* (Veresoz & Mok, 2018, p. 91).

This unique learner *perezhivanie* is measured through the ways in which a learner “becomes aware of, interprets, and emotionally relates to a certain event” (Vygotsky, 1994, pp. 340-341). Thus, by understanding the learner’s interactions with those structures, we see in their responses the refracted image of those systemic influences, making the learner a kind of mirror through which the educational environment’s impact on their development can be discerned.

Perezhivanie, therefore, fills a uniquely complementary role as relating to this study. Each learner’s social situation of development (SSD) becomes a marker for their unique responding trajectory relative to the structures they are encountering. Thus, word meanings (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 122) come to be refracted in each unique learner response

as they seek to reconcile those meanings with their own identities, culture, language, values, and meanings (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 341).

Belief and meaning also share a similar conceptual basis when considering Vygotsky's own statement about early stages of concept formation, called pseudo-concepts. Vygotsky (1962) says "...in real life complexes corresponding to word meanings are not spontaneously developed by the child: The lines along which a complex develops are predetermined by the meaning a given word already has in the language of adults" (p. 67). Thus, the extent to which beliefs matter in educational contexts is directly proportional to the significance ascribed to them as found within influencing structures.

Vygotsky holds up speech as initially the primary means of assigning meanings, "Rational, intentional conveying of experience and thought to others requires a mediating system, the prototype of which is human speech born of the need of intercourse during work" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 6). Speech (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 69) is among the more prominent curricular structures for assigning and distributing meanings in and between structures within an instructional pathway, though the term originates here and not in Vygotsky's work. Speech is among the first ways parents are likely to attempt communicating meanings to their children, reinforcing particular conceptions of things in the formative environments, and thereby functioning as a curricular structure. Speech also would be how teachers in school environments primarily facilitate instructional interactions. For those for whom verbal speech is not possible, equivalent avenues of communication are sought and employed.

Speech and all other modes of communicating meaning share the same foundation. Students and educators, their responses and outcomes and the curricular structures provoking them are built on the selfsame foundation of *words*. Word and word meaning in all these ways lie at the root of a dynamic collective process of mediating or often reconciling worldviews between these pathway structures and the individual. As Vygotsky (1962) later emphasized, “The decisive role in this process, as our experiments have shown, is played by the word, deliberately used to direct all the part processes of advanced concept formation” (p. 78). With words, educators and developers imbue the environment and structures around them with meaning to establish the conceptual trajectory and momentum for learners, an instructional pathway. With words, individuals reconcile their lived experience with those structures and meanings of the instructional pathway.

It is interesting to note that Vygotsky (1998) also speaks of the social situation of development (SSD) in terms evocative of the pathway concept,

It [The social situation of development] determines wholly and completely the forms and the path along which the child will acquire ever newer personality characteristics, drawing them from the social reality as from the basic source of development, the path along which the social becomes the individual. (p. 198)

This persisting notion of learning paths offers reinforcement to these depictions. It also logically suggests that these selfsame instructional pathway patterns also function in forming the child’s *perezhivanie* in the first place, which means a child’s introduction to school represents a meeting of pathways.

As learners are first swept up in a new pathway, such as a school, the curricular structures begin their work of transforming prior understandings and conceptions. And according to Vygotsky (1962), “Once a new structure has been incorporated into his thinking—usually through concepts recently acquired in school—it gradually spreads to the older concepts as they are drawn into the intellectual operations of the higher type” (p. 115). This makes the impact and magnitude of these curricular influences all-encompassing. Each new stage in concept development builds on preceding levels, generating a conceptual current that can be sustained and augmented over time.

The combined magnitude of conceptual development is a source of radical change for any individual, interrupted only by the potential challenge arising from vigorous opposing pathways in intersecting bids for the learner’s attention, vying for them to be reconciled to their concepts. And as long as they remain unaware of these influences, they are bound by them. As noted by Vygotsky (1962),

As long as the child operates with the...system without having become conscious of it as such, he has not mastered the system but is, on the contrary, bound by it.

When he becomes able to view it as a particular instance of a wider concept..., he can operate deliberately with this or any other...system. (p. 115)

For Vygotsky (1962), this pattern of interactions centered around word meaning becomes a sweeping, immersive and all-encompassing behavioral framework packaged and intertwined together as modern sociocultural theory, “the collaborative and transformative way in which knowledge is co-constructed” (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 204).

These same patterns can be found in other areas of contemporary educational and religious thought. For example, the concept of consequential progressions has distinct similarities to how such pathways are introduced in its descriptions of how a teacher establishes a learning culture made up of cultural constructs which are collectively adopted through the joint activity of the class (Putney et al., 2000). This adoption allows the learner's understandings to be "progressively constructed in and through particular opportunities for learning," thereby demonstrating, much like the patterns of influence between an educator and learner, "how the discourse of the collective shaped actions and understandings of individuals" (Putney et al., 2000, p. 104). As a co-constructor of these cultural practices within a community of practice, the teacher is able to not only maintain, but deepen the cognitive structures of learners over time, and deepen the learning that takes place. These cultural constructs act as curricular structures within an instructional pathway of classroom cultural practice and generate the compounding momentum to move learners toward a desired outcome, such as the "*discourse of the collective*" from the example above.

Critical Curriculum Studies is another area of particular importance to this study, giving every indication of instructional pathway patterns. Researchers who step back from consideration of one particular ideology, such as Vygotskian or Christian ideological frameworks, to consider instead the way these broader patterns function relative to *any* ideology, can draw distinct parallels. This suggests that instructional pathways span the ideological spectrum in education. Consider Michael W. Apple's (2019) emphasis on hegemonic structures within society consisting of a "dominant system of meanings, values, and actions which are *lived*" (Apple, pg. 4-5). These structures exert dominant

meanings and values onto learners within an instructional pathway of hegemonic influence, forcing those learners to reconcile them with their own values. Apple's (2019) approach to thinking and acting toward education reinforces these parallels as it

...seeks to portray the concrete ways in which prevalent (and I would add, alienating) structural arrangements—the basic ways institutions, people, and modes of production, distribution, and consumption are organized and controlled—dominate cultural life. This includes such day-to-day practices as schools and the teaching and curricula found within them. (p. 1-2)

For illustrative purposes, Apple's (2019) paragraph describes an instructional pathway formed by prevalent structural arrangements that include but are not limited to educational systems. This pathway's structures wield alienating influence to dominate the cultural life of those learners. The direction or intent of its influence is determined by embedded meanings that orient these learners, as subordinate or dependent members of the system, toward those values and practices that reflect the inclination of the dominant ideology.

In one example of this, Apple (2019) talks about immigrants who were perceived “as a threat to American civilization until they came ‘to think about, and act on, political, social, economic, sanitary, and other matters in the approved American way’” (Apple, p. 74). Their contextualization was accomplished by a dominant group who “looked to the schools. The school curriculum could create the valuative consensus that was the goal of their economic and social policies” (Apple, p. 75). In this example, school became the engine and framework for an instructional pathway with very particular intent. In another example, a highly regarded teacher of a kindergarten class “...expected the children to

adjust to the classroom setting and to tolerate whatever level of discomfort that adjustment included” (Apple, p. 58). Again, the students’ experience and conceptions were modified by this pathway of structures and meanings until arriving at “a common understanding of the meanings, limitations, and potential the setting affords for their interaction” (Apple, p. 53). The result of structures and meanings within this instructional pathway was a dramatic contextualization of kindergarten-age children, where eventually “All the children talked more about working and less about playing in October than they had in September” (Apple, p. 57). In both cases, curricular structures were used to direct learners away from prior conceptions, attitudes, values, and actions, toward desired or acceptable pathway counterparts.

Much more could be said about the presence of these patterns throughout Critical Curriculum Studies, including how the same patterns are likewise apparent in efforts made to counter such detrimental influences (Au, Brown, and Calderon, 2016, p. 120, 140, 142) (Au, 2012, p. 97), but it suffices this work to rest on its assertion that the same sense of instructional pathways, curricular structures, underlying meanings, and learner contextualization are indeed reflected throughout works of this field.

Lastly, Christian theological tradition also has embedded notions of these patterns of influence. Consider, for instance, the simple biblical proverb, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (King James Bible, 1611/2013, Proverbs 22:6). In the cause and effect dynamic suggested by this verse, the structures and meanings by which a parent trains their child set them on a learning trajectory that holds them even when they mature. This training with its structures and meanings has the hallmarks of an instructional pathway.

To examine these patterns of influence in this study, I applied a Vygotskyan theoretical lens to conduct a case study of Jesus Christ's teaching methodology. The purpose of this study was to explore the instructional methodology of Jesus Christ as a teacher, and those events and decisions occurring around him that informed his teaching and influenced his learners. As such, the research questions were:

1. How does Jesus Christ establish a learning context for followers during three key instructional events?
2. How does Jesus Christ mediate learning in these events?
3. How do Jesus Christ's followers respond initially to his instructional strategies during the three instructional events?

Chapter III

Methodology

Telling Case Study

This holistic case study explored the instructional methodology of one particular individual and those events and decisions occurring around him (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 97). I selected Jesus Christ as a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) to better understand an educator's practice through a Vygotskian lens. I selected three purposefully sampled teaching events from the harmonized account of Jesus Christ's ministry found in The King James Version of the New Testament Gospels, located at the beginning, middle, and end of his ministry, to be analyzed using Spradley's (1980/2016) methods of domain and taxonomic analysis.

According to Mitchell (1984), researchers who use case study to argue and establish theoretically valid connections search for "a 'telling' case in which the particular circumstances surrounding a case, serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent" (Mitchell, 1984, p. 239-240). In this study, a Vygotskian theoretical framework provided a unique lens for an otherwise exhaustively studied and largely defined methodology within Christian frameworks. The Christian framework, likewise, provides a compelling illustration of how these patterns operate within an educational context.

Jesus Christ's life and ministry were recorded in the New Testament Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (King James Bible, 1611/2013), which on the four-hundredth anniversary of its publication was regarded as "the only universally known version of the Bible...and still the most widely used book in the world" (Croft, 2011, p.

250). This study focuses on three key instructional events taken from the biblical record, beginning with Jesus's initial invitation/call to action to several of the disciples (King James Bible, 1611/2013, John 1:35-51), the miracle of Jesus Christ walking on the water (King James Bible, 1611/2013, Matthew 14:22-33), and Jesus's concluding teachings to his disciples on the shores of the sea of Tiberias (King James Bible, 1611/2013, John 21:1-24). The following represents my selection criteria for these events:

- Distinctive methodological nature
- At least two levels of action and response on the learner's part to ensure richer analytic depth
- Jesus Christ included as principal educative source
- Core disciples included as primary learners during the event
- Educationally significant, or comprised of unique educational variables and potential insight

I selected an event from the earliest period of Jesus Christ's ministry to establish a tentative baseline for the learners' future interactions with him. The second and third events explore those structures of influence that are established or maintained by Jesus Christ to bring about change. The selection of these episodes for analysis is determined by natural thematic transitions or breaks occurring in the narrative around each event, with traditional breaks sometimes indicated in the text by chapter breaks or with the pilcrow symbol ¶.

Data Collection and Analysis

This case relied entirely on a previously recorded historical text with strong cultural and religious themes operative throughout. As such, initial data analysis follows

Spradley's (1980/2016) process of domain analysis, which uses relational concepts to "discover...a culture's principles for organizing symbols into domains," leading directly "to decoding the meaning of these symbols" (p. 107-108). Domain analysis is a device for systematically breaking down the key elements of a culture and its processes based on observable relationships between those elements. This analysis facilitated the first depiction of the word meanings behind those structures of influence that are introduced by Jesus Christ. Additionally, the analysis illustrated the ways in which learners interacted with those meanings.

Table 1 provided an illustration of the analytic process based around one of these domain elements, which targets research question 3 regarding the learner's concept of *perezhivanie* (Vygotsky, 1994). The concept of *perezhivanie* is broken down by Vygotsky (1994) into three key interactions, "how a child becomes aware of, interprets, and emotionally relates to a certain event" (pp. 340-341), and through the sense in which the influence of elements within that social environment is determined by its "'refraction' through an individual's *perezhivanie*" (Veresov and Mok, 2018, p. 90).

The domain element of learner lived experience is expressed using the *means-end* semantic relationship (Spradley, 2016), *X is a way of responding to the teacher*. Table 1 represents what initial coding for this domain element looks like when applied to 2 out of 5 verses from the first instructional event from the Gospel According to St. John, Chapter 1, verses 35-38. On the left the verse is broken into smaller segments to aid in conducting more focused analysis. On the right are examples identified from the event or learning context that include "a cover term, an included term, and the semantic relationship" (Spradley, 2016, p. 94).

Table 1

Example of Means-End Domain Analysis for Learner Outcomes

EVENT <i>Two of John's disciples follow Jesus Christ.</i>	DOMAIN ELEMENTS
<i>Verse John 1:37-38</i>	<i>Learner Lived Experience (Perezhivanie) "X is a way of responding to the teacher."</i>
37 1 And the two disciples 2 heard him speak, 3 and they followed Jesus.	37/3, <i>Tentative physical following-action is a way of responding to the teacher.</i>
38 1 Then Jesus turned, 2 and saw them following, 3 and saith unto them, 4 What seek ye? 5 They said unto him, 6 Rabbi, 7 (which is to say, 8 being interpreted, Master,) 9 where dwellest thou?	<p>38/4-6, <i>Expectations or anticipation surrounding an idea, concept, or figure (Rabbi) is a way of responding to the teacher.</i></p> <p>(Interpretive Note: Their response to Christ's question, designating him as "Rabbi" suggests certain expectations the disciples' have regarding Christ's role and identity.)</p> <p>38/5-8, <i>Recognition of Jesus Christ as a Rabbi or Master is a way of responding to the teacher (and suggests a desire to eventually become like him).</i></p> <p>(Interpretive Note: "Individuals who decided to study with a rabbi... would be able to closely observe the rabbi's practices and to absorb his wisdom... The memorization of their teachers' opinions and the observation of their practices formed the centre of rabbinic study" (Hezser, 2010, p. 472-473).</p> <p>38/9, <i>Inquiring after Jesus Christ's dwelling place (...as potential means of satisfying their curiosity or securing more time with him) is a way of responding to the teacher</i></p>

Note. Included terms for the semantic relationship, Learner Lived Experience, are listed in the right column with numbers indicating their corresponding verse and line.

This intensive stage of early analysis is the foundation for confirming the operation of these patterns, of which the Learner Lived Experience is one, as well as for understanding the circumstances they represent. Breaking down each verse into smaller segments allows for deeper systematic digging into the event details, ensuring I came

away with as true an understanding as possible grounded directly and concretely on specific locations in the text.

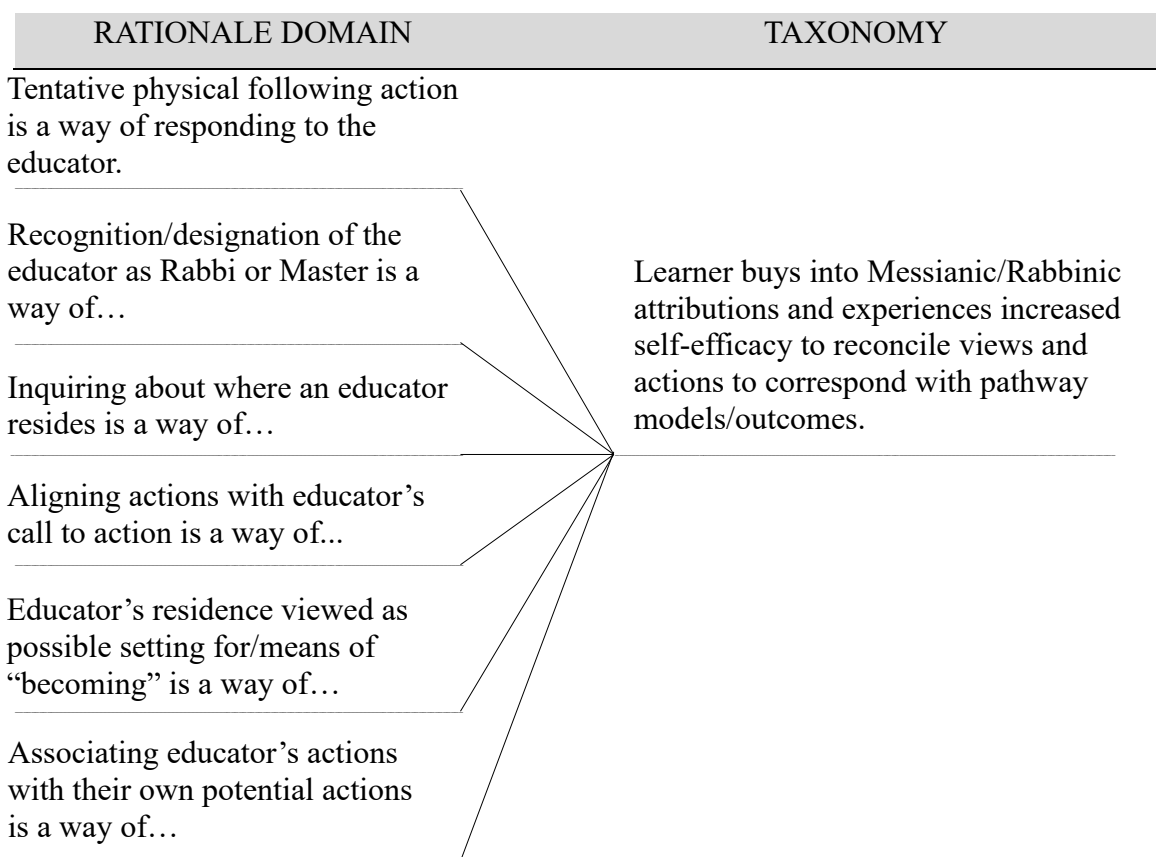
By phrasing my observations regarding each occurrence of this pattern according to an included term, semantic relationship and cover term, I was able to pursue an understanding of these events more deliberately in the direction of needed information, and as informed by the domain elements themselves. This made each insight readily accessible and operationalized from the start in relation to the Vygotskian pattern. According to Spradley (2016), the cover term is the broader cultural domain under investigation (p. 89); and included term refers to the smaller categories within that domain that give it dimension (Ibid). The semantic relationship is what brings the two terms together, telling us how each included term relates to the broader cultural domain, or cover term (Ibid). Learner Lived Experience from Table 1 is an example of a semantic relationship which helps relate specific learner responses to the broader cultural domain of the teacher's teaching/influencing action. These domain elements were grouped by learning event in a domain analysis worksheet (Spradley, 2016), helping me "visualize the structure of each domain" (p. 93).

Spradley (2016) stated further that the discovery of "several dozen domains" over the course of an open search will provide "a good overview of the cultural scene" (p. 97), but that selective focus is applied to "several related domains in the final description" (p. 98). In this study I used a priori coding to examine one central analytic domain that came out of my analysis of this application of the Vygotskian theory. This central analytic domain was broken into a taxonomy of four distinct Vygotskian constructs which were all operating within a learning culture or context, as indicated in Figure 2 in the next

chapter. These were: sociocultural context, curricular structures, negotiated meanings (underlying meanings), and the learner lived experience (perezhivanie).

After conducting domain analysis of all occurrences of these four domain elements across the educational events, a more detailed taxonomic analysis identified relationships between those elements. Spradley's (1980) method of Taxonomic Analysis provided a ready means of grouping, consolidating, and ultimately boiling the field of domain elements down to their essence. This approach places controlling emphasis on "the relationships among *all* the included terms in a domain" (Spradley, 1980, p. 113).

The taxonomic analysis began with the domain analysis worksheet to examine the domain occurrences individually and then as a collective. This helped to identify their essential operations or functions within the immediate learning context while also noting any broader similarities between them (Spradley, 1980). Once focused taxonomies were fully developed from all the originating aspects of the *Teaching/Influencing Action domain*, they were combined to form a taxonomic profile showing how the instructional pathway operated. Figure 1 illustrates the process of taxonomic analysis used in this study.

Figure 1***Example of Taxonomic Outline Diagram for Occurrences of the Rationale Domain*****Strategies for Validating Findings**

The study design included a variety of checks on resulting impressions, beginning with the solid theoretical groundwork for exploring these consistent patterns of interactions between elements found throughout the works of Vygotsky and other researchers. This created a strong rationale for their application to querying those relationships in their unique interaction within a specific and prominent educational process, as opposed to being viewed only incidental to or as ancillary components of more traditionally prominent educative processes.

Further checks were built into the analytic process, beginning with a close reliance on tying any resulting impressions to specific moments in the text through

Spradley's (1980/2016) method of domain and taxonomic analysis. Close reliance on the data leading into and coming out of this research will be important for ensuring there is alignment between the research questions and the conclusions being reached on the other side of this process. Emphasis will be given to providing textual basis for all observations made using domain analysis (Spradley, 1980/2016), which helps ensure that there is reasonable cause and justification for each one.

Due to the constraints of using a particular version of the text, I supplemented my analysis of these episodes with Hezser's (2010) "The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine" as one avenue for checking any assumptions or conclusions I made about individuals and their motives based on an ancient and often threadbare textual account. Since it was impossible to contextualize all social, political, cultural and economic factors potentially at play within the accounts, I drew on historical scholarship to reinforce those conclusions.

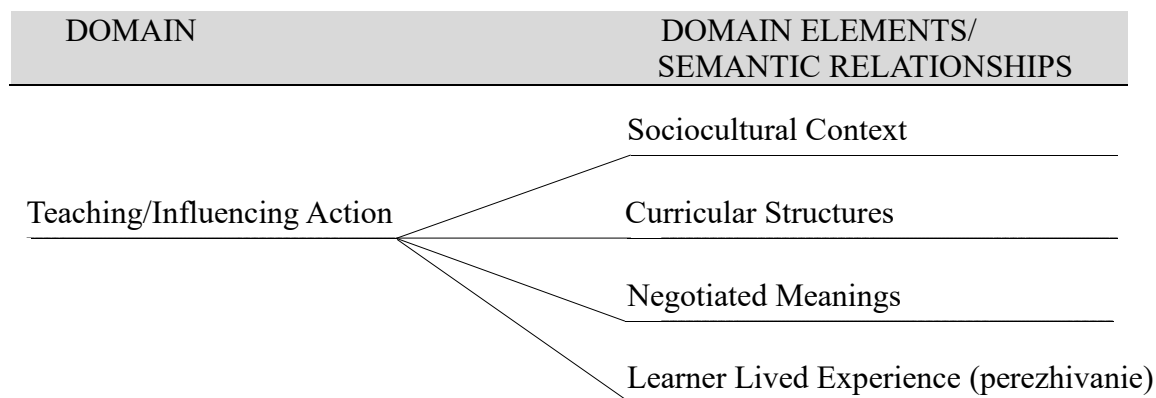
Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this telling case study (Mitchell, 1984) was to explore the instructional methodology of Jesus Christ as a teacher during events and decisions occurring around him that informed his teaching and influenced his learners. Using Vygotskian constructs as a theoretical explanatory lens and Spradley's (2016) domain analysis as an analytic tool, I examined specific educational events in Christ's life in order to answer the research questions. By combining Vygotskian educational constructs with Spradley's cultural domain semantic relationships, I identified a central cultural domain of *Teaching/Influencing Action*. I then developed a taxonomy of four specific semantic relationships to further delineate the Vygotskian constructs related to this domain. These constructs of sociocultural context, curricular structures, negotiated meanings, and learner lived experience (perezhivanie), enabled me to conduct a search of the events based on them.

Figure 2

The Teaching/Influencing Action Domain - Taxonomy



Each domain element within this taxonomy of *Teaching/Influencing Action* is related in essential ways to the Vygotskian constructs of sociocultural context, curricular structures, negotiated meaning, and learner lived experience. These semantic relationships are described as follows:

1. The Sociocultural Context aspect (X is a *place for doing* the teaching/influencing action) conveys the semantic relationship of location-for-action.
2. The Curricular Structures aspect (X is a *kind of* teaching/influencing action) conveys the semantic relationship of strict inclusion.
3. The Negotiated Meanings aspect (X is an *attribution of* the teaching/influencing action) conveys the semantic relationship of attribution.
4. The Learner Lived Experience aspect (X is a *way of responding to* the teaching/influencing action) conveys the semantic relationship of means-end.

Domain Analysis

Targeting these four domain elements or aspects across the three instructional events, I initially identified 200 distinct occurrences (included terms) during my analysis that seemed to fit these aspects of the Vygotskian constructs. Working in the domain analysis worksheet, I paired these down to 181 after eliminating several verses that I considered outside the scope of the John 21 event.

The remaining 181 distinct occurrences of these elements of the central domain were indicators of the presence and operation of these patterns at every level of Christ's interactions with his core disciples (See Table 2). This analysis made visible that Christ's

interactions with his core disciples were similar to the teaching and learning constructs introduced by Vygotsky's (1962) work.

Table 2

Total Occurrences of Teaching/Influencing Actions Across Learning Events

Vygotskian Construct	Semantic Relationship	Form	# of Occurrences/ Included Terms
RQ1 – Sociocultural Context (SC)	Location-for-action	X is a <i>place for doing</i>	72
RQ2 – Curricular Structures (CS)	Strict Inclusion	X is a <i>kind of</i>	46
RQ2 – Negotiated Meanings (NM)	Attribution	X is an <i>attribution of</i>	22
RQ3 – Learner Lived Experience (LLE)	Means-End	X is a <i>way of responding to</i>	41
Total			181

Note. Phase 1: Domain Analysis

Each domain element had adequate representation and further breakdown by instructional event shows an increase in total occurrences that appears to correspond with the length of each event or my growing sensitization to the analytical exercise (See Table 3).

Table 3

Occurrences/Included Terms Broken Down by Instructional Event

Vygotskian Construct	John 1 <i>Verses 35-39</i>	Matthew 14 <i>Verses 22-33</i>	John 21 <i>Verses 1-19</i>	Total
RQ1 – Sociocultural Context	18	20	34	72
RQ2 – Curricular Structures	2	13	31	46

RQ2 – Negotiated Meanings	2	6	14	22
RQ3 – Learner Lived Experience	11	18	12	41
Total	33	57	91	181

Note. Phase 1: Domain Analysis

The primary takeaway from the tables is their straightforward demonstration that there is clear and consistent representation of every domain element across all educational events. However, while the totals appear to increase relative to the number of verses, variations exist within the categories that may only be accounted for by the unique circumstances of each event or owing to the direction of my focus. For instance, the number of means-end domains were nearly identical for the John 1 and John 21 accounts, despite their difference in length. As noted, this could be due to the unique circumstances of each event, or it could also be owing to the direction of my focus as I moved through the analysis. In addition, each element of the Vygotskian constructs were identified throughout.

Taxonomic Analysis

For further examination of the data, a taxonomic analysis was conducted, which built on the domain analysis, that “shows the relationships among all the included terms in a domain” (Spradley, 1980, p. 113). Similarly, this process illustrated the 181 occurrences of these Vygotskian constructs in 4 categories that were paired down into 21 focused statements that still encapsulated all the original functions from the 181 separate occurrences. The focused statements provide additional analytic examples of the relationships among the elements of the original domain *Teaching/Influencing Action*.

Table 4***Teaching/Influencing Action Domain - Focused Taxonomic Statements***

Vygotskian Construct	Semantic Relationship	Form	Total Included Terms/ Occurrences	Focused Taxonomic Statements
RQ1 - Sociocultural Context	Location-for-Action	X is a place for doing	72	8
RQ2 - Curricular Structure	Strict Inclusion	X is a kind of	46	6
RQ2 - Negotiated Meanings	Attribution	X is an attribution of	22	3
RQ3 - Learner Lived Experience	Means-End	X is a way of responding to	41	4
Total			181	21

In answer to the research questions, the following examples illustrate the four Vygotskian aspects identified during analysis of the events. They are organized by research question and include a description of circumstances in which each example is drawn so they can be considered in their proper context.

The following explanations represent an attempt to show how the tool (the specific semantic relationship developed from Spradley's (2016) domain analysis) helps researchers bridge the gap in the text between the semantic relationship and the Vygotskian constructs. In that sense, think of the following explanations of these Vygotskian constructs like a portrait being painted with words instead of the final presentation of an image.

Additionally, because not every domain element can be represented here and therefore may not necessarily be reflected in the following explanations, added clarity is

offered by inclusion of the simplified taxonomic statements which resulted from full taxonomic analysis of all domain elements identified in this study. These statements were developed through a process of grouping and consolidating 181 occurrences of the 5 domain elements from a Domain Analysis Worksheet into a Taxonomic Outline Diagram. These encapsulate in more succinct form the ways these Vygotskian patterns manifest throughout the three learning events. Presented all together, and one step removed from the specificity of the individual domain elements, these resulting taxonomies paint a telling portrait of how an instructional pathway operates throughout Christ's teaching context in interactions with his core disciples (See Appendix A). They also affirm that the occurrences identified in these three educational events reveal operations or patterns wholly consistent with those early theoretical premises drawn from Vygotsky's (1962) work.

Research Question 1: How does Jesus Christ establish a learning context for followers during three key instructional events?

Sociocultural Context

John 1:35-39. The John 1:35-39 educational event involves two unidentified disciples moving to follow Christ after John the Baptist acclaims Christ as “the Lamb of God” in their presence (John 1:36). The learning context is unique in that the physical conditions and location of the place appear to matter less than the community of individuals who share a fundamental purpose within a place, and that have gathered around a central figure, John the Baptist. That idea is key to understanding how Christ establishes a learning context here. As disciples of John the Baptist, the two disciples

mentioned in this event belonged to his community. This is consistent with later descriptions of the rabbinic tradition prevalent throughout Jewish culture.

In this instructional event, we see a community gathered around John the Baptist that shares a common interest and purpose in him and his teachings. John the Baptist was a figure with a distinct role relating to a broader religious cultural tradition. This tradition is built around anticipation for a figure in whom

Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. 15 ¶ John bare witness of him... (John 1:14)

The two disciples are gathered around John the Baptist and presumably share his belief in the coming of Christ as a Savior, seeing as how they are “his disciples” (John 1:35). In this event, John has established the learning community and identifies Jesus for the disciples, thus transferring the role of teacher from himself to Jesus. It is through their association with this community of shared purpose that the two disciples see Christ and begin to physically follow him after hearing Him acclaimed by John the Baptist.

35 ¶ Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; 36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! 37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

As Christ passes through that community and is acclaimed in this manner by John the Baptist, those disciples initiated a tentative transition from their current context within a community of shared purpose that surrounded John the Baptist toward a context of new or redirected purpose represented by Christ as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:36).

Christ’s direct question to the disciples in John 1:38 marks a significant point in which the sociocultural context helps him establish a learning context. The following occurs after the disciples hear John the Baptist and begin to walk behind Jesus. Christ’s question to the disciples builds on this notion of the learning context as both purpose and place. The disciples are drawn initially toward the *idea* of Christ by whatever anticipation or hope they had regarding his designation as *lamb of God* which prompted them to physically follow him. Then, as Christ’s question to them reveals, the disciples are also drawn toward a dwelling place that they can associate with Christ and even potentially where they can have future association with him.

So, while Christ certainly passes through a physical place, thereby potentially activating it as a learning context, Christ primarily appears to establish it through his interactions with the two disciples within or near this community of shared purpose that existed around John the Baptist, and through a context of new purpose that he represents for them, especially when considered together with statements made by the disciples’ previous “rabbi”, John the Baptist, who declared Christ’s Messianic identity. Christ establishes a learning context through taking a straightforward interaction between the disciples and an environment of previously defined meanings and reframing it in terms of new instructional pathway meanings and potential outcomes.

Matthew 14:22-33. The context of this event is one in which several of the disciples are fishermen by trade, including Peter, who figures most prominently as an actor in this event. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose there are experienced seafarers among the group who have a well-developed understanding of the rules of this physical environment and what to expect from interactions with it. The physical conditions of the Matthew 14 account consist of Christ's disciples toiling for many hours in adverse conditions to cross a sea by boat when they encounter Christ walking toward them on top of the water. The text indicates that the disciples are "tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary" (Matthew 14:24). The event also takes place during "the fourth watch of the night," which means somewhere "between three and six in the morning" (Matthew 14:25b). Compounded by their fatigue and the elements, conditions on the water are difficult, even potentially hazardous.

The stress of a situation that puts learners on edge or drives them toward breaking points will either help or hinder learning. For Christ, the account shows how he is able to leverage their distress into an impactful teaching moment. That space in which they are struggling became a learning context through his subsequent actions. Christ establishes a learning context within this environment and these conditions by performing an action which, though impossible by prior standards and understandings, is nevertheless in line with his instructional pathway. As stated simply in the text.

Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. (Matthew 14:25)

That single action defines the entire educational exchange and is the moment where Christ's actions reframe this setting for his disciples as a learning context. This shows that the event of Christ walking on water activates that environment as a learning context

for Peter, and it is to that interaction with the environment that Peter specifically responds. As the text in Matthew 14:26-28 states.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. 28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come.

Christ's interactions with this environment are viewed by Peter as being fully in line with his own potentialities. This specific occurrence is built around a seemingly incidental circumstance where the disciples efforts toiling on a ship at sea are suddenly framed by Christ as a learning experience and operationalized into the interests of the pathway. This was especially true for Peter, who displayed principal initiative and became the primary recipient of Christ's instruction on this occasion. Additional evidence for the Instructional Pathway was found in John 21.

John 21:1-19. In the John 21:1-19 event, Christ further established an instructional pathway by holding up the learner's regard for an environment and interactions with that environment (the sea, fish, and fishing) as being at odds with their regard for Christ and subsequent commitment to the work of Christ's pathway.

The John 21 account takes place following Christ's death and several of his subsequent appearances to his disciples as a resurrected being. The event takes place "at the sea of Tiberias" (John 21:1) as Peter decides to "go a fishing," accompanied by the six other disciples who are with him at the time. They meet with no success in catching

anything in their net until Christ intervenes and “now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” (John 21:6). Immediately afterward.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread... 15 ¶ So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. (John 21:9, 21:15)

This exchange is inextricably linked to the environment and the disciples’ prior interactions with it. In posing a question to Peter that contrasts his regard for fish and fishing (actions defined by this immediate environment) with his regard for Christ and Christ’s work, (actions befitting Christ’s pathway) Christ is operationalizing this environment as a learning context. He is reframing Peter’s pastime of fishing from being a seemingly innocuous interaction with the environment into a weighted ideological performance.

In all events, the context clearly influences Christ’s actions during the educational exchanges in establishing his instructional pathway. Context defines how Christ interacted with those learners, whether he was passing near a community of like-minded learners and responding to the expressed interest of inquirers, approaching existing learners in a way that challenges their conceptions of an environment’s meanings and their potential actions, or was intervening to shift learners’ errant perceptions regarding fixtures of an environment so they line up with pathway meanings. Christ appears to always draw from his context, operationalizing it in service to his objectives.

Research Question 2: How does Jesus Christ mediate learning in these events?

Mediation through Curricular Structures.

John 1:35-39. In the John 1:35-39 event, Christ mediates the disciples' learning through questions and invitations that, while simple and brief, encourage the learners' move from tentative seeming following actions toward open engagement, addressing them when they merely followed, and inviting them along when they merely inquired about where he lived.

Before moving to follow Christ, two of John the Baptist's disciples had heard him acclaim Christ as "the Lamb of God" in their presence (John 1:36). As those two disciples then move to follow Christ, the account states.

Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? (John 1:38)

Up to this point, these two disciples have not yet interacted with Christ beyond their initial impressions and expectations relating to John the Baptist's remarks about him, and their own initial and tentative seeming following actions. Christ's self-reflective question forces the disciples' intentions to a head.

Furthermore, when the two disciples tentatively respond with inquiries about Christ's dwelling place, Christ's response is simple and direct by contrast.

They said unto him, Rabbi...where dwellest thou? 39 He saith unto them, Come and see. (John 1:38-39)

Repeatedly during this exchange, Christ's encouraging response applies increased force to the disciples' inquisitive momentum, mediating their learning most visibly through questions and invitations that encourage the disciples from tentative seeming following actions toward engaging more openly and directly with him.

Matthew 14:22-33. In the Matthew 14:22-33 account, Christ mediates the disciples' learning through modeling instructional actions, issuing direct invitations for learner participation, and introducing a key diagnostic attribution to empower the learner's reflection and improvement.

On the surface this exchange appears to have significantly more elements of mediation than the John 1 event. Modeling this action for the disciples was a key mediation that set the stage for the learning event to follow. Witnessing Christ's performance of this action within an environment of pre-established rules and meanings forces the disciples to reconsider those rules and apply new instructional meanings.

Another significant mediating action on Christ's part is implemented after he identifies himself to the disciples and Peter desires to perform the same action that he sees Christ modeling.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29 And he said, Come. (Matthew 14:28-29)

Similar to Christ's simple and direct invitation to the two disciples in the John 1 event, through this mediating act, Christ welcomes Peter's framing of the event and his initiative to perform the same action he sees Christ performing. The invitation also serves as a validation of Peter's desire to convert what he sees into action he takes. Recalling earlier reference to the zone of proximal development, in this moment, Christ leads Peter through his personal zone of proximal development by scaffolding and then challenging Peter to move beyond his current level of conceptual and faith development (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 86).

A last notable mediating action on Christ's part that occurs over the course of this exchange has to do with the aftermath of Peter's attempted performance when he begins to sink.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matthew 14:31)

This shows how the introduction of key meanings can itself be a mediating act, as if Christ's introduction of these meanings supplied the learners with lenses through which the events could be better understood. This offers a slightly different emphasis, highlighting how Christ's introduction of these meanings provides Peter with feedback regarding his performance that empowers his potential reflection and improvement. In other words, Christ's introduction of this key meaning to Peter provides him with the means of diagnosing his attempted performance of the modeled action, both why it succeeded to the extent it did as well as where it fell short.

John 21:1-19. In the John 21:1-19 instructional event, Christ mediates the disciples' learning through a strategically selected, timed, and thrice repeated question that reframes elements of the exchange and directs specific emphasis toward pathway ideals. This is illustrated in verse 15 of the John 21:1-19 account.

15 ¶ So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

The presence and operation of Christ's question as represented by this occurrence is one example of how he mediates their learning.

In addition, Christ made a desired pathway action a contingent extension of the learner's existing commitments. Through exposition Christ turns the learner's commitment to him into a force which binds the learner to the pathway and to seemingly predetermined outcomes.

The principal educative exchange investigated in the John 21 event took place between Christ and Peter. Peter and six other disciples have just returned from fishing and enjoyed a meal of fish and bread together with Christ when Christ begins to question Peter.

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? (John 21:15)

The account continues, picking up with Peter's reply and Christ's concluding directive.

He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? he saith unto him, yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17)

What is particular to Research Question 2 for this event is the way that Christ reframes the fixtures of this environment to establish it as a learning context. It is not enough to know that Christ asked a question. That reframing and emphasis is accomplished by a well-chosen, well-timed, well-placed, and thrice repeated question. This is central to how Christ influences Peter's learning in this event, therefore it is a key mediating action on Christ's part. Peter has just been out fishing, catches nothing until Christ intervenes

(John 21:6). Afterward, Peter seems to enjoy the fruits of that effort. In turn, Christ began immediately and dramatically to direct Peter's gaze to what Peter's investment in this activity potentially signifies, while simultaneously holding up the desired pathway alternative.

Again, what Christ is doing to mediate their learning is about much more than the question he asks. The power in how Christ mediates this learning event is in what this question sets out to accomplish, and how well it succeeds. Much like in the Matthew 14 event, this event demonstrates how Christ is again applying labels that allow the learner to see their actions in terms of the pathway meanings.

This relates to the Curricular Structures aspect of the pattern in that Christ's question to Peter of "lovest thou me more than these?" sets Peter up for a secondary or contingent commitment, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15), if Peter answers in the affirmative. In other words, Peter's love for Christ makes feeding Christ's sheep a contingent extension of that love. The question becomes a means by which Christ clearly signals toward and builds instructional momentum around an intended learning trajectory for Peter, aligned with the pathway and further contextualized to its ideals. This is a transformative mediating act on Christ's part.

In fact, that love becomes a hinge on which this entire exchange turns, as evident by a follow-up expository remark offered at the conclusion of the educational exchange. Owing to the length and complexity of the statement and what it appears to accomplish, several related domain elements are presented to help in expressing how Christ uses it.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch

forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not...Follow me. (John 21:18-19)

Essentially, Christ is telling Peter that when he was young, he dressed himself and walked where he wanted. By contrast, when Peter is old, following Christ will mean stretching out his hands for someone else to dress him and carry him somewhere he does not want to go. And the invitation for Peter to “Follow [Christ]” at the conclusion of these remarks would seem to indicate what action on Peter’s part will set this in motion. By contrasting Peter’s past and future, Christ is communicating in a straightforward manner what expectations Peter can have regarding his coming experience in Christ’s pathway.

The earlier context of the event clearly showed how the entire instructional exchange was predicated on Peter’s love for Christ which he affirmed three times. Now, it appears that to “Follow [Christ]” (John 21:19) Peter’s discretion to choose what he wears and where he goes will have to be compromised. This reading is amply confirmed since the event at hand involves Peter’s choice to go out on a boat to fish, which is a place and activity of his choosing; and Christ contrasts this labor and its rewards with his labor (feeding his sheep) and its motivations (love for Christ).

Peter’s claim to meet the qualifying condition of loving Christ more than fish and fishing makes following Christ an extension of this. *Following* is an act which literally entails matching someone else’s destination and potentially even their manner of going. Thus, Peter is set by Christ at a crossroads where he can make good on his affirmation of love in the way Christ is inviting him to do, by following and thereby relinquishing his errant discretion, or he can continue to choose fish.

As indicated by these and other domain elements identified from across the three educational events related to Research Question 2, Christ does not merely direct an isolating or narrow instructional sequence of highly segmented statements, actions, and interactions with learners to mediate learning in these events. Rather, Christ mediates learning through his interactions as both educator and exemplar within a dynamic system of influencing structures and deeply significant, even catalytic meanings. These structures and meanings generate instructional momentum to guide his learners from prior understandings and modes of action along a transformative instructional pathway toward new outcomes.

Negotiated meanings.

John 1:35-39. In the John 1:35-39 account, the two disciples appear to be spurred by John the Baptist's words to follow and inquire after Christ's dwelling place (John 1:37-38).

Two prominent meanings emerge over the course of this exchange which are central to how Christ mediates learning in these events, and in this case, it is rather his apparent acceptance of or lack of challenge or opposition to John the Baptist's declaration that Christ is "the Lamb of God" (John 1:36) and the disciples' use of the term "Rabbi" (John 1:38) that Christ's mediation becomes illustrated by the negotiated meanings domain elements. Consider verse 38 of the John 1:35-39 account.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?"

This relates to negotiated meanings, potentially and simply accounting for both the learners' interest in Christ and Christ's acceptance of (or lack of opposition to) the attribution they assign to him, along with its implications. An explanation of the implications suggested by the term is offered in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*,

“Individuals who decide to study with a rabbi and were accepted by him would ‘serve’ that rabbi...by living in his household, accompanying him everywhere, and carrying out various mundane and even servile functions...In turn, they would be able to closely observe the rabbi’s practices and to absorb his wisdom...The memorization of their teachers’ opinions and the observation of their practices formed the centre of rabbinic study” (Hezser, 2010, p. 472-473).

In their use of this term, the disciples appear to invoke this tradition, inquiring about this “Rabbi’s” dwelling place while communicating a great deal besides regarding their potential intentions or interest. So, when he in turn entertains and even encourages their interest and engagement, all around this central attribution, its importance in the account becomes even more pronounced.

Matthew 14:22-33. In the Matthew 14:22-33 instructional event, Christ walks on water to reach his disciples as they struggle to cross the sea by boat. Consider verse 25 of the Matthew 14:22-33 account:

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea...

Recurring throughout the Matthew 14:22-33 instructional event is the theme of Christ's identity, particularly as a negotiated meaning. Christ is able, on account of his identity, to

walk on water to reach his beleaguered disciples (Matthew 14:25). He causes them alarm when he is mistaken for a spirit (Matthew 14:26). He reassures the disciples that it's him (Matthew 14:27). He then accepts when Peter further invokes that question of his identity as if it were tied to Peter's potential actions (Matthew 14:28) by inviting Peter to step out of the boat and perform that action for himself (Matthew 14:29). In other words, Peter is also capable of performing that same miraculous action of walking on water because of who Christ is. Active at nearly every level of interaction, Christ's identity is a central operative meaning relating to how Christ mediates learning in this event.

Two other key meanings are operationalized by Christ when Peter's attempt to perform that same action of walking on water falls short. Consider Matthew 14:28-31.

And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 29 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. 31. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

Christ potentially accomplishes a great deal by negotiating these meanings. Christ is telling Peter what would have made the difference between greater success or failure. These meanings act as a diagnosis of the reasons Peter fell short. They act as diagnostic tools for future improvement, or as targets for where he should focus those efforts. This makes the introduction of these negotiated meanings an important way Christ mediated learning in this event.

John 21:1-19. In the John 21:1-19 instructional event, Christ negotiates meanings which invoke Peter's former and future experience and add emotional weight to his

teaching. Peter used to be a fisherman before accepting Christ's invitation to be one of his disciples early in Christ's ministry (Matthew 4:18-20). Also, the John 21:1-19 instructional event takes place at or near the end of that ministry. So, Peter now has several years of experience as one of Christ's disciples. Now consider John 21:2-3.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. 3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.

It seems telling that Peter is the one who initiates the decision to go fishing, and this may account for Christ later singling him out from among all the disciples.

Some important events lead up to the principal educational exchange in this event. Christ finds the disciples have decided to go fishing but have met with no success after laboring at the task that night (John 21:3-4). Christ intervenes miraculously to help them bring in a bountiful haul of fish (John 21:6). After being recognized, Christ even has a meal of fish ready for the disciples as they arrive back on shore (John 21:7-9). Christ mediates learning in this event through his miraculous intervention in their task and through questions and expository statements, but one of the most pivotal aspects of that mediation comes from the meanings he puts in play and leverages throughout the event. Consider John 21:15.

15 ¶ So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?

His question deftly contrasts a straightforward love for fish with love for Christ. But much more is potentially signified by these meanings, especially as relating to the

instructional pathway and its negotiated meanings. By leveraging these meanings in this way, Christ is potentially invoking all of Peter's former vocation and life before discipleship, but certainly calling for Peter to examine the motivations behind his immediate actions. Love of fish and of fishing is here presented as a rival affection, a rival pathway of motivations with a corresponding action that is marked by this question as peripheral to Peter's chief vocation of discipleship. This dominant or intended pathway of discipleship is represented by Peter's contrasting love for Christ. At this comparatively mature stage in Peter's discipleship, the meanings make the comparison much more impactful.

Research Question 3: How do Jesus Christ's followers respond initially to his instructional strategies during the three instructional events?

Learner Lived Experience.

John 1:35-39. In the John 1:35-39 event, Christ's learner's respond by inclining their desires, expectations, and actions toward prolonged or future association with him.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?" (John 1:38)

It becomes immediately apparent that an operative meaning is at play in this case, which is key to understanding the disciples' response. The two disciples invoke the term, Rabbi, which implies a great deal about how they view Christ, as well as their potential or desired association with him. If Christ accepts the designation of "Rabbi," then they might be accepted by him as his followers in the rabbinic sense. Hezser (2010) states,

“Individuals who decided to study with a rabbi and were accepted by him would ‘serve’ that rabbi (shimush hakhamim) by living in his household, accompanying him everywhere, and carrying out various mundane and even servile functions....In turn, they would be able to closely observe the rabbi’s practices and to absorb his wisdom...The memorization of their teachers’ opinions and the observation of their practices formed the centre of rabbinic study.” (p. 472-473)

And by inquiring after Christ’s dwelling place the disciples potentially signal their desire for an association with him. In this moment, the learners signal in a variety of ways their interest in such a relationship. They physically followed Christ. They used the term, Rabbi, invoking a rabbinic tradition in which they might attach themselves to him as his disciples. They directed their inquiry directly to a piece of information that insured they could have future engagements with him. And as indicated in the text, at his invitation “They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day” (John 1:39).

Considering the remarks from John the Baptist that spurred the disciples initially into action, the disciples’ use of the term Rabbi further invokes the Messianic tradition for these learners, tapping them and Christ into an immense cultural and national anticipation surrounding the advent of a figure whose sacrifice as “the Lamb of God” would “[take] away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). John the Baptist’s remark becomes a powerful attracting force, as the learner responses in this event seem to indicate, inclining their desires, expectations, and actions toward association with Christ.

Matthew 14:22-33. In the Matthew 14:22-33 instructional event, Peter initially responds to Christ’s instructional strategies by completely reorienting himself in terms of how he views his environment, and how he subsequently intends or desires to interact

with his environment. The key instructional exchange in Matthew 14:22-33 is tied to Christ's arrival on the scene and the lived experience of his disciples as they are laboring to cross the sea by boat in adverse conditions. However, this time the incredible manner of Christ's arrival, walking on top of the water, and the meanings communicated or reinforced by this are key to understanding the learner response.

“26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. 28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” (Matthew 14:26-28

This shift in the learner's lived experience constitutes a responding trajectory that begins when Christ interacts within his (and their) current environment and its elements in a way that provokes fear. It continues as he offers reassurances that move Peter toward a complete reorientation of how he views his environment. Finally, it concludes as Peter reveals how he subsequently intends or desires now to interact with his environment as a result.

Peter's own initiative, in direct response to Christ's action and assurances, moves him toward a particular avenue of bold response, and it is to that avenue that Christ responds, saying to Peter,

“...Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.” (Matthew 14:29).

Since only Peter responds out of all the disciples present, his unique lived experience is even more pronounced as an operative variable leading him to this response. Considered

together, these events make it increasingly apparent that not only was Peter's *desire and intention to act* a crucial element of his response, but also their transference or extension into actual actions which reflected the pathway meanings and orientations embodied by Christ throughout this exchange. Peter's response indicates a conception of self with potential to embody those same operative meanings and be enabled to perform those very same actions.

A concluding angle of unique and significant learner response comes from Matthew 14:28:

"28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." (Matthew 14:28)

Peter appears to propose a new attribution when he says, "*if it be thou, bid me come unto thee...*". He is invoking the question of Christ's identity through that statement, as well as suggesting that those meanings behind Christ's actions are tied to his own potential actions. Again, Peter responds in this event by completely reorienting himself in terms of how he views his environment, and how he subsequently intends or desires to interact with his environment.

John 21:1-19. The John 21:1-19 event constitutes a kind of educational intervention, and bears a striking similarity to the previous account in that it involved a dramatic reorientation in terms of the learner's views. Christ comes upon the disciples as they are engaged in a task seemingly peripheral to the primary pathway of discipleship. A modicum of helpful context comes from the simple fact that fishing is revealed in earlier events as the vocation several of the disciples were called away from by Christ in order to start their learning journey as his disciples (Matthew 4:18-20).

After joining Christ later onshore and completing a meal of fish and bread (John 21:9), Christ turns his attention to Peter with the question, “Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15) Peter responds affirmingly, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee” (Ibid), to which Christ then responds, “Feed my lambs” (Ibid). This question is repeated by Christ after the same fashion two more times, and by its third repetition in John 21:17, Peter’s response reveals his altered temperament.

“Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

On the surface, Peter’s answer has not changed from the first instance to the third. Only internally does Peter’s response reveal dramatic alteration, which makes his repetition of the selfsame answer even more telling, also suggestive that he was almost certainly sincere, but at the very least insistent. Peter demonstrates resolve in the face of a challenging curricular structure, a challenge which mounted over three successive repetitions on the educator’s part.

As Christ asks his question and extends the directive for Peter to “Feed [his] lambs” (John 21:15), Peter never does respond to the actual directive. Peter only ever answers the leading question, but never says anything about feeding Christ’s sheep. On that point he remains silent. Such absence of visible response suggests that Peter could still be processing the information and has not yet solidified it as a concept, which fits the description of a pseudo concept (Vygotsky, 1962). Certainly, Peter’s silence is as telling as any direct response he may have given, though readers are not privy to its significance.

Looking with broad strokes at what this analysis reveals about Christ as an educator, Research Question 1 shows how Christ established a learning context for his disciples through interacting with his environment in ways that operationalized it as a frame for crucial pathway meanings. His exchange with two learners near a community of shared purpose precipitated his invitation for them to become part of his community, as was the case in the John 1: 35-39 event; his miraculous interaction with the sea during the disciples' difficult sea-crossing in Matthew 14:22-33 provoked Peter to boldly emulate his actions and his regard for that environment; and his teachings following a seemingly innocuous fishing venture in John 21:1-19 dramatically recast that entire venture as being at odds with Peter's love of Christ and his discipleship. As these learners encountered the new frames for their environments Christ presented to them, they were drawn toward his way of seeing and interacting with that environment, and so were contextualized to the meanings and implications of the instructional pathway he represented for them.

Research Question 2 shows how Christ accomplished this reframing through employing curricular structures which assisted learners in reorienting themselves to his way of seeing and acting. This framing action related to how Christ intended for learners to view and interact with their environment, with himself, and with themselves by extension. Those structures were built around central negotiated meanings that lent them increased ideological force. The curricular structures Christ used to accomplish this comprised actions like teacher inquiry and invitation, along with his attribution as Rabbi, which he used to shift the two disciples from tentative following actions toward more direct and lasting engagement with him in the John 1:35-39 event; or Christ's identity and

his modeling actions which helped draw Peter well beyond his current levels of conception and action toward the performance of the very actions he saw Christ modeling for them, even providing Peter with the means of targeted future improvement, as illustrated in the Matthew 14:22-33 event; and lastly, through a weighty question and further exposition in the John 21:1-19 event which reoriented Peter away from his former vocation and regard for fishing toward aligning his professed love of Christ with his labor as one of Christ's disciples.

In every event, ways of seeing or acting are presented or encouraged by Christ whose performance by learners would presumably catch them up at their points of engagement and bring them toward alignment with him, or with the dominant pathway conceptions and actions he represented. Christ's actions in every event consistently highlight the distance between him and his learners, between his conceptions and theirs, and between his actions and theirs. His mediating actions likewise all served as devices which inclined learners to close that gap, thereby contextualizing them to the instructional pathway meanings and outcomes.

Research Question 3 shows how learner responses reflected their unique experiences and backgrounds, or lived experience, as it interacted with or reacted to the pathway structures and meanings presented by Christ. This resulted in unique learner trajectories or responses that the pathway and Christ needed to anticipate and respond to. The two disciples in the John 1:35-39 event responded to Christ's inquiry by inclining their desires, expectations, and actions toward prolonged or future association with Christ and what he seemed to represent for them; Peter responded to Christ's instructional strategies in the Matthew 14:22-33 event by completely reorienting himself in terms of

how he viewed Christ, their environment and his own capabilities as one of Christ's disciples, which determined how he subsequently interacted with that environment; and lastly, this was represented in the John 21:1-19 event through Peter's determined professions of love for Christ in the face of Christ's repeated questioning, his distress at imputations suggested by these questions, and his lack of any direct response to Christ's answering directive. Learners are seen in every instance reconciling their experience with Christ's pathway, often through duress, but driven by their anticipation, desire and determination.

Chapter V

Discussion

In this study I used a telling case design and domain and taxonomic analysis to examine Christ's instructional actions through a Vygotskian lens. The instructional pathway patterns reflected by the Vygotskian constructs of sociocultural context, curricular structures, negotiated meanings, and learner lived experience were used as an explanatory theory of Christ as an educator. The results suggest that Jesus Christ's educational approach is an exemplar of these instructional pathway patterns

The findings suggest several areas of immediate relevancy for this study, with implications first for any physical, but also broader sociocultural contexts in which religious or secular education takes place. Consider the unique educational contexts in which Christ was able to influence such transformative change in his disciples. His direct, authentic, encompassing, and experiential approach perhaps has greatest pertinence to apprenticeship educational models, or any less classroom-centric systems.

The findings of this study suggest the premise that Christ's teachings and methodology constitute an interplay of structures and meanings moving learners toward intended learning outcomes. The attendant activities from efforts to apply these same patterns in vocational rehabilitation can therefore facilitate a trainee's reorientation into vital work attitudes and behaviors. For example, the way Christ modeled interactions with his environment and framed elements of that environment in pathway terms is suggestive of how vocational trainers can model crucial interactions with settings and situations their trainees will need to be able to navigate over the course of their work. The way Christ supplied learners with frames and meanings to diagnose their efforts and

target future improvements is suggestive of ways trainers can similarly ensure that their trainees have the means of targeted self-assessment and continual improvement.

To elaborate on that latter example, recall that after Christ modelled walking on water for the disciples in Matthew 14:22-33, and after Peter's partially successful but ultimately incomplete and harrowing attempt to emulate Christ's action, Christ held up faith and doubt as the key variables behind Peter's unsuccessful attempt (Matthew 14:31). So, in that instance, the instructional pathway outcome of doing what Christ did required that instructional pathway meanings of faith and doubt be introduced to inform Peter's future efforts. Having introduced those meanings to Peter, Peter would then have possessed the means of more deliberately targeting faith and doubt in his subsequent efforts to do as Christ did and become as Christ was.

In contemporary vocational rehabilitation, behavioral competencies are similarly leveraged as operative meanings that are intended to inform trainees' ongoing efforts. Just as Christ held up faith and doubt, Deseret Industries competencies include traits such as dependability, productivity, professionalism, teachability, and being a team player; and each larger competency is further broken down into smaller concrete actions or behaviors that make up each one, such as following quality standards for assigned tasks pertaining to the productivity competency, or seeking, accepting and applying feedback pertaining to the teachability competency (Ready for Work Associate Guidebook, 2019).

Just as Christ introduced faith and doubt as meanings when they were particularly impactful for Peter, which was immediately following his frightening experience sinking into the water during his attempt, Christ's example suggests the importance of trainers being deliberate in how they introduce trainees to a program's requirements. If

introduced too early, trainers are frontloading learners with abstracted meanings that lack context and relevance. Without having experienced such a dramatic shortcoming moments prior, Peter would not have felt quite so keenly Christ's subsequent instructions.

Additionally, by frontloading meanings too early, we may actually entrench the learner in their own habits because they lack frames of experience where new behaviors are contrasted with existing ones. This disadvantages desired pathway meanings by presenting them in direct opposition to a trainee's own experience rather than by way of purposeful instruction at opportune moments of pronounced or enhanced receptivity. This is one indication that Christ's example employing instructional pathway patterns can be applied in a vocational rehabilitation training process.

Additionally, we might well anticipate similar applicability to other apprenticeship and situated learning models (Csinos, 2010; Riegel & Kindermann, 2016). Despite any differences in explicit purposes, means and outcomes, such models share with Christ a leveraging of the authenticity and immersion of the learner's experiences to guide them toward desired behaviors, attitudes, and meanings. In other words, we might well anticipate finding instructional pathway patterns in operation in numerous corresponding contexts, and so find means through these patterns of better navigating those learning contexts.

Even in classroom contexts, deliberate framing of different elements of a learner's world and experience takes place whether or not those learners are actually in immediate proximity to those situations at the precise moment of instruction. The classroom is still a forum for reframing a child's world, with its structures designed to add suggested/intended functions and meanings to the elements and fixtures of a learner's

current and future environments, including notable frustration or constraint when such connections are not clear.

This study's insights into Christ's methodology point to the value of incorporating activities and ideas into classroom practice which will allow learners to reckon with conditions and circumstances relevant to educational outcomes, and to reorient themselves toward the new meanings and structures needed to succeed in this.

In addition, the implications of these findings potentially extend into exchanges taking place between educators or educational systems and learners. Where the question of effectively mediating the learning experience warrants more deliberate care, educators should consider the parallels between the Vygotskian instructional pathway model exemplified in these accounts by Christ and their respective professional interests and practice.

Culturally relevant teaching or pedagogy is one clear example, which directs focus to the lived experiences of learners, and to structuring lessons and educational experiences around that (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2005). As an example, in the John 21:1-19 account Christ played pathway meanings directly off Peter's past experience and former identity as a fisherman. This instruction leveraged Peter's experience as a means of reinforcing desired pathway outcomes, meeting Peter exactly where he was and calling for him to become actively reflective and responsive as a learner, thereby ensuring the relatability and provocativeness of the instruction (Putney, 2012).

Another important example is what this study suggests about non-linear development where the individual and the collective exist in a reflexive relationship (Putney, 2012). Consider the way Christ is merely projecting certain meanings into a

collective space in Matthew 14:22-33. By walking on water to enter that learning space, Christ had projected his undefined actions out into the open to see how his learner's would respond or interpret them. At this point, Christ supplied the actions and the disciples supplied any meanings through their interpretation of his actions. His entrance on the scene went without specification of who (or what) he was (Matthew 14:25). Neither did Christ explicate the implications of his actions for the disciples, leaving that entirely up to his disciples' within this collective space of the context and their perception.

Now, from where the disciples perceived Christ's actions within a collective space, they responded with fear thinking it wasn't Christ at all, but a spirit (Matthew 14:26). Christ immediately retouched or supplemented his actions within the collective space by assigning reassuring meaning to them, letting them know that it was him they saw performing those actions. Still within the collective space, Christ's actions walking on water now had Christ's identity attached as a key meaning, and both parties had at this point touched those meanings over the course of the exchange.

The exchange continued as Peter then picked up that meaning-laden action of Christ walking on water and elaborated on it by offering an interpretation of Christ's action as being representative of Peter's own identity and potential actions. He says, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water" (Matthew 14:28). Now, these meanings within the collective space have evolved from undefined actions eliciting the disciples' fear to meaning-laden actions with direct implications for Peter's own potential actions.

This makes Christ's catalyzing actions and Peter's responses clearly reflective of the following statement:

As individuals participated in collective activity, they shared their own personalized meanings that others then were able to access and use to create their own understandings of what was being shared. In this way, individuals showed active agency in processing the information through problem solving with more experienced others. (Putney, 2012, p. 142)

The same could be said of the meanings and corresponding actions at play in both the John 1:35-39 account and the John 21:1-19 account. In each, individual actions and corresponding meanings are clearly projected into collective spaces as catalysts for learner responses, whatever Christ's intent may or may not have been in such moments. As similar meanings are evoked in collective spaces within our educational contexts, this study presents further potential means of tracing the lines along which meanings develop and for weighing the magnitude of their several impacts as reflected in the lived experience, or *perezhivanie* of the learners (Vygotsky, 1978; 1987).

Looking beyond the more immediate implications, consider the broader application of Vygotskian Learning Theory to this study, and the way a new approach to that theory informed this analysis of Christ's instructional methodology. In short, Christ demonstrated a masterful pedagogy of meanings, or how an ideology or set of meanings can play into the educative process and be leveraged by educators to achieve transformative learner outcomes.

Grading is one important example of a meaning-laden curricular structure where instructional pathway patterns manifest across a wide spectrum of educator practice. For

instance, as referred to earlier, following Peter's short-lived and harrowing attempt to walk on water, Christ tells him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Christ's introduction of these terms served as diagnostic feedback for Peter, an assessment that invited Peter to know and evaluate his own prior attempt and target future improvement. Peter could now identify insufficient faith as the cause of his sinking. He knew that doubt filled the gaps where his faith had been lacking. He also now knew that, if taken at face value, Christ was either reassuring him that he had no such cause for doubt, or Christ was inviting him to actually evaluate through self-examination and introspection any aspects of his self wherein such doubt could have manifested.

This has significant potential bearing for how grades are administered in school. Where contemporary grading practice can at times convey disheartening finality to learners, consider how, just as Christ demonstrated with Peter, contemporary educators might better operationalize their own grading practice to convey positive meanings to their students, such as data folders containing pre and post measures to clearly communicate to learners an accurate understanding of their progress to date, and pairing that communication around motivation and means for realizing their future potential.

This has potential to help shift sometimes unhelpful meanings behind grades from being potentially disheartening definitive valuations of a learner's state to being operationalized as diagnostic progress indicators. This is consistent with Clymer and Wiliam (2007) and Hamilton et al (2009), who advocate for the student use of data folders in order to track their progress, or Jimerson et al (2019) who documented

widespread use of data folders and other means of student-involved-data-use (SIDU) among 11 educators across five school districts in north Texas.

Learners with distinctive lived experience, even in spontaneous displays of initiative, found their actions anticipated or accounted for by Christ and by the pathway structures he put in play. These learners likewise found that their performance of learning actions either moved them away from or brought them closer to sharing the pathway meanings invoked by Christ. Their learning actions either brought them out of or into alignment with Christs' larger aims. They were either moving away from or closer toward a willing embodiment of desired and pursued educational ideals.

Note Peter's spontaneous decision to go fishing in the John 21:1-19 event, an action that seemingly moved Peter out of alignment with Christ's larger aims and further away from sharing his pathway meanings. Christ seamlessly accounted for Peter's decision and its corollary actions by taking part in his endeavor and following it with an impromptu admonishment through a series of poignant questions and a subsequent directive for Peter to "feed my sheep" granted his determination to love Christ more than fish was sincere (John 21:16-17). In this instance, the manner in which Christ accounted for Peter's action by engaging with him and offering feedback and admonishment relates to a frequent occurrence in vocational rehabilitation involving reactive measures taken by trainers upon observing or measuring deficits or positive outputs in a trainee's performance. For instance, it is fairly common for job coach trainers in a Deseret Industries facility to struggle when offering correction or suggesting needed improvements to trainees. Trainees can often grow defensive about their work performance and behaviors, which suggests that trainer feedback is being perceived at

some level as an attack. Although a trainee's defensive responses tend to vary depending on a variety of other factors, including rapport they have established with their trainer and the extent to which the trainees are themselves aware of the deficit and need for improvement; *any* negatively perceived meanings or intent a trainee reads behind the trainer's recommendations constrain that trainee's ability to address needed improvements and limit the trainer's ability to guide further development processes.

In the John 21:1-19 account, again, deep buy-in from Peter has to be a significant factor behind his willingness to receive hard feedback from Christ. But additionally, Christ moves alongside Peter as he is engaging in his errant fishing activity. He responds to Peter's actions almost as if he were entertaining and even facilitating their positive outcome where the natural consequences of Peter's decision were otherwise proving discouraging. Peter and the other disciples had labored all night at catching nothing before Christ arrived on the scene and facilitated a miraculous and bountiful haul of fish (John 21:3-6). Christ's manner of engagement is intriguing in that Christ did not set himself at any point in open opposition to Peter's actions. He did not declare or show himself to be at odds with Peter's decision. Rather, if anything, in an instructive move that stresses the absolute volition maintained by Peter throughout, Christ engaged gently alongside Peter as a meek and helpful companion in the endeavor. Peter and he, each at their respective levels, together experienced and actively influenced the actions, consequences, and rewards of Peter's decision.

When Christ finally extended hard feedback, it was not direct and confrontational. The feedback was not clinical or diagnostic in nature. Instead, the curricular structure of Christ's feedback came packaged around poignant questions evoking meanings of great

significance to Peter, “Lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15). Christ’s questions were opportunely and deliberately followed by brief and simple directives from Christ that pivoted the corrective pathway-affirming actions he wanted Peter to perform, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17), off of Peter’s deep connection and commitment to those meanings, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee” (John 21). This is how Christ worked to influence the reconciliation of Peter’s actions and experience with his professed commitments to discipleship.

Christ’s question and the feedback or correction it targeted was centered squarely and unmistakably on meanings that touched the very heart of Peter’s motivations. And it was when those cherished meanings had been fixed unshakably in Peter’s mind that Christ introduced the correction needed by Peter that had such prominent bearing on those meanings. Vocational trainers should consider Christ’s utilization of these patterns of action and meaning when looking to offer hard feedback to trainees, the merits of moving gently alongside their learners and pivoting hard feedback off meanings of deep personal significance to the learner that have already been firmly fixed in their consciousness.

Another principal takeaway from Christ’s example in this study relates to the Vygotskian construct of *perezhivanie* or learner lived experience. Alternate prior meanings and conceptions were already at play within each of these learning contexts, operating on or even being maintained by the learners themselves. For instance, the disciples’ prior understanding of the rules of their boat’s environment in the Matthew 14:22-33 account were clearly governing their beliefs and actions at the time of Christ’s arrival. The manner of their journey across the sea in contrast to the manner of Christ’s

journey, and the disciples' responses upon seeing Christ all clearly reflect two distinct sets of rules or meanings that needed to be reconciled by Christ.

This example demonstrates how the disciples' prior conceptions of an environment (or the meanings that were operative in their experience) defined and constrained the range and limits of their corresponding actions within that space. As such, these prior meanings likewise represented a potential constraint to Christ's educational objectives, a rival pathway of meanings that needed to be overcome in order for his new desired meanings to become operative in the learners' lives and experience. And we see this reconciliation occurring at every level of the disciples' interactions with Christ. Christ's success hinged on his ability to mediate the learners' reconciliation of their experience with the meanings he asserted. And we see confirmation of their masterful effect in Peter's responses.

Relating directly to the learner experience, in all three instructional events, but especially the John 1:35-39 and Matthew 14:22-33 accounts, Christ responded to spontaneous learner actions and turned those actions (and the learners themselves) in the direction of desired and intended pathway outcomes. In John 1:35-39, two of John the Baptist's disciples initiated the interaction with Christ by following him as he passed by. In Matthew 14:22-33, Peter's spontaneous response to seeing Christ approach singled him out for personalized instruction. In the Matthew 14 account, Peter spontaneously responded to the modeled behavior of Christ walking on water by attempting the same behavior. Peter's spontaneous engagement activated corresponding curricular structures, the teaching devices and actions in the form of educator responses suited to or designed for the type of engagement Peter displayed. These structures came in the form of direct

invitations, assistance in the task and diagnostic feedback following Peter's attempt. This event illustrates how learners respond based on their unique lived experience and how educators and educational systems can anticipate or make allowance for certain learner responses in an instructional pathway.

In the event that educators or educational systems may not expressly account for learner responses, learners could be at a disadvantage. For this reason, schools should prepare an array of structures to try and anticipate a wide range of learner responses, reflecting highly variable needs, abilities and capabilities that are acknowledged by the system (Duffy, 2007; Palmer, 2005). Therefore, teachers need to understand their students' lived experience and assess their background knowledge in order to develop instruction that meets the learner's level of understanding. The instruction that teachers provide must take into account the students' lived experience and prior knowledge and approach instruction from an additive model rather than a deficit model.

Lastly, this study provides an alternate lens for critical curriculum studies, identifying where aforementioned ideological structures and meanings within instructional pathways undergird potentially alienating classroom practices (Apple, 2019). By understanding these patterns educators can shine a spotlight of attention toward the concerted influences potentially being exerted on learners by educational structures and corresponding meanings (Erevelles, 2005). There is a strained dichotomy between expressly desired ideological education, such as, for example, seminarians in the Roman Catholic Church and youth and young adults attending seminaries and institutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and the earlier example where education was brandished against immigrants as a device for contextualizing them into

more acceptable social mannerisms and norms (Apple, p. 74). In such cases, Critical Curriculum Studies exposes where ideological meanings and assumptions discredit learner lived experience to their ongoing detriment.

What this broadly suggests is that the instructional pathway framework can be beneficially applied by educators to enhance their ability to operate deliberately within any educational setting where explicit or implicit meanings are a potential source of contextualizing influence on learners; or where any learner may find themselves reconciling their lived experience with new meanings presented by structures within educational systems (Vygotsky, 1962). Based on how these meanings are increasingly understood to be operating with learners within these systems, educational practitioners and administrators should consider afresh how content is prepared, approved, and presented to learners.

Limitations

There are pronounced constraints on any researcher's ability to objectively and through open exploration claim authoritative results regarding the teaching devices or structures, including intent, of Jesus Christ. The results of my analysis in that regard will reflect my unique and narrow personal experience and focus as I applied these methods and frames of analysis to these events.

Implications for Future Research

While the approach taken in this study could extend to additional telling cases of master teachers who have exemplified the teaching craft throughout history, this research could also be readily and beneficially applied to contemporary educational settings to uncover how these patterns are actually manifesting in classrooms, schools, families, and

industries around the world today. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently shifted organizational emphasis toward a home-centered, church-supported model that places the family and parents as the focal point of their patterns of worship (Nelson, Oct 2018). In the same way Christ's methodology informs vocational rehabilitation and other apprenticeship models, it would likewise inform the authentic sociocultural contexts in which parenting occurs within family units (Marks & Dollahite, 2017).

Christ's methods are particularly well-suited to the way parents or guardians raise children in domestic or home environments in their shared reliance on authentic, organic, and experiential learning. Other settings that might lend themselves uniquely to this kind of instructional lens include vocational rehabilitation services, military training programs, the Catholic Priestly Formation and other religious training programs and processes, etc., with potential to extend much further into an investigation of the ways meanings are at play in any classroom context, as becomes evident through this study's dual ties to both religious and Critical Curriculum Studies. This suggests that any educator seeking to influence any learner will invoke these same patterns in some way, which gives this approach greatly amplified reach and applicability.

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Appendix

Sociocultural Context Taxonomic Statements derived from domain elements of the location-for-action semantic relationship:

1. The learner is in close proximity and affinity (likeness) to the structures of this particular ideological pathway which are presented and represented (embodied) by an educator or learning environment.
2. The educator opportunistically appropriates or “taps into” existing investments of learner capital or spontaneously occurring/arising situations.
3. The educator is sensitized to learners’ circumstances and needs.
4. The educator reframes the learners’ orientation, or accepts, validates or reinforces learners’ framing of pathway ideals and the performance of pathway actions, or actions aligned with the dominant or desired pathway ideology.
5. Structures with underlying meanings and corresponding intended/anticipated learner actions or responses generate conceptual momentum or ideological currents that incline and compel learners toward likeness or embodiment of certain dominant ideologies, worldviews, or conceptions.
6. The educator recognizes conditions warranting educational intervention and calls out learners toward bold and decisive corresponding pathway actions.
7. The educator fosters an aspirational educational context that inclines/ inspires learners to desire, reach, and own (choose) their pathway outcomes, or outcomes aligned or in harmony with the dominant or desired ideology.

8. The educator reckons with and reconciles (helps learners reconcile) the influences exerted by rival pathways whose meanings and corresponding actions detract from intended/desired orientations toward contrary or opposing embodiments.

Curricular Structures Taxonomic Statements derived from domain elements of the strict inclusion semantic relationship:

1. The educator directly assists learners in performing certain pathway actions.
2. The educator contrasts structures, motivations, actions, and meanings of rival pathways to build conceptual momentum around certain intended learning trajectories.
3. The educator employs teaching devices that frame the learner's experiences around desired attributions and toward the learner's performance and embodiment of target pathway ideals.
4. The educator models pathway actions and embodies its ideals as a standard for learners and a counterpoint to rival pathways and conceptions.
5. The educator employs teaching devices or structures (Ex. Bold and direct invitations and calls to action) that bring to a head the realization of learner's pathway actions and commitments and their heightened engagement in these performances.
6. The educator "taps into" existing investments of learner capital toward their performance of pathway actions and their embodiment of pathway ideals.

Instructionally Operative Meanings (Underlying Meanings) Taxonomic Statements derived from domain elements of the attribution semantic relationship:

1. Messianic/Rabbinic figure possessing preternatural capabilities manifests as teacher and embodiment of an intended/ anticipated pathway of actions, understandings, and corresponding learner potentialities.
2. The structures of competing pathways and meanings generate or constrain, respectively, learner momentum along divergent trajectories.
3. The learner, now and in the future, comes to and has potential to embody pathway ideals through the performance of pathway actions.

Learner Lived Experience Taxonomic Statements derived from domain elements of the means end semantic relationship:

1. The learner buys into attributions of Christ's Messianic/Rabbinic identity and experiences heightened self-efficacy to reconcile their existing views with those of the pathway; and perform the actions and achieve the outcomes that have been modelled for them by an educator or pathway exemplar.
2. The distress occasioned by disparity between the learner's current state and their desired state precipitates some educational intervention (including their own responding action).
3. The learner has existing and ensures ongoing proximity to educator and associated interests and potentialities.
4. The learner owns and initiates their portion in a transactional process of learning.