4-2002

Visions of Self in the Act of Teaching: Using Personal Metaphors in a Collaborative Study

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An interdisciplinary group of faculty at a small midwestern state university discuss the work they have done together using self study and metaphors to look at their practice. A brief history of our work is followed by a discussion of the ingredients (group structure, ground rules, etc.) that allowed our group to develop a way of being together that we term professional intimacy. Individually we briefly explore our teaching in terms of a unique personal metaphor (a kaleidoscope; a maker of scrap yarn afghans; soil; a band director; and Yoda). Then we each identify various implications for changes in our teaching based on our metaphors. Finally, we describe how the experience of professional intimacy in this group has affected non-teaching aspects of our professional lives.

Self-study centers on exploring the lived experiences and concerns of individual educators. Although self-study has no simple definition, Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) identify the roots of self-study in qualitative research, in the reconceptualist movement in curriculum studies, in action research by teacher practitioners, and in humanities-based theories and methods contributed by a worldwide network of scholars. The seminal papers for this area of study are referenced in Bullough and Pinnegar; additional representative papers can be found in Hamilton (1998) and Loughran and Russell (2002).

Local Background for this Study

Our local self-study efforts began when a group of five faculty used a modified form of Fenstermacher's (1994) practical argument to examine the implicit assumptions that underlie our practice in teacher education (Boody, East, Fitzgerald, Heston, & Iverson, 1998). In our discussions, we often used metaphors to illustrate our views and to describe our experience of learning together through self-study. The metaphor of a "disembodied brain" captured our sense that our thinking took place in the physical space among us rather than within our own heads. The longer we examined our practice together, the more we embraced this metaphor as descriptive of our way of being together.

We pushed beyond the lone individual conjured up by "self" study and talked instead of "selves" study. Increasingly, we have come to believe that self-study is not most productive when done in one's own room. Hence, we engage in collaborative self-study. This kind of collaboration is fully embraced by members of the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practice community (Cole & Finley, 1998), and so we describe our work simply as self-study.

The work of Palmer (1998) and Bullough and Gitlin (1995) encouraged us to bring metaphors more explicitly into our work. This led to the formation of a group, the authors of this paper, consisting of three members from past self-studies, and two new members. Together we have been using our personal metaphors to reflect on teaching practices and to illuminate tacit beliefs about learning and teaching, students and teachers, content and process, and the interrelationships among our beliefs.

Theoretical Catalysts

Metaphor has long been an essential tool for meaning making in literature and humanities, as well as generative of scientific discoveries. Psychologists and counselors use metaphors extensively as they help clients make greater

meaning of their lives. As teachers, we have regularly used metaphors as a teaching tool in our attempts to enhance student understanding of complex abstract concepts. Palmer (1998) suggests that teachers can also use metaphors to guide their reflections upon their practice and to illuminate paths for constructive change. Similarly, Bullough and Gitlin (1995) utilize the teaching metaphors of preservice teachers to understand and facilitate their professional growth. Initially we drew upon these works as we began to explore our personal metaphors for our teaching. As we worked together, we welcomed others into our group who, through their writings, served as additional catalysts for our discussions (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Rearick & Feldman, 1999).

We began by using an exercise from Palmer (1998) to identify our metaphors. This exercise asks teachers to identify the first image that comes to them when asked to complete the statement, "When I am teaching at my best, I am like a _____" (Palmer, p. 148). Some in our group adapted this prompt and used, "When I am teaching at my best, it's like a _____." The first image that comes to mind, regardless of how humble or silly or grandiose it may seem, becomes an individual's metaphor for use in self-study.

The metaphors each of us brought to the study group are quite different from each other. When our teaching is at its best, we envision ourselves as part of a kaleidoscope, soil, the maker of a scrap yarn afghan, a band conductor, and Yoda, the wise and serene Jedi Master from the Star Wars movies. Each metaphor provides an alternative vision of self and gives us a new place in which to stand as teachers and reflect upon our practice. Each metaphor also contains particular implications regarding how we view our own practice, our students, and our content. We have found that sharing our metaphors in a group discussion context allows us to examine our practice with many different sets of eyes. That is, although one person's metaphor does not fit another person, each metaphor, when shared, offers all of us rich new insights into our classroom practice and our ways of thinking about teaching and learning. In

essence, I tell my story for me and you hear it for you.

Our Self-Study

Group Structure

Our initial plan for this self-study had two components. The first component centered on reflective journaling in which we explicitly explored our personal teaching metaphors in relationship to a particular course we were teaching. Participants generally made one or two extended journal entries each week. In these entries, we provided a brief synopsis of recent classroom events and then used our metaphors to reflect upon these events and our decisions and actions as teachers.

The second component of our inquiry structure called for a monthly group meeting in which we each shared our journal entries. We provided copies of a major entry from the previous four weeks to all participants. We usually e-mailed parts (or all) of a journal entry so that group members could read these entries before the meeting. Originally we planned to meet once a month for five to six hours. This schedule was difficult to maintain, so for the second semester, we switched to meeting once a week for two hours.

Ground Rules and Community

An essential part of our study group is our discussion format, which we base on Parker Palmer's "clearness committee" (see, for example, Livsey & Palmer, 1999). One member of our group becomes the focus person. The role of the other committee members is to give all their attention to the focus person and his or her issue. Three ground rules guide our discussions: 1) ask only questions about which one is genuinely curious; 2) draw conclusions only about one's own practices and metaphor; and 3) maintain absolute confidentiality about what others share. The ground rules, when enacted in our community, mean "... that members are forbidden to speak to the focus person in any way except to ask that person an honest, open

question" (Palmer, 1998, p. 153). Committee members are not to offer advice or refer to expert authority. We, like Palmer, find that this helps the focus person discover "wisdom within" (p. 153). In practice, we moved away from Palmer's clearness committee model, and now use what we call a dynamic clearness committee. Unlike Palmer's committee, our focus person changes during a meeting. In no prescribed fashion, we alternate being committee members and the focus person.

The ground rules for our dynamic clearness committee are taken very seriously, and violations, although rare, are quickly and explicitly noted. We find it particularly important to avoid giving advice designed to save or fix the focus person. Such advice generally does not promote reflection on the part of the person receiving it. Moreover, advice giving can reflect a lack of understanding of the problem. Saving and fixing efforts indicate that one has heard only the symptoms and disregarded the story. Asking honest, open questions can be a challenge since we are so accustomed to asking leading questions which are advice giving in disguise. Questioning then becomes a way of figuring out our own thinking about our teaching and our metaphors. This process of questioning illuminates issues in a member's mind, even when they might not be spoken. A comment or answer about another's metaphor becomes a light for our own metaphors even if our own metaphors might not explicitly be part of the discussion.

In our meetings, we focus on the ideas of teaching and learning in a broad way. We have found that a broad focus fosters a richer discussion with greater depth than a discussion that is based on a prescribed path. In addition, it is more likely that each participant will find an honest and fruitful way to plug into the discussion. We have learned to take matters slowly, becoming comfortable with silence as well as discourse. We must take time to listen so we can listen to learn. Focusing in this manner has allowed our group to develop into a community that serves as a refuge from other groups built solely around a discussion of techniques (Palmer, 1998).

Other Ingredients

Suffering, humor, digressions and outliers are instrumental parts of our community. Palmer (1998) has helped us understand that, "We will not be able to teach ... until we are willing to suffer the tension of opposites, until we understand that such suffering is neither to be avoided nor merely to be survived but must be actively embraced for the way it expands our own hearts" (p. 85). We suffer both together and as individuals, and together we have found that we can make our suffering useful.

> The possibilities for reflective awakenings and transformations are limited when one is alone. Teachers need others in order to engage in conversations where stories can be told, reflected back, heard in different ways, retold, and relived in new ways in the safety and secrecy of the classroom (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 13).

Suffering together, we have relearned why we teach; it is what our hearts move us to do.

Suffering in our dynamic clearness committee is possible because we are not afraid to be vulnerable. Professional intimacy (described later in the paper) allows us to focus on our suffering, embrace it and ultimately learn from it. Moreover, because of our ground rules, we are able to let suffering persist for some time. If we were to resolve tension prematurely, we would not have a chance to embrace it; we would not have grown. The time and support we have for our suffering is a critical piece in our work.

Too often, humor and digressions are considered off task behaviors in working groups. In contrast, we cultivate a practice of *wanderfahring*, a way of enjoying the journey, taking inviting side roads as it were. The digressions are generative in the same way brainstorming is and we do not stop or redirect them. They serve to knit us together as a community by reinforcing our shared context. When returning from such a foray, we often find ourselves refreshed and able to look with different eyes at the topic under discussion. Having a deadline or target is

helpful but we do not let it rule our process. Deadlines and targets energize our movement but do not dictate its direction. Being solely task or product oriented deadens our interactions and makes our community feel inhospitable, while humor allows us to create a hospitable learning space where "the pain of truth's transformations can be borne" (Palmer, 1993, p. 74).

Finally, we have come to find the presence of outliers in our group essential to our work together. An outlier is a member of the group who has a different background from most members of the group or is largely unknown to the group as a whole. While most members of our group have multiple connections to each other, having at least one outlier keeps us from making assumptions based on overlapping contexts or lapsing into coded jargon. This prompts more clarity in our communication. When we work harder to communicate our ideas clearly, we discover that we are more reflective about what we say, how we say it, and how we hear what is said.

Our Metaphors

The main catalyst for our group was the use of metaphor to reflect on our practice. Our metaphors provide a somewhat objective place through which to examine our teaching. In the sections that follow, we present our metaphors and how we used them in our self-study. Recall that we responded with the first image that came to us when asked to complete the prompt, "When I am teaching at my best, I am like a _____" (Palmer, 1998, p. 148) or, "When I am teaching my best, it's like a _____." After coming up with our metaphors, we considered them carefully in our group meetings. The metaphors were mapped onto our teaching. We identified where our students, the content, and the teachers were in our metaphors. Often, this mapping uncovered issues related to our teaching that prompted discussion and reflection. We also considered what Palmer (1998) refers to as the "dark sides" of our metaphors. These discussions became a catalyst for our individual growth as teachers.

Catherine: A Kaleidoscope (Mathematics and Mathematics Education)

The image in a kaleidoscope, when the mirrors are properly aligned, is breathtaking. While an imperfect image can be quite impressive, perfect images are the best. When I'm teaching my best, the students/mirrors come together just right to make a perfect image. In my metaphor, the image is what the students learn; the colorful doo-dads that reflect off the mirrors are the content we study. In my classroom, the students interact with the content. Sometimes what they come together to learn is wonderful—represented by the perfectly symmetric image in the kaleidoscope.

I think of myself as a facilitator when teaching. Therefore, I have tried to minimize my voice in the classroom. I do not want to be all that evident in the events of class; so I strive to create an environment where my students come together with mathematics, play with it, ponder, and solve problems. In my metaphor, this makes me the tube. The most important feature of a kaleidoscope, when considering the image, is the mirrors and how they come together. The tube plays a role in this, being sized so that the angles between the mirrors are good kaleidoscope angles. I create and manage the structure of the class. In a sense, I hold the students together so they can form a "community of inquiry" (Lester, 1996). Together they, like the mirrors in a kaleidoscope, fit nicely or struggle to find their alignments.

Some semesters the image we create never becomes perfect. I think this is sometimes due to flawed mirrors: students who will not play and experiment with the mathematics or are not able or willing to create a community. Thus, we are not able to come together nicely. Sometimes, the tube is too tight or too loose; I am not quite on target with the facilitation I strive for. Maybe it is because we have too few doo-dads; the mathematics I set for the curriculum is not sufficiently rich to promote the community of inquiry. These are some ways the kaleidoscope can fail.

I think the viewers of the kaleidoscope are the assessment component of my teaching. The viewers

of our kaleidoscope are critical analysts of the symmetry in the image; they evaluate the image based on its perfection. In essence, they use a rubric to judge the image. Either I give students rubrics I'll use to evaluate their work, or we write rubrics to evaluate projects they complete. Sometimes I am the viewer; I evaluate their work. Sometimes the students are the viewers; they evaluate their own and each other's work. We all have multiple places in my metaphor.

My content knowledge is the light that illuminates the kaleidoscope. Without a source of light, the mirrors cannot reflect the doo-dads. No image can be seen in the dark. Using what I know about mathematics, I select the topics we study, the problems we pursue and how the content is represented. After I make these selections, it is up to the students and me to engage with the mathematics. My content knowledge is a catalyst for this, just as the light source is a catalyst for the kaleidoscope's image.

When I first wrote about and shared my metaphor, it became clear to me that I was missing. The teacher was not present. When I was the focus of our dynamic clearness committee, my group pushed me to place myself in my metaphor. At first, I resisted thinking about my place in the kaleidoscope; I struggled to identify what my presence meant in my classroom. I wanted my students to listen to each other and feel able to share their thinking. This does not often happen in my classroom; the culture here does not support students' participation in class in these ways. I blamed myself instead of considering the context. Recognizing this helped me place myself in my metaphor. I became the tube supporting the mirrors in the kaleidoscope.

I have taught mathematics education courses, mostly methods, for two years. This seems to be very different from teaching mathematics. While I believe I can teach students mathematics and related topics, I'm not sure I can teach students how to teach. Teaching is an incredibly personal undertaking. Who we are and what we believe influence our lives as teachers. This has resulted in an almost overwhelming dilemma for me. I do not believe I can teach students how to teach mathematics! What, then, is the purpose of offering a methods course? This question has challenged me constantly when teaching methods courses. At first, it seemed I needed a new metaphor to deal with teaching methods. After some reflection and conversations with the group, I decided to adjust my metaphor. Instead of one communal kaleidoscope, we were each developing our own. Instead of teaching students how to teach, I wanted to help them develop their own, grounded, philosophies about teaching and learning mathematics. This eased the dilemma I had struggled with for so long. My metaphor has helped me create a philosophy to use when teaching methods courses.

Tamara: The Maker of a Scrap Yarn Afghan (Mathematics)

When I am teaching at my best, I envision myself as a maker of a scrap yarn afghan. It's the bringing together of different colors of yarn and blending them together to create something that feels like my role as teacher. I especially like the image of using scrap yarn to make an afghan because it represents how teaching requires adapting to both the students who arrive in our classes and the content that is specified for a given course.

This metaphor came from an actual scrap yarn afghan I was making. For this project, I have fairly large amounts of scrap yarn. In addition to the scrap yarn, I purchase yarn in a neutral color to help blend the other colors together. The overall pattern for the afghan requires working with three colors at a time. I pick two colors of the scrap yarn that blend well with each other, and combine these with the neutral yarn and alternate rows of each color of yarn. There are different amounts of the scrap yarn, so one of them will run out first. Thus, I pick the next color by what blends well with the remaining color.

I chose this metaphor because it illustrates my vision of teaching as a blending of pedagogy, students, and content. Sometimes the material dictates the choice of pedagogy, and sometimes the group of students dictates the choice of pedagogy. At one of our self-study sessions group members

asked questions about what various aspects of the afghan represented. This pushed me to think about how elements of the afghan mapped onto elements of my teaching. In the three colors that are blended together at a time, the neutral yarn represents my pedagogy, one of the colors of scrap yarn represents students, and the other color represents content. The neutral color of yarn is chosen because it will blend well with all the other colors of yarn. Similarly, my pedagogy is chosen to blend the students and the material together.

My content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge together are represented by the crochet hook. It is through the crochet hook that the afghan comes together. Similarly, it is through my knowledge of both content and pedagogy that material and students come together. The pattern is the syllabus and overall structure for the class. I have a favorite pattern for afghans, and most of my classes have a similar structure.

One question we discussed at a meeting is "What does the metaphor hide?" In my metaphor, students are just yarn, and it is my job to connect them with the mathematics. Yarn has little individual responsibility. My metaphor hides the responsibility students have for their own learning. Perhaps difficult students represent knotted or tangled yarn that must be untangled before I can crochet with it. Another possibility for these students might be defective yarn, but in making an afghan, if the yarn were defective I would have just thrown it away. However, perhaps there are students that I metaphorically throw away, such as students who regularly miss class, or lack necessary prerequisite knowledge.

Another question discussed at a meeting was "What is missing from the metaphor?" Individual students are one thing that is missing in my metaphor. The yarn only represents students as a whole. Another feature that is missing from my metaphor is assessment. Sometimes when making the afghan, I stop and evaluate if I like the pattern that is forming. However, there really isn't an assessment of the yarn to determine whether it's doing its job of blending with the other colors.

I have only used my metaphor to reflect on my teaching in small ways. I'm not sure that I've lived with my metaphor long enough for it to have deeply impacted my reflections on teaching yet. Also as a younger teacher, I am still struggling to have lesson plans ready and have little time or energy to invest in reflection. However, on one occasion I reflected in my journal about how class was going by asking myself how the colors were blending, and why they were blending better on some days than on others. On another occasion, I found that I was lecturing more frequently than I liked and wondered if that was because I was so enamored of the math color (it was my research area) that I didn't want to let the student color back in.

Katheryn: Soil (Child Development for Teachers)

I was not initially pleased that soil was my metaphor for teaching, but over the course of the past twenty-four months that metaphor has been a fertile ground for consideration of my teaching. Using the metaphor to think about my teaching has opened up new avenues for reflection and new perspectives

The main way I have used my metaphor is in the journaling. Each week after class I wrote a bit about class. I used the metaphor as a tool to think about a particular incident or question I had. For example, what happens when I talk too much, when I talk too little, or what does grading mean in terms of the metaphor? The metaphor image is able to go places I cannot always go with my words alone. It brings with it a pictorial richness and depth that has more power for me and my actions than do reflective words alone.

The following is a short excerpt from my journal showing how I used my metaphor to think about my syllabus for the new semester. It also addresses the issue that the soil metaphor tends to obscure my agency and authority in the classroom. It demonstrates the power of images to open up new ways of thinking about a teaching issue. I don't say I wrote my syllabus today with attention to making it suitable to the kinds of students I currently teach. Instead I talk about how the action of preparing the

syllabus maps onto the image of the soil metaphor giving me new ways to think about what preparing a syllabus is about

So if the soil metaphor is the one [for me] then perhaps creating the syllabus is tilling the soil; opening it up so there is the possibility of seeds sprouting.   This still holds in it the passivity because I am the soil not the tiller. I keep getting stuck!! I am not the tiller and I don't choose the seeds/students. Being soil, I am again only the medium in which the seeds may sprout.

If I am the soil and have that passivity, then I can't choose the seed, I can't till myself, I can't even choose what I am made up of because things just fall on me and become incorporated. I can only be what I am and allow people to take what they need—YIKES. That means that I am not telling/talking the content. I am many things and people take from that selection what suits their needs.   This aligns with the idea of individual experience and schema.

On the other hand, even if a corn seed is planted on me, there are still a number of weeds that spring up, though the majority of the plants will be some reasonable facsimile of corn. This side tracks me into thinking that one should not give too much power to the individual schema/ construction because, like the corn, what people construct from what happens in the class will most likely be a reasonable rendition of what was intended (growing corn).

The metaphor prompts me to map both parts and actions in my teaching onto what I understand of the parts and actions of soil. For example, soil has microbial action that is mirrored in the teaching actions of breaking down ideas. Student resistance to the growth of new ideas is parallel to how seeds must be abraded by the soil before they let moisture and nutrients permeate protective membranes. The mapping, however, is not a simple one-to-one correspondence.   I have also to consider, if my

students are seeds, how their behavior is like and unlike the behavior of seeds, are all seeds/students the same kinds of seeds/students, etc.   These exercises stretch my ways of understanding what it means for me to teach.

A particularly interesting consideration with the metaphor is to examine what it hides and what its dark side is.   As a group we have had lengthy conversations about both my soil metaphor and the kaleidoscope metaphor because they both tend to obscure the fact that the teacher is an active agent in the classroom environment, not passive as the metaphor implies.   These discussions have been useful for me in considering why I might be drawn to downplaying my authority as well as in helping me claim my authority in the classroom.   These efforts have been useful for both teacher and students. It has helped me resolve in part the issue of when to tell and when to let students work things out for themselves.

Melissa: A Band Conductor (Child Development for Teachers)

My metaphor, band conductor, has been with me for several years now. Essentially both the band director and the classroom teacher have the same basic goal: for students to master to the degree possible a particular "piece" and to demonstrate that mastery through a final performance. I have begun to think about my classes as rehearsal opportunities in which my task is to help students master the complex pieces of content. Thus far, I have been using my metaphor to reflect upon two central aspects of my teaching: 1) selecting those masterpieces of developmental psychology that will have the most value and relevance for teachers, and 2) coping with the variability among students in the skills they bring to the learning of those masterpieces.

The   conducting   metaphor   highlights   the importance of making good decisions about which pieces of developmental psychology are most worth learning. My initial thinking in this area centered on the   "masterpieces"   of   theory   that   parallel acknowledged   musical   masterpieces   such   as

Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony,* Mozart's *Don Giovanni,* or Copeland's *Appalachian Spring.* Possible masterpieces in developmental psychology would seem to be the classic theories by Freud, Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, and Vygotsky. Yet these theories often strike my students as quite remote from what they do in the classroom despite considerable effort on my part to be explicit about when and where these theories can be useful. Moreover, these theories are all flawed in ways that musical masterpieces do not seem to be, and although I cannot imagine being a developmental psychologist without having a sound understanding of these and many other more minor theories, I can certainly imagine being a very successful teacher without knowing any of them.

An alternative approach to identifying masterpieces in developmental psychology would be to focus on major developmental themes such as nature and nurture, universality and cultural specificity, early and later experiences, risk and resilience, and continuity and change. These themes seem to be similar to leit motivs, musical themes that are repeatedly interwoven throughout a particular piece. On the other hand, perhaps themes in development are more akin to musical keys, with theories that have similar positions on a given theme being essentially played in the same key. To illustrate with two extremes, Gesell's (1928; Gesell & Thompson, 1938) developmental theory would be played in a "nature" key, while Vygotsky's theory would be played in a "nurture" key. A teacher's tacit views regarding themes such as nature and nurture, continuity and change, and risk and resilience do seem likely to have significant implications for their practice. Thus my task becomes one of helping my preservice teachers recognize the keys they prefer to play in, develop an appreciation for other keys, and develop a deep understanding of how each key may sound in the classroom.

In the conducting metaphor, my students are the members of the band, and I have recently realized that I expect most of my students to arrive as "intermediate" or even "advanced" players. This means they have mastered the fundamental elements for learning and performing the piece I set before

them without much direct guidance from me. Thus I expect students to engage adequate amounts of quality practice on their parts, that is, the readings and other outside assignments, so that during class we can play the whole piece together. The things we do during class time should require lots of active engagement on the students' parts focused on developing nuances of understanding, just as rehearsal often centers on developing the nuances of a musical piece. This expectation, however, increasingly seems problematic, not because of the metaphor itself, but because the majority of my students do not seem to be the intermediate or advanced players I expect. I have begun to suspect that during their schooling, as learners our students have become the equivalent of musicians who are fairly accurate sight readers but fundamentally poor players. For example, I have seen many students misunderstand readings that I have considered quite clear in meaning. They seem to misconstrue whole passages of meaning without even realizing it, rather like a player who has flipped a musical score one page too far and is not familiar enough with the composition to realize there is a problem. In either case, the reading/music does not seem to make much sense, but the students/players do not seem to expect it to do so. Or perhaps they believe they should not have to work at the process of making meaning from a challenging text.

Of course, there are players who do not simply sight read; they rehearse a score carefully, and learn to play it well. Students who can do this with the readings and other outside assignments often seem jarringly out of step with the rest of the class and are indeed advanced players. The difficulty this raises for me centered on how best to interpret the poor playing of my other students. Are these students missing some of the fundamental skills needed to learn the content I want them to understand? Do these students lack the motivation needed to work with a piece of text or an activity until they have learned the content? Do these students lack some kind of internal self-monitoring system that lets them know when they need to continue to work on a piece, and when they have learned the piece well enough to play it in class? No doubt all three of

these factors are relevant in different degrees for different students. As I work to clarify in my own mind exactly what the masterpieces are in developmental psychology, I also want to consider what prerequisite learning skills my students need in order to master these pieces and how I might help less accomplished students develop these skills. What might constitute the equivalent of fingering drills for my students in developmental psychology? What basic playing skills do they need? Are these learning skills in the general sense, or are they content specific skills, unique to the domain of developmental psychology? What if a portion of these problems arise because students just do not enjoy the pieces I have selected? In my own experience, it is very difficult to practice a piece you simply do not like. How important is it that my students like what I am asking them to learn?

As I have listened to my colleagues explore their metaphors, I have found that they provide twists on my metaphor and how I think about it. For example, the notion of active teacher presence and control in the classroom has arisen because of Katheryn's soil metaphor and Catherine's kaleidoscope metaphor. Neither of these metaphors has the sense of teacher presence and control which my metaphor of conducting does. These metaphors challenge me to think about how my students might play without me. Ultimately, I hope they will play their own music as they become classroom teachers, and yet I often find it difficult to let them do so now. More importantly, the gaps my colleagues have found in their metaphors have helped me identify gaps in mine. Catherine once asked where her content knowledge, and particularly her pedagogical content knowledge, was within her kaleidoscope metaphor. Her question had led me to wonder about my own pedagogical content knowledge for developmental psychology and what I actually know about how best to teach what I intend to teach. Of course, I speak to my own students often about the importance of developing their pedagogical content knowledge, but that I should also be developing this form of understanding did not occur to me. Tamara's metaphor of a scrap yarn afghan maker reminds me to think about how best to work with the

players I have, rather than wish I could get better players. Her image of creating something lovely out of what is actually available challenges me to do the same with each group of students. I cannot ignore the players who do not fit with my vision of how my class should play; rather I must find a way to integrate these players into an ensemble in which their music can enhance what the class is playing as a whole.

Linda: Yoda (Early Childhood Education)

When I am teaching at my best it is like Yoda with the Jedi knights. The components of the system of elements in the Yoda mythology from the Star Wars movies map onto the components of the teaching system in a fairly straightforward way. Since Yoda is a kind of teacher, the Yoda metaphor does not require me to stretch and question as much as some of my colleagues.

In the Yoda metaphor, an individual student is a seeker, both of knowledge and of the teacher, willing to submit to discipline, acknowledging and wanting the power. The course on which I focus when developing my teaching metaphor is child, family, school, and community relations. Many of the students harbor misgivings, if not outright fear, of working with parents who may be angry, apathetic, or very different from themselves. However, they state a desire to learn how to work effectively with parents and community members. Because there are two other very different professors with whom they can take this course, at least some of the more knowledgeable students can either seek me out or deliberately avoid me. It is in the interactions on the individual level that I find the true teaching-and-learning situations (in that one-word Russian sense, "abuchyuenye").

When I think beyond my relationship with individual students to look at my relationship to the students as a group, however, I have a harder time. Like Catherine trying to apply her kaleidoscope metaphor to a different class, I too explored another metaphor. I co-teach a course with my mentor, who developed the syllabus, chose the texts, and designed the grading methods. Teaching to someone else's

plan, often with a larger group of students, can feel far removed from the guru-apprentice model of Yoda and Luke Skywalker. The first journal entry that I shared with the group as it reconvened in the fall of this year experimented with an alternative metaphor for that co-taught course (crew boss on a Habitat for Humanity construction). While we never had a group session that focused on this multi-metaphor dilemma, the "listening for me" that occurred with the others' metaphors helped me to sort out the differences. I could see that, in whatever class I am teaching, Yoda is the best ending to the stem: "When I am teaching at my best, it is like a _____." As others questioned and discussed the metaphor write-ups that had been shared, I realized that my need for a different metaphor arose to cover times when I am not teaching at my best.

One of the areas in which I "listened for me" as others questioned and were questioned about their metaphors is content. Unlike post-primary teacher educators, I do not teach content specific to a discipline, such as math or science. I use content and methods from sociology and anthropology, but I am not teaching social studies. Although the mathematicians are clear about what the content of their mathematics courses is, Catherine considered the need for a separate metaphor for her math education classes. That made me realize how different content in my education methods classes is from content in a math class. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) point out that "What teachers do reflects knowledge; indeed is their knowledge. Teachers' practice is their knowledge in action" (p. 89). I had seen the wisdom of Yoda as more about practice than knowledge of facts or even specific skills. My content knowledge comes from my own apprenticeship to and mentoring by a number of Masters with whom I have carried on my own lifelong learning. The discipline to which I have allegiance is education and my methods and theories come much more from sociology and anthropology and human ecology than from the psychological foundations. These are disciplines that deal with knowledge and learning in the shared space between and among people rather than inside an individual skull. The subset of this content knowledge that I

cover in my courses is not easy to specify, but how to collaborate and/or to build partnerships is a primary focus. This is more like teaching how to harness The Force and use it rather than what is the History and Philosophy of The Force.

I have gained a great deal of insight from my colleagues' struggles with the place of the teacher in their metaphors. We seem to share a constructivist philosophy that would have the teacher be a facilitator and guide, not teaching by telling. But sometimes I feel more like a drill sergeant, and some of the videotapes of my classes look more like I am just drilling away with information. Some of this one-way communication is setting up the tasks, which will actually be doing the teaching rather than me. But some of it is me just slipping into "teaching at" mode. This is when I feel the least Yoda-like (or as I said in my reflection after one class, "So NOT Yoda!"). I often use the metaphor of wrestling my students into these very different (for them) ways of looking at adults rather than the children they are attached to, and taking the parent rather than teacher perspective. It is in the wrestling matches that I think some of my students choose to drop the class rather than persist in the struggle; however, if the struggle doesn't kill them, it makes them stronger. Then, right around the middle of the term, just as I am about ready to give up and go back to traditional teaching methods, I experience most if not all of the class jumping up to another level, up off the wrestling mat and ready to join me in my own continuing efforts to master The Force. By the final exam week, I hardly have to be there at all because they have taken over so much responsibility for their own learning. Jedi-knights-in-training can practice recognizing and harnessing and using The Force without Yoda after they reach a certain point. The relations that I have with students often do feel like the guru-student or master-novice model that Yoda has with Luke. But I am also a fellow-seeker, never "arrived" completely. So the "fuzzy problems" I pose with no one right answer are not just pedagogically clever, but are honest questions that I struggle with myself.

My metaphor has helped me to interpret my teaching-learning interactions, and engaging in

metaphor exploration with my colleagues has pushed me to explore corners of my own metaphor. I use my metaphor as a guide when I am puzzling through some problems after a class and ask, "What would Yoda do?" (or chide myself with "So NOT Yoda!"). But the real challenge to change my practice comes from looking for the shadow side of metaphor. Resonating well with the Dark Side of The Force in my metaphor, the shadow side hides the arrogance of being the Wise Knower Students Seek Out. The lurking Drill Sergeant harbors the potential for abuse of power. Disaffected students may go over to the Dark Side, resisting the theoretical or political positions underlying my selections of content for class. At the very least, I have not been as concerned as perhaps I should be with the high drop rate from the class. Some content that I teach, for instance advocacy, can also be used for purposes of which I personally (rather than professionally) do not approve. The Force itself is neutral and can be used either way. I hope to influence students to subscribe to my values and beliefs, one of which is pluralism, which in turn causes me to let them make (and hopefully learn from) their own choices (even if I consider some of them mistakes). As I confront the aspects of my teaching that need improvement, what will happen to my metaphor? If I change my practice, will my metaphor also change? If I actively design a metaphor (rather than just letting it pick me as it did in our original exercise), will that help me to change my practice?

Discovering the Key Ingredient: Professional Intimacy

We have created a community in which we each are allowed to be both professional and personal in sharing our secret stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). We are able to be wholehearted because it is not required that we censor certain ideas or topics, that is, use cover stories as we are often compelled to do in our working contexts. We call this aspect of our community professional intimacy. Professional intimacy is not about being friends in the social sense. It is about being accepted as a worthy person

with worthwhile stories to tell. Rearick and Feldman (1999) helped us understand this component of our group dynamic; a notion of professional intimacy seems to be missing from their framework, although it is an essential ingredient in our group's success.

A community with professional intimacy becomes a place where one's failure can be discussed with the respect that it deserves. Everyone learns from the failure, and no one offers platitudes that devalue its power and importance. The attention and questions we get from the group members help us to recognize the complexity of the problems we face and enable us to find meaning in our struggles. These acts of trust become growth experiences for every member of the group and are only possible in an atmosphere of professional intimacy.

Conclusions

We have come to value professional intimacy and seek to find it in other places. Several of us have found that professional intimacy has an impact on our relationships with colleagues and some of the activities we undertake. Moreover, we are seeing that our self-study efforts have begun to influence university practices. University-wide study groups have been formed to look at issues related to teaching and learning, based in part on our experiences with professional intimacy in our self-study. Some decisions are being made with collaborative input from faculty, using discussion groups as catalysts for finding solutions. An evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, process has begun. A growing number of faculty, starting with the authors, are involved in this process. It seems our work in self-study, in particular the professional intimacy we so deeply value enables us to reach out beyond our safe spaces. As one of us said, "I have practice being authentic in a space without threat; that has helped me survive being authentic in a space where there are threats."

Self-study is transforming our professional lives in many ways. We are more reflective teachers and continue to carefully reconsider our teaching

practices as a result of the group's analysis of our metaphors. An unexpected result of our work has been fostered by professional intimacy. Several of us have become more involved with university governance, at department, college, and university levels. We are better prepared to function in these new roles—more confident and sure of ourselves. Much like a pebble dropped into a pond, the changes within ourselves are causing ripples throughout our communities of practice.

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