

**FACULTY MEMBERS WHO PREFER TEACHING FIRST-YEAR COURSES: AN  
EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY**

by

Kari Anna Marken

B.Ed., The University of Saskatchewan, 2000

M.Ed., The University of Saskatchewan, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES  
(Curriculum Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

October 2019

© Kari Anna Marken, 2019

The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

Faculty Members Who Prefer Teaching First-Year Courses: An Exploratory Case Study

---

submitted by Kari Anna Marken in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Curriculum Studies

---

**Examining Committee:**

Dr. Anthony Clarke

---

Supervisor

Dr. Amy Metcalfe

---

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Carl Leggo

---

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Tom Sork

---

University Examiner

Dr. Gary Poole

---

University Examiner

**Additional Supervisory Committee Members:**

---

Supervisory Committee Member

## Abstract

This exploratory case study delves into the experience of faculty members who indicate a preference for teaching first-year students at the University of British Columbia-Vancouver (UBC), a large-scale, research-intensive, public Canadian university. An in-depth analysis of three faculty members' narratives contributes to the broader case study of the phenomenon of teaching first-year students. The study attempts to present the capacities of first-year students through the eyes of teachers who believe deeply in the students' capacity to join the scholarly community. Additionally, the study contributes to the body of research exploring faculty members' teaching experiences in Canadian, research-intensive universities. The study interprets participants' descriptions and my observations of pedagogical processes in teaching first-year students by drawing on qualitative data including: interviews, journals, reflective writing and statements of teaching philosophy. The researcher drew upon a set of sensitizing concepts to guide the data analysis but remained open at all times to the other evolving possibilities. Three emergent themes (phrased as action statements and indicated in italics) emerged: *Invite students into the scholarly community*; *Enter with an expectation to mutually benefit from one's interactions with first-year student*; *Develop a personal approach to pedagogy*. In addition to being a graduate student, the researcher is a current staff member and former sessional instructor, and she explores her own position as a university educator and administrator through personal narrative throughout the dissertation. The results present an analysis that broadens the scope of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research in the context of teaching first-year students. This study contributes to our understanding of teaching in higher education by responding to an emerging thread in higher education teaching and learning literature: the stories

of faculty who indicate a preference for working with first-year students in the Canadian research-intensive university context.

## **Lay Summary**

Every September, thousands of students commence their first year of studies at universities across Canada. Faculty members are the academic professionals who teach a range of university courses, and many faculty members at research-intensive universities teach first-year, new-to-university students in introductory, first-year courses. Some faculty prefer teaching first-year students and first-year introductory courses. This research study rests on the assumption that university educators, and the academy itself, could benefit from the perspective of such faculty: those who indicate a preference for teaching first-year students and first-year courses. To learn about lived experience of the instructors who teach, and prefer to teach, first-year students, this dissertation presents a case study drawn from analyzing data from three faculty members. This study explores both the faculty members' reasons for their preference and how they articulate the connection between this preference and the actions they take as teachers that reflect their preference.

## **Preface**

This dissertation required the approval of the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The study, including interviews, were covered by UBC Ethics Certificate #H17-00862. As of the date of this dissertation, no part of the research has been partly or wholly published. This dissertation is original, unpublished, and independent work by the author, Kari Anna Marken.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Lay Summary .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Preface.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>List of Tables .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    Conceptual inspiration.....	4
1.2    A focus on faculty .....	6
1.3    How did this research originate?.....	8
1.4    Why is this research necessary and useful?.....	10
1.5    Why am I doing this research? .....	12
1.6    What is my social location in relation to this research topic? .....	14
1.6.1 <i>Professional position</i> .....	14
1.6.2 <i>Ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological position</i> .....	16
<b>Chapter 2: Landscapes of Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1    The Canadian higher education landscape: A brief political and historical overview..	18
2.1.1 <i>Historical</i> .....	19
2.1.2 <i>Political</i> .....	20
2.2    The professional landscape for full-time faculty members in Canadian universities...	23

2.2.1	Research funding.....	24
2.2.2	<i>Unionization</i> .....	25
2.2.2.1	<i>Tiers, tenure &amp; streams</i> .....	26
2.3	Traversing the teaching landscape .....	32
2.3.1	<i>The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)</i> .....	32
2.3.2	<i>Contested spaces: Public and private, precarious and tenured</i> .....	36
2.3.3	<i>Fatigued faculty</i> .....	40
2.4	Teaching first-year students on “precarious ground”.....	41
2.4.1	<i>“Tenure” as a notable condition in this case study</i> .....	42
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....		<b>45</b>
3.1	How will I let the data speak?.....	47
3.1.1	<i>Personal journals</i> .....	48
3.1.2	<i>Memory work</i> .....	49
3.1.3	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i> .....	50
3.1.4	<i>Statements of teaching philosophy</i> .....	52
3.2	Data analysis .....	53
3.3	How will the analysis of the data provide a more complex picture of the phenomenon than was previously available?.....	54
3.3.1	<i>Written form</i> .....	56
3.4	Introducing the cases .....	59
<b>Chapter 4: Fok-Shuen</b> .....		<b>62</b>
4.1	First impression.....	62
4.2	Preference .....	65

4.2.1	<i>Elementary</i> .....	66
4.2.2	<i>What does a mathematician “look like”?</i> .....	66
4.2.3	<i>Office hours as “vector space”</i> .....	69
4.2.4	<i>“To create” ...not just “to compute”</i> .....	70
4.2.5	<i>A caution against “gentle” teaching</i> .....	71
4.3	<i>Pedagogy</i> .....	73
4.3.1	<i>Class size as “fractal”</i> .....	75
<b>Chapter 5: Celeste</b> .....		<b>79</b>
5.1	<i>First impression</i> .....	79
5.1.1	<i>Piqued purpose</i> .....	81
5.2	<i>Preference</i> .....	83
5.2.1	<i>A box of tissues and a colouring book</i> .....	84
5.2.2	<i>Her first year</i> .....	86
5.2.3	<i>“Prof-in-Collegia”</i> .....	87
5.2.4	<i>Stem cells</i> .....	89
5.3	<i>Pedagogy</i> .....	90
<b>Chapter 6: Michael</b> .....		<b>100</b>
6.1	<i>First impression</i> .....	100
6.2	<i>Preference</i> .....	101
6.2.1	<i>Buzz</i> .....	102
6.2.2	<i>An imaginative welcome</i> .....	103
6.2.3	<i>First-year students inspire fields of research</i> .....	104
6.2.4	<i>Cookies and questions</i> .....	107

6.3	Pedagogy .....	107
6.3.1	<i>The “Allegory of the Cave”</i> .....	108
6.3.2	<i>Joy</i> .....	110
6.3.3	<i>In dialogue and discernment</i> .....	113
6.3.4	<i>Tossing a pebble</i> .....	114
<b>Chapter 7: Discussion.....</b>		<b>116</b>
7.1	Introducing the themes .....	117
7.2	Theme #1: Invite students into the scholarly community .....	118
7.2.1	<i>Sub-theme #1.1: Create dialogue in offices and classrooms</i> .....	123
7.2.2	<i>Sub-theme #1.2: Artful conversations</i> .....	128
7.3	Theme #2: Enter with expectation .....	129
7.3.1	<i>Sub-theme #2.1: Discourse of ‘possibility’</i> .....	131
7.3.2	<i>Sub-Theme #2.2: Expectation and appreciation</i> .....	133
7.4	Theme #3: Develop a personal approach to pedagogy .....	137
7.4.1	<i>Sub-Theme #3.1: Metaphoric meaning-making</i> .....	140
7.4.2	<i>Sub-Theme #3.2: Emotional care</i> .....	143
7.5	Summary.....	147
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion.....</b>		<b>149</b>
8.1	Illuminations.....	150
8.2	Limitations.....	153
8.2.1	<i>Tenure</i> .....	153
8.2.2	<i>Embeddedness and subjectivity</i> .....	153
8.3	Suggestions for future research.....	154

8.4	Implications for practice.....	155
8.4.1	<i>Interrogate the institutional and personal “welcome” narrative</i> .....	156
8.4.2	<i>Embrace lecture halls as sites of pedagogical possibility</i> .....	158
8.4.3	<i>Create a culture of “peer seeing” and case narratives</i> .....	160
8.4.4	<i>Protect and proliferate tenure-track positions</i> .....	161
8.5	Closing reflection.....	162
	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>165</b>
	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>188</b>
	Appendix A.....	188
A.1	Participant Details .....	188
A.2	Email Invitation.....	189
A.3	Letter of Consent.....	191
	Appendix B .....	194
B.1	Interview Preamble and Questions.....	194
B.2	Example from participants’ Responses: Preference.....	196

## List of Tables

<b>Table 5.1</b> Researcher's Re-Creation of Celeste's Lesson Plan from a Biology 121 Class in a Lecture Hall.....	90
---	----

## Acknowledgements

To Tony. Dr. Anthony Clarke, my doctoral supervisor in EDCP, who consistently demonstrated curiosity, responsibility and responsiveness. Someone could write a case study about Tony as a doctoral supervisor and disseminate it to all research-intensive universities in Canada to serve as a manual of best practice.

To Amy and Carl. Dr. Amy Metcalfe's courses in Educational Studies changed the way I think about teaching, learning, and educational systems. Thank you for saying "yes" to joining my doctoral supervision committee, and thank you for your honesty, integrity, humanity and friendship. I send deepest gratitude to Dr. Carl Leggo, who sat on my supervisory committee in the years prior to his passing in March, 2019. A poet's heart. A scholar's mind. A poet's mind. A scholar's heart.

To Kim. Kim Kiloh, my friend, neighbor and colleague at the CSI&C, who demonstrated agility and creativity beyond measure as we co-constructed elaborate possibilities for the professional and student versions of me to live coherently and collegially throughout this process.

To the faculty and staff who work tirelessly to create spaces of belonging for first-year students. I have benefitted greatly from working as a member of teams who are dedicated to the First Year Experience at UBC and have been inspired daily by the creative contributions of my colleagues to our collective work in higher education.

To Fok-Shuen Leung, Celeste Leander and Michael Griffin. Every page of this dissertation is an acknowledgement to you! Thank you for putting your trust in this emergent scholar.

To Peter Wanyenya. Rest in peace, dear friend, trusted colleague, and fellow PhD student. You are a true light in this work. Thank you.

Special mention to Tamara Baldwin, Caroline Rueckert, and Mark Mac Lean for welcoming me into the professional landscape during my first years working in higher education. So much of what I have learned from the three of you are infused into these pages: collegiality, appreciative inquiry, integrity, advocacy, and community.

To Bob. Robert Regnier saw the academic researcher in me before I saw it in myself. My work with him as my M.Ed. supervisor at the University of Saskatchewan was pivotal in seeding the sparks of scholarly imagination that led me to doctoral study.

To have access to Canadian higher education is a privilege and I entered into this degree in the spirit of appreciation and gratitude for such a privilege. I acknowledge that any true burden associated in the attaining this Ph.D has been carried by the community surrounding me. The work covered by colleagues, the time lost from friendships and conversations, and never-fully-present partner, sister, daughter and mom. You all know who you are and I see the space you have created for me as your daily acts of care: Michelle, Megan, Aamna, Lisa, Catherine, Kas, Mariko, Natalie, Michael, Robyn, Karla, Julie, Hassan, Dee, Amanda, Angele, Moura (to name only a handful), and every colleague whose creative contributions have made first-year programs what they are today. With specific acknowledgement and gratitude to Justin Lieu, Robbie Morrison, and Janet Teasdale.

To Liv and Mom. My mom, Patricia Mary Marken, was the first to see the teacher in me. Her and vision and love for me are the seeds germinating within this document. My sister, Liv Marken, is my strongest ally and closest colleague. Mom and Liv, you have both been the solid foundation of my sense of belonging since birth.

To my uncles, Dr. David Mulford and Dr. Bill Mulford. Two extraordinary educators in Australia whose own commitments to teaching, research, and learning have been transformative. They have provided a lifetime of inspiration.

To Bennu. To Bennu. My little one who, during this process, has almost grown as tall as me. Thank you for sharing your mom with the big ideas in the world. My fierce love for you inspires me daily to build a better education system.

To Jonathan. Being in family and partnership with someone writing a dissertation and completing a doctoral degree is not easy. My most substantial gratitude is for my husband, Jonathan. My partner and strongest ally, whose commitment occurs in daily acts of care and substantial acts of service to our life together. This document would not be possible without you.

Last, but not least, to the first-year students who show up every day and give universities across Canada their boldest ideas, their most challenging questions, and their most extraordinary professional selves. I see you.

## **Dedication**

Six years ago, my father and I attended a higher education ‘Teaching and Learning’ conference.

Partway through the conference, he asked me:

*When did we start talking about teaching as a thing and not as Doing?*

*When did we start talking about teaching in ways that require PhD’s in Education and Edu-speak?*

*When did those of us committed to improving our teaching for decades start to feel like we aren’t a part of the conversation?*

***When did the nouns replace the verbs, and where did the stories go?”***

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Ronald Norman George Marken, English Professor Emeritus. My first case study.

Yes, it’s a PhD in Education, but I have tried to infuse it with too many stories and verbs for you to tally.

And I dedicate this document to my mother, Patricia Mary Marken, who convinced me to enroll in “just one Education class” after watching me flail through three very difficult ‘first years’ of university. I reluctantly took the class...and the rest is history. As always, she saw the potential in me far before I saw it in myself.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Weak research is concerned only with surfaces, whether in the name of statistics or psychologism. Pedagogically, the highest priority in research should be in having...young people gain precisely a sense of the human world as being a construction that can be entered and engaged with creatively.*

David Geoffrey Smith (1999, p. 42)

*Curriculum theory asks you, as a...practicing teacher, to consider your position as engaged with yourself and your students and colleagues in the construction of a public sphere, a public sphere not yet born, a future that cannot be discerned in, or even though from, the present. So conceived, the classroom becomes simultaneously a civic square and a room of one's own.*

William Pinar (2004, pp. 37-38)

*Classroom instructors—whether tenured or tenure-track professors, lecturers, part-time or adjunct faculty, or graduate teaching assistants—are at the center of the collegiate experience for every first-year student... faculty define the life of the college or university and should therefore be meaningfully involved in working with the newest persons going the campus. Faculty have a unique role in demystifying the campus culture because they control the concepts inherent in higher education and are its central feature, apart from the students. If an institution is to serve first-year students in a way that is sustainable over time, faculty involvement and leadership are critical.*

Scott Evenbeck & Barbara Jackson (2004, p. 257)

*...in thinking of community, we need to emphasize the process words: making, creating, weaving, saying, and the like. Community...has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common...a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group's becoming.*

Maxine Greene (1995, p. 39)

My research focuses on a group of the UBC population: faculty members who teach first-year students. Shaped by case study methodology, this dissertation illuminates and illustrates the stories of three faculty members who demonstrate a preference for teaching first-year students. I explore and analyze case data and present emergent themes, aiming to craft a document that can help educators in universities pause and more fully appreciate—through thoughtful interpretation and connection to theory—how teachers teach and learn alongside first-year students. This dissertation captures a research journey wherein I respond to the research questions:

- Why do some faculty members prefer to teach first-year students at a large-scale, research-intensive university?
- How do these faculty members articulate and represent their pedagogical approach in the first-year teaching and learning context?

A university “curriculum” must not exclusively attend to philosophical or technical abstraction, but also *see, attend to, and enlighten* teachers’ and students’ lived experience and contextual reality. As a novice researcher in Curriculum Studies, I seek to “articulate the educational experience of teachers and students” in ways that capture “autobiographical and theoretical truth-telling” (Pinar, 2004, p. 25). It is important to remember that contemporary conceptualizations of curriculum theory beckon me to “speak to” and write from my “subjective experience” and to invite others (colleagues, readers, and scholar) to explore the “inextricable interrelationships among which structure educational experience” (Pinar, 2004, p. 25).

This dissertation delves into the experience of three full-time, tenured faculty members who indicate a preference for teaching first-year students (the “case”) at the University of British Columbia-Vancouver, a large-scale, research-intensive, public Canadian university. The faculty members who participated in the study are Dr. Fok-Shuen Leung, Dr. Celeste Leander, and Dr.

Michael Griffin<sup>1</sup>. An in-depth analysis of these three faculty members' experiences (three individual cases) contributes to the broader case study. The purpose of the study is to see first-year students through the eyes of teachers who deeply believe in the students' collective capacity to contribute to the academic conversation at UBC and to surface the pedagogical approaches that respond to and/or shape such a belief.

UBC has two campuses—a Vancouver campus and an Okanagan campus. In the context of this dissertation, I use the acronym “UBC” for the University of British Columbia-Vancouver campus, specifically. I locate this case study on the UBC-Vancouver campus and references to UBC throughout this document are references to UBC-Vancouver. I use the term ‘first-year student’ in reference to direct-entry, undergraduate students commencing their first-year of university studies. Throughout the dissertation, I will use the term ‘teacher’ and ‘faculty member’ interchangeably (because all faculty members teach), and in framing the concept of “faculty member,” I use the term as it is used at the University of British Columbia in the Faculty Association Collective Bargaining Agreement (UBCFA, 2016):

“Faculty Member” means any person having an appointment from the Board of Governors of the University of British Columbia as a Sessional Lecturer, Lecturer, Instructor, Senior Instructor, Professor of Teaching, Acting Assistant Professor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor. (p.6)

In this chapter, I will lay a foundation: by grounding the dissertation in my perception of what it means ‘to research’; by expanding on the origins of this research study; by articulating the study’s intended purpose as a contribution to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL); by making explicit my position as the researcher.

---

<sup>1</sup> Names used with permission from the participants.

## 1.1 Conceptual inspiration

Two concepts inspired my research questions, and they are concepts I have deliberated on since starting my own teaching career in 2001. The concept of an *educational institutional welcome* and the concept of *teenagers*<sup>2</sup> have often been present in my way-of-thinking about curriculum and pedagogy in my career as an educator in universities and high schools. As a doctoral student, I now explore these two concepts with theoretical frames and I look for the ways in which the two concepts collide; in other words, I scan educational institutions for notable enactments of curriculum and pedagogy that effectively welcome teenagers into an institutions' academic community.

Regarding the first concept—*educational institutional welcome*—I acutely notice and critically contemplate the ways in which an educational institution initiates and communicates messages of ‘welcome’ to newcomers—from the images chosen on a website or prospectus, to the words chosen by faculty members in the first minutes of their first lecture in a first-year course. In this dynamic, I am most curious about the experience of teachers in education systems and the critical role teachers’ own experiences of education inform and influence how they create

---

<sup>2</sup> This study, admittedly, tells the story of a ‘first-year student’ through the lens of an assumed archetype: a teenager (17-19 years old) moving from high school to university. The data also reflects this version of a character in a story; therefore, a critical question arises: What about students who do not fit into this archetype of ‘traditional first-year student’? Who is making a place for these students on large-scale university campuses? Although non-traditional students (e.g. those transferring from another postsecondary institution and/or, those who have not received a typical high school education, and those arriving at university older or younger than 17-19 years old) make up a small percentage of first-year students at UBC, they are also arriving with a need to belong and land in a place of belonging. As a researcher, I am unable to include in this analysis how Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste incorporate the identities of non-traditional first-year students into their behaviours of ‘invitation’ when teaching first-year courses because references to them are absent in the data. However, they are all attentive to the sense of being in a new place and in this regard, I imply that *all* students are captured in their efforts to welcome new students to a new place.

institutional cultures of learning for students. In listening deeply to teachers, we learn how to serve students.

In regards to the second concept—*teenagers*—I harness my curiosity for young people in their experience of in-between-ness. All but a small percentage of first-year students are teenagers, moving through a distinct phase in their life as they transition from one educational institution—high school—to another—university. In 2017, of the 7124 direct-entry, first-year undergraduate students joining the University of British Columbia campus, 96% of the class was between the ages of 17-19 years old. These students are moving to a new paradigm of schooling—university—and many are also moving to a new city or country at this emergent time in their lives, yet universities are designed primarily for adults. I often wonder about and observe the kinds of stickiness and disconnect that can happen when these two realities collide in a university setting, in particular: universities designed for adults and the newcomers who are not-yet adults.

First-year students are, for the most part, teenagers between ages 17 and 19 years-old. Dr. Sarah-Jayne Blakemore recently published a book (2018) sharing recent neuroscientific discoveries about the teenage brain; her lament in the book's opening paragraph reflects how I often feel as an adult working with teenagers:

When I tell people I study the adolescent brain, the immediate response is often a joke – something along the lines of: ‘What? Teenagers have brains?’ For some reason it’s socially acceptable to mock people in this stage of their lives. But when you think about it, this is strange: we wouldn’t ridicule other age groups in the same way. Imagine if we went around openly sneering at the elderly for their poor memory and lack of agility.  
(p. 1)

Requiring persistent task management, reasoned decision-making, logic, planning and memory, the demands of the early years of academia can challenge adolescent learners in ways they are least adapted for, neuro-physiologically. For generations responses to large groups of teenagers

in public spaces were shaped by disdain, resentment, and frustration (Blakemore, 2018; Jensen & Nutt, 2015; Siegel, 2014). However, since as early as I can remember I have been fascinated by teenagers—before becoming a teenager, as a teenager, and in the twenty-three years since, I have found myself drawn to working with and learning alongside teenagers especially during times of transition in their educational experience. As a high school teacher, I most enjoyed teaching grade eight (moving into high school) and grade twelve (moving out of high school). In welcoming teenagers to university, I find myself continually compelled to explore my professional and pedagogical curiosities associated with this transition.

To explore and surface these two concepts—*educational institutional welcome* and *teenagers*—with even more intention, I applied for a PhD program and, in 2016, I started to explore the phenomenon of teaching in first-year contexts from a dual lenses of professional staff member and doctoral student within the same university.

## **1.2 A focus on faculty**

I am attentive to my role as a UBC staff member and graduate student in both conducting the research and writing this dissertation. Although I have recently enacted a sessional instructor position at UBC (and previously worked as a sessional instructor at Simon Fraser University), my primary professional identities while conducting this research have been as a PhD Candidate (graduate student) in the UBC Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy (<https://edcp.educ.UBC.ca/>) and as an Educational Designer (staff) in the UBC Centre for Student Involvement and Careers (<https://students.UBC.ca/about-student-services/centre-student-involvement-careers>). Questions may arise from the reader about why I am focusing my study on faculty members rather than focusing the study on staff members' or students' experiences more directly. Early in the research design, I made a deliberate choice to focus on faculty members

because, in the context of higher education systems, tenured faculty members are the actors in the system traditionally representative of the academic community in a university. If I am to shape my research around a curiosity about first-year students' transition from secondary-school communities to post-secondary academic communities, it is critical to examine the students' primary experience of transition, which occurs in their daily interactions with faculty members.

With the focus of my study being on faculty members who prefer to teach first-year students in the university context, I decided to use purposive sampling in the selection of research participants and the cases reflect faculty members from the network of faculty I work closely with in my professional network at UBC (Palys, 2008). Purposive sampling best served this research because I was able to select “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p. 230). In my staff role I interact with faculty who are part of my rich, professional network of collaborators. I have worked with Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste for many years<sup>3</sup> and am continually struck by their commitment to undergraduate education, the unique and creative ways they express their commitment, their articulations of their pedagogical practice, and their curiosity about first-year students. They are all tenured faculty at UBC: Associate Professor (Michael), Senior Instructor (Fok-Shuen), Professor of Teaching (Celeste). Each has achieved academic status at UBC while maintaining a preference for teaching first-year students. I am also curious about how tenure informs the teaching practices of the faculty members in this case study, and will explore how tenure could be a

---

<sup>3</sup> Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste have worked on various co-curricular first-year student programs—Jump Start, Peer Assisted Study Sessions, Profs-in-Space, to name a few—stewarded by the Centre for Student Involvement & Careers, where I work as an Educational Designer. In 2018, shortly after completing my doctoral research proposal and receiving BREB approval, Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste were appointed formal administrative status (Academic Directors, First Year Experience) in the UBC VP Students portfolio.

condition within the case that influences a faculty members' pedagogical approach when teaching first-year students.

In this study, I aim to illuminate the contributive capacities of first-year scholars in the academy through the eyes of these three teachers. Although the stories of Fok-Shuen, Celeste, and Michael are remarkable in their attention to pedagogy, this is meant to be an exploration of a particular phenomenon: tenured faculty who lean into and exhibit curiosity in their approach to working with first-year students. This dissertation is an offering to the teaching community in the hopes that this case sparks resonance and insight with other teachers and provokes deeper thinking about the experience of teaching first-year students at research-intensive universities. The case narratives have not been written as 'victory narratives' about the faculty members, rather they have been written to help the reader see first-year students through the eyes of the faculty members who appreciate their own scholarly interactions with first-year students.

### **1.3 How did this research originate?**

Our collective work designing First Year Experience programs at UBC has been informed by models of "Asset-Based Community Development" (ABCD), a conceptual framework and community engagement approach created by John. L. McKnight and John P. Kretzmann and first presented in their book *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (1993) and created as an engagement strategy for community development settings and professional communities, ABCD can be applied to community-building context in education systems, such as the design of co-curricular (i.e. non-credit-bearing campus life programs and student services) orientation and transition programming for first-year students. The following description of an asset-based approach to UBC-Vancouver's First Year Experience program design (outside the classroom) is from a recent report presented to a sub-

committee in the UBC Board of Governor's at the February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 meeting of the "People, Community & International":

First year students are inherently resourceful. Asset-based community development is a method for sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potential. First-year students bring an abundance of personal capacity when they arrive on campus. When students deepen their sense of personal resourcefulness—the capacity to solve problems, find relevant resources, and seek help when needed—within the context of connection and belonging, the effect is higher self-esteem and reduced feelings of isolation. (p.3)

Asset-based approaches seek to "build on the assets that are already found in the community and mobilize individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to build on their assets—not [overly] concentrate on their needs" (Rowland, 2008). In educational discourse related to first-year student transition, an asset-based approach "begins with the premise that all students have prior knowledge, expertise, and bring enormous personal assets with them" (Rueckert, 2014, p. 51). Instead of providing a "one-way dialogue" in which university faculty and staff focus on student deficits and information "gaps," an asset-based approach "creates opportunities for students to engage in dialogue, critically reflect on their own experiences...and to make meaning of their own transition experiences within the context of whatever they already know" (Rueckert, 2014, p. 51).

I started to suspect that an appreciative approach to working with first-year students—an approach inspired by ABCD and by the concept of "appreciative inquiry" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987)—might be a perspective to explore more as part of my doctoral inquiry. In the spirit of appreciative inquiry, I chose to focus on positive experiences of faculty who teach first-year students in an attempt to notice and perpetuate more positive experiences throughout the system (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). At the time of this realization, I had entered my second year of a Curriculum Studies PhD program, and I immersed myself in contemporary curriculum

theorists—Maxine Greene, William Pinar, Ted Aoki, Max van Maanen—and discover Higher Education studies through coursework and collegial conversations with Higher Education scholar, Dr. Amy Metcalfe. By 2017, I started to seek discourses in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning literature that shared (in narrative, emotional, embodied, and richly descriptive depth) the *positive* experiences of faculty members who *prefer* to work with first-year scholars. This search revealed the literature lacked the specific angle, interpretation, and exploration I sought.

#### **1.4 Why is this research necessary and useful?**

*This is what emotions are about, they are about stories, they are not about numbers, so it's always about stories. And what happens when you have got [large numbers]? You have lost the story. The story, to be vivid, it has got to be about an individual case. And when you dilute it by adding cases, you dilute the emotion. (Kahneman, 2019)*

In response to the paucity of research on this topic, I aim to contribute to the scholarly community a written work that brings a sense of three-dimensionality and storied complexity to the body of literature focused on teaching first-year students in the higher education context. *To research* is to enact an enormous privilege: to pause, dig deep, and to follow a trail of inquiry until it illuminates or fizzles. And it's in the cumulative and comprehensive efforts of so many researchers following these lines of inquiry that we build a body of scholarly work that might shift the human trajectory. Research written with an attention to form, shape, story, and emotion is useful because it can guide a reader into the specificities of an educational context. Specificity and attention to detail matter in education, because teaching is a series of moment-to-moment (Van Maanen, 1991), “alive and moving” decisions and actions (Aoki, 1986/2005, p.161). Illuminating such moments is the work of this dissertation. I believe that one purpose of research is to intervene in an organization with stories and examples of how the system might imagine

itself differently. In this case, I am particularly interested in seeding the post-secondary education system with stories and examples of how we—the educators—might shift our perspective regarding the contributive capacity of first-year students by seeing the student population through the eyes of full-time faculty who prefer teaching them. Setting the research up in this way, I am admittedly setting up the analysis to be overtly positive and hopeful in tone. Despite the tendency in educational research academic discourse towards critique and finding fault as a preferred tone of analysis, I do not apologize to the reader for the blue sky thinking and ‘what if?’ undercurrent in this dissertation. I am making a conscious and intentional choice to focus on what is *working well* by framing the study on faculty who—despite the challenges inherent with large class sizes and introductory courses—still indicate a preference for teaching first-year courses. The scholarship that currently focuses on teaching in higher education does not yet represent first-year teaching and learning contexts with sufficient examples of rich, qualitative case studies focusing on educators who see first-year students’ imaginative possibility and contributive capacity.

The practical aspects of teaching are often illustrated in texts with words that evoke the body and spirit: emotional, personal, relationship, careful, wholehearted, practical, impassioned, reflective, etc. Words to describe educational research can evoke disembodiment: methodical, data, analysis, objective, laboratory, value-free, quantitative, replicable, etc. As a researcher, my worldview aligns with theorists and researchers who believe humans “in their interaction with structures” are actors who “have the power to influence or change structures [because] social structures and individuals serve to influence each other” (O’Toole, Talbot, & Fidock, 2008, p. 30). As a Curriculum Studies student, I conceptualize curriculum-focused research alongside Pinar’s construct of curriculum as “complicated conversation” —a conversation educator-

researchers engage in with themselves and others as a process of profound critical reflection to reconcile the private, public, and political realms as “teacher” (2004). I consider my role as researcher as the work of public servant, and I take Pinar’s contention seriously that educators must engage with themselves, their students and colleagues in the “construction of a public sphere, a public sphere not yet born, a future that cannot be discerned in, or even thought from, the present...[a] classroom [is] simultaneously a civic square and a room of one’s own” (2004, pp. 37-38). The work I seek to do as a researcher in transforming public spaces must first happen within myself with the same methodological rigor and attention to design, ethics, and clarity (Chang, 2008; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Neuman, 1996; Scutt & Hobson, 2013).

### **1.5 Why am I doing this research?**

I am doing this research as a contribution to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), and by doing so, I am naming a need for qualitative research about the actors themselves: those who teach first-year students. I offer a case study that explores a strong engagement and enjoyment of the work, despite the problems within a broader system of university educators. I am aware this will read as a particularly hopeful, positive and joyful presentation of teaching and learning in first-year. Each of the participants in this case finds simple, elegant ways to shift their teaching, ways that do not require huge resource burdens or additional time. In another sense, I conduct research in an attempt to assert (and remember) my own belief that people can shift the systems and structures they inhabit through incremental actions and storytelling. Many of the structural, interpersonal habits within large educational institutions, such as UBC<sup>4</sup>, result in individual struggle, community disconnect, and a diminished sense of belonging (for teachers and students). In this study, I do not intend to make sweeping,

---

<sup>4</sup> For a concise overview of the size of UBC-Vancouver, refer to: <https://www.ubc.ca/about/facts.html>

general statements; rather, I attempt to illustrate, analyze and illuminate approaches and perspectives in first-year teaching and learning (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018).

In higher education, we make a promise that we, the adults working in the institutions, will create a scholarly learning community for students on our campuses; but if we research that community using only large-scale, quantitative scientific approaches, and surveys, then we potentially miss other insights into what is, could be, and shouldn't be happening in the community. I have drawn inspiration from researchers like Scutt and Hobson (2013), who applied autobiographic and case study methods to their examination of a Writing Space program they led at their university. In studying the program's effect, they consciously eschewed the more commonplace reliance on surveys, coded scripts and big data prevalent in Higher Education research. When I read their rationale for their choice, I am inspired to add to the body of Higher Education research that attends to the "experience of group life":

Researchers can give individuals different drugs, or dosages, and track the varying effects. But a group of people in a classroom are not all getting the same 'dosage' of education. There are group dynamics – different people may encounter very different events within that classroom. In the Writing Space, one person may be happily typing loudly, while another just beside them fumes in silent annoyance. This makes simple 'variables' difficult...With a theory about the lived experience of group life, and in particular ceremony and ritual, we might better understand why students prefer to come to this program than sit at home or in their offices and write quietly there for three hours instead. (Scutt & Hobson, 2013, p. 22)

I was similarly inspired by researchers who broke down qualitative research process for emerging scholars, like myself, in articles and book chapters written reflectively, and with attention to a researcher's journey and inner monologue. For example, I drew on a set of questions posed by Rhetoric, Politics and Culture scholar, Dr. Sara McKinnon, to frame my rationale and approach to choosing a qualitative approach to research. She poses a set of questions to "help researchers to understand the motivation that guide [their] research practice"

(2004, pp. 14-15); the headings of this chapter's (Introduction) and the following chapter's (Methodology) sections are questions paraphrased and posed in reference to McKinnon's questions: Why am I doing this research?; Why is this research necessary and useful?; What is my position, or social location, in relation to this research topic?; How will I let the data speak? How will the analysis of the data provide a more complex picture of the phenomenon than was previously available? How will this analysis reflect and honour the experiences of the people and communities I talk about?

I have addressed the first two of these questions and will now move to the third.

## **1.6 What is my social location in relation to this research topic?**

### ***1.6.1 Professional position***

As a professional, I identify primarily as an educator. And because this is a research paper *about teaching*, meeting me *as an educator* is critical for naming and framing my assumptions, preferences, frames of reference, world-views and artistic leanings as a researcher. I feel tension writing a dissertation about *teaching* that will be assessed based on my *researching* merits. One verb (*teach*) invokes the confidence of a seasoned self, while the other (*research*) admittedly inspires the insecurity of a newcomer.

I hold a current K-12 British Columbia Teaching Certificate, and although I am not teaching in the K-12 system presently, I am qualified to teach High School Drama and English. My last position as a High School teacher ended in 2007, at which point I took an extended maternity leave with my daughter and I completed a Master's of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. In 2009, I began a career in higher education as a Sessional Instructor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. I have since worked in many different roles in higher education (at UBC, SFU, and the Arts Institute in Vancouver) both in and out of the

classroom as a staff member and faculty member, including positions in the UBC Student Development and Services (a suite of services in the Vice President, Students portfolio) since 2010.

In practical, professional, and pedagogical terms, I am positioned very closely to this research topic. As I type this sentence (on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019), I embody three distinct positions—staff member, faculty member, and graduate student—at the University of British Columbia, each locating me among first-year students and the faculty who teach them: a sessional instructor for a 200-level pilot course in the Faculty of Arts (half of the students enrolled in the course were first-year students); a doctoral student, maintaining a focus on the experience of teenagers in educational institutions; and an Educational Designer on the leadership team at the Centre for Student Involvement and Careers. As an Educational Designer, I collaborate with faculty members from across campus to design, develop, and enact campus-wide initiatives that support first-year students transition to scholarly community. These include initiatives such as: UBC Jump Start, Profs-in-Space,<sup>5</sup> Peer Assisted Study Sessions,<sup>6</sup> UBC Collegia,<sup>7</sup> the Chapman Learning Commons,<sup>8</sup> and the First-Year Educators’ Symposium.<sup>9</sup> Although my staff position provides me—as researcher—a depth of historical data, insight and experience, my position can also be viewed as problematic and limiting to the research. Some might ask: Can I be ‘objective’ in a research study resting so close to my work and my relationships? Frankly, the answer is ‘no’. This study is, admittedly, subjective because of my position (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

---

<sup>5</sup> For additional information about the Profs-in-Space program, see: <https://facultystaff.students.UBC.ca/node/885>

<sup>6</sup> For additional information about Peer Assisted Study Sessions: <https://students.UBC.ca/enrolment/academic-supports/involved-pass#about-peer-assisted-study-sessions>

<sup>7</sup> For additional information about UBC Collegia: <https://students.UBC.ca/new-to-UBC/UBC-collegia-home-away-home-first-year-commuter>

<sup>8</sup> For additional information about the Chapman Learning Commons: <https://learningcommons.UBC.ca/>

<sup>9</sup> For additional information about the First Year Educators’ Symposium: <https://facultystaff.students.UBC.ca/node/915>

I address my subjectivity through writing this dissertation with an attention to self-reflexive writing, personal transparency, and a conscious decision to locate myself in the writing and in the narrative explorations of each case.

### ***1.6.2 Ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological position***

My ontological position is that one's experience of reality is subjective and multiple versions of reality exist; therefore, as a qualitative researcher I research with the desire to illuminate those realities (Creswell, 2012). Epistemologically, I position myself as *part of* the phenomena being researched and I am drawn as a qualitative researcher towards studying contexts inside of which I am rooted and situated. Therefore, the knowledge I create as a researcher is contextually and historically dependent and attention to context, history, and my identity as a researcher must be valued by the reader (Creswell, 2012). My methodological position is as a qualitative researcher who approaches studies as emergent exploration wherein I include my own experience and my own personal interpretations as explicitly *part of* the data (Cresswell, 2012). I design research that allows for a change of direction or shift of research questions at any point in the research journey so that I can best respond to the research problem in the most authentic and genuine way possible within the deadline constraints of the study. Axiology looks at the ways my own values might shape the research (Cresswell, 2012). It is possible for me to do educational research in a paradigm connected to my values. In many ways, my values have been shaped by my work as an educator and they will continue to inform and be shaped by my actions as a researcher of educators (including myself). In sharing my findings, I will make explicit what my values are and their influence on this study. Finally, the rhetorical assumption in this research study—and in qualitative research, more broadly—is that the language I employ will be informed by personal experience, often storied, and at times draw on

literary forms and metaphor. I write in the first person. This rhetorical approach increases the credibility of the research because I am present and accountable in the writing and the research is communicated in a transparent and reflexive way; moreover, the research participants are featured subjectively and in three-dimensionality in the text rather than as a numbers, codes, or generalized stereotypes which would present a different rendering of the phenomenon.

## **Chapter 2: Landscapes of Teaching and Learning: A Literature Review**

Although my professional role within universities is primarily as an Educational Designer and a graduate student, the title I identify with most resonantly is ‘educator’. Therefore, I am attuned to and empathetic to the experiences of teachers in educational institutions. My academic research serves students *and* teachers, and from this vantage point, there are conditions in our current political and pedagogical landscapes that are both compelling and concerning. In order to extrapolate meaning and insights from this case study, we must read (and I must write) the cases with an informed fluency of the current political, collegial, and theoretical landscapes upon which faculty members negotiate their professional and pedagogical identities at the University of British Columbia. Therefore, in this chapter I review literature that focuses on the context for faculty members who teach in research-intensive universities in Canada.

As a professional working in the Canadian higher education system, I am as curious about the broader higher education system itself as I am about the work within any given individual institution. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the political landscape of research-intensive universities in Canada, the professional landscape for full-time faculty members in Canadian research-intensive universities, the landscape of scholarship focused on university teaching and learning, and the precarious landscape for contract-faculty in the first-year context.

### **2.1 The Canadian higher education landscape: A brief political and historical overview**

The historical, political and professional conceptualizations of a ‘faculty member’ are significant because, within the higher education system, faculty members are the systems’ most powerful agents within an academic community. In understanding the professional role of a

‘faculty member’ (i.e. ‘professor’, ‘instructor’ or ‘lecturer’), one can start to understand the historical and political landscape.

### **2.1.1 Historical**

Speaking of landscapes, Canada is a vast geographical landmass, but it has a small population that is scattered throughout the country. Universities started to spring up in the late 1800s and early 1900s in response to a need for highly skilled professionals in local, provincial communities (Jones et al., 2014). The federal government maintains financial support for higher education, but they transfer funding “to the provinces...to preserve the distributed authority over higher education” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 338). As a result of this political structure, the policies governing higher education are different from province to province, and universities have a high level of autonomy and can “make their own decisions over almost all key matters within the constraints associated with block operating grants” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 339).

Soon after constructing Canada’s first universities, the federal government started to make political and financial decisions aligned with a more intentionally *research-driven* agenda based on the rising global reputation Germany held for research production and leadership in the knowledge economy. Borrowing from the German model, the Canadian federal government created the National Research Council of Canada. Through special funding from the National Research Council (NRC), the federal government started to exert more influence over provincial universities as they each vied for the prestige that comes with having faculty in their institutions whose research is seen to be worthy of NRC funds.

During and after World War II, Canada invested in war veterans by providing the returned soldiers with free university tuition. As a result, the number of students nationwide “increased by 46% in 1945-1946 when 20,00 veterans decided to pursue higher education”

(Jones et al., 2014, p. 337). The rising enrolment catalyzed political focus on higher education and citizen access to higher education in Canada. Government-funded specialized colleges and comprehensive universities across the country and developed graduate studies programs to create an expert professoriate who could serve as teachers and researchers within the new institutions.

Student enrolment continued to increase substantially into the 1970's, and the government created structural arrangements that continue to affect the landscape of teaching and learning in higher education to this day (Jones et al., 2014). One of these arrangements was an expansion in undergraduate and graduate program offerings and most universities became "comprehensive institutions," meaning they provided to students a combination of undergraduate, graduate and professional programming with the dual goals of research-productivity and providing excellent learning environments via teaching excellence (Jones et al., 2014, p. 339).

### **2.1.2 Political**

Canadian undergraduates attend research-intensive universities in part because the tax-paying public places a demand on government for high-quality education (Woolley, 2018); therefore, research universities have been established across Canada to meet this public demand. Canada invests heavily in post-secondary education, in comparison with other countries worldwide, spending a "higher percentage of its GDP on tertiary education (2.6%) than any country except the United States" (Woolley, 2018, p. 1071). Most Canadian students attend the university in their province, and there are political and historical reasons for this trend. Canada takes an atypical approach to governing the post-secondary system when compared with other approaches worldwide; in "international terms", the Canadian postsecondary system is "unusual" (Woolley, 2018, p. 1069). In Canada, the "vast majority of universities are public, including all

15 of the research-intensive institutions which comprise the U15 group” (Rawn & Fox, 2018, p. 594) and there are “no elite private universities...[and] little to no federal government oversight of the postsecondary system” (Woolley, 2018, p. 1069).

The recently published collection titled *Teaching and Research in Contemporary Higher Education: Systems, Activities and Rewards* (Shin, Arimoto, Cummings & Teichler, 2014) provides a thorough overview of the current state of the higher education landscape and focuses its study of the system on the role of a professor in Canada. The Canadian higher education and post-secondary landscape is unique when compared to other systems in the world as a result of one distinct political factor: universities are governed at the provincial-political level, not via federal policies, unlike most countries who govern higher education at the national level (Jones et al., 2014, p. 336-338).

The constitutional agreement to hand over responsibility for higher education to the provincial (not federal) governments is one of the structural arrangements that most significantly influences the political and professorial landscape at a research-intensive university (Woolley, 2018). It is valuable to approach the Canadian post-secondary education landscape through a lens of “decentralization”:

Higher education policy in Canada is highly decentralized; higher education is the responsibility of the provinces and territories that have legislative and regulatory authority over universities and colleges. Universities are created as separate private, non-for-profit corporations, though most of these corporations are considered public in that they receive government funding. (Jones et al., 2014, p. 342)

The federal government distributes funding to each province as part of the publicly-funded education mandate, but the decisions about how to distribute the funding rests in the provincial government. Depending on which political party is at the helm of each provincial government,

the decisions about how to spend the funding transfer can vary from election to election and this places a particular pressure on universities to stay responsive to the province's political parties.

At the risk of oversimplification, students choose to attend a particular university based on a number of factors; for some students the reputation of the university plays an important role in their selection, especially if they have been accepted by multiple universities and they have the personal privileges that afford them a choice. In Canada, there is no single way to assess the quality of university education at a federal or comparative level, instead we turn our attention increasingly to a national magazine's determination of rank in comparison with other Canadian universities—the *MacLean's University Rankings*<sup>10</sup> — and we look to the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*<sup>11</sup> (among others) to determine our rank in comparison with comparable universities internationally. The rankings draw on multiple sources of data to determine their results, such as “reputational surveys and student satisfaction surveys, data on resourcing such as spending on library acquisitions or the ration of students to full-time faculty, bibliometric data such as publication and citation counts and data on external research funding and awards” (Woolley, 2018, p. 1066). Because Canada does not have a government-led process to evaluate and assess the quality of higher education institutions, a collection of published rankings dominates the discourse through comparative measures that rank universities from best to worst. Universities in Canada are competitive. The most widely referenced national ranking comes from *Maclean's Magazine* “which publishes an annual issue comparing Canadian universities on a variety of indicators” (Acker & Webber, 2016, p. 250). These same rankings

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.macleans.ca/education/university-rankings/university-rankings-2019/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

have become a key success metric that university leaders and administrators use to hold their institutions (and the faculty and staff within them) accountable (Gopaul et al., 2016).

If universities compete, what are they competing about? According to Economist Frances Woolley in *The Political Economy of University Education in Canada* (2018):

The evidence...suggests that universities compete on research output. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that research output is positively correlated with teaching quality. Therefore, if ranking exercises create incentives for universities to devote resources to research at the expense of teaching, they could actually reduce educational quality. In response to such concerns, the producers of university rankings are starting to include measures of student engagement and satisfaction. These measures are based on student surveys are thus open to the criticisms made of student evaluations of teaching (SET) in general. (p. 1066)

As Woolley suggests, adding a media-driven, metric-fueled, reputation-based system of ranking on top of the already demanding expectation to generate original scholarship and teach the incoming generation of scholars exacerbates a division between the professional performance of teaching and a professional performance of researching. Moreover, if the most dominant reputational metrics in comparative ranking structures are the metrics reflecting research productivity, then the landscape of teaching and learning at a research-intensive universities leans in the direction of valuing research productivity over teaching practice. However, even if teaching became a key reputational metric in the politics of ranking, “teaching excellence is large unmeasured, if not unmeasurable” so such a reality seems unlikely in the near future (Woolley, 2018, p. 1080).

## **2.2 The professional landscape for full-time faculty members in Canadian universities**

By the 1970’s, two shifts in the higher education landscape occurred that has influenced academic professionalism in Canada to-date. The first shift was a further increase in federal government focus and funding for research in an effort to increase Canada’s research output and

reputation on the global economic stage (Jones et al., 2014). The second shift was the move towards unionization in academic professions across Canada.

### **2.2.1 Research funding**

Although federal funding for research had been a priority since 1916 through the National Research Council, by the 1970's "the Government of Canada had come to view university research as an investment in economic and social development, and new research funding mechanisms were created to support curiosity-driven university research" (Jones et al., 2014, p. 340). Although it is "not in the federal mandate to fund postsecondary education... federal funding does go to postsecondary education in the form of research support" (Metcalf, 2010, p. 495). The research funding mechanisms manifested as three distinct federal research councils focused on medicine (Canadian Institutes of Health Research), social sciences and the humanities (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), and science and engineering (National Sciences and Engineering Research Council). Since their inception, there has been an increased the level of competition among research-intensive universities as they vie for federal funding (to complement tuition revenue and provincial funding sources), and the reputational benefits associated with the grants and awards from these three councils. Within academic departments, research-stream faculty members and graduate students are highly encouraged to secure as much research-focused funding as possible from these federal sources. In many departments, its members have no choice and are required by the department to apply for federal council funding. The political and economic benefits to a university are two-fold: by drawing on federal research funding, the faculty member requires less funding from internal sources, and the university reaps reputational benefits when its faculty members are successful competitors for federal grant funding.

For research-stream professors entering the profession, they are under enormous pressure to produce large volumes of research quickly as they build their tenure and promotion package. The pressure often results in a choice between focusing on their research to the detriment of deepening their pedagogical practice; a choice that many would prefer *not* to have to make because they are drawn to the profession because of the triumvirate focus on research, teaching and service (Gopaul et al., 2014). From a performance standard in the Canadian political economy, universities are often measured on research outputs and highly cited publications, which is work that does not happen swiftly—furthering the capacity to be an excellent teacher and excellent researcher is very difficult in the current reality (Jones et al., 2014; Woolley, 2018). In regards to teaching, it is difficult to build support at the federal level for increased attention, value, and funding for universities that demonstrate excellence in teaching. This is, in part, because decisions about how to improve teaching quality are left to institutions to govern locally and autonomously; whereas “strengthening the research capacity and supporting the research function for Canadian universities has been a quite explicit objective of [federal] government policy”, as demonstrated by major financial investments in research, and the development of the Canada Research Chairs and Canada Foundation for Innovation programs (Jones et al., 2014, p. 341).

### **2.2.2 *Unionization***

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to contextualize the cases in the current landscape of teaching in higher education in Canada. The faculty members who make up the cases in this case study each occupy different ranks and roles within the UBCFA and they are not symbiotic in their position or faculty identity. Teasing apart the differences in their rank and role, and connecting these differences to the broader literature looking the role of teaching in the

academic profession in Canada will provide necessary contextual grounding for the later reading of the individual cases.

Another shift in the professoriate landscape was a movement towards faculty members' unionization in universities across Canada (Gopaul et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Metcalfe et al., 2011). During the 1970's, faculty associations in almost all universities moved towards unionization, and this movement was strongly supported by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)—a “national umbrella organization of institution-based faculty associations...[that] emerged as a national voice for professors and a protector of academic freedom” (Jones et al., p. 340). Unionization has become an “important contextual feature of the [university] environment that determines the structure within academic work is conceptualized, performed, and evaluated” (Gopaul et al., 2014; p. 58). Situating the faculty members in this case study, the University of British Columbia Faculty Association (UBCFA) is the union representing all faculty members (full-time, part-time, and contract faculty), and universities independently create their own approaches to human resource policy.

#### *2.2.2.1 Tiers, tenure & streams*

Union formation also influenced the trend towards differentiation of faculty roles and contracts. Faculty members' job security and collective agreements within their institution started to become a reflection of a specific contractual agreement within their university. Research-focused, tenure-track positions are, historically, the original conceptualization of faculty positions and the ways in which these positions have been enacted have shaped professorial culture since research-intensive universities were created. However, the stratification of faculty roles and faculty contracts resulted in what many Higher Education scholars describe as ‘tiers’ of faculty role and type of contract (Jones et al., 2014, p. 340). “Tenure” is a concept

unique to the academic profession and it is a concept that represents a system of “hiring people onto the so-called “tenure-track”, which usually leads to a permanent position after a period of sustained high performance” (Acker & Webber, 2016, p. 234). At the University of British Columbia, the Faculty Association Collective Bargaining Agreement (2016) defines “tenured appointments” in the following terms:

Tenured appointments are full-time appointments except when the University and a faculty member have agreed to change a full-time tenured appointment to a part-time tenured appointment. They cannot be terminated except in accordance with Article 10 below or for financial exigency or redundancy. (p. 61)

In Canada, the tenure-track system is unionized and negotiated through collective agreements and union bargaining. Faculty members are hired into a temporary contract or a tenure-track contract, and the language of ‘tiers’ provide a conceptual representation for the stratified types of professional contracts a faculty member will enact when they work at a university. Whereas UBC does not employ the language of ‘tiers’ in their descriptions of faculty contracts, the literature suggests that the ‘tier’ concept could apply to the UBC context. The ‘tiers’ are not descriptions of professional value or quality of contribution; rather, some scholars employ the concept of ‘tiers’ to surface and illustrate how institutional reward systems (tenure, salary, resource allocation, reputation, etc.) and professional structures (collective agreements, hiring practices, etc.) are indicative of assigned value to types of academic work.

The ‘top tier’ represents full-time, tenure-track, research-focused faculty positions; at UBC this tier is called the “Professoriate Stream” (UBC Collective Agreement, 2016). The ‘second tier’ represents full-time, tenure-track teaching-focused faculty positions; at UBC this tier is called the “Educational Leadership Stream” (UBC Collective Agreement, 2016). The ‘third tier’ represents full-time or part-time contract teaching-focused positions that are not

tenure-track; at UBC, this tier is enacted by many contract faculty in positions titled “Lecturer,” “Sessional Instructor,” and “Adjunct Professor” (UBC Collective Agreement, 2016).

At the University of British Columbia, tenure-track faculty members hold distinct professional titles and each title indicates their tenure “stream”—Professoriate Stream or Educational Leadership Stream—and the rank they have achieved within their stream (UBCFA Collective Agreement, 2016). In the Educational Leadership stream, the titles (from initial to advanced rank) are: *Instructor*, *Senior Instructor*, and *Professor of Teaching*. Faculty in this stream move through the ranks by demonstrating excellence and academic contributions in teaching, educational leadership (often, but not always, taking the form of educational research) and service. More specifically, the *UBC Faculty Association Collective Agreement* (2016) defines “Educational Leadership” in the following terms:

- a) Educational leadership is activity taken at UBC and elsewhere to advance innovation in teaching and learning with impact beyond one’s classroom [see section 4.02 a) for a list of examples] ...;
- b) Judgement of education leadership is based mainly on the quality and significance of the individual’s contributions (p. 65-66).

In the professoriate stream, the titles (from initial to advanced rank) are: *Acting Assistant Professor*, *Assistant Professor*, *Associate Professor*, *Professor*. In the professoriate stream, faculty apply for promotion and are granted tenure on the tenure-track by demonstrating excellence and contributions in “scholarly activity”, teaching, and service. The *UBC Faculty Association Collective Agreement* (2016) defines “Scholarly Activity” in the following terms:

Judgement of scholarly activity is based mainly on the quality and significance of an individual’s contribution. Evidence of scholarly activity varies among disciplines. Published work is, where appropriate, the primary evidence [see section 4.03 for additional definitions of ‘published work’] .... Diverse substantive contributions to knowledge and methods of dissemination, as recognized within the field of inquiry, are valued. (p.64)

The “research stream is no longer the standard for faculty members” (Woolley, 2018, p. 1080). As noted above, the ‘second tier’ of full-time, tenure-track, teaching-focused faculty (TFF) positions now exists in many Canadian research-intensive universities (Gopaul et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2014; Rawn & Fox, 2018; Woolley, 2018). TFF positions have “the same job protections as research-stream faculty, but [reduced research expectations,] greater teaching obligations and, generally speaking, lower pay” (Woolley, 2018, p. 1079). The UBCFA created a tenure-track, teaching-focused faculty position in the early 1990’s during Martha Piper’s leadership as University President. Higher Education scholars describe these positions as ‘second tier’ because these positions are typically rewarded lower salaries and lower levels of institutional prestige in comparison to their research-stream colleagues (Jones et al., 2014; Gopaul et al., 2014; Woolley, 2018).

In an attempt to raise the status of TFF faculty at an institutional level, the University of British Columbia created a highest-level appointment within their teaching-stream, tenure-track called the “Professor of Teaching”. The “Professor of Teaching” position was created in 2011 at the same time the “Teaching Stream” was re-named to “Educational Leadership Stream” and since 2011, a “concerted effort has been made to examine how educational leadership is understood around the campus...[including] a requirement (at the highest rank) that their work has an impact beyond their own classrooms” (Huber & Hutchings, 2018). Some UBC faculty described to Huber and Hutchings that “although the university provides guidelines, there’s been considerable variety in how appointments and promotion within this stream have been handled in different units, and a continuing effort to achieve equity in governance and pay” (2018, para.7). In a study attempting to “document the work experiences and perceptions of TFF at research intensive universities”, UBC scholars Dr. Catherine Rawn and Dr. Joanne Fox (2018) “sought to

document the types of activities in which TFF engage, in order to help define their scholarly contributions to the academy within the context of changing focus on the traditional roles of research, teaching, and service by faculty” (p. 601). In their study, Rawn and Fox (2018) found that teaching-focused faculty reported a variety of forms of contribution to academic life at their universities, beyond classroom teaching:

The variety of contributions reported in our sample suggests that TFF may fall on the same spectrum as research focused faculty, just with a different time emphasis. Both TFF and research focused faculty groups can be considered scholars under Boyer’s (1990) conceptualization. (p. 619)

Despite some movement in a positive direction on some campuses (like UBC), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)—a national advocacy group representing faculty across Canada—is strongly opposed to the stratification of faculty positions and makes the case *against* tenure-track, teaching-focused faculty (TFF) appointments:

Academic work involves both the pursuit of knowledge and its dissemination and application through activities including but not limited to research and scholarly activity, publications, professional practice, the building of library collections, the provision of mediated access to information, artistic production and performance, and service to the profession, internal and external to post-secondary institutions...the defense and promotion of academic work, activities in provincial and national academic staff associations, community engagement, and public discourse...The quality of post-secondary education and the experience of students both suffer when critical enquiry and research cannot flourish...In the assignment of duties, care must be taken to ensure that the balance among research, teaching and service activities as well as the balance between scheduled and non-scheduled duties affords adequate opportunity for every academic staff member to participate fully in all aspects of academic work. The reliance on positions that do not involve the full range of academic activities in the pursuit of knowledge undermines the mission of a post-secondary institution. (p. 1)

On the other hand, champions assert TFF positions are a “proliferation of different kinds of appointments that up the ante on—and value of—pedagogical knowledge and skill” in the academy (Huber & Hutchings, 2018, para. 2).

Finally, on the ‘third tier’ are faculty members who enact part-time or short-term, non-tenure-track, teaching-focused contracts (i.e. contract lecturers, sessions instructor, adjunct professors). Put bluntly, Woolley (2018) describes the hiring practices in Canada as a “differentiated university system” and states the “model of differentiation is inequitable...[where] part-time instructors are paid less than full-time faculty for doing the same work” (p. 1079). A subsequent section of this literature review—*Precarious Ground the Domain of Teaching First-Year Students*—will further attend to faculty members’ working conditions in the third tier and how their experiences deeply influence landscapes of first-year teaching and learning in research-intensive universities.

There can be a sense of community among full-time, TFF instructors across campus, and the community-of-practice among them counters the sense of “pedagogical solitude” that many faculty experience as teachers often in research-intensive environments in ways that contingent faculty may never be able to do (Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011, p. 125). If career advancement opportunities are more heavily weighted towards those with curriculum vitae filled with publications and research funding, this might underscore that Canadian research-intensive Universities are publicly funded and the time faculty members spend can be considered more “valuable” if its output indicates a marketable “impact” (Boyer, 1990; Berube & Ruth, 2015; Gopaul et al., 2016; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Walker et al., 2008). Publications have become the major metric against which a faculty member’s worth is measured. The perceived “unity” between teaching and research has been split as a result of increased management of research-intensive Universities to justify public funds and to compete within a “status economy”:

A defining characteristic of the political economy of higher education is that of status competition...[and] this is how the distinction between knowledge work and marketing begins to blur, with academic publishing becoming a means by which institutions can

market themselves and seek to improve their visibility within the status economy of higher education. (Warren, 2016, p. 137)

In considering economic viability of universities in modern society, a fear that the current model of universities is not economically sustainable may be leading to the division of teaching/research streams to make the university system more fiscally efficient or expedient. However, teaching could be considered a revenue stream for universities, especially with rising tuition costs and with a cost-cutting approach that favors contract teaching labour versus securely employed tenure-track faculty (Gopaul et al., 2016).

## **2.3 Traversing the teaching landscape**

### **2.3.1 *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)***

To better understand how teaching roles manifest within the university system, I return to the 1987 publication of Lee S. Shulman's essay: *Knowledge & Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform* (1987), and Ernest Boyer's influential work: *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990). At the time Shulman (1987) and Boyer (1990) were crafting the early iterations of SoTL discourse with colleagues across North America, most faculty members in North American research-intensive Universities were in full-time, research-focused, tenure-track positions, and were required to balance research, teaching, and service commitments in a well-rounded teacher-scholar model (Boyer, 1990; Gopaul et al., 2016; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). Full-time, tenure-track faculty taught most courses. Whereas some faculty leaned more towards enacting their professional identity as researchers, others leaned more towards enacting their professional identity as teachers.

Over the years, the balance of teaching, research and service has become increasingly strained, as described by Jones et al. in a 2014 analysis of the Canadian professoriate culture:

The Canadian higher education system can also be categorized as being within the group of countries where the professoriate is expected to maintain a balance of both research and teaching. This balance is the source of considerable tension as the system is pushed and pulled between what are sometimes competing objectives of increasing accessibility to undergraduate education on the one hand and contributing to a national research and innovation agenda on the other. (p. 335)

Those drawn to teaching within research-intensive contexts often had to face the reality that they work in a culture where a commitment to teaching is “a risk, both in terms of tenure and promotion and in terms of wider influence on the field, since there were few channels for other faculty to come upon and engage with this work in ways that will make a lasting difference” (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999, p. 14). For this reason, those who champion SoTL celebrate its potential contributions to research (a public contribution to knowledge) as much as they celebrate its contributions to the institutional learning environment and individual teachers’ professional development.

Hutchings and Shulman (1999) best clarify SoTL’s public research contributions as an elevation from teaching practice to scholarship:

...in addition to [good, scholarly teaching practice], yet *another* good is needed, one called a scholarship of teaching which...we describe as having three additional central features of being public (“community property”) open to critique and evaluation, and in a form, that others can build on...It involves question-asking, inquiry, and investigation, particularly around issues of student learning. (p.13)

Historically, a research-focused orientation (especially within a research-intensive university) was the template from where the professoriate was formed and the act of research valued individualized, competitive, and specialized orientations to one’s work within the academic community.

Shulman and Boyer were leaders among a group of university professors who catalyzed the SoTL movement. In *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer states, “[we] believe the time has

come to move beyond the tired old ‘teaching versus research’ debate and give the familiar and honourable term ‘scholarship’ a broader, more capacious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work” (1990, p. 16). *Scholarship Reconsidered* served as a call to the academy to re-imagine the role of professors through an expanded, articulated, definition of scholarship. In it, Boyer (1990) discussed the most important resource in the academy, a faculty member’s *time*, and demands the academy to pay attention to and value the time faculty spend *teaching*. Boyer suggests teaching can be an act of scholarship and teachers’ contributions to scholarly community are far too often undervalued and unseen in the work of the academy. Additionally, Boyer proposes the Academy collectively re-define the notion of “scholarship” to recognize the various ways we produce ‘knowledge’ in universities. In reconsidering scholarship in the professoriate, he asks for “a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching” (Boyer, 1990, p. 24).

Boyer’s 1991 publication responded to Shulman’s (1987) earlier work, wherein Shulman wrote that the act of teaching may be an ancient professional act, but the work of studying “teaching” in a scholarly way is more contemporary. Shulman (1987) writes: “A knowledge base for teaching is not fixed and final. Although teaching is among the world's oldest professions, educational research, especially the systematic study of teaching, is a relatively new enterprise” (p. 98). However, Boyer and Shulman were very clear that the concept of a “scholarship” of teaching and learning was not synonymous with excellent teaching. As recently as thirty years ago (SoTL has shallow roots), Shulman and Boyer launched a pointed argument for conditions to improve in university whereby strong teaching could be rewarded in formal recognition structures. According to Hutchings and Shulman:

[The scholarship of teaching] “requires a kind of ‘going meta,’ in which faculty frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning—the conditions under

which it occurs, what it looks like, how to deepen it, and so forth—and do so with an eye not only to improving their own classroom but to advancing practice beyond it” (1999, p. 13).

The idea of taking teaching seriously in the realm of scholarship has since taken hold in North American universities, and there has been increased faculty motivation in some quarters to explore one’s “teaching with an informed and critical eye” and make contributions to research and institutional improvements based on those explorations (Hutchings et al., 2011, p. xi). The SoTL movement is now taken up in universities and colleges across Canada, as well as internationally in the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL) community.

Since 1990, leading voices within SoTL have called for increased institutional recognition of faculty who both demonstrate quality teaching and quality scholarship *about* teaching and learning and these same voices surface the importance of professional community; community often takes the shape of teaching academies, teaching commons, and teaching centers. (Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2009; Hubball et al., 2013; Hutchings et al., 2011; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Kreber, 2007; Shulman, 2004). Tenure-track, TFF positions are considered a positive, institutionally supported manifestation of both calls to action. Despite the development of TFF positions, career advancement opportunities in universities remain more heavily weighted towards faculty with research-focused publications and funding, which might suggest that publicly-funded Canadian research-intensive universities consider faculty time more “valuable” if its output indicates a marketable “impact” (Berube & Ruth, 2015; Boyer, 1990; Gopaul et al., 2016; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Walker, Baepler & Cohen, 2008). For example, the perceived “unity” between teaching and research has been split as a result of

increased management of research-intensive Universities to justify public funds and to compete within a “status economy” (Warren, 2016, p. 137).

### **2.3.2 *Contested spaces: Public and private, precarious and tenured***

Publicly-funded universities are accountable, and the scope of “to what” and “to whom” they are accountable continues to expand, while Canadian government funding decreases and tuition levels rise (Polster & Newson, 2015). The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2015) references the stress placed on students and teachers as Canada moves toward a more capitalist model:

To be sure, these rising levels of stress cannot simply or directly be attributed to university corporatization; however, corporatization has created conditions that exacerbate and, to some degree, have given rise to them...[D]riven by policies that focus on wealth creation, Canada’s contemporary universities have come to engender a highly individualized, privatized, competitive, and survival-oriented campus culture, heightening performance and productivity pressures and offering little relief from them... [P]olicies and practices that have been essential to corporatization over the past three decades have spawned stressful educational environments for students: for example, high levels of tuition and related costs that require most students to take on financial burdens in order to obtain a university education and that lead many of them to a double-life as students and job-holders; and an online, web-based university-student interface which, providing less face to face and individual-serving contact, is inadequate for identifying, let alone responding to, students in distress. (p. 2)

Hubball, Pearson and Clarke (2013) make an argument for expanding SoTL’s influence to broader curriculum and program reform. They show educational landscapes at research-intensive universities to be “complex and rapidly changing, with increases in disciplinary specialization, student diversity, proliferation of course and program options, and use of technology to expand classroom borders occurring simultaneously with increasingly vocal calls for institutional accountability” (Hubball, Pearson & Clarke, 2013, p. 42).

Classrooms are public spaces. In a publicly-funded, research-intensive university, taxpayers and students pay for faculty salaries. Under the auspices of academic freedom, faculty

decide what will happen in a course through the syllabus, lesson plans, assignments, and exams. In many ways, the culture of academic freedom at universities—compared to the “erasure of academic freedom for [K-12] school teachers”—protects the notion that teaching can be an independently erudite and intellectual act (Pinar, 2004, p. 195). In elementary, secondary, post-secondary classrooms, teachers perform *both* their personal histories *and* professional expertise. A university is a place that is wholly unique in the education landscape (i.e., technical and pedagogical solutions that work in K-12 contexts rarely transfer cleanly to universities) and wholly unique in society (i.e., administrative and programmatic solutions from the corporate or business sector fall flat in a university leadership culture). Therefore, universities do not run as top-down hierarchical structures (i.e. the president is not synonymous with a corporate CEO in a private company); rather, the academic model is one of collegial governance where faculty members hold institutional autonomy and are protected by academic freedom. Importantly, the principle that threads together the university community despite discipline, expertise, and rank within the system is academic freedom. According to Universities Canada—an organization representing 96 institutions across Canada—*Statement on Academic Freedom*<sup>12</sup> academic freedom is the “freedom to teach and conduct research in an academic environment...[and] is fundamental to the mandate of universities to pursue truth, educate students and disseminate knowledge and understanding” (2011, para.1). More to the point, scholar Joanne Williams (2016) shares a response to the question “why does academic freedom matter?” that, in its succinctness, sets a tone for why and how universities and their academics interact in an explicitly unique way:

Academic freedom matters because it allows for the unrestricted pursuit and passing on of knowledge. Knowledge advances through the freedom to provoke, cause offence and

---

<sup>12</sup> Read the full statement here: <https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/statement-on-academic-freedom/>

upset the status quo. There is simply no point in higher education without academic freedom. (p. 16)

University teachers consciously and subconsciously perform political will. There may be a large or small gap of space in-between public and political perceptions about what teachers *should* be doing/teaching/saying and what they *are* doing/teaching/saying. Teachers perform *both* a personal pedagogy *and* a public professionalism simultaneously, and an understanding of the space in-between these two concepts can be deepened through reading of Pinar's (2004) book *What is Curriculum Theory*. Pinar (2004) writes:

If public education is the education of the public, then public education is, by definition, a political, psycho-social, fundamentally intellectual reconstruction of self and society, a process in which educators occupy public and private spaces in-between the academic disciplines and the state (and problems) of mass culture, between intellectual development and social engagement, between erudition and everyday life. (p. 15)

Universities have not escaped the overall trend since the 1970s of pushing education towards a corporate model, from a focus on students' erudition to their "learning management" and from intellectual freedom to "teacher skill development" (Pinar, 2004, p. 16). There's also been increased pressure to have education attend to "pervasive vocationalism," at the expense of the interconnected "intellectual, psychological, social" interests of teachers and students (Pinar, 2004, p. 16). The neoliberal pressures on higher education to attend to the economy and future job market in addition to teaching and research excellence have intensified over the past ten years.

In 21<sup>st</sup> century universities, teachers are increasingly under pressure to teach the *whole student* with the societal expectation that students graduate from university with technological aptitude, applicable career skills, global understanding and moral character development; moreover, the responsibility to design integrated pedagogies beyond one's disciplinary expertise

to attend to this expectation still rests on the individual instructor, with little assistance from the institution (Hubball et al., 2013). Concepts relating to classroom teaching (e.g., group work, collaborative learning, etc.) have adopted a language that evokes masculine business cultures: teachers as “coaches” ensuring “soft skills” like team-work and communication, which are highly associated with workplace attributes, are integrated in their course design (Pinar, 2004, p. 28). Might we consider instead *who* teaches the course, instead focusing on *what* is being taught and *how* that applies to the student’s ability to succeed within a market economy? Such a context invites Pinar’s (2004) reminder that curriculum is not about jobs, economics, or political agendas, but should be about “discovering and articulating for oneself and with others, the educational significance of the school subjects for self and society in the ever-changing historical moment” (p. 16).

Institutional interventions designed to enhance the experience of first-year teaching and learning demand attention to complexity when academic freedom and university governance is concerned. Mandating change from the top down is not always the best option; instead, interventions need to make legitimate and practical sense within the overall pursuit of scholarship in the academy. The solutions need to make so much sense and be so creatively simple that tenured faculty members (who are often extraordinarily busy) feel capable to act. Historically, staff, student leaders, Deans’ offices and, on some occasions, sessional instructors (often the primary instructors of any university first-year course), will lead undergraduate student engagement curriculum and program development. My research acknowledges those players and celebrates their efforts, but asks the question: Where are the tenured faculty members in this process, and how might their stories shift a university’s collective pedagogic imagination—our collective sense that the university is a place new students can enter and engage with creatively in concert with tenured faculty members (Smith, 1999)?

### 2.3.3 *Fatigued faculty*

Too often, faculty struggle to make their teaching *visible* and the compound emotional toil of teaching mixed with the emotional toil of the tenure pressure often results in frustration, fatigue, or burnout (Warren, 2016). Warren (2016) examines his experience teaching at a research-intensive university as an experience working in an “intensified hegemony of [neo-liberal] public management, inviting more aggressive management of academic activities, and fracturing the assumed unity between teaching and research” (p. 135). He unpacks his own difficulty accessing the emotional energy needed to care for his students in a working environment that does not appear to care for him. Warren laments how “institutions of higher education appear to both care less about their employees and have limited regard to the highly gendered nature of care relationships both within and outwith the institution” (2016, p. 131). And what might be society’s capacity to even care about the working conditions of university teachers? Berube and Ruth (2015) attend to a social blindness to feeling compassionate to “struggle” towards any professional member of the academy, based on an understanding of the system shaped by status, elitism, tenure, and autonomy. If, at a dinner party, a contingent faculty member names her profession as “University Instructor,” or the more slippery title of “Adjunct Professor,” most of other guests at the table would not understand if she then complained about her status living below the poverty line (Berube & Ruth, 2015). I also wonder how many academics are compelled to educate society about the obscure and uniquely confusing (from an organization management perspective) academic labour market and academic structure. Even typing that sentence has made my mind drift and eyes wilt, and I’m in the category of someone who wants to *have* the conversation!

## 2.4 Teaching first-year students on “precarious ground”

In Canadian research-intensive universities, the typical learning experiences for first-year students are those of rushing to, from, and through a suite of introductory courses per term, many including lectures alongside hundreds of peers in lecture halls. Sessional faculty members are “often assigned lower level or 'service' courses while tenure stream faculty teach in their preferred areas of specialization” (Cardozo, 2017, p. 406). In Canada, there are shrinking provincial budget allocations to higher education institutions and rising enrolments and increasing “massification” (Gopaul, et al., 2016); therefore, the ideal state, as originally envisioned by SoTL founders 30 years ago, of a balanced trifecta that recognizes teacher/researcher/servant within each faculty member to varying degrees may no longer be possible within such an overburdened system. One justification for increasing the contingent, precarious academic labour market could be the reduced administrative costs, limited resource strain on human resource budgets, more system flexibility (e.g. much easier to end a temporary contract), and a management approach to chunking labour into discreet actions (teaching and research activity as discreet functions). But what happens to service? And to campus community-building? And advocacy (if not downright activism)? Are these functions absorbed by staff and administrative functions? Or are they left to wither and vanish?

Within research-intensive universities (in North America and internationally) increasing numbers of faculty (in particular those teaching introductory and first-year courses) are employed within the part-time academic labour category (e.g., contingent faculty, precariously employed faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, part-time, adjunct, sessional, contract lecturer, etc.) which could be interpreted as a warning, a sad refrain, or a deep concern that teaching is explicitly under-valued (Cardozo, 2017; Hutchings et al., 2011; Polster & Newson, 2015;

Warren, 2016). For the purpose of clarity, I will employ either the term “contingent faculty” or non-tenure-track (NTT) when referencing the role, and “precarious” or “precarity” when referring to these appointments. Therefore, for many of first-year teaching colleagues, those enacting roles in the precarious work category, teaching is a two-dimensional professional performance rooted in their identity, past and present, but with no guarantee of future and clothed in a job title that indicates low status. Even the word “precarity” evokes an image of a body teetering, positioned askew, unhinged and unbalanced. In an ideal state, the emergent TFF tenure stream could elevate the student-learning experience and the overall educational enterprise purpose of the university, complemented by collaboration with research-track colleagues in bringing to “teaching the recognition afforded to other forms of scholarly work” on campus (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999, p. 11).

#### ***2.4.1 “Tenure” as a notable condition in this case study***

There are voices from the US context who assert the importance of the condition of tenure for faculty in the first-year student learning context:

If the only faculty working with first-year students are part-timers, untenured lecturers, or graduate students, first-year instruction is marginalized. In our experience, the stigmatization of persons who are themselves marginal in the academy affects not only those persons but also their students. Therefore, we believe that it is imperative that full-time tenure track faculty be directly engaged in teaching and out-of-class interaction with first-year students. (Evenbeck & Jackson, 2004, pp. 262-263)

The scholarly community within a university is best represented by the tenure-track faculty members (specifically, Educational Leadership Stream and Professoriate Stream faculty in the UBC context) because they are the group of faculty that enact a commitment to a university—and the university enacts a commitment to them—over a lengthy period of time. The experience of these faculty members is also most illustrative of the contextual realities of an experienced scholar within a particular university. Any proposed intervention that might attend to the

phenomena of first-year scholarly engagement must be designed in consideration of a very busy, autonomous, and committed tenure-track or tenured faculty member in mind. The future of SoTL is enmeshed with the future of the professoriate and Hutchings et al. (2011) suggest that while "doing more with less, campuses are struggling and faculty are stretched thin just about everywhere we look" (p. 125). Similarly, the future of first-year undergraduate learning can be considered enmeshed with the future of the professoriate, and the institutional supports university teachers, like me and my colleagues, receive in their work supporting students.

I suggest the structures of SoTL in the first-year domain are precarious due to the growing foundation of first-year courses taught by contingent faculty. Part-time and contingent labor makes "it difficult to do sustained work on pressing institutional agendas for student learning" (Hutchings et al., 2011, p. 125). Because of these conditions, the spirit of a teaching *scholarly teaching community*—so critical in the SoTL field—could be undermined and, in turn, could undermine the experience of *scholarly community* for first-year students. Another angle, suggested by Buber and Ruth (2015) might be to test the capacity of the general public to accept the notion that their children—for whom they are paying enormous amounts of money to send to research-intensive Universities—will very likely receive an education from a teacher with little to no teaching qualifications, who has been hired without any trace of rigor in the recruitment process as it relates to teaching, and who will not receive the basic level of support (in some cases, not even a space for office hours, a laptop, or a phone) to enact their *professional* role in the university education machine. If faculty teaching conditions *are* student learning conditions, the cracks will start to show. Buber and Ruth (2015) suggest that, as a publicly-funded working environment, faculty who are working to change the academic labor conditions for precariously employed teachers, in particular, might take the following approach:

Play on the still-wide-spread belief that [all] college professors are professionals, and that parents who are sending their children to college should have some expectation that professors have the professional resources.... [such as] meaningful performance reviews.... that make it possible for them to do their jobs well. It might even be possible to do this without construing students as consumers and parents as aggrieved consumer advocates demanding that they should get what they paid for. The analogy, instead, should be to the ideals and practices of professionalism... Or think of it in terms of what a college promises and what it practices. Is it telling students that a college degree is a pathway to the middle class, while paying its own instructors, with postgraduate degrees, food-stamp wages? (p. 21)

This does not mean contingent faculty cannot be excellent teachers, but rather their excellence as teachers is fundamentally unsupported by the system the public pays for. Comparatively, would a parent apply the same patience if they sent their child to receive professional care, support, or guidance in the legal or medical profession?

In focusing this case study on full-time, tenured faculty, I am choosing to focus on faculty who are offered the highest degree of freedom to explore the scholarly potential in the first-year teaching and learning space. In making a case around these faculty, I hope to increase the collective curiosity and respect within the higher education system for teaching in the first-year, thereby raising the level of respect for the integrity, quality, value, and scholarly rigour that exists in all first-year teaching and learning contexts. Of particular relevance to first-year teaching, if faculty work is often described as scholarly work, then the “scholarship of teaching...includes intellectual engagement in the content being taught crafting techniques that bridge one’s own scholarly knowledge with the novice, motivating student engagement, implementing lessons that transform and extend the knowledge, and stimulating the next generation of scholars so knowledge can continue to grow” (Rawn & Fox, 2018, p. 595-596). All faculty working with first-year students are doing such work, and deserve the full recognition of the institutions that are hiring them to welcome the new generation of scholars to our universities.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

This study employs Case Study methodology as a way to conduct exploratory research into an under-represented phenomenon in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and my hope is that this study—intentionally framed as an exploration, not an explanation—compels the academic community to further examine the phenomenon beyond the concluding pages of this dissertation. Throughout my PhD experience, I gravitated towards research paradigms that recognize seeking, clarification, discovery, and descriptive processes as *part of* the research method. I am also drawn to methodologies that invite small population samples and a nuanced exploration of the participants' individual experiences of a particular context as a mode of discovery, rather than a mode of proof or confirmation.

In university teaching, where so much of our work is conducted solo, hidden from our colleagues and lacks an audience of peers, narrative accounts of teaching can offer a possible remedy to our “individual and collective amnesia...[whereby] the best creations of [teaching] practitioners are lost to both contemporary and future peers” (Shulman, 2004, p. 97). Teachers will often remove themselves from their pedagogical research, trying to cast aside their fears, vulnerabilities, frustrations, stuck moments, shames, secret celebrations, and failures. We write about ‘them’ (students) and what we can do to improve ‘them,’ and often that research turns to quantifiable results, scales and graphs (e.g., data analytics). In capturing Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste’s stories, this study attempts to counter the sense of “pedagogical solitude” that teachers in research-intensive university environments may experience (Hutchings, Huber & Ciccone, 2011, p. 125).

After defending my comprehensive exams, my supervisory committee suggested I reach towards Case Study methodology as a container to best hold the intention I had to analyze first-

year teaching and learning in a descriptively rich and narrative way. Additionally, the research questions themselves led to the selection of case study as my framing methodology because ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ questions are well-suited for case study they invite rich description and contextual investigation of a social phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

According to Yin (2018), Case Study as a method:

investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident...[and] you want to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case. (p. 15)

Case studies can focus on a specific phenomenon, while simultaneously inviting broad attention to context and illustrative detail. Because classroom spaces are busy and contextually unique, I was not comfortable employing a quantitative methodology that could risk hyper-focusing and hyper-rationalizing one piece of an inherently complex case. Case study methodology included attention given to the abstract concepts—such as emotions, memories, personal perspectives, stories, and beliefs—that run the risk of being dismissed in quantitative educational research studies (Merriam, 1998; Palys, 2008; Stake, 1995).

In selecting an exploratory case study method in my research design, I aim to promote emerging directions for future research in the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning field. Drawing on Yin’s (2018) rationale for determining if case study is an appropriate method, the experience of teaching first-year students is a “common” (versus “critical” or “unusual”) but not-commonly explored experience across the landscape of research-intensive universities in Canada (p. 50). Therefore, the objective of this research study is to “capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation, because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related

to” the embodiment of curriculum and the teaching identities of teachers who work with first-year students (Yin, 2018, p. 50).

This particular case study explores the case of people who prefer to teach first-year students in a research-intensive large-scale university. In this study three individual cases illustrate and illuminate *this broader case*. According to Yin’s description (2018), this broader case study is *intrinsic* (versus *instrumental* or *collective*) because it serves my desire to better understand a phenomenon by exploring a set of individual cases that, in my interpretation, illustrate the phenomenon or the case in question. Yin (2018) continues to build the definition of case study research methods, stating that the method “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (p. 15). In this case, I based the research design on a theoretical proposition that faculty who indicate a preference for teaching first-year courses may infuse their pedagogical practice with enhanced curiosity about first-year students; moreover, I based the research design on the proposition that the faculty members’ preference for teaching first-year courses indicates some kind of beneficial mutual exchange of learning—from teacher to student, but also from student to teacher.

### **3.1 How will I let the data speak?**

This is an intensive study about a small group of people within the University of British Columbia context. The study “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case)” (Creswell, 2012, p. 97). The research design reflects a bounded exploration of the research questions relating to faculty members who *prefer* to work with first-year students in a large-scale research-intensive university context. So, what is the “data” in this particular case study? Over

the years, I have collected stories, written personal reflections in journals, documented planning processes and workshop designs, co-written speeches intended for first-year student audiences, and taken notes during meetings reflecting my interactions with faculty who teach first-year courses. First, I waded through the fragments of journal notes in a collection of notebooks I have kept over the years. Next, I created a series of mind-maps, new journal entries, and narrative renderings based on memories; I call this set of data ‘memory work’. Next, I determined the need to conduct interviews with faculty members and I received research ethics approval to conduct semi-structured, formal interviews with the study’s participants: Fok-Shuen, Michael, and Celeste. Finally, I collected the participants’ Teaching Philosophy statements that they submitted in their departmental tenure and promotion application packages at UBC. In short, I drew on the following four data sets for this study, listed below in chronological order:

1. Personal journals (collected over six years) including notes reflecting interactions I have had with the participants;
2. Memory-work: a set of narrative writing, mind-maps, and notes written from my memories working with the participants;
3. Transcripts from semi-structured, audio-recorded, formal interviews with each participant; and
4. Copies of each participants’ most recent Statement of Teaching Philosophy, as included in their most recent application for promotion in the tenure-track at UBC.

### ***3.1.1 Personal journals***

I have captured notes in a series of Moleskine journals dating back to 2012. These notes capture personal, pedagogical, academic, and professional musings and reflections. As a data set, these journals are limited because I did not take them with any intention—at the time—to use

them to inform a research study. For this reason, many of the entries were not chronological or date-stamped, and they did not include a full scope of the types of observational data that would be included in conventionally designed field journals. Therefore, it was not always easy to let the data “speak” in ways that were clean or easy. As best as I could, I surfaced and captured entries directly referring to teaching and learning in the first-year domain. Once the study’s participants were confirmed, I then surfaced entries referring to Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste. When possible, I date-stamped the entry. In total, I transcribed thirteen entries. I organized and thematically grouped the journal entries prior to conducting semi-structured interviews. Some of these entries referenced experiences I have had over the years observing Fok-Shuen, Celeste and Michael teaching. In some cases, these observations took place in their classrooms, and in other cases these observations took place in facilitated sessions during the Jump Start program. After defining my research study in 2018, I kept a personal, handwritten journal specifically for the study, noting observations, insights, further questions, and connected personal stories and experiences relating to the research journey. For example, after each interview, I would re-listen to the interview and make notes about what I heard and how it connected, reflected, diverged or distracted from the original research questions.

### ***3.1.2 Memory work***

Although it may be controversial to do so, I explicitly included “memory” as a data set in my research study (Fivush & Haden, 2013). By making explicit my memories, I was able to better critique and reflect upon my own underlying assumptions in relation to this study. There is a great deal that I “know” in relation to this study that is stored in my memory after years of working with first-year students, faculty members, my own pedagogical approach as an educator, and my relationships with the research participants. Not all of my memories were

captured as journals entries, so I wrote my memories down and created a reflective, narrative data set (Jasper, 2005). Some of these memories are included as part of the case descriptions in this dissertation in the case chapters; I indicate the personal memory-work in those chapters by writing in italics. By writing my memories onto the page, I created a more cohesive narrative for the research topic and I explicitly capture my subjectivity and positionality in the study. It was also important to put words, a name, and a shape to these memories so that they were not too dominant in the back of my mind, making noises loud enough to drown the emergent sounds of the data. To harness the memories, I turned them into a data set.

### **3.1.3 *Semi-structured interviews***

Themes emerging from journals and memory work informed the development of interview questions for the subsequent semi-structured interviews with Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste. I held semi-structured interviews to gather the participants' responses to the research questions and related questions. Interviews took place in three locations: my office in Brock Hall on UBC campus, Celeste's kitchen in her home off-campus, and in a coffee shop off-campus nearby a Fok-Shuen's home. In each case, the participant chose the location, date and time of the interview and they were provided with some of the questions prior to the interview. All of the interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, were conducted by me, and took place in mid-December, 2018. The interviews started with a brief conversation about the study and a reiteration of the information contained in the informed consent letter. In each case, the participant signed a letter of informed consent sharing with them the risks and benefits of the study and the approach I would take to confidentiality in the study plan. A copy of the letter of the consent is included in Appendix A. After reviewing the letter of consent, I followed a semi-

structured interview format, posing direct and open-ended questions to the participants as the conversation unfolded.

All interviews were audio-recorded using the Voice Record function of the researcher's iPhone, and were transcribed by the researcher.<sup>13</sup> To ensure reliability of the transcription, I first transcribed, then re-read the transcriptions and edited while listening to the original recordings. I generated a list of questions (see Appendix A) related to the research study to use as a guide for the conversation, but these were not followed as a verbatim script, rather as thematic guides for the conversation. Once transcribed, I uploaded the transcribed interviews into NVivo and coded the transcript interview data into thematic nodes. After coding, I surfaced patterns, commonalities, and notable differences in the three participants' responses. Any section written about a research participant was reviewed and approved for publication by the research participant. After analyzing the data, I reflected on *what* the findings might mean in relation to the study questions and in the spirit of surfacing possibilities for future research projects, as is the goal of exploratory case study researching. I determined that one semi-structured interview with each of the teachers would provide sufficient data for the scope of this study because of the scope of other data sources informing the analysis and discussion. I also left open the possibility (for myself, and with the research participants who were all open to the possibility) for a brief follow-up interview if the transcribed initial interview demonstrated gaps in understanding or a conversational thread left unexplored. After transcribing the interviews, I determined no need for follow-up interviews or further collection of semi-structured interview data.

---

<sup>13</sup> I did not have a back-up digital recorder during the interviews, but would stop the interview periodically to check the recording was working and to check the sound quality of the recording. Upon reflection, I realized this was a risky approach and will have a back-up digital recorder for future audio-recorded data collection processes.

### ***3.1.4 Statements of teaching philosophy***

After conducting the semi-structured interviews with Michael, Celeste and Fok-Shuen, I reflected on the lack of textual data written by the participants themselves in my data set. I reached out to the participants in January, 2019 to ask them if they would be comfortable sharing a written version of their Statement of Teaching Philosophy that I could include as a supplement to our interview transcript. Each of the participants agreed to this request, and they each chose to provide me with Statements of Teaching Philosophy from their most recent application packages for tenure and promotion at the University of British Columbia. I collected the documents from the participants as email attachments in early February, 2019. Two of the three participants provided me with an updated, recent version of their teaching philosophy statement in addition to the version used in their application for advancement.

The statements ranged from 1-2 pages per participant. I was careful to attend to the ‘crafted’ nature of a statement of teaching philosophy, as it applies to a tenure and promotion process. In other words, the authors may have included some information in their statements that would appeal to a review board and but may not reflect their deepest held beliefs about teaching. I did not go into an interrogation process of these statements; rather, I included them as carefully crafted textual sources of data authored by the participants to complement the data written by myself, the data transcribed from verbal interaction (interviews), and the interpersonal experiences captured in observations and memories. In this way, the statements completed my aim to draw on many representative sources: verbal (interviews), embodied (observations and memories of physicality and facial expression and feelings), experiential (observations and memories of experiences with the participants while they were teaching), and textual (teaching philosophy statements).

### 3.2 Data analysis

I attempted to pause and better understand—through detailed analysis—a phenomenon by exploring three distinct interpretations of it and then surfacing a set of “case themes” to inspire and inform future program development and research approaches (Cresswell, 2013, p. 97). In choosing an exploratory case study, I chose to *explore* the research questions via attention and analysis of a set of data responding to those questions. By asking myself: “how will I let the data speak?” I paid “attention to the ways in which I may be strategically choosing parts of the data that support[s]” and “ignoring data that contradict[s]” my pre-existing views (McKinnon, 2004, p. 15). Prior to collecting, organizing, and analysing the data, I listed a series of concepts—also known as ‘sensitizing concepts’ in qualitative research—that would guide my approach to data collection (Blumer, 1954; Bowen, 2008; Charmaz, 2003) . As Bowen (2008) states, “sensitizing concepts draw attention to important features of social interaction and provide guidelines for research in specific settings” (2008, p. 3). The initial set of concepts guiding this study were based on my personal and professional perspectives that arose from memory, reflection, prior knowledge, and my knowledge of the literature underpinning the study: *pedagogy, specific story, descriptions of students, classroom environment, challenge, success, personal identity, career, theory, emotion, metaphor, disciplinary connection, teacher inner monologue, inspirational person/theory, teenager, positive/negative reference to teenagers, and ‘my first year.’*

As I completed the data collection, transcription, and analysis process, the study themes continued to develop and emerge in response to the data. In this way, I let the data “speak” and did not try to fit pre-conceived themes onto the final outcome, although I often reflected on the ways in which the sensitized concepts shaped my perception of how and what I saw in the data. The continual negotiation and re-crafting of themes came from an ongoing, intuitive response to

the data as I moved through the process. After transcribing and coding the data, I constructed a list of themes and sub-themes to reflect what was emerging. I then further developed categories that, based on my interpretation, best reflected the conceptual categories and theoretical frames in line with this study and upon which I made inferences, assumptions, and interpretations. Based on my interpretation, three overarching themes emerged from analysis of the data. These will be discussed in more depth in the Discussion chapter of this dissertation. The overarching themes are: “Invite Students into the Scholarly Community,” “Enter with Expectation,” and “Develop a Personal Approach to Pedagogy.”

To increase my capacity to honour the experiences of the study’s participants (and to increase internal validity in the overall study), I shared with the participants their interview transcripts (to member-check the data) and I continually checked in with them regarding any emergent conceptualizations about what I was interpreting from the data (Merriam, 1998). I also shared with them the individual case write-ups prior to submitting this dissertation for publication, and checked with them to ensure I accurately captured their meanings, details, and perspectives in my interpretation. This helped me avoid misrepresentation of their experience and to honour their perspective within the study.

### **3.3 How will the analysis of the data provide a more complex picture of the phenomenon than was previously available?**

By conducting this research, I aim to offer a more detailed, and potentially complex picture of first-year teaching and learning at UBC by attending to data that surfaces the specific perspective of *teachers*. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research leans towards data favouring the students’ perspective and shifting away from data that in this study illuminates the influence on our perspective of teachers. And, as indicated in the Literature

Review chapter, although the Self-Study (S-STEP) body of research does focus on teachers, it is focused on faculty members who teach in Teacher Education degree programs that primarily serve students who are returning to university as a post-degree first-year student. Huber and Ciccone (2011) describe the present state of SoTL as “a buzzing hive of initiatives to improve the learning experience for college students, to increase their rate of completion, and to raise their level of achievement” (p. ix). Although aspirational and exciting in tone, I can’t help but notice the absence of “teacher” or “teaching” from this quote. In absencing a focus on the teacher, we remove the nuance that comes with attention to curriculum and pedagogy as a dance between teacher and student. In an attempt to articulate my concerns—concerns deeply felt but struggling to attach to words—I am drawn and aligned with Lee Shulman’s (1987) quote:

[Formulations drawn] from the teacher’s perspective may be viewed by some readers as overly teacher-centered. I do not mean to diminish the centrality of student learning for the process of education, nor the priority that must be given to student learning over teacher comprehension. But our analyses of effective teaching must recognize that outcomes *for teachers* as well as pupils must be considered in any adequate treatment of educational outcomes [italics in original]. (p. 142)

Taking Shulman’s perspective even further, I assert that an analysis of the data in this study maintains a central focus on the conditions for student learning via “formulations drawn from the teacher’s perspective” and demands we see the two concepts—“student learning” and “teacher comprehension”—as deeply intertwined and equally important within a thriving scholarly community.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) introduced the idea of the researcher/writer as “bricoleur” (p. 9). The bricoleur, in being a part of the fabric of the phenomenon being explored, has the ability to see the research from many angles and make decisions about when, where, and how to layer the details—somewhat akin to an artist composing and creating a work of art. The dissertation is a form of structured thinking-out-loud, and I have found useful in my process the idea that in

writing it I take on the role of “bricoleur” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In the chapters that follow, I will introduce the reader to the research participants and each will have a chapter dedicated to them. I see my role as bricoleur as a unique privilege—the privilege of pausing to observe, explore, capture, interrogate, and turn over in my head, heart, and hands my observations of an artist on stage—in this case, the art I admire is the art of teaching. I wrote the cases from the perspective of another teacher invited and bearing witness to a colleague in their personal and professional domain(s). I wrote with the intention to *notice the teacher* and through such noticing, attend to the possibilities for students within research-intensive university structures. This is a bold position. Although the teaching profession has a common practice of peer-observation and invitation (as in peer review of teaching for formal tenure and promotion at UBC), such practice is most often evaluative—an invitation to watch teaching from the perspective of a judge or critic, or to observe from the position of mentor providing critical feedback, or to watch the students’ interaction with a particular phenomenon within the curriculum. What is far less common is for one teacher to take the time to watch another teacher, and critically *see* their actions and *hear* their intentions as professionals and pedagogues.

### **3.3.1 Written form**

*It is not easy to write autobiographically, especially in the academy, especially with honesty about many issues, including experience of failure, fear, and frustration. We need a different culture, a culture that supports autobiographical writing that is marked by an understanding that writing about personal experience is not merely egoism, solipsism, unseemly confession, boring prattle, and salacious revelation. We need to write personally because we live personally, and our personal living is always braided with our other ways of living—professional, academic, administrative, social, and political. (Leggo, 2008, p. 90)*

If, as a researcher, I present experiences in vivid, storied, creatively written forms, I am attempting to draw the reader into the contextually nuanced, holistic, human experience through

joy, pain, suffering, struggle, elation, etc. In essence, as a researcher I employ *writing* as a tool to systematically analyze the cultural phenomenon I research (Ellis et al., 2011).

As indicated in the research questions—this section of the dissertation has been written with the intention to *see* and *surface* how Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste illustrate their pedagogical approach and how, in particular, they articulate a preference for teaching first-year students. Building on the concept of a ‘bricoleur’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), I wrote each case—presented as separate chapters and titled “Fok-Shuen”, “Michael”, and “Celeste”—as though I was an artistic director of a staged work, making creative choices about tone, setting, story arc, and noticing moments and movements that could indicate connection to their inner monologue, intention, motivation, and desire. Fascinated by the movements, choices, performances, and inner lives of teachers, I intend to make meaning of each gesture, phrase, pause, and lean in when I watch a teacher work with a group of students or share their teaching ideas and process (their ‘inner life’ as a pedagogue). Unlike a staged performance—one that has been scripted, memorized, rehearsed, and blocked fastidiously—teaching emerges dialogically and improvisationally. Therefore, the work of artistic director, in the context of this dissertation, is to artistically direct the shape of these pages in such a way that you can see, hear, feel, imagine and notice the sometimes-subtle and sometimes-overt art of each character in a three-dimensional sense. To truly honour the art and craft of teaching, I must approach writing as an art and craft. To truly honour the research participants, I must write them into existence on the pages as though you can hear the cadence of their voice and the presence of their being. I suggest that to truly *see* the students we serve, we must, as a society, have a curiosity to *notice and see* teachers.

In 1976, William Pinar and Madeline Grumet introduced the concept of *currere* to Curriculum Studies. Latin for “run the course” or “running of the course,” *currere* is a “strategy for students of curriculum to study the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interest of self-understanding and social reconstruction” (Pinar, 2004, p. 35). In developing a method of *currere*, Pinar and Grumet attempted to shift the focus in curriculum theory away from course design (e.g., learning objectives, goals, skill development, etc.), towards a “complicated conversation with oneself (as “private” individual),” between teachers, the curriculum content, and their students (Pinar, 2004, p. 37). I interpret this as meaning that teachers must take who they are and how they interact with the world as being critically important, bringing our whole selves into our work with students. We cannot separate who we are from how we teach. We cannot separate who we are from how we connect curriculum concepts to classroom learning experiences. At any given moment a teacher is in a “biographic situation” that is a “singularly meaningful” moment where history and autobiography collide and can create a future movement (Pinar, 1976).

In writing the three cases, I invited literature, personal reflection, subjectivity, emotion, and what I think of as “hindsight data” into academic research as a way to “eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as [we] perceive it.” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 928). Including my own voice and story to this case study demands attention to research method and writing process equally; writer-researchers attempt to evocatively, and provocatively, communicate epiphanies from personal hindsight, and “consider ways others might experience similar epiphanies” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 276). The hindsight data, in the case of this study, also informed the ongoing analysis of new data.

What I have sought over the years—and what I would like to see more of within scholarly literature about teaching and learning in higher education—are the more nuanced publications that have been written from the point-of-view of a researcher who understands the limitations to “dosing” educational interventions similar to medical trials to test effects over time; more storied “accounts that reflect [professors’] experiences and understanding of learning and, by implication, of teaching are rare” (Trahar, 2013, p. 369). My professional role on campus roots me firmly within the phenomenon I am studying; therefore, I’ve chosen to infuse personalized writing within the dissertation as part of a research process and include my “own experience as a topic of investigation in its own right” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 733). The autobiographic and storied approach to writing in this dissertation pays attention to creative aesthetic, subjectivity, narrative, and the emotional experience of the cases and demands the researcher write confidently and be willing to challenge more typical scholarly forms on the scholarship of teaching and learning.

### **3.4 Introducing the cases**

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) literature invites academics to explore teaching through a curiosity about disciplinarily and pedagogically contextualized human behaviour as it manifests in specific learning spaces by specific learning communities in higher education institutions. The questions regarding human behaviour we most want answered are not purely “scientific” or “techno-rational” questions, which lend themselves to immutable general truth, but rather questions about oftentimes elusive phenomena as they occur in local contexts, like classrooms (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999, p. 14). Any faculty member teaching on any campus represents a unique and specific educational context that is “1) inherently situated, 2) socially mediated, and 3) locally implemented” (Hubball, Pearson, & Clarke, 2013, p. 45).

I now shift this dissertation's collegial conversation away from me and towards the three faculty members<sup>14</sup> who participated in this research endeavour: Fok-Shuen Leung, Michael Griffin and Celeste Leander. All three are tenured faculty members who have received teaching awards at UBC while maintaining an preference for teaching first-year students. In their work as faculty members at UBC, each aims to inspire a re-imagining of the university as a community that holds a sense of responsibility to first-year students as scholars and they create campus spaces as hospitable and welcoming to newcomers (Ruitenber, 2015). Understanding the unspoken assumptions and norms of an institution's academic culture is an important part of developing a sense of belonging to a university; this capacity to develop a sense of belonging (beyond an awareness of academic resources) can become a powerful part of making a successful transition into a new learning environment (Lizzio, 2006). They have also enacted additional roles (outside of their course-based teaching) as educators who have been a part of designing UBC Jump Start,<sup>15</sup> a one-week academic orientation program for direct-entry first-year students. I met Fok-Shuen, Celeste and Michael while working on the Jump Start Program. When a students' orientation to the university is led by faculty members, the campus community members who lead Jump Start believe the effect on students could result in a higher sense of belonging and a reduced sense of powerlessness in their scholarly endeavors; such an approach has been shown to help students make a positive transition into university life (Mikami, 2018; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Swagler & Ellis, 2003; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005).

---

<sup>14</sup> Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste have worked on various co-curricular first-year student programs—Jump Start, Peer Assisted Study Sessions, Profs-in-Space, to name a few—stewarded by the Centre for Student Involvement & Careers, where I work as an Educational Designer. In 2018, shortly after completing my doctoral research proposal and receiving BREB approval, Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste were appointed formal administrative status (Academic Directors, First Year Experience) in the UBC VP Students portfolio.

<sup>15</sup> For a fuller description of Jump Start, see: <https://students.UBC.ca/jumpstart> and <https://www.ubyssey.ca/features/jump-start/>

I invited Fok-Shuen, Celeste and Michael to answer the questions: *Why* do you prefer teaching first-year students at a large-scale, research-intensive university? And *how* do you articulate your pedagogical approach in the first-year teaching and learning context? In the next three chapters I introduce Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste, each with their own case. In writing the cases, I weave direct quotes from my personal journal and memory writing; italicized sections without authorship are my own voice throughout the dissertation. Direct quotes from Celeste, Fok-Shuen and Michael are indicated by offset-script. The cases are written in first-person and the “I” represents myself, the author. I wrote each case with an intention to craft a narrative, three-dimensional account of the participants. The writing blends anecdotes, phrases, words, and concepts from all of the data points and I have taken creative licence in the representative form of the text. I aimed to write cases that would jump off the page and allow the reader to imagine what it is like to be in each teacher’s office, classroom, and in their orbit of collegial conversation. After writing the case studies, I sent the drafts to the participants and they edited and changed any aspect of the draft that they deemed overly dramatized, or falsely represented. Each of the cases in its current form has been approved by the participants as representative of them in description, spirit and characterization.

## Chapter 4: Fok-Shuen

**Dr. Fok-Shuen Leung<sup>16</sup>**

*Department of Mathematics*

*Senior Instructor*

As a Senior Instructor, Fok-Shuen enacts a full-time, teaching-focused, Educational Leadership-stream, tenured position in the Faculty of Science at the University of British Columbia. According to the *UBC Faculty Association Collective Agreement (2016)*, a faculty member earns the title “Senior Instructor” by successfully moving through the tenure and promotion process and demonstrating contribution to the academy in the following ways:

Appointment at or promotion to [Senior Instructor] requires evidence of excellence in teaching and, demonstrated educational leadership, involvement in curriculum development and innovation, and other teaching and learning initiatives. It is expected that Senior Instructors will keep abreast of current developments in their respective disciplines, and in the field of teaching and learning. A Senior Instructor may be promoted to the rank of Professor of Teaching in the fifth or subsequent years in rank. (p. 61)

### 4.1 First impression

*In the Centre for Student Involvement and Careers, we dig into the literature about work, career, and professional choices students make after they graduate from university. Over the years, I’ve come across the quip that mathematicians—specifically Mathematics professors—measure extremely high in the category of contentment in the world of work. I cannot remember where or when I heard this, nor can I assert it as fact, but I am inclined to believe it having worked with many faculty members in the Mathematics Department at UBC over the years. I*

---

<sup>16</sup> Fok-Shuen Leung’s UBC bio page can be found here: <https://www.ubc.ca/about/people.html?Fok-Shuen-shuen-leung>

*often leave an interaction with a Math professor with the sense that they know something the rest of us don't. They have a glimpse into a version of the world's beauty and they know it's a privilege to be there and it's a place that most people on earth will never see*<sup>17</sup>.

In 2012, when I first started working with Jump Start, it was a relatively small program serving direct-entry international students.<sup>18</sup> In the staff role I held (Jump Start Learning Specialist), I collaborated with other staff colleagues, faculty members, and students to refine the student learning components in the program. In our early planning meetings, the Jump Start Academic Director (a position held by a Professor) suggested I meet with faculty members to brainstorm creative strategies for tweaking and enhancing the program design. The Academic Director would send me for coffee with faculty members and the only agenda for these conversations would be for us to discuss first-year students' sense of scholarly connection. Early on, I took Fok-Shuen for a coffee. UBC 100-level Mathematics courses are not always easy for first-year students. Math is a subject students start to learn in kindergarten, and they arrive at university with habits, histories, and preconceived notions of how they will be *in a relationship* with Math at the university level. Some also arrive with very high expectations for themselves. In particular, students expect high grades. If they received 90%+ in Math in High School, they often expect to receive 90%+ in Math in university. The transition from High School Math to university-level academic mathematics can be quite a shock for many students. As I did prior to all coffee conversations, I read Fok-Shuen's departmental online biography page to learn as much as I could about his research and teaching. When I searched Fok-Shuen's name online

---

<sup>17</sup> A reminder to the reader: italicized sections in the cases are first-person narratives written from the author's point-of-view.

<sup>18</sup> In 2018, JS expanded to serve *all* direct-entry first-year students and the number of participants reached ~3400 students.

using Google, two items appeared at the top of the search: his departmental biography and an article in the Georgia Straight (a Vancouver local weekly newspaper) titled “Battling B.C.’s Math Education Crisis.” I clicked on the Georgia Straight article first. Before meeting Fok-Shuen in person, the following excerpt from Georgia Straight article left a striking first impression because it wove students, teaching, mathematics, literature and learning in revelatory ways:

[Fok-Shuen] told the *Straight* that people are missing the mark when they see mathematics as “only a tool that you use and not a subject that you study”. “I think it’s closer to literature than it is to accounting,” Leung stated. He quickly added that there’s nothing wrong with accounting before saying that people underestimate the aesthetic appeal of math. “I think it’s [Godfrey H.] Hardy who said: ‘There is no place in the world for an ugly proof.’ So, in fact, I think one of the biggest misconceptions is that it is this kind of austere, useful thing—and not a rich, beautiful thing”...He said another misconception about math is that the answer to a problem is simply a number. “This is not true,” he declared. “An answer to a mathematical problem is a story. It’s an explanation, a description. Not only does mathematics require grammar the way any other description would require grammar, it also requires an economy of language. It requires imagination, creativity, and communication skills.” Leung often hears students tell him that they enjoyed their high-school English classes but disliked studying math, even if they were good at it. He said that this is because in English, students get to read great writers like Shakespeare, whereas math education often focuses primarily on the “grammar”. (Smith, 2012, para. 36)

Math was a subject I struggled with in high school and university. Math eluded me, and I felt left out of something (“something” is a deliberately weak word choice in this context, because not knowing the “things” I didn’t know left me feeling inarticulate and unspecific in my grasp) by not embracing it confidently. But literature (Shakespeare! Poetry!) evokes feelings of comfort, confidence, and fluency. Prior to working in higher education, when I was a High School Drama and English Literature teacher, I car-pooled every day to and from work (one hour each way) with the High School Math teacher. We often struggled to understand each other, and we were quick to compartmentalize each other’s disciplines. Often, we would even disregard the other’s discipline or challenge its status in the K-12 curriculum. Reading Fok-Shuen’s comments in *The*

*Georgia Straight* was a revelation. An integration. An opening for possibility. A welcome invitation into the mathematician's mind.

## 4.2 Preference

Fok-Shuen's preference for working with first-year scholars comes from a sense of privilege and excitement to introduce students to the mind of an academic mathematician and the culture of academic mathematics. He sets the bar high for his students and believes if they have moved through K-12 math education with enough persistence to get into a highly-ranked research-intensive university (a feat that is becoming increasingly difficult every year with rising entrance averages and increased competition), they deserve the generosity of spirit that comes with boldly opening the door and inviting them into an academic mathematician's scholarly world. Fok-Shuen's way of staging the intervention? With math.

Fok-Shuen: In first-year courses, I introduce the Pythagorean Theorem — not just the statement that  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$  when  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$  are certain sides of a right triangle, but two or three *proofs* of the theory. Few students have seen a proof at all, let alone three different proofs, let alone a reason to have three different proofs (in fact, there are over a hundred). Few have heard of Pythagoras and of the music of the spheres.

In the first hour of the first lecture of any 100-level math course, he teaches a wild, crazy, cool, interesting and *beautiful* example of math. Then, he makes it his mantra to move the students through the term towards an understanding, or even a glimpse into the suggestion of an understanding of the wild, crazy math.

### 4.2.1 *Elementary*

Another interpretation of Fok-Shuen's preference for teaching first-year students is connected to a concept inherent in his academic discipline: "Elementary Mathematics." The "elementary" descriptor does not imply the math is easy, rather it implies the mathematical proof can be navigated with simple tools—the tools present in a first-year calculus course. First-Year students come to class with a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives, and he delights in seeing a complicated mathematics concept (like an "elementary proof") through their eyes, and then showing them how capable they are in tackling it with the basic tools in the course. In this approach, he invites first-year students into a scholarly conversation and assures them that they have capacity to contribute to the conversation as early as the first weeks of their first term at university.

Fok-Shuen: ["Elementary"] is not at all a disparaging descriptor [in Mathematics]. It just means without using heavy machinery...[The "elementary" proof is] normally pretty complicated but it's like a proof that requires no more than first-year calculus. I think mathematicians, by and large, have an appreciation for the cool stuff that you can do with not a lot of machinery.

### 4.2.2 *What does a mathematician "look like"?*

*I attended a lecture today by a visiting scholar from another university. The topic was K-12 Math education. In the talk, the presenter shared images drawn by elementary school-aged students where he'd asked them to "draw a mathematician." The images showed men in long white coats with wild hair and numbers all over the walls. There's something unhinged about the drawings.*

Fok-Shuen: Mathematicians have always known that their subject is deep, intricate,

and capable of great beauty. I firmly believe that students can understand this — and that, understanding it, they will be better suited to whatever vocation they choose. The majority of my students will not become professional mathematicians. Nevertheless, I have tried, and will continue to try, to make them understand why someone might.

*The lecturer asked us to think about the story of math in our teaching and learning culture. What stories do we have as educators about math and how do we transfer those stories to our children. We speak about math in very emotional terms and in ways we don't often speak about other subjects. We "love" or "hate" math. Or we justify math education by praising its relevance in the realm of the pragmatic (e.g. financial literacy, computer programming). It is one of the school subjects we form such a complicated, emotional, and (often) painful relationship with, from an early age. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic....the classic offerings in schools for generations. When I reflect on his lecture, I think about families' stories and how families have stories about who in the family is the "reader," the "writer" (or creative), and the "numbers person." And I think about how our first-year students are bringing all of these stories with them to campus when they arrive.*

Fok-Shuen: For a mathematician, your [first-year] students have had plenty of math classes. It's your first chance to give them a math class that is utterly different.

When students come to UBC, they are bringing with them behaviours and habits born from many years of immersion in K-12 cultures of math education. Fok-Shuen is an academic mathematician and not a high school math teacher; one profession is not better than the other; rather, they are fundamentally different professional identities. In the first-year teaching context,

Fok-Shuen enjoys the opportunity to introduce students to the culture of academic math from the perspective of a professional mathematician.

Fok-Shuen: I like working with first-year students...because there is just an enormous cultural change between high school and university. First year is when a lot of the cultural foundations get laid, even if the intellectual foundations don't get laid. In my field of mathematics, it's this long project that starts all the way from kindergarten. The foundations are really laid in K-12. But the cultural foundation, the foundation of academic mathematics is really laid in university. That's the first time they're going to contact academic mathematicians...At a research-intensive university, the cultural change is double. It moves from being not only a school to an *academy*...In a school, you're essentially being trained for life. In an academy, it's much more selective, not in a sense of being elite, but at least in the sense of being narrow. In the academy, the subject is really the point...Delving deeply into that subject is the point of so many people at the university. That's really what drives them, their own research. There is this double cultural shift [from high school to university, and from school to the academy] which makes, I think, the role of the first-year instructor, professor, or teacher even more important. [And academic] research is just so interesting. To have the opportunity to introduce it to first-year students who know very little about mathematics, little of mathematical research, is a genuine privilege.

### 4.2.3 Office hours as “vector space”

A vector is an object that has both a magnitude and a direction. Geometrically, we can picture a vector as a directed line segment, whose length is the magnitude of the vector and with an arrow indicating the direction... vectors are regarded as abstract mathematical objects with particular properties, which in some cases can be visualized as arrows... Vector spaces are the subject of linear algebra and are well characterized by their dimension, which, roughly speaking, specifies the number of independent directions in the space. Infinite-dimensional vector spaces arise naturally in mathematical analysis, as function spaces, whose vectors are functions. (Vector Space, n.d.)

If you walk into Fok-Shuen’s office for an office hours conversation, you can imagine yourself in a vector space of unknown dimension.

Fok-Shuen: ...then there is the concept of Vector Spaces. You can describe an object on a line with just one number. Unit Zero was right in the middle of the lines and then five is five units to the right, and negative five is five units to the left. You can describe a number on a plane with two numbers, sometimes x and y coordinates.

Imagine yourself as a first-year student and you enter Fok-Shuen’s office seeking clarity on a math problem posed in class or in your homework. Your question is a *point*. But is it a point on a line, on a plane, or in some higher-dimensional space? What is the clarifying context? Zero is in the middle and you come to the office with confusion about the x-y coordinates and with Fok you are seeking the space, the line, the equation that helps you make meaning of the question.

Fok-Shuen: [Vector spaces make me think of] office hours where a student comes and you can give them three of what you think are fantastic explanations for a [math] problem that they're having trouble with. You've given them hints in three different directions and none of them are landing. Then really

what you're looking for is this fourth dimension of your vector space. That is going to get to that sense and your sense, but neither of you know quite what it is and you're looking for the one thing that kind of unlocks it.

Fok-Shuen is aware that he's almost certainly observing the vector from a fourth dimension as mathematician, and is observing the interaction with the student—the seeking of coordinated thought and clarification on the vector— from a higher-dimensional place: a fourth dimension. And it can feel awkward as he poses questions and searches for clarity in the students' thinking and learning. He can pose what he believes are beautiful and fantastical explanations but, oftentimes, none of them land. In that office, in the vector space of the interaction, teacher and student move in opposite directions and in different dimensions. When the two meet, it works. When they don't, it can create more confusion and more mystery, but Fok-Shuen will keep musing until he finds a way to open the door of your understanding—even if that means sending an email long after the office hour conversation.

Fok-Shuen: [I find myself] spending enormous amounts of effort to try to get students to office hours where we can have these kinds of conversations. Or giving them as many opportunities in class so they can talk to other people in the class.

#### ***4.2.4 “To create”...not just “to compute”***

In choosing to work with first-year students, Fok-Shuen is choosing a process of continual re-discovery of his discipline. When he's teaching first-year courses, he feels more attuned to people because he needs to draw on many ways of connecting with students to bring the math into the room as the central character. Aware that many students will bring preconceived notions about math into their first university mathematics classroom, he attempts to

catalyze a provocative conversation—albeit with over hundred students at once—in the first minutes of the first lecture. In that first class, he may share a little bit (but only ever a little bit) about his personal life or invite students to bring multi-faceted aspects of their lives into the conversation as a way to seek nuggets to hook the math onto. Fok-Shuen is in love with math. And his love is contagious. The students feel it in the room and one can't help but sense the students hang on his every word as he describes math using language they've never heard in math class before; words like *art, poetry, Shakespeare, rivers, oceans, story, culture, boundaries & edges, complexity, wild, and crazy* (to name just a few). How rarely these words collide in commonplace societal scripts, but they do collide in Fok-Shuen's class and he is the sort of professor who speaks to and with first-year students as though they've arrived ready for interdisciplinary abstraction and complexity.

Fok-Shuen: [in university mathematics, first-year students] see far fewer numbers, and far more words. They are asked to create, not compute. As though they are already academic mathematicians worthy of a level of complicated conversation and nuanced understanding that has been hidden from them or eluded them to-date.

The math leads, and his respect for students' desire and capacity to understand the math follows.

#### **4.2.5 A caution against “gentle” teaching**

Fok-Shuen is very careful in his assumptions about what students can and cannot grasp. He assumes they want to learn and meet the beauty in math, but he does not make assumptions about their capacity to engage with it academically. In meetings with other campus educators, he's attuned to any subtext in the room that rests on assumptions—in particular, the tendency for

adults to assume students will primarily struggle or need help and support when they meet university-level disciplinary for the first time.

Fok-Shuen: This kind of mathematics can be deeply unsettling, especially for first-year students. Because of this, the tendency is to teach it gently; to go slowly and deliberately; to keep the questions simple, and the examples easy. I do not do this.

*Does a conversation about first-year students requiring “gentle teaching” become its own “fractalization” in the teaching and learning culture of first-year education at a university? If so many of the educators interact within the system assuming students struggle, do we hold back on sharing so much of the wonder, complexity, and difficulty within our disciplines? Towards the end of a recent meeting with staff and faculty who work on student program design, Fok-Shuen suggested we be careful with our overuse of the word “support” when discussing first-year students. He noticed we were having a conversation about programs based on the notion that first-year student “need support.” Do they all “need support”? And if we, as a group of educators, conclude the answer to this question is “yes,” then the follow-up question we have to ask is “what assumptions are we making about them”? And “who, within the group of first-year students, are we assuming need more support than others?” Why? The entire meeting pivoted on Fok-Shuen’s comment. I think of these moments in education as “mirror moments” (my own term). These are moments where groups of educators are talking about a group of students, and something arises (a question, the revelation of a data point, a difficult truth, a story, a debate, etc.) where the group of educators starts to pose critically reflective questions of themselves. We look at our own learning in a mirror; and start to ask ourselves the challenging questions that we most often reserve for students. In these “mirror moments” I am most alive*

*and connected to the educational enterprise, because they generate authenticity and community amongst teachers. How can we generate learning and community in our students if we are not modelling the same in our community of educators? I am very grateful to Fok-Shuen in this moment. These questions helped us see and frame first-year students differently in that particular conversation.*

Fok-Shuen: I strongly believe that [first-year] students deserve, and can handle, real mathematics. I believe that the difficulty and significance of real mathematical problems can be inspiring to students. In contrast, slowing down, simplifying the content and insisting on predictable examples does them a disservice. What we teach needs to be approachable, but it also needs to be worth approaching. I want my students to think of mathematics as a subject filled with problems, not exercises. I want them to think that mathematics is hard, but worthwhile...In short, the big ideas matter, and students respond to them. If the mathematics is beautiful, they accept that it can be difficult.

### **4.3 Pedagogy**

An equation on a chalkboard. From every observable angle, perspective, and context in which Fok-Shuen teaches first-year scholars, the primary focal point is mathematics. Math starts and ends all conversations. Math offers the metaphors and the meaning for his choice to be a teacher. Within Mathematics, Fok-Shuen believes a person can discover beauty, if they are willing to do the work required to do “real mathematics.” *Discipline* drives his dialogue, dissections, and determination as a teacher. And discipline intentionally carries two definitions: the first, a commitment to do the difficult work required to learn math; the second, the scholarly

field of academic mathematics. When Fok-Shuen reflects on his teaching, Math leads as a frame, metaphor, and meaning-making construct. When explicitly asked if there are pedagogical principles informing his large-group lecture-planning, he says “yes,” and then responds with numbers

Fok-Shuen: I have an 80/20 approach. 80% math on the board in dialogue with me, 20% math in small groups in dialogue with their peers.

Fok-Shuen brings to every class the three most ancient and reliable teaching tools: chalk, names and questions.

Fok-Shuen: An early reliance on really big questions that you promise you're going to answer in the class is almost a requirement for me.

Regardless of class size, he attempts to learn everyone’s name in the first few weeks. He asks a lot of questions, and encourages students to ask a lot of their own questions and during a lecture, he is often in the aisles in conversation with a small group of students while another student is at the chalkboard (doing math) at the front of the room. While talking to the students, he calls them by name. Questions, not answers, are the currency of his classroom. And when answers are stated, he questions the answer and encourages students to unpack their answers as a way to deepen their understanding.

Fok-Shuen: Difficult mathematics requires support. As an instructor, I work hard to make myself approachable. This accessibility begins in lectures, where I try to maintain an easygoing, supportive tone. My classroom may seem old-fashioned: there are no laptops or slides... I want students in their rather large class to feel as though they are in a small seminar, talking about important things with intelligent people...I try to learn everyone’s

name in a few weeks. I want to make the 400-person class feels close as possible to the 3-person class.

#### **4.3.1 Class size as “fractal”**

Fractals are shapes that are self-similar, meaning they have the same structure at every scale. As we zoom in on them, we find smaller copies of the larger macro-structure. Fractals occur in the world as “fractal systems” and they “span the spectrum from leaky faucets, to ferns, to heart rates, to cryptography” (Boeing, 2016, p. 7).

*As part of the Jump Start program (2015), we’ve created a series of 1-hour “Learning Labs” that students can select and sign up for as they explore their individual interests during their orientation to campus. I’ve been working with a professional Vancouver beat boxer on a different project, and he recently told me about how he sees musical beat-boxing as an extension of his love for learning math. It reminds me of Fok-Shuen’s descriptions of math and how they evoke art and literature. I reach out to Fok-Shuen and invite him to lead a Learning Lab...with the beat-boxer. He says “yes.” They meet to discuss the possibilities and email me the blurb:*

##### *Fractals Among Us: Math is Music, Music is Math*

*A fractal is an object with a high degree of self-similarity. Fractal-type patterns are found in many places: in Baroque fugues, in complex mathematics, in heart rates and snowflakes. How do fractals live in our bodies, within music and what might they have to say about university life? Combining mathematics, beatbox, body percussion and spoken word, we will explore the feedback loops of this natural phenomenon.*

*Over 200 students register. On that summer afternoon, one week before their first “official” university Math class for these first-year students, this Learning Lab is their scholarly welcome to academic mathematics.*

First-year courses typically have 100+ students in lecture halls at large-scale, Canadian research-intensive universities. Some of Fok-Shuen's first-year courses enroll at 400+. Class sizes this large can challenge many teachers and disrupt their attempts to align preferred pedagogies with practical possibilities. A common challenge for first-year teaching is scale, and for many faculty the class size in and of itself is a deterrent away from teaching first-year students. Fok-Shuen wonders how many more faculty might indicate a preference for teaching first-year students if the class sizes were not so large? The administrative overhead can swallow a teachers' time, energy, and inspiration when operating on such a large scale. As an Educational Leadership stream faculty member, Fok-Shuen's sees the scale "problem" and tinkers with his own pedagogical approach with large classes in ways that might result in helpful offerings to his colleagues.

Fok-Shuen: As a faculty member in the "Educational Leadership" stream, one of my goals is to improve courses for the benefit of students and instructors....My job is to do some trailblazing, so that when [my colleagues] join or take over one of my courses, the going is easier. This trailblazing can take many forms. At a minimum, I can leave behind a very good set of notes. I can also introduce new teaching ideas and revise the curriculum. Finally, I can demonstrate that something is feasible without committing my colleagues to following suit.

As he ponders the scale of the lecture hall, he draws on a math concept—fractals—to re-frame the problem of scale into a site of pedagogical possibility. Fok-Shuen sees the small (minutes, hours) and short (weeks, terms) units of teaching time and the large units of class sizes (hundreds of students at a time) as another equation he must wrestle with daily as a teacher in a

research-intensive university. He imagines a river. A huge river, like the Nile. In a large river, there is scale and speed and diversity, but he focuses on the huge degree of self-similarity with other moving water systems. He compares the river to a trickle of coffee at the bottom of a cup, because they are both essentially doing the same thing. They are both being pulled down and moving similarly through the space they have to move through. If we press pause on our preference to perceive *difference* in these systems—difference in size and scale, in particular—and instead focus on similarity, we see a river as a tiny stream in multiplied aggregate. A fractal is an object which, if you keep going, is identical at any level of magnification as you zoom in or zoom out. And it looks the same...the Nile looks like a stream because both the Nile and the stream break down in to drops of water flowing downhill.

When reflecting on the typically large sizes of math lectures at public, Canadian research-intensive universities, Fok-Shuen doesn't hyper-focus on how a small group is different from a large group, nor does he use scale as a reason to shy away from conceptual complexity and rigorous academic dialogue. Instead he draws on fractals as pedagogical reasoning and approaches his teaching with a focus on one student. He imagines one student meeting academic math for the first time, finding inspiration in the math (and in the invitation from a mathematician), coming up against the newness of it, pressing against and struggling with the boundaries of their understanding, and then, simply, trying to do their homework. Similarly, "fractalization" helps Fok-Shuen to imagine his mathematician colleagues, also working as hard as they can to share math with first-year students at scale and the sense of responsibility of one professor becomes shared in a process held by hundreds.

Fok-Shuen: Sometimes, it just helps...not to worry about the fact that you do have a class of 400 or you do have a department of a hundred faculty members.

You just start with the consideration of one student sitting at home and trying to do the homework and then work from there. I think when you're dealing with this large number of students, there's always this tendency to mistake the logistical challenge for the challenge itself. If you have 400 people at some point, it's got to come down to an individual person doing math and being told stories. You can set up all the incentives like online modules you like but if it doesn't trickle down at some point to that happening, then nothing's happening. Right?

As we conclude this chapter on Fok-Shuen, a final thought pulses through the entire analysis: passion for one's discipline and compassion for students are both contagious.

## Chapter 5: Celeste

Celeste Leander<sup>19</sup>

*Department of Botany & Department of Zoology*

*Professor of Teaching*

As a Professor of Teaching, Celeste enacts a full-time, teaching-focused, Educational Leadership-stream, tenured position in the Faculty of Science at the University of British Columbia. According to the *UBC Faculty Association Collective Agreement* (2016), a faculty member earns the title “Professor of Teaching”—the highest rank in the Educational Leadership stream—by demonstrating contribution to the academy in the following ways:

Appointment at or promotion to [Professor of Teaching] requires evidence of outstanding achievement in teaching and educational leadership, distinction in the field of teaching and learning, sustained and innovative contributions to curriculum development, course design and other initiatives that advance the University’s ability to excel in its teaching and learning mandate. Initial appointments at this rank are normally tenured appointments. Promotion to this rank is neither automatic nor based on years of service and it is expected that some persons will not attain this rank. (p.62)

### 5.1 First impression

I first met Celeste Leander in 2010 when I was working as a program advisor for the UBC International Service-Learning (ISL) program (now named the Office for Regional and International Community Development: <https://orice.ubc.ca/>). The ISL program team was exploring piloting a first-year Reading Week international service-learning experience embedded in a course for credit. A student-staff member in my unit recommended embedding ISL into Biology 121—specifically, Dr. Celeste Leander’s section of Biology 121, mainly because of Celeste’s preference for hands-on experiential activity in her classes. The student I worked with

---

<sup>19</sup> Celeste Leander’s UBC bio page can be found here: <https://www.botany.ubc.ca/people/celeste-leander>

had taken Celeste’s Biology course in his first year and the experience of her teaching left a strong impression on the student. In an effort to broach the conversation with Celeste, I made multiple formal attempts to reach out over email and the phone. The student told me: “she’s all about the students. If you want to get a hold of her, I recommend going to her office hours and waiting for an opportune moment.” At that time—and up until 2017—Celeste was teaching Biology 121 for the Science One program.<sup>20</sup> Outside of her office was a student study space, and I sat among the students watching Celeste’s office and waiting for a moment of pause. Her office door was open. There was a freshly baked cake on a small table near the door—the smell of baking luring students to her desk.

The open door and the cake struck me because, as a personal habit, I scan schools for physical representations of educational ideas. In reading a school like one might read a map or a text, I interpret office doors as physical manifestation of a “threshold concept” — a part of a curriculum that poses a distinct challenge to learners (Meyer, Land, & Baillie, 2010). I describe the transition from high school to university as being a curriculum in and of itself: a process that challenges students to learn new cultures, habits, behaviours, and a whole new language (as in, the lexicon of universities which is distinct from the lexicon of high schools). In this curriculum, one of the most taken-for-granted institutional cultural practices is also one of the most terrifying for first-year students: office hours. The smell of Celeste’s baking nudged students across the threshold of the office door and towards her desk, one after the other after the other. I watched her turn the question posed by one student into a lively group conversation (while eating cake)

---

<sup>20</sup> Science One is an immersive, 27 credit program (plus 2 credits for co-requisite Biology 140) that spans two terms in which Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics/Calculus, and Physics are presented in a unified, integrated format. There are 75 students and 8 instructors in Science One—a better student to teacher ratio than your high school (<https://scienceone.UBC.ca/why-science-one>)

with the students waiting for their turn. When the office-hour came to its final minutes, there were still many students waiting. Celeste needed to pack up and leave, so she brought the remaining cake outside and left it in the study space. I followed her down the hall and made a brief pitch. Her openness and lightness had shifted to caution when she realized I wasn't a student. I quickly pitched the idea, asking her: "Might you be willing to experiment with an experiential learning pilot where our ISL team embeds into your first-year Biology 121 course a for-credit international service-learning experience on a sea turtle reserve in Costa Rica? Up until now, the Reading Week trips have been co-curricular, but we are looking for ways to enhance and place value on the students' learning in more concrete ways and course credit is one such way."

I don't remember her exact response in that moment. I seem to remember the caution lingered, but her brisk movements slowed. Having now worked with her for nine years on many first-year student initiatives, I strongly suspect the words "value students" and "experiment" and "experiential learning" (and, as an avid animal rights advocate "turtle rescue"!) compelled Celeste to listen to me. The ISL program gelled quickly, and Celeste infused her enthusiasm for student learning contagiously. Having gained her trust as a collaborator, one of the highlights of my own teaching career was the week I spent in Costa Rica with Celeste's students while she continued teaching the students who remained in Vancouver.

### ***5.1.1 Piqued purpose***

Since joining UBC in 2010, my own sense of purpose as a first-year student educator has been piqued each time Celeste shares an anecdote about her experimental approach to teaching.

Celeste: I ran a pilot program bringing [course-based] academics into the residence halls in a structured manner. As part of this, I [taught] a section of Biology

121 in the Place Vanier first-year residence ballroom. I [held] evening office hours in the Vanier lounge, and I [would] drop-in for dinner with them regularly. This project aims to break down barriers between first-year students and faculty.

*Tonight, I went to Celeste's Biology 121 class in the Vanier First-Year Residence Hall Ballroom. She runs the course in partnership with Student Housing and Hospitality Services (SHHS). In its first pilot year, eighty students registered and she calls it the "pyjama party" section of Bio 121, because it's in the evening in the students "living room" of their home and SHHS delivers hot chocolate and cookies. Some of the students were actually wearing pyjamas. The room was big and empty, with tables and chairs stacked to the side. One of the students approached the Teaching Assistant and asked her to explain the teachers' goals for the evening lesson. Based on the TA's answer, the student led the group to set up the classroom. The class creates their own classroom unique to the goals of each lesson. As they worked, I helped unstack chairs while asking students to share their impressions of the course. They used words like "empower" and "fun" and "creative" and "ownership." While we set up, Celeste was busy taping flipchart paper to the wall to create a makeshift whiteboard. She started class by asking everyone to gather closely around the flipchart, some of the students seated on the floor and others standing close-by, hot chocolate and cookies in hand. The scenario evoked an image of elementary students gathered around their teacher for story-time. Perhaps I'm projecting my own preferences, but I've often thought that many students—regardless of our age—crave the re-creation of such an experience: to settle in beside to their classmates and to have someone read them a story. In this moment, Celeste told the Biology 121 students a story, and drew on the flip charts to illustrate key points. She told them a "story of studying" (with midterm season*

*around the corner), and wove her personal experiences as an undergraduate student with detailed descriptions of research-backed study tactics. I left the class after an hour, and during my time there I did not see one student look at their phone! Later that night, Celeste texted me a video of the students reviewing mitosis and meiosis using pool noodles and candy. There is a lot of laughing in the video as a few students dance around the ballroom with multi-coloured tubes of styrofoam while a few other students throw candy at the noodles, but Celeste was serious about the lesson and doesn't finish the exercise until she was sure the concept stuck. Then she told them to eat the candy.*

## **5.2 Preference**

In my observations of Celeste over the years, she is extraordinarily committed to any creative initiative on campus (course based or extra-curricular) that places first-year student learning at the centre of its mission. When I started working on Jump Start in 2012, Celeste was one of the program's longest serving Faculty Fellows. She is curious about students' experience of transition and the forming, shedding, re-forming, and evaluating of their identities that takes place during this time in their lives. Her preference for teaching first-year students is, in part, her preference for teaching students (and celebrating students) when the "learning" encompasses all of their life, not just their coursework. This type of learning is particularly rich in the teenage years, when our neurobiology compels us to create a life and identity for ourselves that is separate from our family (Blakemore, 2018; Jensen & Nutt, 2015, Seigel, 2014).

Celeste: I like the process that first-year students are going through, all the things that are secondary to their academics, [like] being away from home for the first time. Many of them are being adults in their home for the first time and grappling with differences from their family...or things that they

are learning about themselves or with previous notions of who they thought they were I like all that transition process that happens. I don't think it's necessarily [about] being a first-year student but [it's] from that age group [teenagers]... The enthusiasm for learning that I think [they] bring to the table is incredible, and the relationships that you build with them and that they build with each other... being a witness to all of that is really fun.

### **5.2.1 *A box of tissues and a colouring book***

*Celeste told me today that she gives her personal cell phone number to all of the students in her class, and invites them to reach out if they need support. She also invites them to “friend” her on Facebook (she has 1100+ friends on Facebook and many are former students). In the years since she started these practices, she has yet to have a student abuse the invitation. And when students do contact her on her cell phone, it is for valid and important reasons. She sets the bar high for students in her expectations that they respect her trust in them and in each other.*

Celeste: I open up to them and I give them the chance to open up to the class as well. Sometimes if we get into personal stuff, we've even set guidelines around the stories that people tell... [so that the stories] are kept in the room.

There are two desks in Celeste's UBC office. One desk holds exams, a laptop, papers, books, photos of family, tissues, pens, a 1/2-eaten lunch; this is Celeste's desk. The other desk holds a box of tissues, a plate of fresh pie, a colouring book, a cup of coloured pencils, paper, pens, a selection of teas and a kettle; this is the students' desk. When Celeste works in her office, the door is always open and the student desk available. Sometimes a student will set themselves

up and work quietly, eat pie, listen to music on earphones, and then leave without talking to Celeste at all. Other students arrive seemingly desperate for conversation, sharing an exciting first date story, a frustration with a work supervisor or a worry about studying for midterms. The tissue box is busy, especially during exam seasons.

Celeste:           The student desk is nice because it's just to come have a snack, chat, whatever, there's not an academic agenda necessarily.

The desk symbolizes Celeste's deep empathy for first-year students, and not just their experience of her course, but their experience with themselves, with each other and with the world around them during a time of transition and possibility. Celeste would not sigh, cringe, or shudder if a group of high school students stood next to her on a bus. She would lean in and take out her earphones, trying to listen in to the conversational explosions.

In shaping this case, I notice ways in which Celeste—the only female faculty member in this research study—displays more overtly care-giving behaviours than Michael and Fok-Shuen. Some might describe her approach as being explicitly “maternal”—with the prevalence of homemade baking, boxes of tissues, and her presence as a shoulder to cry on when the difficulties of first-year become so heavy for her students. Having worked with Celeste for many years, I have observed that these behaviours appear to be entirely genuine to her personality and they are not ‘put on’ as a layer of performance in her teaching. Rather than espouse my own interpretation of this phenomena while writing this case, I asked Celeste to comment directly:

I think a lot about gender roles in support positions... First, the institutional fix is to relegate the burden back to the students, which is unsatisfactory at best and a failure at worst. I think if we take a broad look at incoming students, there are many (most) that are perfectly adept and ready to navigate this system. But there are others who are not. Those of us that teach large first year courses learn to scan and monitor and pick-up on those that are struggling (hopefully). Is this ability itself gender specific? ...partly. We are cultured into this role as mothers. When I've asked my own students about this, they tell me that they are taught to “find a mom” from the time they are very young (if they're lost

at the mall, for example). So, they are also cultured into seeking help in a gendered way. There has been some internal dialogue in my department to disperse this work across genders somehow, but I don't think that's really the solution. I think a better solution is to carry some of the other departmental burdens for us, so that we can best be present for the students who need to be seen. Having said all that, I know many male colleagues who are genuine and thoughtful in their ability to see and help students - so it's not a strict delineation. The issue is exacerbated by gender imbalance in teaching roles, of course. (C. Leander, personal communication, May 22, 2019)

Placing a student desk in her office represents her curiosity about an entire demographic: teenagers. Being a “first-year student” is just one of the many roles a teenager is playing with during such transformative time in their lives. A student desk in her office represents a place to land in the presence of an adult who understands the sense of *grappling* with previous notions of who they thought they were. Celeste is a witness to their transformation; she holds a distinct interest in the particular ways that teenagers make sense of their transition and the desk is a symbol an invitation to connect to students. Her preference for teaching first-year students is grounded in what I would describe as a *radical curiosity* about teenagers.

A professor's office. A space traditionally viewed as a scholar's personal retreat. A space where students traditionally require explicit invitation during very limited timeframes (a.k.a. “office hours”). Now it has a student desk.

Celeste: I invite them into my space.

### **5.2.2 Her first year**

When she recalls her own first-year at university, Celeste tells stories with stillness and clarity. She was the first in her family to attend university and her first-year at university had a profound effect on her development as a teacher, and as a lifelong learner. She shares the story of a professor who taught her in her first-year at university and how he taught the class *how* to learn as much as he taught *what* to learn. This professor profoundly shifted Celeste's perspective

because he welcomed her and her colleagues into a community of scholarly engagement and civil society by interacting with the class. As a professor, he believed his role was to sharpen their minds so that they could contribute to the academy more thoughtfully and responsibly. It was a profound welcome to the academy. His unorthodox methods also left an impression on her as a teacher. In the first class, he passed around garbage bags and asked all of the students to dispose of any highlighters they had in their backpacks.

Celeste: From my own experience at community college, I had a mandatory class my first semester on how to be a successful student. On the first day, our professor came in with a black trash bag and made us throw away our highlighters. We were all aghast! But he taught us how to study smarter. The impact of someone teaching me how to be a successful student was huge in my own life. I hope I can bring some of that to UBC students. It's important for them to know that there's someone who's just there for them, and watching out for them.<sup>21</sup>

### 5.2.3 “*Prof-in-Collegia*”

Celeste is the Professor-in-Collegia for Arbutus Collegia<sup>22</sup>—a home-away-from-home program designed for first-year commuter students. The following description of the Collegia is from a recent report presented to a sub-committee in the UBC Board of Governor's at the February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 meeting of the “People, Community & International” committee:

Collegia at UBC Vancouver offers an interdisciplinary “home-away-from-home” for first-year students who commute. Within these dedicated spaces, new students

---

<sup>21</sup> A quote from Celeste in a full article on the UBC website featured Collegia and Celeste: <https://www.UBC.ca/stories/2016-fall/professor.html>

can access resources to help navigate their transition to university, make friends, and get advice from senior peer mentors and faculty members... Collegia attendance is positively correlated with an improved sense of community and belonging on campus. (p. 5)

Celeste: I spend time weekly with these students with an emphasis on training in soft skills such as taking multiple choice tests, term paper writing, and study strategies. I also spend a lot of time in the Collegia kitchen, baking with students and having informal conversations.

The first-year experience can be a very intense time in a young adult's life—a time of coming from one way of being in the world and becoming into another version of oneself. The teenage years are when there are pressing issues accompanying academics in a students' life and it's these issues and conversations that Celeste invites into her Collegia conversations, in addition to her classroom and office hours interactions. She aims to surface the sticky moments of life transition so that the students might see the moments as shared (not isolated), name them, and attend to them—and in some ways turn the exploration of the issues into an exploration of the course.

Celeste: I think first-year students still have this huge joy and excitement for being there in the first place and they are really earnest I think in what they are there for, what they want to do, they are just full of excitement... Many of my students are [first-year students and] living away from home for the first time and bring personal challenges to the classroom that also influence the dynamics of learning. I value the processes that these students are going through and strive to create a learning experience that meets them where they are and opens an opportunity for them to move forward with confidence in their abilities as learners.

#### 5.2.4 *Stem cells*

Celeste is entering her 24<sup>th</sup> year of teaching university Biology, Zoology and Ecology courses. She imagines the students are like stem cells: in an emergent and raw state when they arrive at university and throughout their undergraduate degree they start to branch out, differentiate, self-renew, break down, build up, and discover their specialization in the world. She prefers teaching students in the early state of possibility—before they declare disciplinary academic majors.

Celeste:           When stem cells start, they can become any kind of cell, and then as they age they get more and more specialized into the type of cell they're going to be and they can't go backwards.

Such attunement and interest in the experience of young adults' positions Celeste to read between the lines and sift the subtexts when too often adults' discourse and dialogues about first-year students hold and perpetuate negative assumptions, othering tendencies, and unhelpful stereotyping about teenagers. Celeste notices how many of her colleagues use the term 'kids' while referencing or first-year students. She attends to and consciously avoids language that belittles the contributions her students could make to the academic community and she is interested in how her students are making-meaning of this time in their life—a time of adjustment and transition, but also a time of creative exploration and identity formation.

Celeste:           There are things that you've learned that got you through high school as a straight-A student basically by definition. What are the pieces that are going to work for you, and where are the holes, where maybe you need something different--All of that part, I really enjoy?

### 5.3 Pedagogy

Celeste: I think of teaching and learning almost like art. Not that you can't evaluate art, but I think of it as much more subjective –like there's going to be certain people that where a piece of art appeals to that group and I think that with teaching and learning –my teaching style's not going to resonate with everyone who's in my classes, necessarily. [My role is to] give them knowledge that they can then use to form some opinion that *matters*.

I asked Celeste: “Can you walk me through the experience of a class you teach with first-year students?”. She was doing the dishes during our interview and after I asked the question I watched her look up from the sink and out the window, as if searching for the perfect example. She shared a Biology 121 activity she leads over two days with 150 to 200 students in a lecture hall. By the end of the activity, students will experience how important inter-disciplinarity and communication can be when professionals apply science “knowledge” to problem-solving processes.

**Table 5.1 Researcher’s Re-Creation of Celeste’s Lesson Plan from a Biology 121 Class in a Lecture Hall**

<p><b><u>Lesson Topic:</u></b> Species Recognition in Biology: An Orca Whale Case Study</p>
<p><b><u>Learning Goal:</u></b> There are multiple frameworks for species recognition and each framework has implications for how we interact with the species in scientific communities from ecological and biological perspectives. In this lesson, students will interrogate the different ways—ecological and biological—that we can recognize a species</p>

depending on the perspective we are viewing the species. For this case study, we will focus on whales and on determining if Orca Whales are a distinct species.

**Activity:**

1. Divide the class into groups of four.
2. Within each group of four, ask students to designate one person to be the “ecological species” expert and one person to be the “biological species” expert.
3. Send all of the “biological species” experts to one corner of the lecture hall and all of the “ecological species” experts to another corner of the lecture hall.
4. Once they are in their large groups, invite each group to have a “mini-conference” where they discuss whales from an “expert” perspective. Provide each group with specific additional resources to help them assume an “expert” role and form opinions from that perspective.
5. After their mini-conferences, students return to their groups of four and at the groups have to debate, dialogue, and then decide if whales are one species or several species.
6. Each group then reports their decision to the rest of the class.
7. After each group has reported, we will watch a video about whales in captivity and continue the lesson with a mini-lecture and additional resources.

Celeste: [In this whale activity] they'll argue very vehemently with their team members... [but] then they have to listen to everybody else and come up with something that... gives it, first of all, a rationale of why this is important biologically, but also...it gives them knowledge that they can then use to form some opinion that matters. These whales matter or maybe they don't matter to us, but it could matter and so our designation [of] that

population is important. Even though it's a big class, stuff like this can feel intimate and get and get students involved.

At the core of Celeste's pedagogy is a deep respect and belief in her students' abilities as learners, and a seemingly limitless curiosity about the creative possibilities for herself and her colleagues as teachers. She takes on the work of teaching, and she fully and firmly hands over the work of learning to her students. This point is worthy of repetition: learning is the work of the student, not the teacher.

Celeste: I believe that good teaching can be different for different people – and that there is not one single most effective optimum for teaching. An ideal, if one exists, varies with changing variables including goals, content, class composition, and personality of the instructor. I recognize that teaching should be different for different sets of students. My own personal teaching style has grown out of these observations, and my teaching is an iterative process that changes to reflect the needs of my students.

Fundamentally, learning is the work of the student and not the teacher.

In putting the work of learning explicitly into the students' domain, Celeste acknowledges (but doesn't apologize for) the difficulties that arise in learning. Learning is hard. It can be painful. It's speckled with moments of elation, a-ha! fun, revelation—but as in life, these moments can fuel and feed the learning process. Celeste steers the ship while the students do the work to get the ship to move.

Celeste: I might be navigating where we're going, but they are the ones rowing and doing the work. [Students are] in charge of their own learning and they are going to do it or not do it.

And moving a ship is sweaty, difficult, endurance work with high stakes if the destination isn't reached. She teaches them tips, tricks, and tools that make learning more effective, but she does not indicate that it will ever be easy. Here's a teacher who has earned a reputation for (among many other things) her emotional responsiveness, her ethic of care and attention, for her fierce and stalwart advocacy for student well-being, and for her infusion of fun into the classroom. Some might assume that these qualities compete with intentionally creating conditions in a course that result in students working really hard, feeling very frustrated, sweating, crying, striving, and trying. Such an assumption is false. Celeste is an example of a teacher setting a high bar for students in their academic learning journey (because she *believes* they can reach it) while also attending to the myriad of ways a student learns about life in this hyper-intense time of transition.

Celeste: I view my classroom as a place where space is held for learning. To accomplish this, I approach each class as a unique experience, both for my students and for myself.

Celeste sees and attends to first-year Science students' desire to get high grades, and the pressure that results from their commitment to academic excellence. Many of the students in the Faculty of Science enter university with aspirations to apply for Medical School or other highly competitive Health Sciences programs. As a Professor of Teaching, she emphasizes metacognition and research-backed learning strategies in her teaching so that her students have the tools they need to work towards the grades they want. But she is also attuned to the students' fear of failure, and worries this fear is an additional pressure that can be suffocating for the students. During midterm season, she names and leans into this fear and places the concept of "failure" at the centre of the classroom agenda. Most often, Faculty of Science students at

research-intensive Canadian universities are not arriving on campus having experienced receiving low grades in their Science classes. For some students, the definition of ‘failure’ is not even in line with the Faculty of Science definition, and they will name themselves a ‘failure’ if they receive any grade below their own predetermined standard. For these students, the standard may not have deviated from their high school standard, and their high school standard often hovers ~90%. Educators may choose to leverage this moment in an aims to show students how ill-prepared they were and to use the shock of midterm grades as a punitive moment to encourage motivation for learning—in other words, a moment to teach the consequence of “not trying hard enough.” In Celeste’s Biology classroom, she harnesses the swirling, sticky, frantic, and nervous energy in the classroom during midterm season and uses it to intentionally go “off script” when required.

Celeste: I hope that students leave their in-class and out-of-classroom interactions with me—I am oftentimes one of the first professors they will meet at UBC—with a good grasp on biological concepts, but also with learning skills that I consciously encourage. These include independence in learning, working in groups, and critically evaluating science. I value creativity and give students opportunity to showcase their creative work in my classes. Most importantly, I hope my students leave my classroom as engaged, confident learners.

When students struggle with midterms, she pivots from Biology content, and instead delivers a lecture about life; specifically, a reinforcing story that shows her students that grades do not define us. She is so acutely in tune with students’ need to define themselves at this age and stage of their life, and the incredible privilege she feels at being their teacher during this time—a time

of first impressions and life transitions—shows up in these moments when she brings all of herself and all of the students into the lesson. The shape and plan for the lesson varies from year to year, but recently she’s been inviting a group of past students to speak as guest lecturers and she calls them her “Spectacular Failures” keynote speaking team. They are a group of students who failed her Biology 121 course in previous years, but have all gone on to do remarkable things and live purposeful lives.

Bringing life in all of its messy, expansive glory and pain into the classroom feels more possible in a first-year context because of the breadth of disciplinary curiosities she can reference in the room. In introductory Science courses at UBC, students haven’t yet chosen their disciplinary major, so students in Celeste’s class could be taking the course as a pre-requisite with the intention of majoring in one of a broad range of disciplines. A disciplinary breadth builds layers of diversity into her classroom, and she struggles to replicate this dynamic in her upper year courses once students have started to form into more academically curated communities.

Celeste: First year is when you get to really wow them with whatever your field is or who you are. You are their first impression of what it means to be an academic, or what it means to be part of this place. That's a responsibility, but it's also really fun. They are a much broader group than you're going to get and even second year, where they've narrowed down majors.

Despite having expertise in Botany and Zoology, Celeste enjoys teaching first-year courses because they are introductory in scope and this means she continually revisits concepts from her discipline that she would not indicate are her particular areas of expertise. When teaching upper year courses, faculty hone in more closely to the distinct content that they have

studied more in-depth. She recognizes that the breadth of content covered in a first-year course could also be a reason why some faculty do not want to teach first-year courses; perhaps it's not the students they are avoiding, but rather the scope of content. She wonders if this experience of 'breadth' could be daunting for some research faculty who prefer teaching courses located as closely to their specialized expertise as possible. But for Celeste—whose research focus *is teaching* and who has achieved the highest rank in the Educational Leadership stream as a Professor of Teaching—the breadth of the course content combined with the breadth of student interest and background becomes an ideal petri dish for experimentation. It's also a time when she can explicitly notice and name the intensity of transition the students feel collectively.

Celeste: I feel like I'm designing the stories around what they're going to learn. I have overarching learning goals behind the scenes. I give them a place where they can delve into science deeply.

In the first class of the first term of a Biology 121 course, Celeste introduces the concept of "genetics" by sharing her own genetic material for the students to analyze. The students work with her genetic material. At one point (planned and designed behind the scenes: a story *and* a moment to delve deeply into science) they laugh when they discover Celeste's genetic predisposition indicates she is meant to be 5'7" tall and 160 lbs. She is not close to that height or weight. It's a moment of disruption and disconnect. Why would her genes predict she was going to be much larger than she is? What happened? At this point, she opens up about her life. About her mom being 17 when she had Celeste, and how she was the first in her family to attend university. She shifts the conversation briefly away from genetics and towards a story about her own academic journey. Then back to genetics. The lesson takes two classes from start to finish, and sets the foundation for the classroom environment—a place where the students'

contributions matter, where all ideas are welcome, and where they can navigate their sense of belonging in the academy.

Celeste's own pedagogical research most often takes the form of case studies. She publishes case studies primarily for an audience of Science educators.

Celeste: [Case studies are] my favourite thing because it's curriculum based and it's fun and it's storytelling.

Her cases showcase the capability of first-year students to meet the high expectations she sets for them as learners. A recent example explores her use of collaborative exams in Biology 121, a first-year large lecture course.

*Celeste just texted me a video of her students "writing an exam." She's piloting a "collaborative exam" approach this year and the video shows students talking, laughing, and moving around in small groups at tables in the new Hennings Active Learning Theatre.<sup>23</sup> Some of the students are even sitting on top of the tables. I've never seen such loud and lively exams before.*

In these exams, she sets up stations and students collaboratively work on portions of the course exam in groups.

Celeste: [When looking into teaching and learning research], I typically will become interested in one aspect and explore that piece. Like the collaborative exam. That was really interesting to me and I spent a lot of time looking at the literature around collaborative learning and collaborative exams.

She worries about researchers' tendency to trust the "proven stories" told about learning when the stories rely too much on numbers and data to quantify learning in large-sized classes.

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://learningspaces.UBC.ca/hennings-200-active-learning-theatre>

Celeste: I definitely have a giant filter with some of that big data stuff. Honestly, I'm not a huge data person. I'm not convinced that a lot of the data telling educational is really telling us what it's telling us.

She uses her collaborative exam pilot as an example. What if the results of the pilot rested *only* on the students' grades? As in, if the grades in her exam were equal or higher than other sections of Biology 121, then the numerical data might point towards some type of interpretive "result." She eschews colleagues' attempts to lean in this direction of interpretation because there is often a much deeper story *behind* the numbers.

Celeste: There are variables that aren't taken into account. Something as simple as this collaborative exam work that I did which was really exceptional and some of the student comments were amazing. That class was at 8 a.m. and we know that the 8 a.m. class traditionally has lower grades than the other sections because it's the last one to fill up. [Because they're 18-years-old and] they're not awake... When colleagues want me to compare averages at the end of the term with some other section that's at 1 o'clock in the afternoon versus the 8 a.m. section, I don't think it means anything because there's this other massive variable with a lot of history behind it that makes [the number] *noise*.

Even Celeste's approach to research resists turning students into numbers on a page. In publishing case studies and qualitative research, she ensures she is writing the students into her work as capable agents and actors in the emergent story of teaching and learning in post-secondary science education. Celeste is committed and dedicated to both her teaching and her

discipline, and her empathetic approach to her students is a defining feature of her pedagogical practice.

## Chapter 6: Michael

Michael James Griffin<sup>24</sup>

*Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies*

*& Department of Philosophy*

*Associate Professor*

As an Associate Professor, Michael enacts a full-time, research-stream, tenured position in the Faculty of Arts at the University of British Columbia. According to the *UBC Faculty Association Collective Agreement* (2016), a faculty member earns the title “Associate Professor” by demonstrating contribution to the academy in the following ways:

Appointment at or promotion to [Associate Professor] normally requires evidence of successful teaching and of scholarly activity beyond that expected of an Assistant Professor. The candidate will be judged on teaching as defined in Article 4.02, on sustained and productive scholarly activity, on ability to direct graduate students, and on willingness to participate and participation in the affairs of the Department and the University. Initial appointment at this rank may be based upon evidence of the candidate’s potential to meet these criteria, including the opinion of scholars or other qualified persons familiar with the candidate’s work and capability. (p.62)

### 6.1 First impression

*I observe how people move through space in ways that are distinct and unique. When I studied acting in university, my professor led us through an entire month of exercises that explored “walks.” On the first day, she sent us out of the classroom, tasking us with sitting in a public place on campus and watching in great detail how people walk. I went outside and watched students walk through a green space to get from one building to the next. Each walk had a personality. Each walk had an idiosyncrasy, a pace, a rhythm. Since that day, I attend to*

---

<sup>24</sup> Michael’s UBC bio page can be found here: <https://cnrs.ubc.ca/people/michael-griffin/>

walks—and to other forms of daily, habitual movement through space, like biking or skateboarding or running—as much as any other detail about them when I form an impression. I met Michael in 2012 when I started working with the Jump Start program. Michael also started working with Jump Start as a Faculty Fellow in 2012 and we met at a campus event a few weeks prior to the program's launch. He biked up to the glass doors with a huge smile on his face. On UBC campus, I often see Michael on his bike. He bikes without a helmet, avoiding traffic. He rarely bikes in a straight line because he is looking around while he moves. When I catch a glimpse of him biking, I cannot help but feel happy. The look on his face—open, alert—and the way the bike moves—breezily—inspires feelings of being somewhere for the first time and biking through that place with fresh eyes and an open heart. He spends an extraordinary amount of time on campus, but I often get the impression he is taking in the university with the awe of a newcomer, biking the campus in search of wonder and infusing wonder. One day, on Halloween, I saw Michael biking past the library dressed as Plato. It was a wonder-ful sight.

Michael:        If life is a learning journey, then the university is less a map than a way-station—a place where travelers meet early on the road, exchange diverse perspectives, and trade tools.

## **6.2 Preference**

A tenure-track Professoriate Stream Associate Professor specializing in Ancient Greek philosophy, Michael draws inspiration from *all* students (he teaches on-campus and off-campus to students in a wide age-range), but when given the choice prefers teaching courses on campus with a first-year focus.

Michael: [Being among first-years] is like being an ant in the middle of a beehive—the blooming buzzing, massive confusion. It's beautiful...such excitement and intellectual possibility.

### **6.2.1 Buzz**

There's so much going on in the first-year context at a research-intensive university—so many people (students, faculty, staff) and so many ideas flowing and identities forming. At its basic level, there's the energy of thousands of teenagers zooming around campus searching for the right room, the right answer, the right version of their degree path, the right friends. The nervous energy, the sense of frantic possibility, the press of people and the press to discover passion and purpose.

Michael: ...a spirit of just wanting what Aristotle calls the longing to understand or curiosity or the kind of wonder that we come into the world with....

Michael lives, teaches, and learns among this buzz, scale, and press. Literally. Michael is the only faculty member at UBC who lives in student housing, choosing a first-year residence hall as his home. Since 2013, he has lived in first-year student housing as the Totem Park Residence Hall “Professor-in-Residence<sup>25</sup>.” His apartment is on the same floor as the students, and after a day of teaching and researching, he regularly dines with students and hosts evening events in the residence halls across campus.

Michael: As a grad student at Oxford, I was used to a college setting that had graduates, undergraduates and faculty all living together in one complex. You'd go to dinner together and maybe sit beside someone from a

---

<sup>25</sup> An article published in 2016 featured Michael's role as Professor-in-Residence: <https://www.UBC.ca/stories/2016-fall/professor.html>

different faculty. I wanted to bring that feeling to UBC so that first-year students don't just see their profs as a tiny face at the bottom of a lecture theatre. I wanted to create that human contact, and give students a chance to know what the life of an academic researcher is really like. The programming around Professor-in-Residence sparks conversations between first-year students of different backgrounds, their senior peers and faculty, and engages a respectful, genuine mutual quest for knowledge that characterizes good academic inquiry. It's working. Students tell me that I and other faculty seem approachable and welcoming. It's made me a better teacher, too: I've learned how to listen and communicate better with first-year students. As a philosophy instructor, it informs my teaching around perspective-taking and critical inquiry.

### **6.2.2 *An imaginative welcome***

*Today Michael spoke to the Jump Start participants at the Opening Ceremony.<sup>26</sup> He delivered the "Welcome to the Academy" speech on behalf of the Faculty Fellows. He started the speech by asking the 1500 students in Chan Centre to look at the shoes of the person sitting next to them. And then to look at the lighting in the ceiling. "Notice that these are all products of the human imagination," he said, and reminded us that the university itself is the product of human imagination. He called this the "imagination game." What a great way to welcome first-year students to university! To remind them that we are all interacting in a place (a university) and*

---

<sup>26</sup> In the first days of Jump Start, students attend a staged welcome event called the Opening Ceremony. In the event, upper year students share stories of welcome with first-year students and those stories can take the form of speeches, visual art, and music. As part of the event, a UBC faculty member delivers a "Welcome to the Academy" speech as a formal invitation from a campus scholar to the newest community of scholars in the university.

*with products (shoes!) that we have created. It brings students into the conversations as co-creators and colleagues from day one and asks them to join us in the collective imaginary.*

During Michael's speech in the 2014 Opening Ceremony, he introduced himself to the audience by telling the students a little bit about his own academic journey:

Michael: I majored in Classical Studies because it captured my imagination. Ancient history seemed like the coolest fantasy world ever, and all the adventures and stories were real. It was history. More than that, when I immersed myself in the heights of ancient Athens, Greek democracy, law, literature, philosophy, economics, the origins of physics, mathematics, or love poetry (all ancient Greeks, by the way), I was discovering anew one of the basic well-springs of today's entire world. We are all of us, every student and professor at UBC, a team: we are the Research & Development team of the human race. We are here to try out the big new ideas. Whether we get them from thought experiments, science experiments, history, literature, art, fieldwork, the farm, or the grey matter inside our heads, we're here to do the blue-sky thing. To imagine how things could be different. How things could be better. (Griffin, 2014, UBC Jump Start Opening Ceremony speech).

### **6.2.3 *First-year students inspire fields of research***

In many ways, the first-year students light Michael's imagination for what might be possible with his research. The dialogue placed at the centre of his teaching practice—dialogue between seasoned and newcomer scholars—not only creates moments of lit-up-ness for the students, but also for Michael himself. In the classroom, he builds a community dialogue with

first-year students in ways that intentionally (and not by happy accident) fuel his own research. Oftentimes, his academic research develops in conversation with first-year students.

Michael:       Already in first-year, every student offers unique ways of knowing, intuitions rooted in individual experience, and a facility with multiple languages and media of self-expression. I think it's the instructor's role not to replace these natural fluencies, but to bring them to maturity. We can affirm authentic acts of self-expression, encourage healthy intellectual risks, and illustrate by example that empathy and respect for our differences do not stifle rigorous inquiry, but facilitate it.

In his approach to research, he will test new ideas in a first-year classroom because the students are intellectually diverse (they haven't yet siloed into declared majors), open-minded (they hold few preconceptions about what the "right" answer is), new to the subject (most high schools do not have philosophy or Greek studies), unaware of philosophical jargon (also prompting Michael to communicate clearly and jargon-free), and quick to declare opinions (interacting in academic discourse with beginners' minds).

Michael:       [in dialogue with first-years I am] in contact with these ideas that are not already saturated in your disciplinary jargon and way of looking at things. When he poses a new line of research inquiry to first-year students, he trusts the group's originality, guilelessness, and lack of pretence when they catch and play with the small spark of an idea, question, concept, or theory. His research life-cycle tends to flint, crackle, and catch fire in four-year cycles.

First, he poses not-yet-fully formed questions to his first-year classes, thereby authentically inviting them into scholarly philosophical dialogue—he's inviting them to discuss

something that he actually does not know the answer to yet. He invites students into a dialogue that moves towards rigorous academic discourse.

Michael: . . . . .gradually getting deeper into a way of seeing and negotiating the world and information.

While the students are in dialogue (with him, and with the course texts and ancient scholars) he actively listens and maps the connections of thought that reflect his disciplinary expertise.

In his teaching, he will surface these connections with expert grace as a way to bring students into their own emergent understanding of the difference between fact, opinion, and philosophical inquiry. But he will also surface the connections as an exercise in exploring his own research in a space of fresh thinking. The benefits are truly dialogical between teacher/learner and pedagogue/researcher. Next, he will draw on the diverse perspectives and original thinking in the room to continue to shape and hone the idea until he thinks it's ready for a broader audience (e.g. a conference presentation). Then, in further dialogue with his academic peers, he'll continue to work with the idea to write a paper. The peer-review process during the paper's articulation is the next layer of scholarly dialogue with the ultimate goal of publication. Then, he will bring the paper back into the classroom with first-year students (approx. four years later) and share with them the process, while also posing new ideas to start the process again.

In many ways, Michael manifests a version of the ideal trifecta of teaching, researching and community service, and he has found a way within his discipline to ignite the curiosity and wonder of first-year students by feeding his own philosophical inquiry. Although the first-year students taught by Michael would not necessarily know this explicitly, the spirit in which he interacts with the class is infused with a sense of gratitude and true curiosity for their

contributions because he sees the first-year classroom as a laboratory for research questions and trajectories.

#### **6.2.4 Cookies and questions**

*I asked Michael if he has any strategies for getting students in residence to attend his events. There is so much noise at a large university and there are so many events, programs, and opportunities for first-year students. Choice overload. Information overload. Analysis paralysis. These are all common feelings for first-year students and a common response is to not attend anything at all. I've had that feeling in grocery stores recently. Why are there so many types of mustard? The bounty of choice overwhelms me and I don't buy any mustard at all. Michael shares with me his strategy for hosting "pop-up Office Hours" in the Totem Park Residence Commons Block. He sets up a table in the middle of the busiest part of the block—the area students move through to get from their rooms to the dining hall and ballroom. On his table, he has a large tray of cookies (chocolate chip and raisin) and a flipchart with a "Prof-in-Residence Poll of the Day" topic (e.g. What movie should we show in residence and invite another professor to explore with us?). He then carries around the cookies on a tray and walks right up to students and asks them "Do you prefer chocolate chip or raisin cookies?" and then uses the cookie question to entice them to answer the question on the flipchart paper. The spectacle of a prof chasing students around with a tray of cookies is usually enough to generate buzz for the poll and to get enough students gathered around the flipchart so that he can start a conversation based on the poll question.*

#### **6.3 Pedagogy**

Michael: My core content is Greek philosophy—the inquiring and, at its best, undogmatic tradition of Socrates, which inspired scientific, ethical, and

psychological speculation. Here, both new and advanced students encounter contradictions: rooted in a single language and a local culture, proud but flawed, cosmopolitan at its best and xenophobic at its worst, Greek literature invites us to challenge our presuppositions, and can illustrate both the best and the worst of human potentials.

### **6.3.1 The “Allegory of the Cave”**

*There’s a chatter in the lecture hall, but not frantic chatter or distracted chatter, rather the sound of over a hundred young adults arranged in small huddled groups having conversations in the tones and cadences (titling various levels, a combination of leaned in and urgent sounds) of questions. In a room this large, with so many voices, the patterns of sound indicate the types of conversation. This room is filled with the sound of inquiry: voices connected to breath, sounds formed with the intention to connect and build with the sounds of another, gentle upswings of tone pepper the air—the distinctive sound of a question mark. Copies of Aristotle’s Poetics and Plato’s Republic rest scattered on laps, desks, and dog-eared in some students’ enthusiastic hands. Most copies are opened to a page—and it’s as though the two men are in the room with us, joining the conversation. If one were to walk into the room mid-lecture, it would be impossible to discern teacher from student. Where is the teacher? His script written hastily on the chalkboard: “what does the Allegory of the Cave tell us? What is the story about?” A few minutes pass and one man stands from a group, nods and smiles, and moves with careful subtlety to another group, melting into the conversation.*

The professor: Michael. The flint. The spark. The catalyst.

Michael: [In Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”, imagine] human beings have been

chained with their heads unable to move, watching shadows play on the wall of the cave. Since this has been the condition they've experienced since birth, they have no concept of what a shadow is. They just assume everything they see is real. We have this perspective, watching these prisoners, that they are unaware of the fire and the puppets and the puppeteers behind them, and the whole mechanism casting the shadows on the wall, completely unaware that behind that there's a way out of the cave. What you would find if you got out and saw the reality that everything was only shadows of? As soon as you got out, if you ever did get out to see the realities, you would almost immediately, when you really grasped what was there, feel compelled to go back to the cave again to help others realize the truth. They wouldn't be able to understand you, or at least not right away, and they might, in fact, like Socrates, Plato's teacher, try to put you to death.

The observer wouldn't assume, by watching Michael teach and by absorbing the energy of the room, that Michael draws heavily on words associated with fire when he reflects on his pedagogical approach. Swift analysis of a fire metaphor related to teaching may sway one's imagination towards assuming the teacher is prone to grand gestures, a need to light up a room, add fuel to the flames of heated debate, and push the class towards passionate engagement with the course content; but Michael rarely (if ever) evokes such compulsions, movements or gestures. Instead, he draws on a more nuanced understanding of "fire"—seeking perspectives in the metaphor that serve his ideal classroom: a space of authentic community dialogue, regardless of the number of students in the room. In many ways, when the ideal is met, the effect can be even more profound at scale, in a large classroom with many students, and with newcomer

scholars struck by the depth of connection and the genuine invitation from a professor to join the scholarly conversation.

Michael: [Plato] uses the metaphor of fire for this moment when two people that are talking maybe, and both using their own words and their own perspective somehow, and they come together like fire sticks, and then when there's a light that flashes, then there's something that happens that's not quite like a definition, or an argument, or an illustration, or anything, but it's just a unique thing that happens that somehow light like or fire like, and it can be inspiring and it can be transformative moment.

There's a connection between the verb *educere* and the fire words. When he thinks about the Latin origin of the verb *educere*, he interprets its meaning (“to draw forth...”) as an invitation to him, as the teacher, to create an environment that is inviting, comforting, curiosity-provoking, and joyful. There is no better image than a fire to gather around. So, in the classroom he has two jobs: to build the fire—drawing on the course content—and to draw students towards it—building on his pedagogical practice. The rest of the work—the work of the other meaning of *educere* (to lead from within...)—is the work of the students. To be warmed by the fire and to do the work—the leadership from within work—to make meaning of their own thinking in collaboration and catalytic communication with Michael, the scholars in the field and with each other, a community of newcomer scholars.

### **6.3.2 Joy**

Michael vividly remembers his own excited, and at times overwhelmed, first-year scholarly self in dialogue with all of the disciplines before he chose his disciplinary focus. And to make that choice, he followed feelings of joy. Why do we do research and partake in university

life at all if it's not to enjoy the freedoms and discovery based on the pursuit of joy, and our own sense of a good life? In his interactions with students, Michael tries to spark and ignite the joy in a room, because he sees it, feels it, and believes it's there. A "start with joy" approach is only possible because he truly enjoys working with first-year students. When asked what emotion is most central to his professional pedagogical practice, he doesn't hesitate before saying the word *joy*. This word reflects his own origin story as a first-year student when he first discovered the study of Ancient Greece. It surprised him. And he decided in his own academic journey to follow joy and to make decisions as a scholar based on the perpetuation of that feeling inside of him and the recreation of the possibility of feeling joy in the spaces and places where he is invited to introduce Ancient Greece to others. Michael remembers his own first-year student self:

Michael: I have a very vivid memory of being a first-year student...my memory of coming into the university of feeling like I wanted to major in everything. [I chose] joy. I had to make an early decision when I was a first-year student of whether to follow the academic exploration that brought me joy or to use some other criterion to decide on major course decisions and life plan and I went for the joy. I took the courses that I loved as electives, and majored in classics, and it just has continued to be a source of joy for me...What I feel and remember when I go into a lecture theatre, is how happy I was [in my first year] in those settings and how much joy this exploration brings. I like the idea that if I come with that feeling of [being] genuinely really happy to be here—even if it's a hard day—I know this next 45 minutes it's going to be great...for me at least!

Now that he's studied Aristotle for many years, he reflects on his first-year self through the interpretive lens of having an Aristotelian *longing to understand* and recalls the discernment and development in his academic identity that arose from debates, disagreements and deep discussions with his professors and peers. In its ideal state, a marriage of fire and joy equals *home*.

Michael: One more thing about joy and fire, when you bring the two together it makes me think of home, because home is where the hearth fire is, in a sense, or the fire that we gather around and there's a joy and a light in that context. I think there's something of being at home in that setting of the classroom too that feels meaningful.

Michael has a capacity to pose questions while demonstrating expert understanding of the ancient Mediterranean development of higher education as an instrument for fostering civic responsibility, and in his curiosity to draw out the thoughts and questions of first-year students is remarkable. Michael can turn a large lecture hall of new philosophers into a bustling dialogue, unearthing connections between classmates and generating new ways of approaching a problem by drawing on a collective imagination.

Michael: By the end of the class, I hope to bring out patterns and show [students] how [patterns can] link in constructive ways.

Can Michael turn a large lecture-hall in a research-intensive university into a *home*? He's under no illusion that joy for Ancient Greek philosophy is easily contagious, and he creates a classroom space around the hope that even if not everybody is going to find joy in the subject.

Michael: I want them to love the experience of being in the room.

### 6.3.3 *In dialogue and discernment*

The promise of education is the promise of *dialogue*—dialogue with ideas, knowledge, wisdom, difference, and possibility. Philosophical inquiry delights Michael and provides a continual source of pedagogical inspiration for him. In moving towards a discourse wherein students can parse the difference between truth and falsehood, Michael approaches first year classrooms as dialogical spaces—as places where a student can be in dialogue with all of the people and disciplines in the academy before choosing their discipline. He tries to create conditions for this in his classroom. Dialogue demands a standard of care, respect, rigor, and inquiry. The grounding into dialogue is also a way of rooting in the philosophical foundation of dialectic and the role of dialogue in Ancient Greece.

Michael: I always talk about Plato's Allegory of the Cave somehow for better or for worse. Nobody can really agree, right away, what would be outside the cave until you start to realize that the conversation we're having itself is really what Plato's talking about. That it's the way that we can listen to each other, and by hearing you and by maybe starting to learn to hear myself and listen to the implicit rules of respect, and rigor, and inquiry that guide our conversation, we realize that that world outside the cave is not an answer to the questions, but it's how we learn to ask questions. That's why it's an allegory for education.

In Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, the promise of education is the promise humans can emerge from the cave where *opinions are based on shadows of facts* (Plato, 1974). In the Humanities the promise of dialogue can, with great intention, take shape in a classroom and in the dialogue, the professor's research agenda can collide with the pedagogical agenda in ways

that appear seamless. If you infuse delight into pedagogy, as Michael does, it is the fire that fuels the imagination.

#### **6.3.4 *Tossing a pebble***

In the residence hall dining room, students often share stories with him about their experiences with other faculty members in class. The stories teach him how important it is for professors to critically reflect on their positions of power, and to attend to the weight of their words. Professors' words have the power to lift the sense of possibility in a classroom, but they also have the power to diffuse joy, and stifle students' belief that they can contribute to the scholarly conversation. Michael credits living in residence with first-year students and working with students and student leaders (upper-year, formally trained undergraduate students who enact leadership positions in campus programs, like Jump Start or Residence Life) for helping him to become a better teacher.

Michael: I've noticed that there are behaviours in the research professoriate [where we] may come into a first-year classroom never having taught before and having received no teaching about teaching or no context. I think there's some of those behaviours that don't help first-year students feel comfortable talking. I remember in dinners with first-year students and residents hearing about just the one kind of time that the professor sarcastically shoots down a question. Which seems funny to them, but then for the next three years it means somebody is like, "Thank God I didn't ask a question, or if I did I'm never doing that again." I don't think we all realize that. What feels like tossing a pebble from one place [the professor's position of power], it's like a boulder falling somewhere else.

In sum, Michael models the very practice—the joy of inquiry—that he invites his students to take up and engage in as they become scholars (albeit beginners) in the academy.

## Chapter 7: Discussion

In 1978, Maxine Greene invited teachers and educational researchers to examine learning environments as “landscapes” in the book *Landscapes of Learning*. For analytic purposes, this dissertation intentionally focuses on the landscape of teaching and the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers as a way to better see and understand the landscape of learning for first-year students. I sought emergent themes in this case study’s data that represented actions, perspectives or behaviours the faculty members take or enact within the landscape of teaching first-year students. Consider how the academic identity of a high school student shifts into the academic identity of a university scholar in the abrupt and often disarming pedagogical transition from one educational landscape to another. In the first-year at university, students learn far more than their course curriculum; they learn how to study for exams, tackle the navigational challenges of a new environment, make friends, and chart the constellation of courses required to obtain degrees. Later in their undergraduate degree journey, they declare a major (or majors), and align loyalties to particular disciplinary departments. Students quickly reframe their sense of place and identity as they enter physical, programmatic and conceptual spaces within an educational institution.

The campus landscape itself poses one particular challenge to students as they learn to navigate and negotiate a new physical place; but of more profound importance is the landscape of *learning* at a research-intensive university—a place governed by the explicit and implicit academic rules, standards, and norms. And, to further complicate the transition, the landscape of learning at a university is further siloed into disciplinary landscapes, with their own particular set of rules, standards, and norms (Huber & Morreale, 2002; Pace & Middendorf, 2004; Shulman,

2005). Students arrive onto UBC campus and negotiate their identities as learners and emergent scholars within the campus' unique contextual landscape<sup>27</sup>.

## 7.1 Introducing the themes

After analyzing the data and writing the individual case narratives, I reviewed all of the coded interview and teaching philosophy scripts, journals and memory-work. Based on my interpretation, three overarching themes emerged from analysis of the data across all cases. I titled the overarching themes: *Invite Students into the Scholarly Community*, *Enter with Expectation*, and *Develop a Personal Approach to Pedagogy*. Each of the themes is centred on a verb and the verb reflects common actions or behaviours reflected in the data. Sub-themes also surfaced, and will be included in the discussion below as a way to organize the thematic analysis.

The thematic groupings presented below are not so cleanly siloed in the daily act of teaching and learning, but they are separated in this dissertation for analytical purposes. I sought themes with the spirit of *exploratory* research, wherein the researcher offers the field—in this case, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning field—concepts worthy of further exploration in future research (Yin, 2018). In this chapter I explore a theoretically informed, in-depth exploration of the case themes that emerged from a close analysis of the data.

---

<sup>27</sup> At UBC, the land is the unceded, traditional, ancestral territory of the Musqueam people. Only the Musqueam community can welcome students to the land. Therefore, in the context of this chapter, I define “landscapes” as being the conceptual landscape of scholarship and “academia”, and the physical spaces on a campus where academic exchange are most likely—but not exclusively—occur (classrooms and office). If educators are committed to decolonization, we must problematize our role as scholars and stewards of the academic ‘landscape’ in campus environments built upon unceded territories. The UBC academic community has much work to do in this regard, including a commitment to enacting the Indigenous Strategic Plan as part of the new UBC Next Century Strategic Plan: <https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/core-areas/local-global-engagement/strategy-17-indigenous-engagement/>

## 7.2 Theme #1: Invite students into the scholarly community

First-year students work hard to make meaning of the academy by viewing themselves as characters in the new and unique setting, seeking institutional narratives and scholarly connections to answer their most pressing questions: “Will my contributions matter?”, “Am I smart enough?”, “Will anyone notice me?” and “Do I belong?”. They might be overwhelmed by the landscape of a large-scale, research-intensive university campus; in particular, the size of their first-year classes and the geographic scale of the campus itself. At the same time that students search for purpose on a campus, faculty and staff dedicate themselves to the creation of structures, programs, and course design that can better support students’ undergraduate socialization (Weidman, 1989), “performing a complex and multifaceted [approach], with activity occurring in the classroom and the laboratory as well as in the residence halls and the student union [requiring]...many individuals [to] play a role in the educational process, including faculty, administrators, staff members, and students” (Benjamin, Earnest, Gruenewald, & Arthur, 2007, p. 13). Despite the scope of the activity, of paramount importance is the perception a first-year student has that they are invited into the scholarly community by faculty members—their teachers, like Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste (Astin, Parrott, Korn, & Sax, 1997; Kim & Sax, 2017; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Romsa, Bremer, & Lewis, 2017; Trolan & Parker, 2017). The student-faculty interaction can assist students in developing “different forms of positive self-concept during college including academic/intellectual self-concept” (Kim & Sax, 2017, p. 112).

Examples abound demonstrating ways in which Michael, Fok-Shuen, and Celeste interact with first-year students in ways that indicate they understand the scale and magnitude of shift in learning landscape, and they welcome first-year students to the

scholarly community with a spirit of invitation. Therefore, I interpret this theme as the approach Michael, Fok-Shuen and Celeste take to creating create *welcoming* and *inviting* landscapes (within classrooms, offices, and other locations on campus) and places/spaces (within scholarly community and disciplinary discourse) for first-year students. This theme is reflected in Galle's (2017) assertion that the institutions themselves (conceptual institutions—academia—and physical institutions—campus buildings and organizational structures) are learning spaces/place for first-year students, and faculty members are critically important guides:

As students acclimate themselves to all that their arrival entails, the college also presents to them its faces— the scale of the campus and each of its physical spaces, its permanent members (faculty and staff), the culture and traditions of the institution, its academic program, its values, and its sense of community. If we are being thoughtful about this inevitable engagement of student and campus, then we must recognize there is an implicit invitation to educators to imagine and reimagine campus venues for learning and teaching using disciplinary content and place as the guiding organizational principles. (p. 86)

Notions of “place-consciousness” invite educational researchers to examine the *places* where learning occurs as sites of curricular possibility wherein educators explicitly attend to place in their pedagogical approach (Greene, 1978; Gruenwald, 2003; Shannon & Galle, 2017; Smith, 2002).

First-year students enter academic institutions as newcomers and they seek spaces, places and people that confirm their *sense of belonging* in the community. I present this theme drawing on the analysis that crystallized around notions of place, navigation, and belonging. As first-year students navigate the macro-landscape—the university and academia as a whole—they are also scanning the distinct discipline-specific scholarly landscape under pressure to declare a disciplinary major, often by their second year of undergraduate study. A sense of belonging is a person's or group's basic need to feel

welcomed into and feel valued in their community (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, & Alvarez, 2007; Lieberman, 2013; Lizzio, 2006; Marshall, Zhou, Gervan, & Wiebe, 2012). If the “undergraduate experience [is] a set of successive challenges that each student faces and addresses” then those “that develop the sense of belonging, one of the early challenges, will be more likely to persist, to learn, and to flourish” (Galle, 2017, pp. 85-86). Many may even find their joy.

Michael, Fok-Shuen, and Celeste all make it a part of their pedagogical approach with first-year students to nurture a sense of belonging to their disciplinary academic culture and the academic culture of the university, more broadly. They each take it upon themselves to translate the unspoken assumptions and norms of academic culture by engaging in critical dialogue with students about the cultural norms of the university classroom and their discipline, and giving them access to a deep understanding of everything from possible help-seeking behaviours and how to develop relationships with their teachers, to the formal conventions of being part of a scholarly community (Grayson & Grayson, 2003; Lizzio, 2006). Through their actions, they each demonstrate how a powerful part of making a successful transition into a new learning environment is the students’ capacity to develop a sense of belonging to an academic culture, rather than only sharing what academic support resources are available to them (Lizzio, 2006). They also show genuine interest for students’ previous life experiences (prior to university) while simultaneously introducing their academic discipline with attention to the importance of instilling wonder and a sense of capability in the students:

- Fok-Shuen attends to students’ experience of the shifting landscape of math education, from the cultural constructions in K-12 systems to the cultural

landscape of learning alongside and within a community of academic mathematicians.

- Celeste attends to the inter-disciplinary complexities within Biology, and creates learning experiences that result in students becoming more confident science communicators beyond the academic community. She also shares with students her educational research expertise (as a Professor of Teaching) through thoughtfully timed ‘learning-about-learning’ activities in her courses, thereby providing students with tools they can use to enhance their scholarly capacity and engage in a classroom meta-dialogue about university learning.
- Michael attends to his responsibility to provide a first impression for young Philosophy and Classical Studies scholars; for most of his first-year students, an introductory course in university is the first time they have taken a course in this discipline—most K-12 schools do not teach Philosophy or Classical Studies, and if they do it is in the realm of “elective.” Michael gives them an opportunity to engage in critical dialogue about contemporary societal themes that he then roots in the discourses and rigorous thought processes found in Ancient Greek Philosophy.

The academic transition from high school to university can be difficult for many students. Grade averages are, typically, much lower in university than high school grade averages, and stories about students who drop out circulate as a form of fear-based, extrinsic motivation throughout first-year communities (Grayson & Grayson, 2003). With such high entrance requirements to get into competitive, Canadian research-intensive universities these days we can assume that most new students are academically inclined and they find a strong

sense of purpose and intellectual sense of ‘place’ and belonging in their scholarly pursuits (Galle, 2017). Students arrive at university highly motivated to make meaning of their new academic identities in relationship to their teachers (faculty members) and each other (Astin et al., 1997). However, once at university, students often seem to struggle to establish effective studying habits and the implicit rules and cultures in the academy remain elusive to them; the danger in this transition is the potential a student can lack sense of belonging and purpose in their scholarly pursuits (Grayson & Grayson, 2003; Lizzio, 2006). In searching for a “place” in the scholarly community, they must navigate both the course material they are studying while simultaneously learning about the rules and cultural norms of academia and of their Faculty or School, specifically.

In Student Development literature, researchers use the term “undergraduate socialization” to describe students’ holistic engagement in campus communities (Wiedman, 1989). Socializing students into their scholarly community is critically important because the one common desire binding the entire first-year student community is the desire to learn and to obtain an undergraduate degree. First-year students benefit by interacting with faculty members like Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste, who move beyond “socialization” and establish a sense of belonging as scholarly hosts for their disciplines, taking the time to attend to their transition experiences and interacting with them in relational and welcoming ways. Such interactions can contribute to student retention, academic success, and institutional affinity, not only in first year, but throughout a student’s degree (Kuh, 2001; Kuh et al., 2005; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2004). In this case study, I found numerous and consistent references, descriptions, and examples demonstrating Celeste, Michael, and Fok-Shuen’s attention to introducing first-year students to their scholarly discipline in ways

that indicates a desire to learn alongside students by seeing the discipline through the fresh perspective new scholars can bring.

### ***7.2.1 Sub-theme #1.1: Create dialogue in offices and classrooms***

Classroom interactions can be limited—in the faculty to student ratio interpersonal sense—because of the size and scale of a typical lecture hall. Alternatively, the office-hours model can work well...for the small percentage of students who attend (Smith, Chen, Berndtson, Burson, & Griffin, 2017; Griffin, Cohen, Berndtson, Burson, Camper, Chen, & Smith, 2014). In this section I explore how Michael, Fok-Shuen and Celeste attempt to harness the possibilities for classroom and office-hour conversation with first-year students, and how they enter into these conversations with a genuine spirit of dialogue, not monologue.

What if faculty interactions with first-year students resulted in a “dialogic” environments in which students are “answerable” for their actions and “acknowledge [their] agency within a specific context and ...are prepared to answer to other people who are affected by [their] deeds” (p. 59)? During interactions with faculty members, first-year students rehearse a scholarly script with the people in the university who embody and manifest the academy through their professional and personal commitment to scholarship: faculty members. Students also learn what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like to take responsibility for their learning and scholarly actions in their interactions with faculty members. Scholarly rehearsal (i.e. practicing the behaviours and mindsets associated with academia) most effectively happens during classroom interactions and course-based “office hours.” Through these conversations—ideally dialogic, not monologic—students begin to embody a self-directed sense of agency and responsibility within the scholarly community. Edmiston and Wilhelm (1998) define “genuine dialogue” as being how “we imagine how the world looks from another perspective at the same time as we see from our

own point of view” (p. 58). Attempts at engaging in “genuine dialogue” in schools can often disintegrate into a teacher-controlled interaction best described as a series of monologues, with teachers delivering knowledge to students (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1998). Monologic classroom frameworks lead to students “shifting blame and responsibility” when they are called upon to be build self-directed agency in the classroom (Edmiston & Wilhelm, p. 58).

The data demonstrates how Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste each indicate a curiosity to meet students *outside the four walls of the lecture hall* and a curiosity to connect with other educators on campus to create a collegial community of care for first-year students. Successful undergraduate socialization movements are the result of teachers’ efforts to move (with care and curiosity) towards students and students’ efforts to move towards faculty, in and out of the classroom (Astin, et al., 1997; Chory & Offstein, 2017; Kim & Sax, 2017; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Wiedman, 1989). The cultural practice of “office hours” in universities “represent[s] the institutional commitment to student-faculty interaction” and the commitment to creating spaces on campuses where students and faculty can meet in a less formal space than the classroom (Smith et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2014). There can be a higher likelihood for connection and relationship during office hours, and a relationship with a *caring* faculty member can greatly influence a student’s sense of belonging at university, which in turn increases their motivation to do the difficult work required to learn.

Unfortunately, the uptake for office hours remains very low and too few students heed the invitation, in part because the concept of office hours is unfamiliar for many first-year student (Smith et al., 2017). One way to interpret this behaviour is to blame students for not making enough of an effort. There could be validity in some criticisms of students, but a more generous interpretation could be to look at the broader culture and story of “office hours” in higher

education and find inspiration in examples like Fok-Shuen, Michael, and Celeste—all of whom assume students want to learn, and who assume they are equally responsible for making the invitation land. Celeste, Fok-Shuen and Michael all demonstrate a determination to engage with students both inside and outside the classroom as a way to seed interpersonal, less formal, and more dialogical discussions with first-year students. The data also suggests they are intentionally disrupting traditional notions of ‘learning space’ in their non-traditional use of campus spaces.

For most faculty members teaching in large-scale, research-intensive university campuses in Canada, the experience of teaching first-year courses is, typically, an experience of teaching in lecture halls to large groups (100–400+) of students. In each of Fok-Shuen, Michael, and Celeste’s teaching histories with first-year students, such is the predominant image and it reflects the most common first-year teaching context within the specific context of a large, publicly-funded, Canadian research-intensive university. Ted Aoki (1986/2005) reflects on classrooms as places where students “arrange themselves” around the “teacher’s intention” indicated by the placement of objects in the room, the furniture, the writing on a chalkboard, the arrangement of books on a desk, and the emotional or physical expression from the teacher facial expressions, body language, and placement of themselves in the classroom (p. 159). The placement of objects in the classroom can be an expression of how a teacher’s decisions create “pedagogic situations” that hold curricular planning documents as living and breathing within “lived situations pregnantly alive in the presence of people” (Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 159). Curriculum as documents of “doing” describe what, where, and how students and teachers will “do the learning” and “do the teaching” to get the pre-requisite knowledge before moving to the next step (Aoki, 1986/2005, p.161). Aoki provides warning to the danger of understanding curriculum in this way,

in that it forgets that curricular documents are also subjective, written by humans in relationships, and infused with their values, biases, and assumptions.

Aoki reminds us that teaching is “fundamentally a mode of *being*” (1986/2005, p. 162). Building on Aoki’s wisdom, the case data suggests that curriculum as *being* can be possible in classrooms with over 200 students, but we tend to over-focus on the *doing* (e.g., lecturing, clicker-clicking, power pointing, note-taking) because our imaginations might be limited to a false notion that human interaction between teachers and students can only happen in the smallest possible student-teacher ratios. Michael, Fok-Shuen and Celeste counter such a narrative. They approach lecture halls with a pedagogical and personal attention to creating a space that feels more like an intimate dialogue than a lecture-based monologue. In all three cases, they also eschew the use of technological aids and devices as attention-grabbing tools and they default to more embodied forms of classroom engagement strategies.

- Michael draws the entire class into a philosophical discussion and moves through the classroom conversation with the purpose of connecting the threads and reflecting cohesive argument back to the students based on what he sees and hears in the crowd.
- Fok-Shuen demonstrates “being a mathematician” in front of the students, but then moves the class into dialogue through his expert posing of questions and moving students into math problem-negotiation circles.
- Celeste embraces the classroom as a play-space, where she can break the rules of common practice in a lecture hall and reimagine walls as galleries and the four corners as conference rooms; in a newly build collaborative learning lecture hall, she went as far as to reimagine the course final exam as a reflection of the classroom itself in her design of a collaborative exam.

There are reasons why a faculty member may indicate a preference *not* to teach first-year students and their reasons for such a preference are valid, considering these challenges. For example, introductory courses tend to favor large class sizes and managing scale can demand considerable time and preparation in addition to the time and attention a faculty member spends on course content and curriculum development. As academic grading policies shift in British Columbia's K-12 educational sector (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/assessment>), first-year courses often become the place where discrepancies in academic preparedness first emerge; therefore, first-year instructors play a 'translator' role as they bridge the expectations and skills in the transition from secondary to post-secondary. Introductory courses provide a breadth of content relative to a given discipline, and many faculty members will have to revisit concepts they are not considered 'expert' in as they teach these courses; for many faculty members, they might prefer to teach courses at the upper-year level that are more in line with their focused areas of disciplinary expertise.

Many early career research-stream faculty are advised to concentrate on research rather than teaching and upper-year courses can present a smaller, more focused group of students, thereby reducing the complexities in their teaching duties. Educating large classes of new-to-university students while 'on stage' in a lecture hall can be pedagogically challenging and many faculty members have not been prepared as teachers for these sorts of contexts. I share these challenges with the intention to name an awareness that there are other possibilities that are not fully explored in this study. There are difficult realities in teaching first-year courses at research-intensive universities that I do not dwell upon or deeply interrogate, but that is not because I am ignoring to the existence of such difficulties.

### 7.2.2 *Sub-theme #1.2: Artful conversations*

Celeste explicitly refers to her teaching practice as an “art,” not a “skill,” evoking Maxine Greene’s (1995) call to educators to see their classroom spaces as places of artistic meaning-making and authentic dialogue. In each case, the faculty members approach their classrooms artfully, paying attention to the placement of themselves in relationship to the objects in the room, the lesson content, the time of day, and the students’ lived realities. The teachers draw on abstraction, metaphor, and story to bring students into the learning space, thereby harnessing the power of artistic thinking to buoy and inspire the collective imagination and scholarly dialogue.

In educational spaces, both literal like a classroom and figurative like a curriculum plan, Greene (1995) invites the Arts into the process of nurturing the students’ and teachers’ “social imagination” (p. 111). If imagination is the ability to see what is not already present and to propose possibilities for what could become present, then “social imagination” provides a visionary framework for the possibility for social connection, social belonging, and social change in first-year courses. According to Greene (1995):

We have to be articulate enough and able to exert ourselves to name what we see around us...the “silences.” These may be thought of as deficiencies in need of repair. It requires imagination to be conscious of them, to find our own lived worlds lacking because of them. (p. 111)

In support of those teachers willing to explore the Arts, Greene encourages less of an emphasis on Arts as aesthetic product, and more of an attention to how the Arts encourage process words such as “making, creating, weaving” into our thinking-about-curriculum, infusing a space with “the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group’s becoming” (p. 39). It’s the experience of tension between planned and lived experience that is the human experience of aliveness. In valuing being alive in our classrooms, Michael, Fok-Shuen and Celeste honour and value the

experiences first-year students, teachers, and the scholars in their discipline bring in the day-to-day, artistic imaginings of pedagogy, suggesting our evaluation of teaching and learning could move beyond means to end measurements and towards dialogic possibilities of how to be together (Aoki, 1981/2005).

### **7.3 Theme #2: Enter with expectation**

Fok-Shuen, Celeste and Michael invite first-year students into the scholarly community, and contained in the spirit of their invitation is an expectation that they—as expert scholars—will benefit from their interactions with first-year students (i.e. newcomer scholars). They enter into the interaction with first-year students with an expectation to serve but also to gain. In this study’s data, the anecdotes, concepts, and language clearly reflected a foundational belief that first-year students are contributors and necessary members of the scholarly community. Upon acceptance to university, first-year students are already established *as members of the academy*, and they do not need to jump through a series of additional hoops or receive additional “help” before they are declared a part of the community. Granted, they are newcomer scholars in need of apprenticeship and guidance, but the difference in perspective results in a profound shift away from a welcome shaped by perceptions of deficit and towards a welcome shaped by appreciation. The data also demonstrates how each faculty member enters the teaching landscape with the expectation students will do the work of learning—they create spaces where active-learning is an expectation.

As much as teachers step into the classroom space intending to enact their professional identities as teachers, students step into the classroom intending to enact their role as learners; in short, the unspoken but understood pedagogical contract. If a teacher sets the expectation that students work hard as learners in the classroom environment, then the two actors in the education

system—teacher and student— work together to achieve a high standard of work. In each case, Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste expect a high degree of engagement from their first-year students and they have established teaching practices that show students their efforts *matter* in the course unfolding. Stories from the cases that illustrate this theme include:

- Fok-Shuen’s depiction of the potential inherent in “elementary mathematics” and the capacity for first-year students to manage difficult concepts with the refinement of basic tools. In introducing difficult mathematical problems at the beginning of the course, and by eschewing “gentle teaching,” he sets high expectations at the outset because he believes students have the capacity to work hard and rise to the occasion. In approaching his interactions with first-year students with this ethos, he celebrates effort (with the solution to a big, sticky, wild problem) and sends a message to students that their work matters beyond a test score.
- Celeste’s assertion that, in her courses, she accepts the work of *teaching*, but *learning* is students’ “work.” Although she can provide guidance as a teacher by teaching strategies for learning, she does not take the credit for student learning. Learning is not a series of magical a-ha moments; rather, learning is the result of sustained, engaged, effort and Celeste sets the expectation for students that they are responsible to show up for themselves and make the effort to learn. By explicitly naming learning as “work,” she recognizes the effort it takes to learn and places value on students’ effort.
- Michael’s elicitation of ideas from first-year students for his own scholarly research trajectories indicate he deeply values the contributions they make to philosophical inquiry. By centring his first-year classroom pedagogy on dialogue featuring mutual respect,

rigorous discernment of thought, and contemplative inquiry, Michael invites students to reflect and refine their perspective so that they can engage in scholarly discourse with confidence.

### **7.3.1 Sub-theme #2.1: Discourse of ‘possibility’**

As educators, the most important thing we are tasked to take care of are the intellectual lives of our students and of ourselves with erudition and intellectual courage. In the “space-in-between” high school and university, first-year undergraduate students need educators who will invite them into places and spaces where the conversations *matter*, and we will extend such an invitation if we believe that first-year students’ contributions *to the conversations* matter. Further analysis of this theme draws on Peter McLaren’s (1988) critical perspective in curriculum theory, urging educational researchers to investigate “schooling from the dual perspectives of ritual and performance...[seeking] important explanations for a wide range of patterned behaviors and transactions that exist inside” educational institutions (p. 5).

McLaren categorizes teachers into three “roles”: the “teacher-as-liminal servant”; the “teacher-as-entertainer” and the “teacher-as-hegemonic-overlord”, with the ideal role being “teacher-as-liminal-servant” (1988, p. 164). This role embodies “the best attributes of a teacher [enacting curriculum] within a critical pedagogy” wherein the teacher sees classroom interaction with first-year students as an “encounter” that is worthy of “both a discourse of critique and possibility” (McLaren, 1988, p. 170). Very often, McLaren observed students are “actively engaged by the instructor but...they remained isolated and unreflective viewers” of the teacher’s actions, as though “being entertained” by the teacher; hence, McLaren names this the ritual performance of “teacher-as-entertainer” (p. 164). Finally, McLaren observed, and warned against, the most damaging, and far too common, performance of the “teacher-as-hegemonic-

overlord,” where “knowledge [is] passed on perfunctorily—as though it were a tray of food pushed under a cell door” and the students sit in a “numbing state of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual emptiness” (1988, p. 165).

Because most first-year course instructors at large, research-intensive universities teach in lecture halls, McLaren’s (1988) “teacher-as-entertainer” metaphor may provide the most illuminating analysis for the first-year curricular experience, as courses literally take place *in theatres* where students are “too often reduced to the role of pure spectators who assimilate[e] knowledge about things rather than of things in relation to other things (knowledge as lived experience)” (p. 166). In the “teacher-as-entertainer” paradigm, students in large lectures become “isolated viewers” who are entertained by the an “actively engaged” teacher; therefore, the classroom becomes a theatre and the “students become an audience” within the teaching and learning experience (McLaren, 1993, p. 114). Even more worrying might be the first-year student learning experience within a “teacher-as-hegemonic-overlord” paradigm, in which faculty members hold disdain for the students’ lack of knowledge, and talk *at them*, rather than *with* or *for them*, delivering content from a position of expert knowledge delivery.

In the context of this case study, a “teacher-as-liminal-servant” approach would place first-year scholars as academic community members wherein teachers regard students’ *knowing* alongside their *not-knowing* in respectful balance, understanding “learning as more than a one-way road from ignorance to knowledge” (McLaren, 1993, p. 114). When teachers place value on student learning, they approach learning as worthy work, akin to professional efforts. In each case, the teachers design their interactions with first-year students with mutual effort and reciprocal engagement as a core principle. In addition to valuing students’ work, they also celebrate their learning effort whenever possible. Each faculty member in this study shows up to

up in class with first-year students as “co-celebrants in the learning process...characterized by intense involvement and participation” (McLaren, 1988, p. 165). Thus, we see in each of the three cases the teacher as liminal servant in their service to the university via their service to first-year students and their pedagogical care for first-year course curriculum.

### **7.3.2 Sub-Theme #2.2: Expectation and appreciation**

In taking a broader and more critical view of the cases, it is important to note that each of these faculty members have received high levels of institutional validation and departmental recognition at UBC through the receipt of teaching awards, high-status administrative positions, and articles published about them in mainstream university newspapers. With this in mind, I cannot help but wonder if their capacity to enact a “liminal servant” approach with first-year students might be bolstered by UBC’s asset-based narrative about them as individuals themselves in the system (McLaren, 1988). A study of teaching-focused faculty (TFF) by Rawn and Fox (2018) suggests that the degree to which TFF are “integrated into mainstream institutional culture” can influence the value they place on their professional position (p. 619). This is not surprising. There is a notable *absence* of data in this case study’s data-set reflecting Fok-Shuen, Michael or Celeste’s frustration with the university or a sense of being under-appreciated or under-valued as a teacher within the university. Considering the research-intensive nature of UBC, such an absence is striking and raises concerns about the transferability of Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste’s approach to other faculty who are not as seen and valued in the institution. Do these cases reflect ‘typical’ conditions in the first-year teaching context? Or do they reflect ‘extraordinary’ conditions insofar as they feature three faculty members who have each received high degrees of institutional appreciation and validation in the form of teaching awards, administrative posts, and published university newspaper articles? In other words, does such a

high degree of institutional expectation and appreciation for faculty create teaching conditions that allow for increased conditions of expectation and appreciation for one's students?

Shifting back to a focus on Michael, Fok-Shuen, and Celeste's articulation of first-year students, the data shows a prevalence of appreciative language when they describe their enthusiasm to host scholarly conversations with first-year students. In First-Year Experience and SoTL literature, descriptions of first-year teaching and learning often lean in the direction of discussions about how first-year students can benefit from the *help* and *support* of faculty. If we think about the first-year student body as a 'community-in-need of help' and a faculty member as an 'expert' in a position of institutional power, then a discourse about teaching and learning could easily slip into deficit-based discourse. In other words, if an educator believes the first-year student enters the academy *lacking* something (a select list of commonly referenced 'somethings': knowledge, time management skills, maturity, language ability, self-regulation, etc.), then there is a possibility for the educator to develop a sense of professional reward based on their belief that they have 'helped' address the students' state of deficit.

In this study, Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste consistently reference the ways in which they (and the university) benefit from interacting with first-year students. The data lacked language use that indicated they believe they are doing the first-year students a favour with their time and attention. Instead, the data surfaces a counter impression: Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste frame their preference for teaching first-year students by drawing on language indicating a belief that students infuse their teaching career with purpose, joy, and disciplinary discovery. Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste indicate with their language that they truly believe first-year students' contributions *matter*:

- Fok-Shuen introduces students to difficult, beautiful, complicated mathematics because he believes they deserve it and can handle it and he enjoys experiencing the problem alongside them. He also challenges his colleagues when they design programs, courses, or university processes upon deficit-based assumptions about first-year students.
- Celeste validates and celebrates the whole transition experience—in and beyond her classroom, in and beyond academic scholarship—and her attention to the whole experience deepens her professional satisfaction and seeds her own educational research. She attends to the power and possibility of teenagers in the academy, and she does not use language that rejects or dehumanizes first-year students’ holistic life experience.
- Michael celebrates the interdisciplinary richness a first-year classroom contains—a richness unique to first-year because students have not started to silo into disciplinary tracks. He harnesses the “excitement of intellectual possibility” in the first-year domain and uses language that reflects excitement and possibility.

Even when newcomer academics interact with tenured faculty (a.k.a. “the academy”), those interactions can be shaped by the perception that, as contributing members to the learning and scholarly space at a university, students arrive as probationary not credited members of the academy. If a teacher’s default position as an educator is to assume a group of students *will struggle*, then the teacher is more likely to adopt paternalistic language when communicating with the student, and the choice of language can, in turn, limit the possibilities first-year students to contribute in the academy. Drawing on the theme of “Enter with Expectation”, I focus in on language, specifically, and the use of asset-based or deficit-based language in the data. As a

broad example of what I mean by “deficit-based” language, consider descriptions of first-year students from paternalistic and, frankly, “othering” or dehumanizing frames. For example:

- using “us/them” and “we/they” dialects can indicate othering and exclusion;
- descriptions of a first-year university that draw on survival narratives and boot camp references can indicate deficit insofar as they assume a first-year student has not yet earned the right to contribute to research and scholarly dialogue (i.e., first-year as a place to “learn the ropes” and earn the right to contribute);
- neoliberal discourses often frame the first-year student body as a collective institutional revenue stream, with only financial (rather than academic or creative) benefits to the university enterprise highlighted;
- and references to first-year students as “kids” or “teenagers” often unearths further deficit-based descriptors <sup>28</sup>.

---

<sup>28</sup> Zooming out: The prevalence of deficit-based discourses surrounding teenagers is not unique to higher education. Teenagers are often positioned as a demographic in society needing to be “helped” or “controlled” by adults. Reporting on teenagers from the 1940s until early years of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Western media has consistently demonstrated the tendency towards narrative laced with disdainful curiosity and stand-offish objectification—descriptions of modern hoodies echo description of 1950s bobby socks and 1970s bell-bottoms; modern hip-hop analysis echoes earlier descriptions of 1940s Swing, then the Beatles, and 80s punk. In very recent history, a subtle discursive shift in the media reporting on teenagers is a result of neuro-scientific research (Jensen & Nutt, 2015; Siegel, 2014) that focuses on the powerful influence of neurological development in the teenage brain. In another version of our modern compulsion towards techno-scientifically reductive analyses of complex human behaviour, neuroscience now provides capable and controlled adults a brain scan “map” that helps us better understand, undermine, and control the incapable and uncontrollable “teenager.” Articles in reputable American news publications—*The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *The New Yorker*, to name a few—responded to teenage brain research with titles like: “Why Teenagers are the Worst” (Yorker, et al., 2015); “Can Teenage Defiance be Manipulated for Good?” (Ripley, 2016); “The Teenage Brain: There May Be a Silver Lining to all That Misbehaviour” (Kim, 2016); and “Why Teenagers Act Crazy” (Friedman, 2014). Such titles demonstrate a tendency to spin snapshots of teenagers’ physical, psychological, behavioural, and now neurological states into patronizing and didactic diatribes about their problematic presence in orderly adult society. Could we, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, justifiably title articles about other demographics with such flippancy? As a thought experiment, insert “child,” “adult,” “elderly,” or a distinct race, cultural group, or profession into the titles of the articles above. Rather than spinning the ground-breaking neuro-scientific discoveries into asset-based narratives that compel adults to discuss the creative “power and purpose” of the teenager in society (Siegel, 2014), the media largely spins a deficit-based narrative, urging adults to use the science to justify our troubling history of manipulating and segregating the teenage demographic.

As described in the Introduction chapter, “Asset-Based Community Development” (ABCD) is conceptual framework and community engagement approach that seeks to “build on the assets that are already found in the community and mobilize individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to build on their assets—not [overly] concentrate on their needs” (Rowland, 2008). In this study, the asset-based approach surfaced most profoundly in two ways: the ways in which the teachers placed *value* on first-years students’ efforts and contributions to the academy through the “work of learning,” and the ways in which the teachers used language that demonstrates and evokes the assumption that first-year students are an asset within the university community, and, in particular, to their own continual development as expert scholars.

#### **7.4 Theme #3: Develop a personal approach to pedagogy**

I interpret “Develop a Personal Approach to Pedagogy” as a theme that encapsulates images, metaphors, emotions, sense of professional stability and references to the body in the performance of teaching. Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste each demonstrate the importance of bringing themselves wholly into their teaching and they have each *developed a personal approach to pedagogical practice* with first-year students. The data analysis in this section compels the question: What could it mean to bring *oneself* into the scholarly community we create, as educators, with first-year students? When students first enter the university classroom (oftentimes a large lecture hall), they are met by faculty members who are also negotiating their own identities as teachers within the same contextual campus landscape. In the landscape of teaching and learning, Michael, Celeste and Fok-Shuen each find ways to bring a unique, personal interpretation of their discipline and their pedagogical selves into their interactions with first-year students. They are all tenured faculty members and throughout this section, the question lingers: How much does their status as tenured faculty members influence their

pedagogical practice? Both players—*student* and *teacher*—find themselves interacting daily with tensions and frustrations resulting from their position within their institutions' reward structures; while students vie for validation from their course grades and institutional credits, their teachers vie for validation as they move through either rigorous tenure and promotion processes or repeated applications for short-term teaching contracts (Acker & Webber, 2016; Jones, Gopaul, Weinrib, Metcalfe, Fisher, Gingras & Rubenson, 2014). In short, how a university invites both students and teachers to campus can have an influence on the students' and teachers' sense of belonging and sense of capacity to contribute to the university. The landscape of teaching creates the landscape of learning. The teachers at the heart of this study all mentioned the privileged position they are in as tenured faculty in comparison with their colleagues who teach first-year courses as non-tenure-track sessional instructors or contract lecturers. As tenured faculty, Michael, Fok-Shuen and Celeste have some conditions in place where they can set limits on their teaching and care-giving without threat to their employment. Having said that, it is important to note that some of the 'out of the classroom' UBC roles Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste enact—Prof-in-Residence, Prof-in-Collegia, Jump Start Faculty Fellow, to name a few—come with a modest financial stipend, teaching resources, and collegial support from student services professionals. With the prevalence of precariously employed teachers teaching first-year courses, there are serious questions about the emotional capacity of the first-year teaching community to effectively demonstrate care for first-year students when they are teaching and working in precarious conditions themselves.

In addition to drawing on more formal professional and technical constructs, a faculty member makes meaning of their teacher identity by drawing on images, stories, emotions and metaphors in their personal development of a pedagogical practice. I believe tenure matters in

this process and this case study reflects teaching conditions informed by the benefits of tenure. A faculty member hired into a tenure-track position may approach their teaching with a sense of self more grounded in the campus community because a tenure-track position demonstrates the mutual commitment between the place (the university) and the pedagogue (the faculty member).

Whereas each case in this study reflects deeply unique and contextually grounded descriptions of individual teaching practice, the thematic thread weaving them together is the notion of creative conceptualizations of one's personal pedagogy. Through my experience working with many university educators over the years, I have noticed that many will either shy away from or firmly root themselves in the jargon associated with educational research, theory, and pedagogical frameworks. I suspect that faculty member's rejection of educational jargon could be an attempt to stay aligned with their own discipline's research paradigm (remaining skeptical or respectful of other discipline's experts), or an attempt to stay connected to their personal approach and gut instincts about teaching. The latter suspicion is based on conversations with faculty where they share opinions that educational theory can be too serious, too confusing, too simplistic, too ethereal, or too technological. Rather than perceiving these faculty members' responses as a rejection of the body of educational research itself, instead I wonder if I may explore curriculum scholars who unearth more humanizing approaches evoking less of a "learning management" discourse, and instead evoking more interpersonal, critically reflective, permeable, and embodied discourse (Pinar, 2004). I remind the reader that this dissertation *is not* intended to be a victory narrative of 'great teaching' by three university faculty members. Rather, this dissertation is intended to be an exploration of the pedagogical processes and professional identities of teachers who indicate a preference for teaching first-year students. Pausing to dive deeply into the cases pedagogical processes and professional identities, I

discerned ways-of-framing pedagogy and professional identity rooted in art, story, metaphor, memory, and the body. Clearly, I was sensitive to this possibility. However, the data analysis bore this out in a number of ways.

While earlier themes explored the value of first-year students' intellectual and emotional efforts in the academy, this theme illustrates the value of metaphor and emotion—two deeply personal and subjective concepts—in shaping their teachers' pedagogical engagement.

#### **7.4.1 Sub-Theme #3.1: Metaphoric meaning-making**

*Metaphor: a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one and of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. (Metaphor, n.d.)*

With my disciplinary *what*—Curriculum and Pedagogy— there is a concept— theatre—that offers a working metaphor with which I explore my own pedagogical *how*. As a graduate student studying curriculum and pedagogy in higher education systems, theatre has also become a metaphoric tool to explore the big-picture *why*—its cast, characters, setting, and scripts. I often wonder:

- *Why* do we delay inviting newcomer scholars (first-year undergraduate students, in particular) to contribute to—and even to lead—educational movements in higher education?
- *Why* do we predetermine the script and relegate first-year students to the role of understudy?

Who we are as educators can be shaped as much by our *what* — philosophy, anatomy, sociology, architecture, chemistry—as it is by our *how*. Every discipline holds distilled concepts that can become lenses through which to view teaching and enact, understand, explore, and play as an educator: *fractals, neurons, networks, scaffolds*. In

SoTL, the term “signature pedagogies” can be used to describe the links between academic discipline and pedagogies designed to specifically reflect or harness the discipline (Shulman, 2005). However, in this section I have chosen to use the concept of ‘metaphor’ as an analytical frame instead of ‘signature pedagogy’. Using metaphor to make meaning of patterned behaviour inside organizations is not new, nor is it unique to education. Metaphors have been a cornerstone (note the intentional use of a metaphor—“cornerstone”) in organizational theory literature for many years (Alvesson, 1993; Bresler, Latta, & Prendergast, 2008; Morgan, 1986; Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2002). Applied specifically to their personal pedagogy, the teachers in this study draw on metaphor “to mediate their content knowledge [and] transform knowledge of content, pedagogy, students, and self into classroom actions” (Grant, 1992, p. 433). Drawing on images to make-meaning of one’s teaching, metaphor provides “both a frame, or a way of looking at things, and a process by which new understandings [about pedagogy can] come into existence” (Grant, 1992, p. 434). Examples from the data that illustrate this theme are:

- Fok-Shuen’s use of mathematical concepts to make meaning of the complex interplay between course content and individual student learning (fractals), classroom dynamics (percentages—80/20), and office hours interactions (vectors). In a brief turn from mathematics, Fok-Shuen also made sense of the “lecture” by saying the “lecture is a launch pad”.
- In welcoming students to the academy, her discipline, and her office, Celeste often referenced “opening doors.” As a teacher, she put herself on a ship, navigating the vessel as the teacher and acknowledging the efforts of the students who are rowing, thereby applying their strength and effort as learners to get the

boat to shore. She also compares first-year students to stem cells, early in the stage of specialization.

- Michael's use of metaphors was abundant—in his experience of the scale and energy of the first-year domain (an ant in a beehive), in the dialogue (hearth-fire) he builds and stokes in the classroom (home), in the individual scholarly pursuit (scholarly process (a traveler on a journey)), in the development of an idea to a research paper (pipeline), and in the unpacking of a professor's power in a classroom (boulder and a pebble). In his most descriptive, Michael draws on an allegory for education—Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*—to both serve as a metaphor (education as theatre) and a unit of course content.

To develop as discerning teachers—or artists, educators, craftspeople, professors, scholars, pedagogues... whichever title one chooses—some faculty members teaching first-year courses might *seek* formal curriculum or pedagogy theory to find words, phrases, and concepts that resonate with their unique professional approach. However, many teachers—as the data demonstrates with Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste—will discover their own descriptive metaphors to make meaning of their personal practice (Grant, 1992; Jensen, 2006; Schön, 1979, Schön, 1983). In a presentation to delegates at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Rodney H. Clarken (1997) said:

Our beliefs about knowledge, students and education influence our practices. The beliefs, images, about school influence metaphors about teaching. The current efforts to restructure and reform education might also be seen as efforts to restructure and reform the basic myths, beliefs, and metaphors of educators and the public about education. By using metaphors and visuals images, educators can arrive at a deeper understanding of their role and responsibility as educators, the nature of education, and the relationships between the teacher and student.  
(p. 10)

Day after day. Moment to moment. Teachers and students are simultaneously writing and enacting curriculum's living script—as we write the world, we are written by the words.

#### **7.4.2 Sub-Theme #3.2: Emotional care**

By creating a focus on emotion, I am placing my research within the community of scholars who pause, notice, attend to, and value the emotional energies manifest in teaching—in particular, the teachers' emotions as curricular constructs and the teachers' capacity to harness emotions in the classroom and office as honed pedagogical approach (Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Liu, 2011; Decker, 2007; Fried et al., 2015; Greene, 1978; Noddings, 1996; Zemblyas, 2003). In this case study, I encouraged the participants to include emotion when telling their stories about teaching in the first-year; as a researcher, this choice came from a desire to “eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity” in preference for individual narratives by “situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it” (Richardson, 2005, p. 928). Some recently published descriptive accounts by faculty in research-intensive universities evoke the language of emotion and draw attention to teachers' physical burden of care within professional reward structures where caring is largely invisible and unrewarded (Cardozo, 2017; Warren, 2016). Teaching is demanding precisely because societal expectation is demanding, evoking an “all in” (head, heart & hands) devotion from the teacher.

Michael, Celeste, and Fok-Shuen's rich data offers moments of intrapersonal professional joy, love, curiosity, confusion, pride, concern, sadness, isolation, excitement, vulnerability, hope and zeal as teachers (Zemblyas, 2003). In the data, Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste drew heavily on emotion when enacting and articulating pedagogical processes and their professional identities in the first-year teaching domain. More specifically:

- Celeste drew on emotions evoking *enjoyment*, *playfulness*, and *confusion*;

- Fok-Shuen drew on emotions evoking *disruption, grittiness, awkwardness* and *attunement*;
- Michael drew on emotions evoking *joy, curiosity, inspiration, and empathy*.

For Michael, Celeste and Fok-Shuen, the emotional responses to teaching seem to be as much about their professional identities as educators as the emotional response they have to their disciplines and to the students. They are as likely to use emotional descriptors when speaking about Mathematics/Biology/Philosophy as they are when speaking about first-year students or personal pedagogies. However, the data suggests that Celeste's use of emotional terms is much more likely to be in reference to the students and far less about the discipline, whereas Fok's use of emotional term lands more in the domain of the discipline.

Fok-Shuen, Michael and Celeste's descriptions of their preference for teaching first-year students all evoke an image of a teacher *leaning in* and looking for the *space in-between* themselves and their students then finding a way to create a place to meet in that space. The space-in-between could be disciplinary understanding (a mathematics proof), or personal identity navigation (reconciling past and present versions of oneself), or emotional exploration (finding joy). I interpreted "emotional care" in the data as being the participants' acts of *looking towards* first-year students (individually and collectively) and *leaning in* to better understand and respond to the students' needs—looking toward and leaning in are behaviours manifested from a place of empathy, care and curiosity. In large-scale, research-intensive universities, where class sizes are enormous and the "buzz" and "press" can feel overwhelming, we need faculty who care, look toward, and lean in to the spaces in between student and teacher (Noddings, 1995/2002; Aoki, 1986/2005). And it is also important for educators to be *seen* and valued for these efforts. Celeste's reflections about gender speak to the additional burden of care and emotional labor

placed on female faculty, especially those in teaching-focused roles where “women now make up the majority (approximately 60%) of sessional instructors and full-time teaching-stream members” (Woolley, 2018, p.1073), but they continue to be underrepresented in the tenured academic profession overall when research-stream faculty are also taken into consideration (Metcalf & Gonzalez, 2013; Woolley, 2018). A 2013 study focusing on the underrepresentation of women in the academy across North America found that female faculty were “more likely to respond affirmatively” to the statement “My job is a source of considerable personal strain” than male faculty and the affirmative response rate was highest for female faculty in Canada (Metcalf & Gonzalez, 2013, p. 17). In the article (Metcalf & Gonzalez, 2013), the authors use the term “educational survivors” to describe female faculty who have achieved tenure in the current state of academic professionalism (p. 2). In connection to my research study, I wonder if the additional expectations to provide emotional care for newcomer students is one of the reasons why female faculty in the first-year teaching domain report being under more “personal strain” than their male counterparts.

The teachers in this study are drawn to teaching because they care about students, they care about each other as a community of educators, and they care about their academic discipline. For Fok-Shuen, Celeste and Michael, teaching in the first-year domain results in a collaborative, collegial, inter-personal, and creative manifestation of their professional identities (Palme, Zajonc, & Scribner, 2013). However, professional emotional care is often *not* valued as a tangible “output” in higher education’s economic discourse (Cardozo, 2017). In this case study, acts of emotional care noted in the data often extended beyond course-based teaching: advising, mentoring, coaching, office hours, thoughtful assignment feedback, social media engagement, evening dinners, weekend emails, etc. (Cardozo, 2017; Warren, 2016). Too often, faculty struggle

to make their teaching *visible* and the compound emotional toil of teaching mixed with the emotional toil of struggle often results in frustration, fatigue, or burnout (Warren, 2016).

We might also consider the history of academic labor and teaching, in particular through the resource lens of time. In the “faculty time” as resource category, daily negotiations professors make between *love, money & time*, institutional working conditions, and contractual realities can make these negotiations fluid and easy, or fraught and difficult (Shulman, 1987). Cardozo (2017) draws on sociological research to examine the history of teaching at universities alongside the teaching profession more broadly in society. She suggests we cannot have the conversation without broadly situating university teaching within the entire teaching profession and labelling the work as “care work” (Cardozo, 2017). I wonder what the capacity is to hold these experiences in the body—a physical place that has limits to how much it can take in and give out; the experience of feeling “not enough” in regards to time and task management, and the experiences of large class sizes and the burden of depersonalization that results in not being able to connect with all of the students in our classes.

Throughout my analysis of the data, I kept asking myself: Are we (university educators and administrators) creating conditions for learning for our first-year students that mimic the load, burnout, and isolation felt by those stressed and stretched by the academic system itself? Perhaps this made sense in previous generations, when progression through university studies, and the prospects for employment, security, visibility, publication, and pay were more viable. Now, for many faculty members, every step of the academic journey results in strain and little guarantee of reward. So, the notion of “boot camp”-style academia in first-year might be considered a systemic and structural response by faculty to students. However, the participants in this study have all found ways to counter the “boot camp” narrative, while still maintaining high

standards and the necessary expectations required in scholarly community. They demonstrate a stronger foundation for first-year teaching and learning as being a foundation of community, collaboration, creative problem-solving, and shared experience; therefore, they demonstrate approaches that attend to the head, heart, and bodies of the teachers and students in the room.

## **7.5 Summary**

In summary, the faculty members in this case study demonstrate their preference for teaching first-year students through a set of actions evident in their pedagogical approaches. To the community of educators (faculty and staff) who work with first-year students at UBC (and beyond), I offer this analysis and the distillation of the data as an invitation for each of us to think expansively about teaching first-year students. Each faculty member invites first-year students into a scholarly community, and, as teachers, they enter the shared academic space with an expectation to benefit from their interactions with new scholars. Moreover, in their representation of themselves in this shared space, each faculty member continually develops an explicitly personal approach to their pedagogical practice. These actions are free, low-tech, and adaptable to suit an individual depending on their personal style, discipline and worldview. But tenure matters. The presence of tenure as a foundation for the participants in this case study must be considered in any analysis of faculty members' approaches to teaching first-year students. When faculty are under surveillance (via student evaluations, peer-review processes, and departmental evaluations) while in a probationary or contractually professional arrangement, they are navigating their own sense of isolation, disconnect, and alienation within the academic community. I'm not suggesting that contingent (non-tenure track) and pre-tenure faculty are not capable of emulating this case study's findings; rather, I am suggesting this case study surfaces

critical questions about the interpersonal interplay between the sense of belonging for teachers in research-intensive universities and the sense of belonging for first-year students.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

I have presented one interpretation of the landscape of teaching in the first-year scholarly domain at a large-scale, Canadian research-intensive university. Prior to (and during) my doctoral research journey, I was immersed in first-year undergraduate education as a staff member and sessional instructor. However, the doctoral journey has been an immersion into a slowed-down, deep-dive scholarly interrogation. I crafted the research questions from a place of practical *knowing*, but not from a place of scholarly *knowing*. The first—a *practical* knowing—located itself in my hands and gut. In my work on first-year undergraduate initiatives at UBC, I have spent many hours in conversation and collegial community with faculty who teach, and who love to teach, first-year students. I have been lucky in my work to be immersed in stories: stories of celebrating students' accomplishments, even in the simplest and most humble ways—breaking through the stickiness of a chemistry problem, learning how to do laundry for the first time, attending an undergraduate research conference, navigating a new public transit system and still getting to class on time, making a friend, failing a midterm then passing the final. Conducting the case study presented in this dissertation has helped me to explore theoretical and analytic frames in making sense of these stories.

As the scholars stewarding institutional academic culture, we—faculty and staff—must enact a welcome that engages the imaginative contributions of new scholars as the foundation of our pedagogical practice. In the opening pages of this dissertation, I included a quote from David Geoffrey Smith, who reminds us that “the highest priority in [pedagogical] research” is to focus on phenomena that serve young peoples’ “sense of the human world as being a construction that can be entered and engaged with creatively” (1999, p. 42). Universities are a construction of the human world. They are an elaborate laboratory of the human imagination. Collectively, we have

created the modern-day university and we continually reinforce its historical rigour and academic integrity, while simultaneously re-creating and innovating from within. Those of us who work within the university are also responsible for welcoming the academy's newest members in the spirit of creative co-construction. As educational institutions, universities create cultures that can be welcoming or alienating for young people entering as fledgling members of the academy.

This case study provides an in-depth rendering of three teachers' unique enactments of a pedagogical practice, while simultaneously offering an analytical distillation of their collective actions to the broader higher education teaching community. A study focusing on teaching in the first-year context is not, in and itself, original. However, this case study brings to the surface the experience of tenured faculty members who indicate a preference for teaching first-year students in a publicly-funded, large-scale, Canadian research-intensive university. Personal, narrative descriptions of university teaching are rare, and in this dissertation, they are offered to the academic community as a possible provocation for thinking differently about first-year teaching. Finally, this study offers a piece of writing that demonstrates first-year teaching from a perspective that positions first-year students as being valuable members of the academy with the potential to inspire faculty as much as faculty have the potential to inspire first-year students.

## **8.1 Illuminations**

If a doctoral dissertation attempts to contribute original scholarship to existing fields of study, then this particular dissertation contributes to SoTL literature an exploration of first-year teaching with a focus on teachers who demonstrate a deep appreciation for first-year students and first-year courses. Additionally, this dissertation offers to SoTL an in-depth study of three university teachers with an attention to story, metaphor, body, breath, and becoming without excessive abstraction or technical jargon. Over the course of my research, I have examined the

following two questions through the eyes of three faculty members, and (to a lesser degree) included my own reflections as a university educator:

- Why do some faculty members prefer to teach first-year students at a large-scale, research-intensive university?
- How do these teachers articulate and represent their pedagogical processes in the first-year teaching and learning context?

Elaborating on the original research questions, in the overall research design I asked questions that, in my discernment, are not typically posed to teachers—questions that invite them to use personal stories, imagery, metaphor, emotion, and disciplinary concepts to explore their personal, pedagogical processes. These questions are similar to the types of questions I have asked faculty members for many years in my university staff role. But in this research study, the questions demanded a much more substantive and *steady* level of attention, rigour, focus and analysis. Through critically reflective, personal writing, I revisited years of anecdotes, journal entries, and memories and then conducted informal, semi-structured interviews with the teachers in addition to exploring the language they used in formal teaching philosophy statements. I then *slowed down* (Mountz, 2015) with each sentence and image and story in the data to see where there might be illuminating connections or revelatory disruptions to literature in the field (SoTL, Curriculum Studies, Student Development, First Year Experience, and Higher Education Studies, in particular).

I've generated a discussion based on three emergent themes through which educators (staff and faculty alike) might use to interrogate their own interactions with first-year students. The major finding of this study is an offering of these three themes, each worthy of further pause and exploration.

- *Invite Students into the Scholarly Dialogue:* The teacher's describes their role as being, in part, to *invite students into the scholarly community*, both in their unique disciplinary arena, and in the university community more broadly. It is as much the responsibility of the teacher to do the work of welcoming to the academy as it is the responsibility of the student to do the work of learning how to succeed within a new academic culture.
- *Enter with Expectation:* The faculty member *enters with expectation* into the relationship with first-year students, expecting to learn from first-year students' perspectives on and contributions academic discourse. They invite first-year students into the academy as newcomer scholars and they value the perspectives, knowledges, identities, and experiences they already bring with them.
- *Develop a Personal Approach to Pedagogy:* In addition to drawing on more explicitly professional constructs and technical, pedagogical frameworks, the faculty member makes meaning of their identity as a teacher of first-year students by drawing on images, stories, emotions and metaphors in their personal development of their teaching practice. They demonstrate the importance of bringing themselves wholly into their teaching and they have each *developed a personal approach to pedagogical practice* with first-year students.

The cases themselves serve as distinct, illustrative pedagogical renderings of professional practice in the first-year students' teaching and learning context. Each of the three cases presents a rich, three-dimensional portrayal of teaching first-year courses (in Biology, Philosophy and Mathematics); therefore, each case stands alone as a distinct offering to university educators and educational researchers.

## **8.2 Limitations**

### **8.2.1 Tenure**

In the Literature Review chapter of this dissertation, I delved more deeply into the role precarity plays in the contextual framing of first-year teaching and learning in large-scale, research-intensive universities for both tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty. I selected established, tenured faculty reflecting both the Professoriate stream and Educational Leadership stream at the University of British Columbia. In making this choice I do not intend to dismiss the contributions of non-tenured and contract faculty members who teach first-year students at UBC. Therefore, a limitation of this study is its transferability to pre-tenure and contingent faculty, whose working conditions are more precarious than full-time, tenured faculty.

### **8.2.2 Embeddedness and subjectivity**

Another limitation of the student relates to my embeddedness in the context and subjectivity. The participants' responses were very likely influenced by my presence, our historical working relationship, and the grounding ethos and foundational principles of the programs we co-design. Unknown researcher may have evoked different responses to the research questions. Like many qualitative studies, this study is not generalizable to other populations, in part due to the researcher's—my own—embeddedness in the context and in part to the purposive sampling (not random sampling) of the participants (Palys, 2008). As a qualitative researcher guiding this dissertation's study, I was “interested in case study analysis—[seeking] why particular people...feel particular ways, the processes by which these attitudes are constructed, and the role they play in dynamic processes within the organization or group” (Palys, 2008, p. 697).

My position influences the study's textual data set as I wrote a large portion of the personal journals and field notes before I started my doctoral program and long before I settled on the research questions framing my dissertation. However, I eschew and challenge notions of "neutrality" in any research paradigm. Patti Lather (1991) states:

...scientific neutrality is always problematic; they arise from an objectivism premised on the belief that scientific knowledge is free from social construction...Rather than the illusory "value-free" knowledge of the positivists, praxis-oriented inquirers seek emancipatory knowledge. Emancipatory knowledge increases awareness of the contradictions distorted or hidden by everyday understandings, and in doing so it directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes. (p. 52)

I hope to have unearthed some understanding and increased awareness about the everyday performance of teaching and learning in the first-year context at research-intensive universities in Canada. Despite the limitations this study presents, and despite the reservations I felt as a researcher located so closely to the phenomenon, after critical reflection with myself and with my doctoral supervisory committee, I chose to continue with the study because my position and location enhances the study's potential more than it detracts from its possibilities.

### **8.3 Suggestions for future research**

Some possible directions this study might inspire include further case studies guided by the same research questions but drawing on more focused demographics of "faculty member" and more focused definitions of "first-year student" at the University of British Columbia to delve more deeply into the phenomenon. Broader methodological applications beyond case study may also better serve future research. For example, while conducting this study, I often wondered what the story might be from the perspective of the first-year students themselves (in their first-year and longitudinally) who are taught by such faculty. A mixed-methods, longitudinal study including surveys, focus groups, and institutional data (e.g. course assessment

data) comparing the experiences and academic performance of students in different learning environments could provide insight into the phenomenon of teaching first-year students. Another route could be a larger-scale study of faculty who teach first year students and indicate a preference for teaching first year to see what emerges from a larger data set. Alternately, a study of faculty who indicate disinterest in teaching first-year student could produce some interesting insights.

As is the intention of exploratory case study research, each of the emergent themes in the Discussion chapter warrants its own research study to more deeply discern its applicability to a larger data-set of teachers and a broader body of critical literature. Furthermore, the themes offer possible frameworks within which we can create bodies of new literature with a focus on first-year teaching and learning in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and fresh interpretations of first-year students in the First Year Experience literature.

#### **8.4 Implications for practice**

*Classroom instructors—whether tenured or tenure-track professors, lecturers, part-time or adjunct faculty, or graduate teaching assistants—are at the center of the collegiate experience for every first-year student... faculty define the life of the college or university and should therefore be meaningfully involved in working with the newest persons going the campus. Faculty have a unique role in demystifying the campus culture because they control the concepts inherent in higher education and are its central feature, apart from the students. If an institution is to serve first-year students in a way that is sustainable over time, faculty involvement and leadership are critical.*

(Evenbeck & Jackson, 2004, p. 257)

To SoTL, this study contributes a rich exploration of the role faculty members play in demystifying campus culture for first-year students. Moreover, this study centres its exploration on the faculty members' approach to teaching and the ways in which their pedagogical practices are a manifestation of their preference for inviting first-year students into their unique discipline and the scholarly community at-large. Despite the challenges—content breadth, large class sizes,

administrative challenges, and scope of student preparedness, to name a few—inherent in teaching first-year courses at large scale, research-intensive universities, this study offers insight into a phenomenon wherein tenured faculty enjoy teaching and learning alongside with first-year students and deem the intellectual exchange *mutually beneficial*. This study contributes an emerging articulation of mindsets and actions—low-cost, low-tech, and low-barrier—performed by its participants and offered to SoTL educators for pedagogical critique, emulation, and expansion via research interrogation and further theoretical analysis.

In concluding this dissertation, I introduce a set of practical implications informed by this study's result with the following caveat: Researchers conduct exploratory case study research to unearth compelling lines of inquiry for subsequent interrogation. The results of exploratory case studies are not generalizable across populations or conclusive in their determinations. Therefore, each of the subsequent suggested practical implications can be read as suggestions for pedagogical practice (i.e. applied to educational practice with first-year students and collegial conversation), theoretical practice (i.e. applied to the process of critical reflection and academy inquiry), or research practice (i.e. applied to a future research design).

#### ***8.4.1 Interrogate the institutional and personal “welcome” narrative***

Those of us working in research-intensive universities might critically reflect and interrogate the language we use and the images we choose when we craft and present a narrative of “welcome” to first-year students. Some questions to consider:

- What is the ‘teaching and learning’ story the images and words tell, in their current articulation?
- How might we shift the words and images to reflect an invitation for first-year students to enter the scholarly community as creative agents in dialogue with faculty?

- In images (on websites, social media channels, slide decks, etc.) is there a balance of representative ways-of-being in a learning community? For example, are teachers presented alongside, in dialogue, and in community together with first-year students? Or do any of the images present teachers listening to students or are the students predominantly listening to teachers?
- Do our images and stories about teaching preference or privilege particular articulations of “traditional” or “innovative” pedagogy? Is there a visual or narrative story about teaching that alienates particular pedagogical approaches and / or students’ expressions of learning?
- Does the story of learning lean heavily on images and language reflecting the role of teachers and university staff to *fix* first-year students (i.e. deficit-based language)? Are we inviting them to *take responsibility* for their learning, *contribute* and *academically thrive* in their first-year as a university student? Or are we inviting them to *receive support* and *academically survive*?
- As educators, we might consider posing the following questions to ourselves: Am I interacting with first-year students in the spirit of inviting them into a scholarly community? Do I enter into a relationship with first-year students expecting to benefit from their contributions to our interactions?
- How might we include teacher emotion in our messages of welcome? Might first-year students be more inclined to bring their whole heart and mind into the classroom if the messages they read from the academy leading up to their first class include in equal measure joy, struggle, frustration, elation, and curiosity as described by the faculty who will teach them?

#### 8.4.2 Embrace lecture halls as sites of pedagogical possibility

*Pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact are the mindful skills that enable a teacher to act improvisationally in always-changing educational situations.... [which are] always changing because the students are never the same, the teacher is never the same, the atmosphere is never the same, the time is never the same. In other words, the teacher is constantly challenged to give positive shape to unanticipated situations. It is this ability to see pedagogical possibilities in ordinary incidents, and to convert seemingly unimportant incidents into pedagogical significance that is the promise of tact for teaching.*

(van Maanen, 1991, p. 187)

University teachers are experts in a specific discipline (e.g., physics, philosophy, visual art, chemical engineering, education, etc.) and in their campus roles they live in an institutional department alongside other experts. Even in large lecture halls—the typical teaching environment for first-year students in research-intensive universities—teachers must think on their feet from a place of wisdom, thoughtfulness, intuition and complexity. In my experience studying and working in the first-year student learning context at a research-intensive university for the past seven years, I’ve rarely found references in conference programs, journals, or books referencing the day-to-day collective, creative classroom experience from the perspective of a teacher *being* in a community and *seeking community* relationship with a large lecture hall filled with first-year student students. More often, the narrative is skewed towards *doing* first-year courses through the perspective of classroom management or engagement techniques (e.g. clickers, Power Point<sup>29</sup>, etc.), individual student skill development, and institutionally scaling course content comprehension. I’m often struck by a collective education belief—one I believe is

---

<sup>29</sup> The extensive use of Power Point in university teaching has become a topic of debate in higher education. Prof. Alan Wolfe provides a critical perspective in a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* article titled “The Unbearable Pointlessness of Power Point” (<https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Unbearable-Pointlessness/246558>). In some circles, Wolfe’s article sparked a conversation about the use of Power Point at “illustration” or Power Point as “pedagogy”, as demonstrated in Prof. Brian Porter-Szucs July 1, 2019 *Letter to the Editor*: <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/letters/the-point-of-powerpoint/>

false—that a 200:1 student-to-teacher ratio cannot produce profound interpersonal pedagogic moments within a classroom.

In the context of first-year courses at research-intensive universities, the object of curiosity is the scholarly discipline, and the scale of community is often very large. The members of the community bestowed with the most power and wisdom are the faculty members and the students' desire to *become together* is typically focused keenly on a desire to become academically successful, as defined by the students' grade. In other words, the sense of competition and urgency is palpable in a first-year course and it is not uncommon to have one teacher and 200+ students moving through a course curriculum at rapid speed for one semester (~12 weeks). Teaching first-year courses at a research-intensive university in Canada can be difficult.

Therefore, I recommend we use the cases in this dissertation to catalyze collegial conversation about what is possibility re: interpersonal connection in large groups. If, as a community of university educators, we truly *do not believe* learning and community-building are possible in large lecture halls, then we need to change the model for teaching and upend the entire structure to reduce class sizes. If we refuse to reduce class sizes in first-year courses at large-scale, research-intensive universities, then we must re-imagine lecture halls as being spaces that have potential for seeding a scholarly sense of belonging and dialogical interaction with faculty members. Let's commit to de-bunking the myth that lecture halls are "depersonalized" spaces and let's draw on a whole range of pedagogical approaches (including, but not limited to or preferential to technological interventions) to maximize the learning potential within lecture halls.

### 8.4.3 Create a culture of “peer seeing” and case narratives

*The environment ceases to be environment, and in its place comes into being a pedagogical situation, a lived situation pregnantly alive in the presence of people.*  
(Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 159)

Despite educational research efforts to offer replicable teaching best practices and methods, we must consider the classroom as an elusive, interpersonally charged, creative space, not a laboratory with predictable, controlled conditions. As such, an exploration of teaching might attend to the fleeting, to the moment-to-moment interactions resulting in the whole and make attempts—even messy, unfinished ones—to understand the profession drawing on the language of craft, art, relationship, and body. With the intention to provoke debate, a teacher can approach their teaching artfully—committed to processes of critical inquiry, self-reflection, and discernment—yet remain indifferent to the formal scholarship of teaching and learning. Could this be a place where case studies rest? Can a teacher who resists formal SoTL discourse learn from reading case narratives in ways that inspire a deeper inquiry into their pedagogical practice? One can engage in excellent practice without a fluency in the theoretical or technical language of curriculum and pedagogy. However, lacking this formality, educators are often left to their own devices and knowledge remains idiosyncratic rather than intentionally developed and built upon.

Conducting this case study inspires my suggestion for pedagogical researchers to contribute more narrative case studies about faculty members into the SoTL body of research. Perhaps the intentionality of a broader set of case narratives could inspire a culture of *peer-seeing* to complement the culture of *peer-evaluation*. Teaching can be a very lonely profession. I left my own teaching career to pursue staff roles in higher education in part because I was lonely and longed to experience working collaboratively in a professional team. For most faculty members in research-intensive universities, they are most often the only faculty member named on a

course syllabus. Faculty in research-intensive universities rarely watch each other teach in formative evaluation processes. Some exceptions exist, such as the common practice draw on summative evaluations of teaching for formal professional assessment purposes. Opportunities for informal, non-evaluative, and developmental peer observations in teaching are rare. In writing a narrative case study about a colleague, I recommend we practice the gentle and intentional act of noticing another teacher, of *seeing* another teacher and in that seeing, attempting to make-meaning and illuminate purpose and possibility—through critical attention to what is and what could be—in their moment to moment everydayness as crafts-persons, as tinkerers, as creatives, and as pedagogues.

#### **8.4.4 *Protect and proliferate tenure-track positions***

Teaching, for the participants in this study, could be considered a three-dimensional, stable performance in their tenured, professional roles at a research-intensive university:

- they are rooted in their sense of professional identity—past, present, and future;
- as tenured faculty members, they have job titles that indicate high institutional status and they are valued within the university system (with a secure salary, institutional benefits, professional development, and steady collegial community); and
- as scholars, they remain in continual discourse and dialogue with a broad, international community of experts in their chosen fields of research.

There is much we can learn from the experience of faculty who have such stability in a university, and who indicate a preference for working with first-year students. However, faculty members professional, contractual work context can have profound influence on their teaching, just as students' personal contexts can shift their ability to fully 'show up' in their learning. With professional stability, the participants in this study have been awarded a degree of creative

flexibility and pedagogical protection that more precariously employed educators do not have. Put simply: they can take more risks and play with pedagogical possibilities with less fear of impact on their position within the university.

Tenure-track positions are a university's way of signaling "you belong" to faculty members. Tenured communities know each other and work alongside each other for a sustained and committed period of time. Canadian research-intensive universities are publicly-funded institutions wherein its academic members are being called upon by society to address a cacophony of global issues. University educators have a responsibility to work with our young people to co-create a better future. Undergraduate students typically stay in a university only for the length of time it takes to receive their degree. Therefore, it is the work of the educators to weave the past, present and future contributions of our innovative, young scholars into the work of addressing the world's most wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973). I believe tenure matters and systems of tenure and precarity influence teaching quality, and I have recommend universities *protect and proliferate tenure-track positions* if they seek to increase cultures of learning, creativity, problem-solving, and belonging for first-year students and their teachers.

## 8.5 Closing reflection

*...in thinking of community, we need to emphasize the process words: making, creating, weaving, saying, and the like. Community...has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common...a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group's becoming. (Maxine Greene, 1995, p. 39)*

I sought to illuminate reasons why some faculty prefer teaching first-year students in a research-intensive Canadian university context. I aimed to discern if there were particular approaches these faculty took to teaching first-year students that demonstrate their preference in practical, tangible, pedagogical and perhaps even ethereal ways. I wanted to tell the stories of

teachers, because good teaching *matters*. Over the past few years, I've started to worry that a shift towards hyper-focusing on student-learning might distract educational researchers too far away from a focus on the experience of teaching and the experiences of teachers. I want to infuse the SoTL literature with this case study because the stories and discussion within it might spark a imaginative collegial conversation.

This research journey has been a journey of discernment. As a doctoral researcher, I have attempted to submit a “substantial piece of scholarly work that contains a significant contribution of new knowledge” (Scope of doctoral dissertation, n.d.). The grandiosity (“substantial,” “significant,” “new”) of such a statement has been, admittedly, daunting. Conducting this study and crafting its articulation demanded humble patience *and* perseverance. As a novice researcher, I often had weak reserves of both patience and confidence, but the muscles strengthened every month. Researching requires the researcher to believe the phenomenon under study *matters*. The faculty who teach first year students matter significantly in the daily performance of university life and learning. Learning occurs in community and among relationships with people that challenge each other and seek solutions together. Learning is enhanced when a member of the community holds wisdom and can steward the community through the learning journey with humility, curiosity, and love (Leggo, 2011). When we show up in learning communities—regardless of the size of the community—with humility and curiosity, we demonstrate mattering. The object of curiosity *matters* and the community members engaged in the collective curiosity *matter*. When conceived of in this way, learning is not a process that can be controlled with technical solutions; rather, learning becomes a creative and imaginative act of *becoming together*. Such a process applies to the communities of students in a university, but also to the community of teachers and educators. Society relies on faculty members to see the imaginative possibilities

and contributive capacities of our students within public universities. As educational researchers we have a responsibility to put the perspective of teachers in the centre of our studies about student-learning, and to notice the imaginative possibilities and contributive capacities of faculty members *as teachers* within the academy.

## Bibliography

- Acker, S., & Webber, M. (2016). Discipline and publish: The tenure review process in Ontario universities. In L. Shultz & M. Viczko (Eds.), *Assembling and governing the higher education institution* (pp. 233-255). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Acker, S. & Webber, M (2017). Made to measure: early career academics in the Canadian university workplace. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(3), 541-554.
- Acker, S., & Haque, E. (2017). Left out in the academic field: Doctoral graduates deal with a decade of disappearing jobs. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education/Revue Canadienne d'Enseignement Supérieur*, 47(3), 101-119.
- Alvesson, M. (1993). The play of metaphors. In J. Hassard & M. Parker (Eds.), *Postmodernism and organizations* (pp. 114-131). London, UK: Sage.
- Aoki, T. T. (2005a). Interest, knowledge, and evaluation: Alternative approaches to curriculum evaluation. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 137-151). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. (Original work published in 1981).
- Aoki, T. T. (2005b). Teaching as in-dwelling between two curricular worlds. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 159-167). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. (Original work published in 1986).
- Arimoto, A., Cummings, W.K., Shin, J.C. & Teichler, U. (Eds) (2014). *Teaching and research in contemporary higher education: Systems, activities and rewards*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

- Arnett, J.J., & Cravens, H. (2006). G. Stanley Hall's adolescence: A centennial reappraisal: Introduction. *History of Psychology, 9*(3), 165-171.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 25*(4), 297-308.
- Astin, A.W., Parrott, S., Korn, W., & Sax, L. (1997). *The American freshman: Thirty year trends, 1966-1996*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California.
- Banas, J. A., Dunbar, N., Rodriguez, D., & Liu, S. J. (2011). A review of humor in educational settings: Four decades of research. *Communication Education, 60*(1), 115-144.
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing.
- Baumeister, F. R., & Leary, R. M. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*(3), 497-529.
- Benjamin, M., Earnest, K., Gruenewald, D., & Arthur, G. (2007). The first weeks of the first year. *New Directions for Student Services, 117*, 13-24.
- Berk, R. A. (2007). Patullo lecture: Humor as an instructional defibrillator. *Journal of Health Administration Education, 24*(2), 97-116.
- Berube, M. & Ruth, J. (2015). *The humanities, higher education, and academic freedom: Three necessary arguments*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blakemore, S. J. (2018). *Inventing ourselves: The secret life of the teenage brain*. New York, NY: Public Affairs Hachette Book Group.

- Blumer, H. (1954). What is wrong with social theory? *American Sociological Review*, 18, 3-10.
- Bochner, A. P. (2001). Narrative's virtues. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(2), 131-157.
- Bochner, A. P. (2013). Putting meanings into motion: Autoethnography's existential calling. In S. Holman Jones, C. Ellis & T. Adams (Eds.), *Handbook of auto ethnography* (pp. 50-56). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Boeing, G. (2016). Visual analysis of nonlinear dynamical systems: Chaos, fractals, self-similarity and the limits of prediction. *Systems*, 4(37), 1-18.
- Bowen, G. A. (2005). Grounded theory and sensitizing concepts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(3), 12-23.
- Boyer, E. L. (1987). *College: The undergraduate experience in America*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Braid. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Retrieved July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/braid>
- Bresler, L., Latta, M. M., & Prendergast, M. (2008). Teacher as performer: Unpacking a metaphor in performance theory and critical performative pedagogy. *International Journal of Education and the Arts*, 9(2), 2-20.
- Bruner, J. S. (1985). Narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought. In E. Eisner (Ed.), *Learning and teaching the ways of knowing* (pp. 97-115). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Canadian Association of University Teachers (2017). *Guide to acknowledging first peoples & traditional territory*. Ottawa: Canadian Association of University Teachers.

- Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). (2016 January). *CAUT Bargaining Advisory: Teaching-intensive appointments*. Retrieved June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://www.wufa.ca/article-152/sessional-committee>
- Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). (2016 January). *CAUT Bargaining Advisory: Teaching-intensive appointments*. Retrieved June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://www.wufa.ca/article-152/sessional-committee>
- Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). (2018, July). *CAUT almanac of post-secondary education*. Retrieved July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://www.caut.ca/latest/publications/almanac>
- Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). (2016 January). *CAUT Bargaining Advisory: Teaching-intensive appointments*. Retrieved June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://www.wufa.ca/article-152/sessional-committee>.
- Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). (n.d.). *CAUT Fairness for contract academic staff*. Retrieved June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://www.caut.ca/issues-and-campaigns/fairness-for-contract-academic-staff>
- Cardozo, K. M. (2017). Academic labor: Who cares? *Critical Sociology*, 43(3), 405-428.
- Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Chapnick, A. (2012, October 10). The teaching-only stream: Are we headed up a creek without a paddle? *University Affairs*. Retrieved July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/the-teaching-only-stream/>
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies for qualitative inquiry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (pp. 249-291). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Chickering, A. W. (1969). *Education and identity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39(7), 3-7.
- Chiose, S. (2015, October 6). Rise of the teaching class. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/rise-of-the-teaching-class-changing-makeup-of-canadasuniversities/article26603696/>
- Chory, R. M., & Offstein, E. H. (2017). “Your professor will know you as a person”: Evaluating and rethinking the relational boundaries between faculty and students. *Journal of Management Education*, 41(1), 9-38.
- Clarke, A. (2001). The recent landscape of teacher education: Critical points and possible conjectures. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 599-611.
- Clarke, A. (2014). What If I Had Said “No”? In A. Cohen, H. Bai, C. Leggo, M. Porath, K. Meyer, K. & A. Clarke (Eds.), *Speaking of Learning: Recollections, Revelations, and Realizations* (pp. 103-116). Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- Clarke, A., & Erickson, G. (Eds.). (2003). *Teacher inquiry: Living the research in everyday practice*. London, UK: Routledge-Falmer.
- Clarcken, R. (1997, March). *Five metaphors for educators*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Coaldrake, P. (2000). Rethinking academic and university work. *Higher Education Management*, 12, 7–30.
- Cooperrider, D. L. & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In Pasmore, W., Woodman, R. (Eds.), *Research in organization change and development* (pp. 129-169). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

- Cosgrove, B. (2013). *The Invention of Teenagers: LIFE and the Triumph of Youth Culture*. *TIME.com*. Retrieved 11 October 2017, from <http://time.com/3639041/the-invention-of-teenagers-life-and-the-triumph-of-youth-culture/>
- Cotton, S. R., & Wilson, B. (2006). Student-faculty interactions: Dynamics and determinants. *Higher Education*, 51(4), 487-519.
- Cramer, K., Burrows, V., Lamoureux, C., Mackay, S., Pedri, V., Pschibul, R. (2016). The marketing of Canadian universities: A misadventure now 24 years old. *Collected essays on teaching and learning*, 9, 227-239. Retrieved June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <https://celt.uwindsor.ca/index.php/CELT/article/view/4434>
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among the five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cuseo, J. B., Fecas, V. S., & Thompson, A. (2010). *Thriving in college and beyond: Research-based strategies for academic success & personal development* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.
- DeAngelo, L., Mason, J., & Winters, D. (2016). Faculty engagement in mentoring undergraduate students: How institutional environments regulate and promote extra-role behavior. *Innovative Higher Education*, 41(4), 317-332.
- Decker, E. (2007). Q. What's funny about teaching? A. Not enough! Arguing for a comic pedagogy. *Educational Insights*, 11(3).
- Dei, G. J. S. (2016). Decolonizing the university: The challenges and possibilities of inclusive education. *Socialist Studies/Etudes Socialistes*, 11(1). 23-61.

- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2008). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Edmiston, B. & Wilhelm, J. (1998). Repositioning views/reviewing positions: Forming complex understandings in drama. In B.J.Wagner, (Ed.). *Educational Drama and the Language Arts: What Research Shows*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T., & Bochner, A. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research, 36*(4), 273-290.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (1996). Collecting ourselves at the end of the century. *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Evenbeck, S. E., & Jackson, B. (2005). Faculty development and the first year. In M. L. Upcraft, J.N. Gardner, & B. O. Barefoot (Eds.), *Challenging and supporting the first-year student: A Handbook for improving the first year of college* (pp. 257–274). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Field, C. C., & Jones, G. A. (2016). *A survey of sessional faculty in Ontario publicly-funded universities*. Toronto: Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education at OISE-University of Toronto. Retrieved June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://nysaaup.org/media-storage/library-upload/study-ontario-adjuncts-report.pdf>
- Fivush, R., & Haden, C. A. (2013). *Autobiographical memory and the construction of a narrative self: Developmental and cultural perspectives*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Freeman, T. M., Anderman, L. H., & Jensen, J. M. (2007). Sense of belonging in college freshmen at the classroom and campus levels. *Journal of Experimental Education, 75*(3),

203-220.

- Fried, L., Mansfield, M., & Dobozy, E. (2015). Teacher emotion research: Introducing a conceptual model to guide future research. *Issues in Educational Research*, 25(4), 415-441.
- Friedman, R. (2014, June 28). Why teenagers act crazy. *The New York Times*. Retrieved July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/29/opinion/sunday/why-teenagers-act-crazy.html>
- Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. & Marchall, S. (2009). *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: Enhancing academic practice* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fuentes, M. V., Alvarado, A. R., Berdan, J., & DeAngelo, L. (2014). Mentorship matters: Does early faculty contact lead to quality faculty interaction? *Research in Higher Education*, 55(3), 288-307.
- Galle, S. (2017). The potential for place-based learning experiences on the college campus. In D. Shannon & S. Galle (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary approaches to pedagogy and place-based education: From abstract to the quotidian* (pp. 85-101). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Garbett, D. & Ovens, A. (Eds), (2018) *Pushing boundaries and crossing borders: Self-study as a means for researching*. Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP
- Gopaul, B., Jones, G., Weinrib, J., Metcalfe, A., Fisher, D., Gingras, Y., & Rubenson, K. (2016). The academic profession in Canada: Perceptions of Canadian university faculty about research and teaching. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 46(2), 55-77.

- Gottschall, J. (2012). *The storytelling animal : how stories make us human*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Grant, G. E. (1992). The sources of structural metaphors in teacher education: Three cases. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 8(5/6), 433-440.
- Grayson, J. P., & Grayson, K. (2003). *Research on retention and attrition*. Montreal, QC: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Greene, M. (1978). *Landscapes of learning*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Greene, M. (1978). Towards wide-awakeness: An argument for the arts and humanities in education. In Greene, M. (Ed.), *Landscapes of learning* (pp. 161-168). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Griffin, W., Cohen, S. D., Berndtson, R., Burson, K., Camper, M., Chen, Y., & Smith, M. A. (2014). Starting the conversation: An exploratory study of factors that influence student office hour use. *College Teaching*, 62(3), 94-99.
- Gruenwald, D. A. (2003). Foundations of place: A multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(3), 619-654.
- Gudmundsdottir, S. (1995). The narrative nature of pedagogical content knowledge. In H. McEwan & K.Egan (Eds.), *Narrative in teaching, learning, and research* (pp. 24-38). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hall, G. S. (1904). *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education (Vols. I & II)*. New York, NY: D. Appleton & Co.
- Hensel, N. (1990). Maternity, promotion, and tenure: Are they compatible? In L.B. Welch (Ed.),

*Women in higher education: Changes and challenges* (pp. 3-11). New York, NY: Praeger.

Hubball, H, Pearson, M., & Clarke, A. (2013). SOTL inquiry in broader curricula and institutional contexts: Theoretical underpinnings and emerging trends. *International Society for The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1), 41-57.

Huber, M. T., & Morreale, S. P. (2002). *Disciplinary styles in the scholarship of teaching and learning: Exploring common ground*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Huber, M. T. & Hutchings, H. (2018, Feb. 26). *New teaching positions up the ante on pedagogical knowledge and skill*. Retrieved June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from

<https://bayviewalliance.org/new-teaching-positions-ante-pedagogical-knowledge-skill/>

Hutchings, P., & Shulman, L. (1999). The scholarship of teaching. *Change*, 31(5), 11.

Hutchings, P., Huber, M., & Ciccone, A. (2011). *The scholarship of teaching and learning reconsidered*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Jasper, M. A. (2005). Using reflective writing within research. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 10(2), 247-260.

Jensen, F. E., & Nutt, A. E. (2015). *The teenage brain: A neuroscientist's survival guide to raising adolescents and young adults*. New York, NY: Harper.

Jensen, D. F. N. (2006). Metaphors as a bridge to understanding educational and social contexts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 2-17.

Johnson, D. R., Soldner, M., Leonard, J. B., & Alvarez, P. (2007). Sense of belonging among first-year undergraduates from different racial/ethnic groups. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(5), 525-542.

Jones, G. A. (2013). The horizontal and vertical fragmentation of academic work and the challenge for academic governance and leadership. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 14*(1), 75-83.

Jones, G. A., Gopaul, B., Weinrib, J., Metcalfe, A. S., Fisher, D., Gingras, Y., & Rubenson, K. (2014). Teaching, research, and the Canadian professoriate. In *Teaching and research in contemporary higher education* (pp. 335-356). Springer, Dordrecht.

Kahneman, D. (Guest), & Harris, S. (Producer). (2019, March 12). *Making sense podcast #150: The map of understanding: A conversation with Daniel Kahneman*. Podcast retrieved May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <https://samharris.org/podcasts/150-map-misunderstanding/>

Karram Stephenson, G., Jones, G.A., Bégin-Caouette, O., Metcalfe, A., & Toor, A. (2017). *Responding to Change, Assessing Difference: A Review of the Literature on Professors at Canadian Universities*. Toronto: Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education, OISE-University of Toronto.

Kezar, A., & Gehrke, S. (2014). Why are we hiring so many non-tenure-track faculty? *Liberal Education, 100*, 44–51.

Kezar, A., & Maxey, D. (2014). Troubling ethical lapses: The treatment of contingent faculty. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 46*, 34–37.

Kezar, A., & Sam, C. (2012). Governance as a catalyst for policy change: Creating a contingent

- faculty friendly academy. *Educational Policy*, 28, 425–462.
- Kim, M. (2016, February 23). The teenage brain: There may be a silver lining to all that misbehavior. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2016/02/23/the-teenage-brain-there-may-be-a-silver-lining-to-all-that-misbehavior/>
- Kim, Y. K., & Sax, L. J. (2017). The impact of college students' interactions with faculty: A review of general and conditional effects. In A. Editor & B. Editor (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 85-139). New York, NY: Springer.
- Kreber, C. (2007). What's it really all about? The scholarship of teaching and learning as an authentic practice. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1).
- Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications.
- Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the national survey of student engagement. *Change*, 33(3), 10-17.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the post-modern*. Routledge: London.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimated peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Leggo, C. (2011). Living love: Confessions of a fearful teacher. *JCACS (Journal of the Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies)*, 9(1), pp. 115-144

- Leggo, C. (2008). The ecology of personal and professional experience: A poet's view. In M. Cahnmann-Taylor & R. Siegesmund (Eds.), *Arts-based research in education: foundations for practice* (pp. 89-97). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lieberman, M. D. (2013). *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.
- Light, R. J. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ling, S., Lindsay, S. (2015, January 26). Knowing the land beneath our feet: UBC's indigenous histories and presence. *The Talon: UBC's Alternative Student Press*. Retrieved July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <http://thetalon.ca/knowning-the-land-beneath-our-feet-UBCs-indigenous-histories-and-presence/>
- Lizzio, A. (2006). *Designing an orientation and transition strategy for commencing students. A conceptual summary of research and practice*. Brisbane, Australia: Griffith University.
- Loughran, J. (2005). Researching teaching about teaching: Self-study of teacher education practices. *Studying Teacher Education*, 1(1), 5-16.
- Marquina, M., & Jones, G. A. (2015). Generational change and academic work: an introduction. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(8), 1349-1353.
- Marshall, S., Zhou, M., Gervan, T., Wiebe, S. (2012). Sense of belonging and first-year academic literacy. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 12(3), 116-142.
- Martínez-Alemán, A. M., Pusser, B., & Bensimon, E. M. (Eds.). (2015). *Critical approaches to the study of higher education: A practical introduction*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- McKinnon, S. (2014). Text-based approaches to qualitative research: An overview of methods, process, and ethics. In F. Darling-Wolf (Ed.), *Research methods in media studies* (pp. 319-337). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Press.
- McLaren, P. (1988). The liminal servant and the ritual roots of critical pedagogy. *Language Arts*, 65(2), 164-179.
- McLaren, P. (1993). *Schooling as a ritual performance: Towards a political economy of educational symbols and gestures* (2nd ed). London, UK: Routledge.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Metaphor. (n.d.) In *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Retrieved March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor>
- Metcalf, A. S. (2010). Revisiting academic capitalism in Canada: No longer the exception. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 81(4), 489-514.
- Metcalf, A. S. (2017) Nomadic political ontology and transnational academic mobility. *Critical Studies in Education*, 58(2) 131-149.
- Meyer, J. H. F., Land, R., & Baillie, C. (2010). Threshold concepts and transformational learning: Editors' preface. *Educational futures: Rethinking theory and practice*, 42, ix-xli.
- Mikami, A. (2015, February). *Emerging research in first year student transition experiences at UBC*. Paper presented at the University of British Columbia Advising Conference, Vancouver, Canada.
- Mikami, A.Y., Szvedo, D. E., Khalis, A., Jia, M., & Na, J. J. (2018). Online peer interactions predict emerging adults' academic and emotional adjustment in the transition to

- university. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 29(1), 210-224.
- Moores, L., & Popadiuk, N. (2011). Positive aspects of international student transitions: A qualitative inquiry. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(3), 291-306.
- Morgan, G. (1986). *Images of organization*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Munhall, P. L. (2007) *Nursing research: A qualitative perspective* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Boston, MA: Jones & Bartlett.
- Mountz, A. (2015). For slow scholarship: A feminist politics of resistance through collective action in the neoliberal university. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14 (4), 1235-1259.
- Neumann, M. (1996). Collecting ourselves at the end of the century. In C. Ellis & A. P. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing ethnography: alternative forms of qualitative writing* (pp. 104-123). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press. Original work published in 1992.
- Noddings, N. (1996). Stories and affect in teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 26(3). 435-447.
- O'Meara, K. (2015). How scholarship reconsidered disrupted the promotion and tenure system. In E.L. Boyer, D. Moser, T. C. Ream, & J. M. Braxton (Eds.), *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate* (Expanded ed., pp. 41-47). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Toole, P., Talbot, S., Fidock, J. (2008). Anecdotally speaking: Using stories to generate organizational change. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 8(2), 28-42.

- Oswick, C., Keenoy, T., Grant, D. (2002). Metaphor and analogical reasoning in organization theory: Beyond orthodoxy. *Academy of Management Review* 27(2): 294–303.
- Pace, D., & Middendorf, J. (2004). *Decoding the disciplines: Helping students learn disciplinary ways of thinking*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Palladino, G. (1996). *Teenagers: An American history*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Palmer, P. J., Zajonc, A., & Scribner, M. (2010). *The heart of higher education: A call to renewal. Transforming the academy through collegial conversations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Palys, T. (2008). Purposive sampling. In L.M. Given (Ed.). *The sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods, Volume 2*. (pp. 697-698). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Pascarella, E. (1980). Student-faculty informal contact and college outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 50, 545-595.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Pinar, W. (2004). Autobiography: A revolutionary act. *What is curriculum theory?* (pp. 35-62). Mahwan, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Pinar, W., & Grumet, M. (1976). *Toward a poor curriculum*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Plato. (1974). The simile of the cave. *Republic* (pp. 240-248). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Polster, C., & Newson, J. (2015). *A penny for your thoughts: How corporatization devalues teaching, research and public service in Canada's universities*. Montreal, QC: Canadian

Centre for Policy Alternatives.

- Poole, G., & Iqbal, I. (2011). An exploration of the scholarly foundations of educational development. In J. Smart & R.P. Perry (Eds.) *Higher education: A handbook of theory and research, Vol. 26*. New York: Springer.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6, 253-256.
- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed., pp. 959-978). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ripley, A. (2016, September 12). Can teenage defiance be manipulated for good? *The New York Times*. Retrieved July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/13/upshot/can-teenage-defiance-be-manipulated-for-good.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/13/upshot/can-teenage-defiance-be-manipulated-for-good.html?_r=0)
- Rittel, H., & Webber, M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4(2), 155-169.
- Romsa, K., Bremer, K. L., & Lewis, J. (2017). The evolution of student-faculty interactions: What matters to millennial college students? *College Student Affairs Journal*, 35(2), 85-89.
- Rose, T., & Ogas, O. (2016, January 22). The faulty foundation of American colleges. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 62(19), B6.
- Rowland, S. (2008). *What is asset based community development (ABCD)?* Collaborative of Neighborhood Transformation. Retrieved on March 20, 2019 from <http://www.neighborhoodtransformation.net/>

- Rueckert, C. (2014). The changing face of international student orientations in the Canadian context. *A world of learning: Canada's performance and potential in international education* (pp. 52-55). Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE).
- Ruitenbergh, C. W. (2015). *Unlocking the world: Education in an ethic of hospitality*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Samaras, A. P. (2002). Self-study for teacher educators: Crafting a pedagogy for educational change. *Counterpoints*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Sax, L. J., Bryant, A. N., & Harper, C. E. (2005). The differential effects of student-faculty interaction on college outcomes for women and men. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(6), 642-657.
- Schön, D. (1979). Generative metaphor: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy. In A. Ortony (Ed.) *Metaphor and Thought* (pp. 284-324). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflexive practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schutz, P., & Zembylas, M. (Eds.), (2009). *Research on teachers' emotions in teaching: Practical implications and implications for future research*. London, UK & New York, USA: Springer.
- Scope of a doctoral dissertation (n.d.). Retrieved from University of British Columbia Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019:  
<https://www.grad.UBC.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation/scope-doctoral-dissertation>
- Scutt, C., & Hobson, J. (2013). The stories we need: Anthropology, philosophy, narrative and higher

- education research. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 32(1), 17-29.
- Shannon, D., & Galle, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Interdisciplinary approaches to pedagogy and place-based education: From abstract to the quotidian*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 1-22.
- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.
- Shulman, L. S. (1997). Disciplines of inquiry in education: A new overview. In R. M. Jaeger (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education* (2nd ed., pp. 3-30). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Shulman, L. S. (2004). *Teaching as community property: Essays on higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Shulman, L. S. (2005). Signature pedagogies in the professions. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 52-59.
- Siegel, D. J. (2014). *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain*. New York, NY: Tarcher.
- Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talks, texts and interaction*. London, UK: Sage
- Smith, C. (2012, October 31). Battling B.C.'s math education crisis. *The Georgia Straight*. Retrieved June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from <https://www.straight.com/article-822531/vancouver/battling-bcs-math-crisis>
- Smith, D. G. (1999). The hermeneutic imagination and the pedagogic text. *Counterpoints*, 15, 27-44.

- Smith, G. A. (2002). Place-based education: Learning to be where we are. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(8), 584-594.
- Smith, L. 2012 (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*. London: Zed Books.
- Smith, M., Chen, Y., Berndtson, R., Burson, K. M., & Griffin, W. (2017). “Office hours are kind of weird”: Reclaiming a resource to foster student-faculty interaction. *Insight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, 12, 14-29.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Strange, C., Banning, J. H. (2000). *Educating by design: Creating campus learning environments that work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Starr, L. J. (2010). The use of autoethnography in educational research: Locating who we are in what we do. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 3(1), 1-9.
- Strange, C., Banning, J. H. (2000). *Educating by design: Creating campus learning environments that work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Swagler, M. A., & Ellis, M. V. (2003). Crossing the distance: Adjustment of Taiwanese graduate students in the United States. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50, 420–437.
- Sword, H. (2011). *Stylish academic writing*. Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press.
- Terosky, A. L. (2010). How do they do it? Career strategies of university professors noted for taking teaching seriously. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 21, 121–145.

- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Trahar, S. (2013). Autoethnographic journeys in learning and teaching in higher education. *European Education Research Journal*, 12(3), 367-375.
- Trolian, T. L., & Parker III, E. T. (2017). Moderating influences of student-faculty interactions on students' graduate and professional school aspirations. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(8), 1261-1267.
- Tuck, E. & Yang, K.W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1). 1-40.
- University Act (RSBC 1996, c. 468). Retrieved July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from the British Columbia Laws website: [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00\\_96468\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/00_96468_01)
- Universities Canada. (2011). *Statement on academic freedom*. Retrieved on January 29, 2019 from <https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/statement-on-academic-freedom/>
- University of British Columbia (2019, February 7). Board of governor's first-year orientation and transition report (People, Community & International Committee). Retrieved June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from [https://bog.UBC.ca/?page\\_id=15476](https://bog.UBC.ca/?page_id=15476).
- University of British Columbia and the University of British Columbia Faculty Association (2016). *Collective agreement between The University of British Columbia and the Faculty Association of the University of British Columbia, July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2019*. Retrieved May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from: <https://www.facultyassociation.UBC.ca/collective-agreement/>

- Upcraft, M. L., Gardner, J.N., & Barefoot, B.O. (Eds.). (2005). *Challenging and supporting the first-year student: A Handbook for improving the first year of college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- van Maanen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. London, ON: Althouse Press.
- Vajoczki, S., Fenton, N., Menard, K., & Pollon, D. (2011). *Teaching-stream faculty in Ontario Universities*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.
- Vector Space. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved February 20, 2019, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vector\\_space](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vector_space).
- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science*, *331*, 1447-1451.
- Walton, G. M. (2014). The new science of wise psychological interventions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *23*(1), 73–82.
- Walker, J. D., Baepler, P., & Cohen, B. (2008). The scholarship of teaching and learning paradox: Results without rewards. *College Teaching*, *56*(3), 183-189.
- Warren, S. (2016). Struggling for visibility in higher education: Caught between neoliberalism ‘out there’ and ‘in here’—an autoethnographic account. *Journal of Educational Policy*, *32*(2), 127-140.
- Weidman, J. (1989). Undergraduate socialization: A conceptual approach. In J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 289-322). New York, NY: Agathon.
- Williams, J. (2016). *Academic freedom in the age of conformity: Confronting the fear of knowledge*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Woolley, F. (2018). The political economy of university education in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue canadienne d'économique*, 51(4), 1061-1087.
- Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yorker, T., Lepore, J., Smith, J., Bans, L., Bietz, B., & Lepore, J. et al. (2015, August 31). Why teenagers are the worst. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from:  
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-terrible-teens>
- Zemblyas, M. (2003). Interrogating “teacher identity”: Emotion, resistance, and self formation. *Educational Theory*, 53(1), 107-127.
- Zoledziowski, A. (2017, October 18<sup>th</sup>). Which university is right for me? *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 from  
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/canadian-university-report/your-2018-guide-to-choosing-the-right-university/article36632345/>

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Study Recruitment Invitations and Informed Consent Documents

Appendix includes:

- Participant details
- Email invitation
- Letter of Consent

#### A.1 Participant Details

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Descriptive details</b>	<b>Position at the University</b>	<b>Date, Length &amp; Location of Interview</b>	<b>Date participant's' Teaching Philosophy Statement (s) written</b>
Fok-Shuen	Male Mid-career Math	Senior Instructor (Educational Leadership Stream)	December 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2018 62 minutes Coffee Shop	Version 1: 2013  Version 2: 2017
Celeste	Female Later-career Botany & Zoology	Professor of Teaching (Educational Leadership Stream)	December 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2018 PAP's kitchen 42:30 minutes	Nov. 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2016

Michael	Male Early-to-mid-career Philosophy	Associate Professor (Professoriate Stream)	December 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2018 Researcher's Office 41 minutes	Version 1: 2015  Version 2: 2018
---------	---	--	---	--

## A.2 Email Invitation

Dear [Faculty member's name]:

### **Faculty Members Who Prefer Teaching First-Year Courses: An Exploratory Case Study**

We are writing to inform you of a study involving tenure-track and tenured faculty members and their experience with first-year students at UBC. The study title is: *Faculty Members Who Prefer Teaching First-Year Courses: An Exploratory Case Study*<sup>30</sup>. We are contacting you to see if you might be interested in participating as a research subject in this study. This study will result in a published dissertation by Kari Marken, a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies in the Faculty of Education. The two questions guiding this research study are:

- Why do some faculty members prefer to teach first-year students at a large-scale, research-intensive university?
- How do these faculty members articulate and represent their pedagogical approach in the first-year teaching and learning context?

---

<sup>30</sup> Note: the title of the study as it was submitted to BREB in November, 2018. The title has since changed, but the details of the study remain the same.

This study asks each research participant to meet with the researcher to conduct a one-on-one semi-structured interview with each participant. There will be three participants recruited in total. More detailed information about the study can be found in the Letter of Consent document (attached). In the study we are seeking to learn more about how the experience of teaching first-year students in on UBC campus might serve our collective understanding of the role first-year students play in the academy.

For more information about the study or to arrange for your participation, contact the study's Principal Investigator, Dr. Anthony Clarke or the study's Co-Investigator, Kari Marken. Participation in the study is voluntary. We have attached to this email the Letter of Consent for research participants. If you are interested in being considered as a participant in this study, please review the Letter of Consent and contact Kari who will answer any questions that you have. If you are interested in participating in the study, we will be asking potential participants to email us their signed Letter of Consent by **[insert date]**. By **[insert date]**, we will have selected the three research participants and you will receive a confirmation of participation by **[insert date]**. The principal investigator of the research study, Dr. Anthony Clarke is Professor in the Faculty of Education in the Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy and this study is being undertaken as part of the dissertation research of a PhD candidate, Kari Marken, who Dr. Clarke supervises. To opt out of any further contact from the study team, reply to this email with the words "Opt Out" written in the subject line and we will remove you from all contact lists.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony Clarke & Kari Marken

### A.3 Letter of Consent



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

**Research Project title:** *Faculty Members Who Prefer Teaching First-Year Courses: An Exploratory Case Study*

#### **Who is Conducting this Study?**

**Principal Investigator:** [REDACTED], Professor, Faculty of Education, Dept. Curriculum & Pedagogy, [REDACTED].

**Co-Investigator:** [REDACTED], Doctoral Student, Faculty of Education, Dept. Curriculum & Pedagogy, [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]. This research is for a Doctoral Studies graduate degree and will be part of a dissertation.

#### **Why Are We Doing This Study?**

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are a tenured or tenure-track professor at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver Campus) have extensive experience at UBC working with first-year students. In the study we are seeking to learn more about the experience of faculty members who indicate a preference for teaching first-year students at UBC.

#### **Who is Invited to Participate in This Study?**

We seek a total of **three** Faculty members who each meet all of the following inclusion criteria:

You teach at UBC in one of the following *large* Faculties in which direct-entry first-year students are welcomed: Arts, Science, Applied Science, Sauder School of Business;

You are tenure-track or tenured at the University of British Columbia;

You enjoy teaching first-year students.

If we receive expressions of interest from more than 4 participants, we will further select based on the following criteria: cross-campus Faculty representation (ideally one participant from each targeted Faculty), and mix of Educational Leadership & Research tenure-track within the final group of participants.

Participants *excluded* from this study are faculty members that meet one or more of the following exclusion criteria:

- You are not a tenure-track or tenured faculty member;
- You are not employed by UBC;
- You are not teaching in the Faculty Arts, Science, Applied Science or Sauder School of Business;

#### **What Happens If You Say: “Yes, I Want to Be in the Study”?**

By signing this Letter of Consent and emailing it as an attachment to the study team, you will indicate your interest in being a part of the study. Within two weeks of signing the letter, you will receive confirmation from the study team that you *have* or *have not* been selected as a study participant. If you *have not* been selected, we will provide our rationale and we will electronically destroy the signed Letter of Consent from our files. If you

Version 4.0: November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018



have been selected for the study, we will contact you and move through the study procedures in the following order:

1. Scheduling:

- You will meet with the Co-Investigator, Kari Marken, to go over the study timeline and schedule your involvements as a research participant.
- You will be asked where & when you prefer to hold the interview(s). You will have the choice of locations (your office or one of the offices of the study team). You will indicate if you would like the sessions to take place as one 2-hour session or as two 1-hour sessions.
- You will indicate your availability to attend a focus group within 1-month of your individual interview. The study team will schedule the focus group according to the availability indicated by the participants.

2. Semi-Structured 1-on-1 Interview

You will take part in a formal, semi structured interview of approx. 2 hours. If you provide permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. If not, written notes only will be taken.

3. Focus Groups

Within 3 weeks of the individual interviews, you will be invited take part in a focus group with all four research participants. With the permission of the participants, the focus group will be audio recorded—if anyone expresses discomfort with the recording, written notes only will be taken. The questions asked will be similar to those asked in the individual interview. The purpose is to have you and the other research participants re-visit your answers as a way to deepen your reflection and/or draw out a new understanding or perspectives in the company of your faculty colleagues.

4. Member Checks

Once the data is analyzed (from the interviews and the focus groups), the researchers will share the data analysis with you to check the data to confirm that it accurately reflects your views, feelings and experiences. This step will take approximately 60 minutes. You will also be given the option to decline the opportunity to member check.

**How will the study results be disseminated?**

You will receive a copy of the dissertation upon completion of study. The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles and books. No digital content will be included. As a study participant, you may be identifiable from the content based on the details of the stories that you share.

**Is there any way being in this study could be bad for you?**

There is no apparent risk to the participant that that the study team can foresee.

**Will being in this study help you in any way?**



You may benefit from the research in that you will connect with other campus colleagues who are interested in improving their connections to first-year scholars; as such, you may benefit by forming new collegial and pedagogical networks.

**How will your privacy be maintained?**

While the data is being analyzed and study results written up, you will be assigned a pseudonym to, the best of the research team's ability, protect the identity of the participant. The pseudonym will be assigned by the study team. The name assigned will start with the same letter as the Faculty in which you work (i.e. if you work in the Faculty of Arts, your pseudonym name could be 'Amelia'). However, there is a possibility for deductive disclosure (readers deducing your identity based on the descriptions and stories) because of the nature of the study and the work that you do at UBC. You may also meet the other participants during the focus group and although we encourage all participants to refrain from disclosing the contents of the discussion outside of the focus group, we cannot control what other participants do with the information discussed.

**Will You Be Paid For Your Time?**

As a recognition of the time you will contribute to this research, you will receive a \$100 gift certificate to a campus vendor of your choice (UBC Bookstore, UBC Food Services, etc. are some examples of possible choices). You will receive the \$100 compensation even if you withdraw from the study.

**Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?**

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please contact the Principal Investigator, [REDACTED].

**Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?**

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at [REDACTED] or if long distance e-mail [REDACTED] or call toll free [REDACTED].

**Right to Withdraw**

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact. If you choose to pull out of the study, all documents and data connected to your participation will be destroyed; paper copies of data will be shredded and electronic copies will be erased.

- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study

---

Participant Signature                      Date                                      Printed Name

## Appendix B

### Data Collection and Analysis Documents

Appendix includes:

- Semi-Structured Interview preamble and questions
- Example of interview text (preference)

#### B.1 Interview Preamble and Questions

**Research Project:** *Faculty Members Who Prefer Teaching First-Year Students: An Exploratory Case Study*

##### Three Broad Participant Interview Questions (and Associated Probes)

Thank you for meeting with me today. We will start the interview shortly and expect the interview to last approximately 1-hour. You've probably noticed the iPhone on the table. We will activate its voice-recording function to audio record this session. I'm recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. As outlined in the letter of consent, now is a good time to remind each of you that your contributions to this interview will become data for the research study and a doctoral dissertation. This may take the form of direct quotes from the interview. It is possible that, based on your responses, you may be identifiable from your contributions, and although we will be using pseudonyms in the dissertation, the nature of the dissertation research—one that relies on direct quotes, interview scripts, and personal stories—means that we may not be able to guarantee full confidentiality if a reader identifies you through deductive means. You will also have the choice to have the final dissertation include your real

name after you have read the document. Please let us know if you are not comfortable with proceeding with the interview with these details in mind.

### **Participant Information**

- Q1. As part of the interview protocol, confirm participant's name, faculty status at UBC year, and name of the first-year course they are teaching in 2017-2018:
- (a) Please remind me of the preferred name that you use?
  - (b) And your current status as a faculty member at UBC (Vancouver)?

### **Preference**

Q2. In your work as a teacher in a research-intensive university, would you describe yourself as preferring working with first-year students?

- (a) Why?

Q3. As part of the interview protocol, indicate to the participant that this is an opportunity to share with the interviewer, some aspects about their reasons for preferring to teach first-year students:

- (a) What about teaching first-year students is *special* or *unique* in the academy?
- (b) Is there something that you feel you *know* about the first-year domain that, if all faculty members knew, they would clamor to sign up to teach first-year courses?
- (c) What first-year courses do you typically teach, and in what other ways do you primarily interact with first year students on campus?
- (d) Is there a personal reason why you feel connected to first-year teaching?

### **Pedagogy**

Q3. As part of the interview protocol, indicate to the participant that this is an opportunity to share with the interviewer, some aspects about their work with first-year students that are particular significance to them:

- (a) In general terms, how would you describe your experience working with first-year students at a large-scale research-intensive university like UBC?
- (b) Who are you as a teacher? What makes you tick?
- (c) Are there any metaphors, descriptors, images, concepts you rely on as you make

meaning of teaching & learning in the first-year context?

- (d) As a teacher, what do you draw on for inspiration as you build your pedagogical expertise in the first-year teaching & learning domain?
- (e) Do you draw on the SoTL literature to inform your practice? If so, which aspects? If not, why?

### **Professional Identity in a Large-Scale, Research-Intensive University**

- Q4. As part of the interview protocol, indicate to the participant that this is an opportunity to share anything else about their experience as a professional teaching first-year students at a large-scale, research-intensive university.
- (a) Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?
  - (b) Are there conditions on campus that make it easy/difficult to thrive as an educator in the first-year context? What conditions do you applaud and what changes would you like to see happen?
  - (c) Has a focus on first-year students impeded your advancement in any way (i.e. tenure & promotion)?

*Conclude by thanking the participant for their. Remind the participant that we will share with them the final draft of the graduate studies dissertation that will include the research data from this study.*

## **B.2 Example from participants' Responses: Preference**

**1) Interview Question:** Would you describe yourself as preferring teaching first-year students?

If so, why?

Highlighted text shows the coding within the NVivo node: "Preference"

**Michael:** Yes, I think so yes. I have a very vivid memory of being a first-year student, I feel in first year students who I meet the same kind of sense that we're not yet-- I won't say boxed in, but kind of trained in a disciplinary mode of thinking. Part of what I think we're doing, learning as undergraduates in second, third and fourth year is kind of gradually getting deeper into a way of seeing and negotiating the world and information and understanding how people in academics

talk and parsing a discourse for truth and falsehood. Zooming back to first year, we're not kind of zeroed in on that yet. We haven't learned usually to think like an economist, or an engineer, or a psychologist, or a philosopher. I love the open mindedness and the excitement of intellectual possibility that comes with first year. For me, it relates to my memory of coming into the university of feeling like I wanted to major in everything, and finding out that I couldn't do that, but having that kind of spirit of just wanting what Aristotle calls the longing to understand or curiosity or the kind of wonder that we come with. I think that's part of my joy in being involved in first year experience.

**Celeste:** Definitely. was hired at UBC to teach in a first-year cohort program and that's all I taught almost exclusively for about 12 years. I just recently branched out and then done other stuff other than sort of one-off thing and I still feel like first year students are really the group that I feel most drawn to for lots of different reasons...I think first year students still have this huge joy and excitement for being there in the first place and they are really earnest I think in what they are there for, what they want to do, they are just full of excitement. I think the transition process is really hard but they are willing to do it usually which is not always true I think once students get to upper years where they have different things that they are worried about and they are more focused on what comes next in their lives [pauses]. I like the process that first year students are going through, all the things that are secondary to their academics of being away from home for the first time, many of them are being adults in their home for the first time and grappling with differences from their family maybe or things that they are learning about themselves or with previous notions of who they thought they were I like all that transition

process that happens. I don't think necessarily from being a first-year student but from that age group.

**Fok-Shuen:** Yes, absolutely. The way you framed the question is interesting because you could've just asked do I prefer working for first-year students but there is something about the fact that it's a research-intensive university that I want to respond to. Let me answer generally first, just about why I like working with first-year students in general, and then why in this particular setting, it's particularly valuable. I like working with first-year students in general because there is just an enormous cultural change between high school and university. First year is when a lot of the cultural foundations get laid, even if the intellectual foundations don't get laid.

In my field of mathematics, it's this long project that starts all the way from kindergarten. The foundations are really laid in K-12. But the cultural foundation, the foundation of academic mathematics is really laid in university. That's the first time they're going to make contact with academic mathematicians. It's why I really value and appreciate the chance to, basically, get at the students before they develop too many bad habits, or to help instill in them something that could help carry them through a rough first couple of years, because it always is for people who are interested in math, in university. All the way through to when the math really starts to get interesting. They've got to carry this particular spark of curiosity. At a research-intensive university, the cultural change is double. It moves from being not only a school to an academy where you just----In a school, you're essentially being trained for life. In an academy, it's much more selective, not in a sense of being elite, but at least in the sense of being narrow. In the academy, the subject is really the point. There are secondary points but I think that the subject is

the point. Delving deeply into that subject is the point of so many people at the university. That's really what drives them, their own research. There is this double cultural shift which makes, I think, the role of the first-year instructor, professor, or teacher even more important. Maybe as a third thing, I don't talk about, the research is just so interesting. To have the opportunity to introduce it to first-year students who know very little about mathematics, little of mathematical research, is a genuine privilege. I know you want this to be basically about teaching, not about math?