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Anatomy Of A Peace Educator: Her Work And Workplace

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Abstract: This article reports a case study that examined the peace education practice of a 5th and 6th grade teacher at an independent, non-profit school in the Mid-western United States. The study used Paulo Freire's (1970) conception of dialogue as its conceptual framework. After describing the study's context and methods, we present data focusing on the teacher's background and development as a peace educator, her teaching practices, and her relationships with her students, school and local community. We discuss Michelle's interdisciplinary approach to peace education linked with her personal background and her use of dialogue as dynamic, fluid, and relational. Our analyses also prompted emergent themes for which we used curriculum theory to capture forms of integration between the personal and political dimensions of peace education, based on which, we propose an "integrated peace education."

Keywords: Peace education curriculum, critical dialogue pedagogy, interdisciplinarity, dialogue as dynamic and relational, and integrated curriculum.

Introduction

"Students have to know how to grow up, to talk, and to speak civilly to their life partners when they have a disagreement about, say, the children. About, you know, I am Jewish and you're Muslim. How are we going to raise our children? How are we going to honor our parents who might feel very strongly? I mean, they have to be able to have these conversations."

We begin with a brief interview quote in which Michelle¹, a 5th and 6th grade teacher, explained why she explicitly sought to engage her students in dialogue around agreements and disagreements, conflicts and resolutions. Describing herself as a "self-taught" peace educator, Michelle is a 53-year old white woman who teaches at Diversity School, an independent, non-profit school in the Mid-western United States. She is one of many practicing teachers who

¹ Pseudonyms are used for all individual and place names to protect confidentiality.

grapple with the challenges of helping young people develop the skills needed to contribute to a world less plagued by individual and group conflicts.

The purpose of this case study was to examine Michelle's practices and development as a peace educator. Although the field of peace education holds high expectations for classroom teachers, research on how peace educators become peace educators is rare, as is research focusing on the actual curriculum and classroom experience of peace practitioners (Author, 2017, 2020; van Ommering, 2017). Moreover, teacher education programs and professional development practices seldom address the aims, content, or challenges of peace education (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2014). Peace education scholars have further argued that effective emotional and organizational support for teachers to critically reflect on their identities and pedagogical practices are crucial to addressing the challenges of peace education (McLean, Cook & Crowe, 2008; Zembylas, 2008; 2011; Author, 2020). Given that these teachers are often left alone in their work, (Koshmanova et al., 2007; Montgomery & McGlynn, 2009; Zembylas et al., 2011; van Ommering, 2017), we sought to examine Michelle as a case study focused on her development as a peace educator.

Although the themes included in the study are not unique to peace education, we began the study with a focused interest in peace education practice instead of human rights education, international education, global education, or social justice education. Despite the abundance of empirical evidences focused on these fields worldwide, peace education research and practice are yet to be cultivated in ways relevant to various contexts (Cook, 2014). Possible reasons of this might be the challenges related to incorporating peace education within the context of teacher training (Bekerman, 2014) such as the lack of professional support for practicing peace teachers (McLean, Cook, & Crowe, 2008), teachers' insufficient perceptions of what peace education entails (Horsley, Newell, and Stubbs, 2005), the fear of disapproval for being disloyal to the nation (Harris & Morrison, 2003), and teachers' fear of losing their job and home (Author, accepted for publication in early 2021). As a result, this study aimed to contribute to the limited empirical literature in the field of peace education by focusing on Michelle's development and practice.

In this study, peace education refers to the process of empowering people with the skills, dispositions, and knowledge to create a more peaceful social order (Harris & Morrison, 2003). Due to the growing body of research over the past three decades, the meanings of peace and peace education, its prototypical attributes, and its core desired outcomes tend to vary depending on the political, theoretical, and methodological orientations of both scholars and practitioners (Galtung, 1973; Reardon, 1982; Salomon and Nevo, 2002; Bajaj, 2008; Page, 2008). The diverse nature of approaches and practices in peace education around the globe has resulted in significant overlaps with several subfields, including human rights, environmental and international studies, conflict resolution, and development education (Harris & Morrison, 2003; Zartman, 2007). Reardon (1999) divided these approaches into two groups. "Education *for* peace" constitutes the first group and includes international education (i.e., global education and/or world studies), multicultural education, and environmental education (p. 7). Emerging in response to the notion of global citizenry, each of these approaches focuses on creating the effective preconditions for a culture of peace (Reardon, 1999). Each subfield of educating *for* peace draws upon a particular discipline (i.e., international relations, cultural anthropology, and environmental sciences, respectively). "Education *about* peace," the second group, consists of three main approaches and/or subfields: nonviolent conflict resolution training, human rights education, and peace

studies (Reardon, 1999, p. 7). Drawing from an array of fields and disciplines, these approaches share the common aim at reducing conflict between individuals and groups.

We define critical peace education as educational policy, planning, curriculum, and pedagogy aimed at transforming educational content and pedagogy to address direct, indirect, and structural forms of violence (Harris, 2004; Reardon, 1988; Bajaj, 2008). Critical peace education puts an emphasis on asymmetrical power relationships as a major cause of conflicts, and calls for further empirical research on local understandings of conflict, violence, and peace (Bajaj, 2008). Critical peace educators strive to equip learners with skills and knowledge so that they can build the capacity to address present inequalities (Bajaj, 2008; Brantmeier, 2011; Duckworth, 2011; Hantzopoulos, 2011; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2014).

Despite significant theoretical literature focusing on critical dialogue (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992), there remains a need for empirical research in order to anticipate, analyze, and overcome the challenges of critical dialogue practices. This need becomes even further prevalent when we consider the criticism dialogic practices have received (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; hook, 1994; Suransky & Alma, 2017). Drawing from critical peace education and Freirean dialogue allowed us to focus this case study on two research questions: 1) What does it mean to become a peace educator (what roles do past experiences play in guiding peace education practices)? and 2) How are the components or attributes of Freirean dialogue (love, humility, faith, mutual trust, hope, and critical thinking) acknowledged or expressed in the practice of teaching peace?

The study presented below used Freirean dialogue as a conceptual framework to analyze the aims, curricula, teacher beliefs, and challenges of contemporary peace education. In presenting Michelle's case, we have organized this report into three parts. First, we review previous research and describe the study's conceptual framework. Second, we recount our methodology and use thematic analysis (Creswell, 2014) to present descriptive and analytic findings focused on Michelle's development as a peace educator, her use of her experience as curriculum, and her relationship with the school at which she teaches. Finally, we return to our conceptual framework as a basis for interpreting the data presented in our findings. Our analyses also prompted emergent themes for which we used curriculum theory to capture the integration of the personal and political dimensions of Michelle's work. The focus of the study throughout is on understanding the conceptual underpinnings of dialogue used in teaching for and about peace.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework, drawn from critical peace education, has been developed by applying the concepts and principles of critical pedagogy to teaching for or about peace. Thus, critical peace education is grounded in critical theory and the work of scholars such as Christoph Wulf (1974), Lourdes Diaz Soto (2005), Carl Mirra (2008), and Ken Montgomery (2006). The fundamentals of this approach have also relied on the writings of Paulo Freire, and particularly his work on dialogue. Freire (1970) conceptualized dialogue as more than a simple exchange of information, but rather as an "encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 69). In Freire's approach, dialogue is one of the primary ways to establish the horizontal relationships that characterize his problem-posing and problem-solving approach. Freire contrasts dialogue with anti-dialogue, a vertical, unloving, acritical relationship that subordinates others as objects rather than subjects (Rule, 2011). Freire (1970) ties anti-dialogue with a banking model of education in which teachers are the "haves"

and the students are the have-nots. In contrast, dialogue is seen as a socio-political encounter that rests on six attributes: love, humility, faith, mutual trust, hope, and critical thinking (Freire, 1970; 1998).

The first attribute, love of humanity, includes affirmations of the world and of people. Freire (1970) argued that creative and liberating acts of revolution depend on this type of love in order for “teacher-learners” to work *with* people, not *for* or *on* them. Because love is the task of responsible “Subjects,” it cannot exist under domination or stasis. Humility, the second attribute of dialogue, recognizes that learning and acting involve the contributions of others, and that these contributions need to be valued. Humility serves as a counter to arrogance, the latter of which prevents individuals from seeing themselves in unity with others. The result of arrogance is not dialogue, but often prescription. For those who engage in acts of arrogance, Freire’s criticism was sharp: “Someone who cannot acknowledge himself [sic] to be as mortal as everyone else still has a long way to go before he [sic] can reach the point of encounter” (1970, p. 78). The third attribute, faith, Freire (1970, p. 90) described as an “a priori” condition for dialogue. Faith represents a belief in the power of humans to make and remake, to create and recreate the world. Miller (1998) has argued that faith is an aspect of the first attribute because love of humanity “grounds these people as ends-in-themselves and makes faith possible” (p. 78).

When dialogue is grounded in love, humility and faith, Freire (1970, p. 90) argued that an expected outcome is mutual trust, the fourth attribute of dialogue. Mutual trust is nourished when one party’s words coincide with their actions: “to say one thing and do another—to take one’s own word lightly—cannot inspire trust. To glorify democracy and to silence the people is a farce; to discourse on humanism and to negate people is a lie” (Freire, 1970, p. 78). Mutual trust strengthens decentralized epistemic authority and open relationships (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010).

The fifth attribute of dialogue, hope, arises from the incompleteness of human beings and their constant search for wholeness. Acceptance of a static and unchanging world, a world without hope, only leads to despair. Freire (1970, p. 92) described encounters without hope as “empty and sterile, bureaucratic and tedious.” Hope, on the other hand, lends purpose to solidarity and praxis—an amalgam of thought and action. As Freire wrote, hope “does not consist in crossing one’s arms and waiting” (1970, p. 92). The final attribute of Freirean dialogue is critical thinking. Freire described this attribute as “thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them” (Freire, 1970, p. 78). Freire (1970) also contrasted critical thinking with naive thinking; “For the naive thinker, the important thing is accommodation to this normalized ‘today.’ For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality on behalf of the continuing humanization of men” [sic] (p. 92). As such, critical thinking is not a specialized set of skills that some people possess and others do not. Instead, and similar to the other attributes, critical thinking is a process of transformation.

Dialogic pedagogy aims to improve the human existence. Yet, well-intention and hope alone are not enough although they are an essential basis for transformation (Freire, 1992; Mockler, 2011). Despite the long history of dialogue as a scholarly field, the literature also cautions the practitioners and scholars of the field about the possible oppressing practices of dialogue due to challenging manifestations of power and privilege (Suransky & Alma, 2017), social structures of oppression (Ellsworth, 1989), and oppressive pedagogical dynamics (hooks, 1994). Moreover, Freire’s ideas of transformative education have also been criticized for overlooking power and privilege (hook, 1994). In short, Freire has been critiqued for placing too

much faith in dialogue as an abstract and Utopian process (Ellsworth, 1989). If scholars and practitioners were to take dialogue as a simple exchange of information, such exchanges could include norms that further inequalities and the oppression of particular groups. A fully inclusive dialogue may not be possible, but Freire's characteristics noted above are what make such encounters distinctly educational.

Methodology

Procedures

Participant observation, interviews, and documents collected on site served as our methods of data collection. Participant observations were conducted at Michelle's school for a period of just over one year. During this time, we observed over ten sessions, during which Michelle was either the lead-teacher or co-teaching with REXX and/or other invited teachers. Each observation session included two to three hours of classroom instruction. Field notes were collected for Michelle's 5th and 6th grade classes. We conducted three formal interviews with the primary participant (Michelle), and had numerous informal conversations with her before and after our observations and through email. Michelle was chosen specifically as the focus of this study among her colleagues for several reasons. First, she identified herself as a peace educator and designed her curriculum each year around various themes of peace education. Second, Michelle initiated her training in this regard through several professional activities such as scholarships, traveling, and practicing peace education. Third, she created the "traveling Peace Museum" twice with her students based on her guiding question "How can we make the world a more just and peaceful place?" At the end of the unit, the culminated projects of the students were displayed at the school, a local church, and in several public spaces. Finally, Michelle guided and supported REXX's development as a peace educator through modeling and mentoring. Thanks to these characteristics, Michelle stood out as a peace educator among her several colleagues at Diversity School, none of whom self-identified as peace educators nor they designed their curriculum specifically around dimensions of peace education although they practiced – directly or indirectly – the school's ethos related to peaceful conflict resolution.

We also conducted secondary interviews with Michelle's team-teacher REXX, one invited teacher (Haley), the school principal, and the Diversity School teacher training program director. Each audio-recorded interview took place in a meeting room at the school and lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Recordings were later transcribed, and researcher memos were added during early analysis. The interviews with Michelle focused on her conceptions of peace and conflict; her educational and professional background; her background specific to peace education; the kinds of activities and/or lessons she designed for her students together with her reasons for designing these activities and/or lessons in particular ways; and her beliefs regarding dialogue as a pedagogy for peace education practice. Data were selected for inclusion in this case study from our primary interviews and observations based primarily on their relevance to our research questions. Three semi-structured interviews with Michelle and 25 hours of observation of her teaching were selected from the total of 18 interviews with Diversity School community members and a total of 63 hours of observations during their classes.

Secondary data included semi-structured interviews with Michelle's team teacher (REXX), the director/co-founder of the school, Haley (an interventions program coordinator and instructor who team-taught a building healthy relationships curriculum with Michelle and REXX in the 5th and 6th grade), and the director of the Collaboration Organization (a professional development

initiative to train Diversity School teachers). The purposes of the secondary interviews were to collect background information on Michelle’s school and to help triangulate this information with other sources. We used common procedures (e.g., use of pseudonyms) to minimize any risk to participants and to protect confidentiality. All participants in the study provided informed consent as required by the sponsoring institution’s Internal Review Board. In addition, we contacted several Michelle’s past students through email who had helped create the “traveling Peace Museum.” Our emails asked these students about their experiences working on this project as well as its perceived influence on them as individuals. Three of these students responded, sharing what stood out for them from the process of creating and exhibiting the museum in public spaces. Moreover, we collected over 300 pages of curriculum documents from all the interviewed teachers’ activities and lesson plans, 189 pages of which were designed and employed by Michelle. Finally, we received a copy of the video recording of one of the exhibits of the travelling Peace Museum, which was created by Michelle and her students. Secondary data were coded and analyzed using the same procedures that were used for primary data. In keeping with a case study method (Merriam, 1991), however, we approached secondary data more selectively based on its relevance to Michelle’s work, and primarily for the purposes of triangulation across data sources. Table 1 shows the details of the total and selected data resources.

Data sources	Total	Selected Data
Interviews	18 semi-structured interviews in total (13 with other Diversity School teachers, 1 with the school director, 1 with the teacher trainer, and 3 semi-structured interviews with the invited teacher (the interventions program coordinator who designed and taught the building healthy relationships curriculum in Michelle’s class)	3 semi-structured interviews with Michelle as well as several informal conversations with her before and/or after observations
Observation	63 hours of observations in all teachers’ classes	25 hours of Michelle’s teaching
Field notes	47 pages	25 pages
Documents	Over 300 pages of curriculum materials	189 pages of Michelle’s curriculum materials
Emails	3 past students’ responses	3 past students’ responses
Video Recordings	1 DVD of Peace Museum Exhibit	1 DVD of Peace Museum Exhibit

Table 1: The Total and Selected Data

Analysis and Warrant

While we treated all interview data as self-report, our initial analyses coded both interviews and observations (field notes) based on the six attributes of Freirean dialogue (Freire, 1998). We learned from early coding that our analyses would not be a simple process of “operationalizing” Freire’s attributes as discrete categories. Because Freire’s attributes are both overlapping and abstract, we quickly found discrete codes to be reductionist and thus poorly aligned with the spirit of Freire’s work. The brief interview quote with which we began our report serves as an example. The context of the quote is Michelle explaining her hopes that her students would learn to constructively discuss agreements and disagreements with future

significant others. Because these comments look to the future, we initially coded this example as “Hope.” However, Michelle’s hopes also imply other attributes such as Faith in a dynamic, changeable world—a world in which her students can make a difference. While we retained the six attributes as the basis for our analyses, we made a conscious effort not to force data into a single code, instead assigned multiple codes in order to explore the relationships among the attributes.

We also sought to increase the credibility and warrant for the study’s results through triangulation and member checking. Triangulation occurred across data sources (Denzin, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) by examining how interviews, observations, and documents corroborated or contradicted different data sources. During follow-up interviews, member-checking techniques were used to gauge the accuracy of participant responses. After preliminary analysis, we contacted Michelle again and asked her two questions: Is our reporting, including direct quotes and descriptions, free of any factual errors? And, have we represented your work adequately and fairly? Employing mem-checking techniques as an ongoing process through follow-up interviews, email exchanges with Michelle, and several informal talks before and after the preliminary analysis of the data were helpful in clarifying and correcting pieces of data as well as providing for in-depth data and analyses. For example, when Michelle first mentioned family meetings, we thought she was referring to parent-teacher conferences. However, later we learned through member-checking that family meetings were held in each program on a regular basis as an integral part of the curriculum. Learning that family meetings were opportunities for members of the community to learn the democratic procedures of cooperation, mutual respect, responsibility and social interest, we also observed three family meetings of the 5th and 6th grade. We then used Michelle’s feedback to refine our analyses and results.

Study Site: Diversity School

As reported by the school director, Diversity School served 210 students (aged 3 to 18), 42 percent of whom were economically disadvantaged based on federal free and reduced lunch guidelines². 20 percent were students of color and an additional 13 percent were from outside the US. The school provided partial or full scholarship support to 178 of its 210 students. Committed to a progressive orientation, the core values of the school were stated in Diversity School staff orientation documents as: “the development of the heart, mind and voice of every child.”

Founded in the 1970s in a small, college town in the Mid-western United States, Diversity School is a progressive, non-profit school operating early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school programs. As an example of the school’s progressive orientation, Diversity School uses what students and teachers called an “ethos” or pledge that the students, parents, and school staff were asked to acknowledge:

Diversity School Community is dedicated to creating an environment where everyone’s bodies and feelings are safe and valued. If we have a conflict, it is our responsibility to solve it through respectful, non-violent means.

² Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals.

This ethos, written in capital letters on a large white sign, hung on the wall over the main staircase and directly across from the entrance doors. Hence, Diversity School's ethos was one of the first things one would likely see when entering the school. As a key component of the ethos, the school implemented nonviolent conflict resolution protocols and provided consistent support from peers, older students, teachers, and other advisors.

Diversity School had abandoned "letter-grade" policies, using instead an array of assessment procedures to guide the school's academic and social/emotional expectations for students. After graduating from this progressive, project-based, personalized learning environment, 90 percent of Diversity School graduates moved on to higher education. Moreover, both teachers and students described the school as an "extended family," and they explicitly spoke of this family as having both "aunts and uncles" as a way to call special attention to the gender balance of the school staff although everybody called each other by their preferred names. For example, everybody used the school director's unique preferred name instead of his given name.

Diversity School was also viewed as an alternative for students who are struggling in the local public schools. REXX, Michelle's co-teacher, described his views on the "fit" between family backgrounds and the school:

A family who is very kind of strait-laced, like a very rule-oriented type of family, may not be the best fit for here because these kids have a lot of freedom that public school kids or students in almost any other schools do not have.

The Participant

Growing up in the countryside, Michelle enjoyed riding quarter horses in fields, forests, and show arenas of the Midwest. She left the country behind to study international business on a scholarship at one of the largest research universities in the state. However, after starting her undergraduate career, she discovered her interest in language, and so she returned the business scholarship to study English literature. Before graduating, she took part in an exchange program with the People's Republic of China (PRC). During her studies at Hangzhou University, she discovered what would become an enduring love of Chinese language as well as Asian history and culture. Michelle traveled further in the PRC, Taiwan ROC, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, and Jamaica. After receiving her Bachelor's Degree in English Literature, Michelle earned a Master's Degree in East Asian Studies with a concentration in Chinese linguistics and language. Inspired to pursue a career in education, she completed her certification and began teaching at Diversity School in 1993.

After Michelle had begun teaching, she applied for and received support from the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund to study the Pacific War and World War II through Japanese perspectives and then compare those perspectives with American views. During her study in Japan, Michelle visited war memorials and peace museums. She was affected by her experiences in Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Okinawa so deeply that, in her words, "I would go there again tomorrow, if I could."

Although Michelle reported that she grew up "kinda sheltered" in the countryside, she experienced her "renaissance" during her college years. She met people from different walks of life and from all over the world. The arts, however, Michelle learned through her family, which impacts her ethos as a peace educator (e.g., integrating the Peace Museum activities in the curriculum). She explained that both her mother and maternal grandfather were artists, and that

their influence added to the breadth of interests that she brought to her own teaching. Although Michelle's teaching license was in secondary English literature, she was hired as a language arts and social studies teacher. In this position, she has taught several subjects in the 5th and 6th grade program, including language arts, social studies, environmental science, arts, Chinese, and guitar. Michelle's interests outside of teaching included Buddhism (although she did not belong to any Sangha), social justice projects through her church, outdoor activities, and music. Her greatest joy was spending time with her daughter, who was a university student at the time of the study. As a single parent, Michelle also viewed Diversity School as "an extended family," and she highly valued the community support it offered to both her and her daughter.

Findings: "Moving a Grain of Sand"

Michelle described peace education as, "the underlying theme of much of [her] vision as an educator." On a yearly basis, Michelle has cycled through an array of lessons, projects, and themes from what she labelled "a peace education lens." She developed her curriculum thematically based on what she identified as a recurrent and fundamental question for her and her students: "How can I help make the world a more just and peaceful place?" Depending on the subject focus for the year, this question was reflected throughout Michelle's classroom activities. For example, Michelle twice implemented a unit that culminated in a "traveling Peace Museum." These projects used Michelle's guiding question to generate three areas of focus: 1) lessons learned from conflicts of the past (in this case, the WWII and Pacific War); 2) current conflicts (primarily the Israel-Palestine conflict); and 3) visions for a just and peaceful future. At the end of this unit, the classes held large exhibitions that were displayed at the school, a local church, and in several public spaces. Together with her co-teacher, Rexx, Michelle has relied on this perspective to teach units on life skills, building healthy relationships, mindfulness education, relational aggression, human sexuality, and environmental education. They sometimes had visiting teachers to teach particular aspects of these units. Thanks to Michelle and Rexx's motivation to collaborate with others to better serve the needs of the students, Haley was able to teach the full building healthy relationships curriculum, which would not be possible in other schools due to time limitations set by the school administration.

Michelle's development as a peace educator occurred over time and in response to perceived student needs. Michelle mentioned, for example, that her self-study of mindfulness-based stress reduction led her to implement mindfulness education from a peace education perspective. Michelle explained that she did so because of her experience working with students with autism disorder. She described these students as experiencing significant physical conflicts because they lacked a developed understanding or had difficulty decoding nonverbal communication. Therefore, the class studied brain science as one of their themes for that year, investigating how the brain worked; how to circumvent fight, flight or freeze reactions; and how to develop frontal lobe functioning.

Moving from Content to Integration

Michelle expressed additional motives for teaching peace. For example, through her teaching and self-studies, Michelle began to see "parallels" between domestic violence and

violence in different aspects of daily life, including the language used in popular music lyrics. Referring to the violence in popular music, Michelle commented:

Listening over and over to rock lyrics from the seventies that I will just recite because of my culture. I would be singing along while I was working at some job and all of a sudden I became aware of the violence in the lyrics. And the music did not give you the context that a book would give you that allows you to process that.

Michelle also recognized other media as an aspect of social life that directly involved or implied violence. Early in her teaching career she began to see students coming to school after having consumed large quantities of popular media:

. . . students were coming in, and their parents saw them watch it over and over and over and as the years would go by watching more and more violence in their television shows and their movies ... Once the students were trying to tabulate how many murders these kids saw a week in TV and movies, and it was substantial.

The interaction of media and the students' daily lives is certainly complex and influenced by a range of past experiences and the social context in which they find themselves.

After her Fulbright studies in Japan, Michelle decided to implement peace education as a formal curriculum:

And that is when I decided to study, to weave peace education as an actual curriculum with my kids, and we did the Peace Museum. I have a book about peace museums. I modeled it after that. The children mapped out learning like lessons from the past, current conflicts and visions for a just and peaceful future, because that is the way the Okinawa Museum did it. That is the way the book that I read did it. That gives us the power to actually do something. What can I do to make the world a more just and peaceful place? I did that curriculum twice, seven years apart.

As part of their Peace Museum curriculum, Michelle and her students studied the stages of rising fascism in Japan, Germany, and the United States. While doing so, students engaged in several different activities: they changed Japanese Yen to USD; learned Japanese games; interviewed people; created art; wrote poetry; viewed feature films, documentaries, archival stories, manga, and anime; and arranged guest speakers who were American or Japanese veterans and/or survivors. During the second exhibition, the class also wrote and performed a short play.

Michelle's curriculum focused on the Israel-Palestine conflict as well. Michelle arranged a visit to an art exhibit, for example, that included Palestinian children's art. One of her students asked about Israeli children's art because it would make an interesting comparison and Michelle's students wanted to honor both Palestinian and Israeli children's art. This inquiry led Michelle to include in her curriculum a book on Israeli children's art. Furthermore, she invited an Israeli university student to speak to her classes. They read the children's art book and then held a panel discussion. Later, they invited Palestinian undergraduates from the local university and held a second panel discussion. Michelle transcribed both panels and gave the transcripts to her students to analyze. They then compared the transcripts as a basis for class discussions. In particular, Michelle commented on these discussions: ". . . rather than taking a side on a situation we don't know about, we used it to look at the retribution cycle, then we looked at our own forms of retribution cycles and those we observed around us."

Michelle offered another example that drew on local resources when she taught a book, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. This story recounts the experiences of teachers who had been interned in a concentration camp in Germany together with 15,000 children. Among those children, only 200 survived. In part, Michelle selected this book because two of those survivors were related to one of Michelle's students. Thus, the class invited the survivors to visit the class to tell their family stories.

Michelle and her students were engaged in such projects over a significant period of time (often more than a semester) in order for the students to develop greater depths of understanding. For their Peace Museum, Michelle's students embarked on independent projects that focused on the study of historical conflicts, peace leaders, and social movements. When the students completed their projects, they created the museum on lessons from the events leading into and during World War II. The class exhibited the Peace Museum at the school, a local Unitarian church, and several outdoor community fairs. In doing so, Michelle and her students made a concerted effort to include veterans and survivors at the exhibits. Michelle and her students also employed a letter writing campaign to get veterans' views to balance the connotative baggage that the word *peace* sometimes implies. Michelle explained:

Because the minute you say peace or peace education, someone like my father, who is a Vietnam vet, you know, a career in the military... he gets very upset. Attack, attack, defend, defend. They think peace or peace education is an offence against their sacrifices.

For the Unitarian church exhibit, Michelle and her students again invited elders from the community. One of the best compliments they received, Michelle explained, was when "one older man went over and talked to a young man on the Battle of Okinawa exhibit for a long time and then, at the end, the man told the boy that their sacrifices were validated because that ten-year-old boy, so many years later, was studying the very battles that the man had taken part in." Michelle emphasized that she had not assigned that battle but that the student had chosen it himself. The Peace Museum students also shared the delight of that project experience. All three students that responded to our questions through emails emphasized their appreciation for the chance to take part in the Peace Museum.

Civil Discourse

For Michelle, being a peace educator included teaching students how to engage in "civil discourse," the term she preferred to dialogue because she found dialogue and civil discourse quite similar. She believed that dialogue could best be taught with everyone sitting in a circle where students and teachers would be able to see each other's faces. Michelle was also included in the circle, but as an equal member of the group, talking with the students instead of lecturing. Having learned how to engage in dialogue effectively in the classroom, Michelle argued, students would be able "to apply these skills in their everyday life." Michelle also hoped that her teaching would be intergenerational; that her students would become peace advocates, and that when they had children, they would teach their children peaceful ways of engaging with others.

Michelle also taught environmental education as a part of her peace education curriculum, linked through issues of equity and eco-justice. Her class again began with the guiding question: How can we make the world a more just and peaceful place? From this point, the class focused on issues of power in environmental education (specifically water equity) to help students better understand conflicts around water accessibility and use.

Furthermore, Michelle sought to increase her students' awareness of "the little day to day battles of violence in our language, violence in our metaphors, and violence in our media consumption." The morning we had this conversation, while we were sitting in her class, one of Michelle's students said, "Well, I just killed two birds with one stone." Michelle corrected this old figure of speech by saying to the student, "You just helped two birds with one hand." The student turned to look at Michelle. Giving her a puzzled expression, he responded, "Oh, that works?" This brief exchange illustrates what Michelle called "something small like moving a grain of sand," but she was determined to move that grain. She said, "I am not old enough to move the older ideas. I'm not strong enough. But I can move a grain of sand. Everyday a few grains. So that's sort of how I look at violence in our speech." Michelle applied this approach to herself as well.

All the time the kids will say 'that's so gay' or 'that's retarded.' I do not let that go by. I speak to it every time because I want people to speak to me and hold a mirror up to me as well. So I think that's how I see words as all intertwined.

At the level of Michelle's classroom interactions with students, Michelle also viewed the Diversity Ethos and its accompanying protocols as directly supporting peace education. Earlier in Michelle's teaching, her daughter attended a public school and had experienced a conflict provoked by another student. Michelle felt that her daughters' school had mishandled the situation, noting that, "If that happened in our school, in any class in our school, it was a whole different approach." She then referred to one of the activities we observed her facilitating together with Rexx a few days prior. In that approach, students used the school ethos in response to interpersonal conflicts. First, the students were asked to resolve the conflict themselves. The students who failed to resolve it themselves asked a friend or fellow student to help them. If that did not work, they came to either Michelle or Rexx. The teacher asked each student to tell their side of the story without interruption. Next, the teacher asked them to paraphrase what the other person said by using "I statements," such as "I hear you say ..." and "I feel ... when you ... because" Finally, the teacher asked them, "What are your needs?" While we were going over this approach during one of the interviews, Michelle laughed and said: "Sometimes the kids would rather punish themselves than go through the whole conflict resolution process."

Analyses and Discussion

The findings above cut across several dimensions of Michelle's development and practice as a peace educator. She drew widely on her past studies and travels in order to develop lessons and curriculum around the themes of peace and justice. In developing this curriculum, Michelle also relied on colleagues, her school, and the local community. Our analyses used Freire's six attributes of dialogues in order to highlight the relational dimensions of Michelle's teaching. Based on these attributes, data were categorized and then examined for patterns within and between each category.

Freirean Dialogue in Practice

The first attribute, love of humanity, includes affirmations of a changing and dynamic world. In Freirean terms, love of humanity is manifested in working *with* others, not *on* or *for* them. Such affirmations are partly implied in how Michelle described her own development as a

peace educator. She recounted college, for example, as her “renaissance” of expanding interests and experiences in which her change in majors gave way to an abiding interest in world cultures, Asian literature, art, history, and travel. Moreover, our data provide numerous examples in which Michelle has drawn on her experience in developing lessons and thematic units. The Peace Museum project, Michelle’s focus on the Pacific War, her incorporation of children’s art, and Japanese literature are examples of content that Michelle has accumulated from her past experiences and which she used as resources in her teaching.

Michelle’s “wealth” of experience, however, could be viewed as a point of tension. Scholars with a critical bent might argue that by drawing on her past experiences, self-study, and travel, Michelle risks imposing her knowledge by “naming the world” on behalf of her students. With Michelle’s relative “wealth” of experience, she risks becoming a member of the “haves” and her students members of the “have-nots.” Moreover, Michelle taught with clear purposes and often with a specific curriculum (albeit flexible and student-centered). Like Paulo Freire (1970) in his work with adult literacy programs in Brazil, Michelle brought an agenda to her teaching at Diversity School. Rarely, however, did Michelle serve as the only or primary source of knowledge for her students. She drew widely on her own experiences, but also sought out a range of resources from colleagues, her local community, and students. Michelle often taught lessons together with REXX, her faculty team member. She also recruited guest speakers and curriculum materials from state and local nonprofit agencies. In short, Michelle’s work affirmed others through collaboration. She readily asked others for help and was receptive to their assistance. Depending on the relationships involved, asking for help may also require a degree of humility, Freire’s second attribute of dialogue.

While Michelle’s humility was implied in her collaboration with others, she also expressed humility directly in her comments on her professional development. Michelle explained that she had never felt “complete” as a teacher, always having more to learn. Michelle also noted her limitations when she admitted, “I’m not strong enough to move old ideas . . . but I try each day to move a few grains of sand.” Such humility serves as a complement to the other attributes by preventing acts of imposition in the name of love, faith, and so on. While Michelle was committed and passionate in her teaching, humility allowed her to avoid the stance of a “crusader” or “savior” teacher (Emdin, 2016).

Humility however is a two-edge sword in the sense that it implies the limitations of a single teacher. While Michelle’s teaching is largely successful, she has few connections with other peace educators. The satisfactions that Michelle draws from her work is limited in this sense. She has witnessed her own students’ learning but has few avenues for professional support specific to peace education.

Like humility, faith in dialogue is relational in its affirmations of others. Freire (1970) describes faith as an a priori assumption that the world is dynamic and changeable. However, faith resides in the present. When Michelle spoke of her determination to “move a grain of sand,” she was expressing faith in both her students and in her own teaching. Or, to take another example, the guiding question, “How can I make the world a more just and peaceful place?” affirms that her students are capable of doing so. This assumption is closely related to what care-theorist Nel Noddings (1986) calls *confirmation*. Confirmation is the assumption of best motives congruent with the circumstances at hand. It functions within care theory as a way to recognize others as agents.

Hope overlaps with faith as an affirmation of others. Yet compared with faith, hope takes a future orientation. We found this orientation pervasive in Michelle’s teaching. In our opening

quote, Michelle argues that her students will need conflict resolution skills in their future adult lives when making decisions with a life partner. It may also be the case that Michelle's curricular focus on peace, conflict, power relations, and environmental issues is a curriculum that expresses and/or requires significant hope in a transformative world. Michelle's students will face significant challenges outside the supportive environment of Diversity School. Nevertheless, she hopes to prepare her students for just such challenges by encouraging them to employ the skills and strategies in their interactions outside. For example, the students tended to use the strategies to resolve the conflicts they experienced within their families and so they framed family interactions in line with the Diversity School ethos.

Mutual trust and critical thinking, the final two attributes of dialogue, were linked together in an unexpected way. As mentioned earlier, mutual trust is achieved by an alignment of one's words and actions. As Freire (1970, p. 78) put it: "to take one's words lightly . . . is a farce." Michelle did not take her words lightly. Having studied languages and cultures, she was alert and sensitive to how words impact others. Michelle often challenged her students when they used disparaging slang such as "that's so gay" or "that's retarded." "I speak to it every time," Michelle explained, "because I want people to hold a mirror up to me as well."

Michelle's attention to everyday language also played a role in the critical thinking that she modeled and encouraged her students to engage in. Freire (1970, p. 92) contrasted critical thinking with naïve thinking, the latter of which seeks to maintain a "normalized" present while critical thinking aims to transform the present. From this perspective, Michelle refused to accept disparaging slang and colloquial expressions that conveyed a normalized disrespect for others. Moreover, Michelle regularly pointed out to her students the violence explicit or implied in common idiomatic expressions, song lyrics, and on social media. In this context, Michelle's push back against such pervasive cultural patterns is also a form of critical thinking because it rests on the ability to make implicit meanings explicit before they can be critically understood. Finally, Michelle persistently sought out a range of perspectives on whatever topic she was teaching, doing so in order to give her students substantive content and opportunities to practice critical thinking skills.

Emergent Themes

In the previous section we described Michelle's use of dialogue as dynamic, fluid, and relational. Freire's work asks that we approach the attributes of dialogue not as a list of components or separate skills, but as systems of relations and exchange. Doing so in this study foregrounded significant aspects of Michelle's teaching, including her curricular focus on issues of conflict and social justice as well as her close attention to the often unrecognized power of language. In these areas, Michelle's teaching aligns well with Freirean dialogue as a component of critical theory.

While our data support this interpretation, there is another side to Michelle's teaching that transcends the cooptation of Freirean dialogue without its emphasis on inequality and social justice. Although Freire is often used naively to reproduce the status quo, Michelle counters this naivety with progressive traditions. On the one hand, Michelle seeks to help her students critically analyze social and political power, particularly around issues of equity. On the other hand, Michelle blends these aims and practices with a decidedly student-centered pedagogy. The hallmarks of this pedagogy include collaboration, active student engagement, personal relevance, thematic curriculum development, and cooperative learning. Michelle's progressive leanings are

also suggested in her aims as well as in her practices. Recall our opening interview quote, for example, where Michelle spoke not of social causes or political power, but of her students' needs to resolve interpersonal conflicts. These stated aims and the practices we observed closely align with the child-development wing of American progressive thought, and specifically the work of John Dewey on student engagement, interest, and effort and Michelle's use of arts work to teach peace (e.g., creating a travelling Peace Museum) (Dewey, 1913, 1938).

At the same time, critical theory and progressivism are typically represented as contrasting and often conflicting traditions (Eisner, 1985). Critical theory focuses on structural forms of violence and power differentials within the larger social context of schooling. Progressivism does not discount these concerns but focuses on how students experience social structures directly. In Michelle's work, however, these traditions seem fully integrated, thus providing an opportunity to reconsider the comparability of practices drawn from both traditions. It may also be that while we drew our conceptual framework from Freire, whose body of work is guided by critical theory, Freire's specific writings on dialogue cross over into progressive ideals, and this too may help account for our results. In practice, merging the political and the practical is rare but not without precedent. Adjoining peace education, examples range from Jane Addams' work at Hull-House in Chicago (Addams, 1908; Noddings, 2016) and the Summerhill School in England (Neil, 1960) to the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee (Horton, 1998). While these schools embraced a range of values, Michelle too carries on many of their activist traditions.

Still other factors may account for Michelle's merger of political and progressive orientations. In particular, Diversity School not only had a strong progressive orientation but also one that fits Michelle's teaching almost hand and glove. We have already noted this orientation as reflected in the school ethos, which welcomed dialogue as a means for cooperative learning. Diversity School's independent status and small size may have also provided more opportunities for dialogue than would be possible in many large public schools. In particular, Michelle and her students held wide discretion in deciding what to study and how to study it. In such ways, Diversity School did not represent public schools at large. Nevertheless, it does represent possible alternatives to more common forms of school organization. Janet W. Schofield (1990) has argued for the value of "unusual" research sites for what she calls "studies of what could be" (pp. 217-21). Michelle's case serves as an example of *what could be* in the sense that Diversity School, at least for Michelle and her students, operates much like a greenhouse to nurture the "seedlings" of dialogue.

Integration also characterized Michelle's thematic curriculum development. Building on Reardon's (1999) distinction between teaching *about* and teaching *for* peace, we can say that Michelle's work exhibits an integration across both categories. Michelle did not eschew academic disciplines as central to her curriculum. She included topics representing history, international studies, and the sciences. Nevertheless, Michelle's skills-based teaching, as we have noted, focused on conflict resolution and interpersonal skills. While Reardon's distinction is based on the discipline that informs a particular approach, Michelle's teaching is largely interdisciplinary. We suspect that this interdisciplinary approach is again linked with Michelle's personal background. Having received little formal training in peace education, we could not discern a single or dominant discipline orientation in Michelle's work. Instead, Michelle draws on diverse life experiences (primarily travel, study abroad, and community projects) that cut across history, language, politics, and the sciences. Certainly Michelle might benefit from a more discipline-based study of peace education, including Reardon's work. However, rather than

lament Michelle's lack of a strong disciplinary orientation, we might revisit and possibly revise peace education principles to recognize if not encourage interdisciplinary teaching.

Further support for Michelle's interdisciplinary approach is her integration of peace education perspectives across an array of curriculum topics. The history of World War II, Japanese art and language, water rights, brain functioning, digital safety, and other topics were linked together under Michelle's "peace education lens." Michelle's students approached water rights, for example, from an eco-justice perspective in order to foreground historical and political conflicts as well as how such conflicts had been resolved in the past. Without a disciplinary home, Michelle's curriculum may seem somewhat unstructured from this perspective, but this dimension of Michelle's teaching also demonstrates the adroit conceptual skills needed for Michelle to adapt content to her own ends.

The type of approach we are describing might be called "integrated peace education." Foremost, this approach would include conceptualizing a variety of content in terms of its contributions to understanding conflicts and/or peace building. Integrated peace education does so by foregrounding and making explicit patterns that connect experience with broader understandings of how that experience is shaped by history, culture, politics, and so forth. More generally, integration of content emphasizes the primacy of personal meaning and the connections that students are able to make through their engagement with that content. Danesh (2006) proposes an integrative peace curriculum that is similar to the approach we are describing here. Danesh's (2006) curriculum is grounded in theories of peace, particularly the notion of unity and a shared worldview. Our approach draws on curriculum theory and questions of educational purpose. Both approaches hold advantages because our current environmental crisis is, to some degree, also an educational crisis.

Michelle's role as a peace educator is to develop learning activities that allow her students to integrate personal experiences with the broader cultural patterns that guide those experiences. Michelle's teaching roles alternated among those of arranger, facilitator, and guide, often in that order. Her dialogic methods included modeling, opportunities for practice, and what is often called "soft suasion," as when Michelle would "correct" her students' use of disrespectful language. Earlier, we noted that Michelle drew significantly on the school and local community as a teaching resource. From the perspective of integrated peace education, however, it would be more accurate to say that Michelle was not only seeking out resources for her teaching; she was also seeking learning partnerships for her students.

On a final note, Michelle's student-centered pedagogy also points to one of the study's limitations. While we observed and talked informally with many of Michelle's students, the focus of the case presented here is on Michelle's development as a peace educator. In taking this focus we have neglected student perspectives and experiences. Based on the results of our study, we could argue that Michelle's thematic curriculum development had yielded a rich, coherent, and flexible array of learning activities. Does this view align with how Michelle's students experience her classroom? What challenges do these students face in being asked to assume roles that include co-planning and a broader range of decision-making than is typical for 5th and 6th-grade students?

A second limitation of the study is that while we have focused on Michelle's uses of dialogue and curriculum development, we have not considered questions of how these factors relate to teacher socialization and professional identity. Particularly in cases similar to Michelle, further inquiry is needed on questions of how teachers form identities around the curriculum they teach and the content areas in which they teach.

Conclusion

This study examined the development and peace education practices of a 5th and 6th grade teacher in an independent, non-profit school in the Mid-western United States. Our research focused on how Michelle pursued the prospects of peace education through dialogue. We have used Freirean dialogue to highlight many of the relational aspects of Michelle's teaching, particularly her rapport with her students and her collaborative interactions with colleagues and members of the local community.

To summarize, the major conclusions of the study are threefold. First, Michelle capitalized on her past experiences by integrating her travels and previous studies into her ongoing classroom teaching. Second, Michelle relied on extensive use of school and community support. Her school provided Michelle and her students with both the flexibility and support to reach out to a variety of community members and organizations as they pursued their studies together. Third, Michelle's thematic curriculum development served to integrate a range of content under the concepts of peace and justice. Michelle was particularly skilled and motivated at making connections across topics and content areas, giving her teaching an interdisciplinary orientation. Michelle's commitments and practices as a peace educator have a lot to offer to the related literature especially regarding the promising potential of peace education for the transformation of education in a fast changing and conflict fueled world. Michelle's motivation to become more with the help of others while helping others become more, and her practices of dialogue as dynamic, fluid, and relational make a significant contribution to the limited literature while calling for further research examining what it means to -in Michelle's words- "move a grain of sand" in varying contexts around the world.

As a method of teaching, dialogue has a long history. From Socrates to Freire, educational thinkers have grappled with the uses of dialogue and its aims. Freire's conception of dialogue presents us with a set of overlapping and mutually dependent attributes. While we have noted the challenges of using the attributes as an analytic tool for research, these limitations are counter balanced by Freire's emphasis on the role of dialogue in forming relationships of solidarity. In short, the foundations of dialogue are rooted in forms of human connection that we found illustrated in both Michelle's work and work place. This grounding in human connection and in working *with* others again reaffirms dialogue's relevance for peace education. We believe that much of peace building proceeds in this spirit.

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