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I Appreciate You: A Spectral Reading of SoTL during COVID-19

ABSTRACT

What lives amongst loss? This study employs spectral reading practice to thematically analyze the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) produced within the Canadian blogosphere during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the extent of loss that the pandemic brought, the findings of this study reveal that SoTL practitioners continued to embrace positive affectivities and "what works" in their reflective research about the experience of teaching and learning during crisis times. The four revealed themes—endless possibilities, teaching as care, care ethics, and community awe—point towards a hardening disciplinary and methodological characterization of SoTL (or what I refer to as a "SoTL attitude") that is rooted in qualities of appreciation, generosity, and reparation. Overall, this work contributes to examinations of SoTL as an evolving disciplinary area, providing unique insights into its surprisingly cohesive response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

"Everything," says Derrida, "begins by the apparition of a specter" (2006, 2). Perhaps this research, then, might be understood as an exercise in ghost-hunting: an investigation into what is both absent and present (Holloway and Kneale 2008, 308). The concept of absent-presence can be understood via the genealogy of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, I write this in a moment where the celebratory declaration of lifted COVID-19 restrictions seems almost like a hazy memory. Our epidemiological waves now go unnumbered. Biopolitical surveillance has been mostly relegated to wastewater data. The evolving social lexicon of COVID-19 seems to have even transcended the phrase "endemic," adhering to Zylberman's (2010) assertion that "there is nothing like the definitive forgetfulness of modern influenza epidemics" (85). That is all to say, since its formal identification as a pandemic in March 2020, COVID-19 has been progressively relegated to an absent-presence, neither completely dead nor completely alive.

You might be wondering what this has to do with the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). The positivist scholarly tradition would compel me to pause here and clearly state the problem under investigation. That isn't where I want to begin though, oriented towards and against a problem. Rather, in an exercise of ghost-hunting, I approach the field from a different angle—one that centres reparation and recovery (Gordon 2011, 3). This perspective, often ignored within paranoid academic paradigms and suspicious hermeneutics, calls for a spirit of curiosity and exploration (Sedgwick 1997). This paper begins with a question, then, rather than a problem statement: what can spectral readings—that is, an attention to the alternative wisdoms, narratives, and possibilities for justice that emerge from talking with ghosts (Shaw 2018, 107)—reveal about the burgeoning field of SoTL? To this end, I look towards

absent-presence in the scholarship of teaching and learning produced across the Canadian post-secondary blogosphere during the COVID-19 pandemic, in hopes of discovering the dimensions of SoTL's character. Through this exercise of ghost-hunting, I aim to offer insights that can inform and guide our approaches to the study of teaching and learning.

SOTL'S GOT AN ATTITUDE

Straddling the boundary of "paradigm" and "discipline," SoTL is broadly defined as a systematic inquiry aimed at improving the teaching and learning experience (De Jaeger, Stoesz, and Doan 2022). Darling (2004) notes that "it is distinct from scholarly teaching in that it goes beyond teaching well, even superbly, to participating in a focused inquiry process and reflective practice about one's own teaching" (47). Like the public humanities (Schroeder 2020), the field of SoTL was borne out of the proliferation of public and meta-institutional critiques of teaching (Bender 2005) as a "mélange of incoherence" that goes "unnoticed and unsanctioned" amidst the scholarly preoccupation with pithy publish-or-perish tenure pieces (Sykes 1988, 5). In response to these critiques, beginning with Boyer's 1990 publication of *Scholarship Reconsidered* (and later advanced by Shulman), SoTL evolved to position teaching as rigorous and serious intellectual work, subject to analysis and peer review. Specifically, Shulman "argued for the application of more systematic and scholarly methods to the study of 'what works' to make learning happen" (Bender 2005, 45). Conceptually similar iterations of inquiry interested in "what works" followed this publication. Most notably, Hutchings et al. (2013) oft-cited taxonomy, which offers four types of questions to advance the practice of scholarly teaching: what works, what is, visions of the possible, and theory building. Like Shulman, Hutchings' taxonomy attempts to transcend framings of scholarly problematization that tend towards negative criticality and a hermeneutics of suspicion by inquiring into "the *effectiveness* of teaching practices and pedagogical approaches" (Center for Engaged Learning, n.d., emphasis added).

This doesn't mean that SoTL ignores problems. Bass (1999) famously asked in his seminal SoTL essay, "How might we make the problematization of teaching a matter of regular communal discourse? How might we think of teaching practice, and the evidence of student learning, as *problems* to be investigated, analyzed, represented, and debated?" (1, emphasis added). It was this very conceptual shift from seeing teaching as mere classroom interaction to the identification of "teaching problems that can be investigated as scholarship" that served to initiate the validation of SoTL as "real" scholarly inquiry, legible within the tricolon of tenure (Bender 2005, 2). SoTL does more than simply fixate on problems. Through the adoption of an affirmative stance (i.e., asking "Yes, and?"), SoTL practitioners demonstrate a deliberate intention to move beyond problem identification towards a consideration of "what works" to inform the development of best practices and actionable insights.

In their analysis of empirical SoTL literature, Manarin et al. (2021) identify the prevalence of "what works" as a narrow disciplinary view. I'd like you to consider this instead as a bold disciplinary or methodological "attitude," especially considering the pervasive scholarly anxiety towards lines of inquiry that are antithetical to the monopolizing "doubting game" (Elbow 2009). Appreciative and "generous" (Fitzpatrick 2019) approaches to research are often perceived as assaults to scholarly empiricism, contradictory to the criteria for "good

research," which requests "detachment, rigour, unilateral control, and operational precision" (Cooperrider 1986, 12). Simply said, "what works" is not an easy orientation to employ. As bell hooks (2018) said: "When I talked of love with my generation, I found it made everyone nervous or scared" (xix). Yet, despite having to fight for its legitimacy as "real" research and validity as a "scholarly avenue for advancement" (Franks and Payakachat 2020, 1174), the corpus of SoTL seems to boldly claim that transcending critique's negative mode does not equate to blatant rejection of criticality but rather, enables a coexistence of the "affective and ethical" (Best and Marcus 2009, 10). As a ghost-hunter, I'm eager to lean into this penchant for wholeness—this disciplinary "attitude"—in my examination of SoTL produced during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to explore what is both absent and present in these works (Holloway and Kneale 2008). As Derrida says: "Everything" (2006, 2), signaling the vast scope of (exciting!) inquiry before us.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The following section outlines the theoretical frameworks of Appreciative Inquiry and hauntology, dually employed for the analysis of SoTL published across the Canadian blogosphere during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appreciative Inquiry (or, asking "Yes, and?")

First introduced by David Cooperrider in the 1980s as a methodology for organizational development, Appreciative Inquiry was articulated as "more than a method or technique. . . a way of living with, being with, and participating in the varieties of organizations we are compelled to study" (1986, 17). It was configured as celebratory—an alternative to problem-oriented research—and centralized "the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them" (Whitney and Cooperrider 2005, 8) by foregrounding five principles: constructionism (words create worlds), simultaneity (questions are fateful), poeticism (what we focus on grows), anticipation (image inspires action), and positivity (a positive core brings out positive outcomes) (Figure 1).

In an attempt to affirm Appreciative Inquiry as "both a philosophy and worldview" (Coghlan, Preskill, and Tzavaras Catsambas 2003, 6), Cooperrider initially refrained from articulating a structured process to advance it as an agile methodology (Reed 2007, 53). So, what does Appreciative Inquiry look like in practice? Put simply, rather than "negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, design, and destiny" (Justice and Jamieson 2012, 198). This is what Whitney and Cooperrider (2005) put forth as the 4D cycle, years after Cooperrider's dissertation "built the first theory and vision of Appreciative Inquiry" (Barrett 2017, 8). In chronological order, the discovery phase involves the discovery of successes and strengths, using these findings to elicit idealistic futures. After dreaming of positive futures, ideas, or "provocative propositions" for achieving the dream are contemplated and designed. The final stage, destiny, involves the construction of actionables to facilitate positive change (Mohn 2018). That is, Appreciative Inquiry begins with generosity as its epistemological basis to celebrate and leverage what is already working within an organization (whilst not ignoring the problems) (Carter 2006). I employ Appreciative Inquiry here as a theoretical framework for the spectral reading of SoTL research produced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1: The principles of Appreciative Inquiry
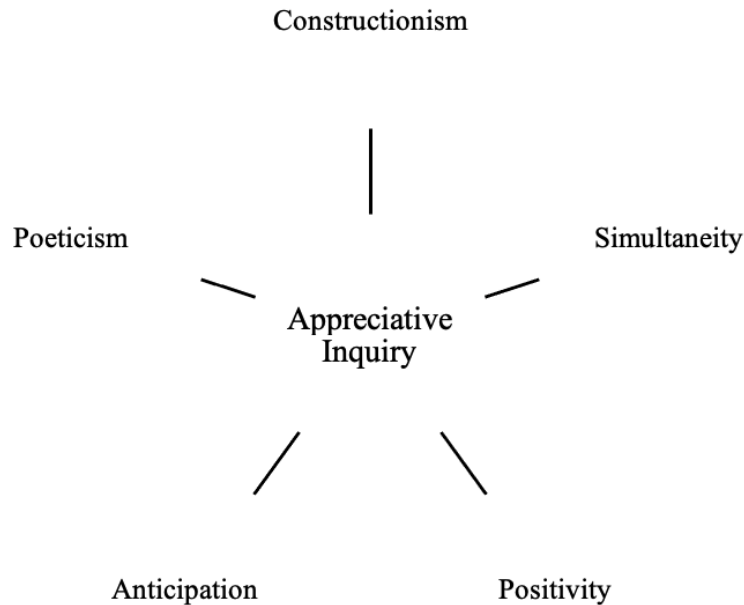
Hauntology (or, asking "Yes, and?" again)

Hauntology is the "science of ghosts, a science of what returns," says Macherey and Stolze (1995), in a succinct summation of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (19). Alternatively said, hauntology is the study of being ("ontology") through the "deconstructive logic" of ghosts (Derrida and Stiegler 2002, 117). Like the appreciative inquirer who sees organizational negatives and in response says, "*Yes, and* what is happening here that can be appreciated?" the hauntologist straddles the binary of presence and absence, claiming the same improvisational "Yes, and" to proclaim "to be *and* not to be" (Derrida 2006; emphasis added) to gain a more holistic view of the object under consideration.

Now, you might be wondering: isn't this work interested in reparation and generosity? Why am I calling upon "the scary spirits of the unsettled dead" (Bell 1997, 815)? This question has a limited view of ghosts. Have you ever held your childhood stuffed animal, and felt awash with the comfort of nostalgia? This is the semblance of a ghost, who can "transmit not only pain and suffering, but also the goodness of the past" (Simpson 2021, 131). So, yes, ghosts can be scary. But we must recall—as is the first rule of hauntology—that evocation "does not focus on the specter at all, but rather, underscores the responsibility of the haunted subject to welcome, and speak to, the specter" (Shaw 2018, 9). That is to say, "it is only people who can conjure them up" (Bell 1997, 831). This is not unlike the active role of the suspicious reader: if we are to privilege negative affect, "we (as critical scholars) [will] find what we set out to find, with little or no room for surprise" (Christensen 2021, 157). We take on an agentive role when ghost-hunting and reading. We have the agency to offer a "hospitable reception," to commit ourselves to "gracious" remembrance in the present. This allows us to recognize and consider what "could have been and can be otherwise" (Gordon 1997, 57–58). The improvisational principle of

"Yes, and," then, does not simply imply "resignation or passivity, with an obligation to merely accept whatever life offers;" rather, the adjoining "and" indicates the addition of a new element or direction, building onto and transforming the original behaviour (Vickers n.d., 8).

METHOD

Selection of scholarly blogs

In line with the developing genealogy of SoTL, this research focuses on scholarly blogs that explore the topic(s) of teaching and learning. As a form of public scholarship, blogging has gained significant traction within the field of SoTL, in part due to the open scholarship movement, as well as the broader public's growing consumption of (and participation in) social media and blogging (Greenhow and Gleason 2014). The social scholarship of teaching, say Greenhow and Gleason, can enable a more realized vision of scholarly teaching as "public, transparent, and open for review" given that scholars can "open up access to their teaching and their classroom to a broader public" (281).

Despite advancements in the repository of peer-reviewed journals dedicated to SoTL research, it remains an under-published discipline, with "the majority of articles [delineating] the parameters of SoTL" (Gilpin and Liston 2009, 4). In an inventory of teaching-focused journals, Braxton et al. (2018) identify that "recommended-practice reports" tend to dominate the field, whereas more affective and reflective narratives "rarely find their way into print" (109). In selecting scholarly blogs as the focus of thematic analysis, I: (1) seek to create space for affective SoTL, and (2) affirm Cook-Sather, Abbot, and Felten's (2019) recent advocacy of "reflective writing" as a valuable and legitimate form of SoTL research.

Data collection

This study employs spectral reading practice to examine the SoTL produced across the Canadian blogosphere during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study population was limited to universities located in Ontario, Canada. An initial environmental scan deduced that out of 23 public universities, eight have centralized blogs dedicated to the topic(s) of teaching and learning. The blogs were evaluated according to the following inclusion criteria: posts published between March 2020–July 2022; written in English; teaching portfolio (tenured, sessional, and/or adjunct); reflective authorship practice; and online full-text accessibility. It is significant to note that since the blogosphere straddles the public and private, online full-text accessibility was selected as a criterion to mitigate ethical tensions regarding participant consent and authorial permissions (Hookway 2008). Accordingly, five of the eight centralized blogs were excluded from the study.

The following blogs were selected for analysis: the *Teaching and Learning Services Blog* (Carleton University), the *Teaching and Learning Blog* (McMaster University), and *Teach & Learn* (University of Windsor). The available blog posts were selected by searching for the following keywords: "teaching," "pandemic," or "COVID-19." Purposive sampling was then used to develop a corpus that prioritized reflective (vs. descriptive) writing. Blog posts produced solely by non-teaching portfolio SoTL practitioners (e.g., non-teaching staff) were excluded to prioritize accounts of the classroom from a teaching standpoint, although reflections facilitated by non-teaching portfolio practitioners were included (e.g., interviews). Since the discussed

blog entries are open-access and produced within a research context, identifiers have been included in the analysis. The decision to include identifiers affirms the "expansion [of] the legitimacy and acceptance of reflection as a valid form of SoTL" (Abbot 2019). Finally, 25 posts that met the inclusion criteria formed the corpus for analysis (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of corpus data

Blog title	University	Total # of posts	# Of posts in corpus
The Teaching and Learning Services Blog	Carleton University	49	16
Teaching and Learning Blog	McMaster University	88	5
Teach & Learn	University of Windsor	49	4

Data analysis

The approach to data analysis combined manual deductive and inductive coding: where deductive coding involves developing a pre-defined codebook derived from a theoretical and/or conceptual framework (Linneberg and Korsgaard 2019, 264), inductive coding allows themes to emerge from the data itself (Glasser and Strauss 2009). Each blog post was initially double-coded using a line-by-line method: first according to an *a priori* codebook informed by the hybridized concepts of Appreciative Inquiry and hauntology, and then followed by open coding (that is, reading the data without prespecified categories) to discover any emergent themes. The following three categories formed the deductive codebook: hope for the future, appreciation of the present, and gracious remembrance of the past. A simultaneous (or double) coding method was crucial to ensure that the analysis was guided, rather than limited, by the predetermined code set. A wide range of new thematic categories (self-discovery, vulnerability, experimental, affect attentive, community encouragement, etc.) emerged from the inductive method and enriched the findings of the deductive coding cycle; these data-driven codes served to extend and modify the initial codebook to meet the trustworthiness criteria of qualitative thematic analysis (Morse 2015). I then engaged in third-cycle manual inductive coding (translation: hand coding) of the data excerpts to identify discursive patterns and discrepancies between the two codebooks. Modified code sets were formed, subsuming the deductive coding scheme within the emergent thematic categories (Table 2).

Table 2: List of generated codes for content analysis

Code	Sub-codes	Definition
Endless possibilities	- Excited by opportunities for change - Discovering new approaches - Restorative nostalgia	The blog author embraces unprecedented opportunities for innovation. Example: "I was amazed at the power and sophistication of the online learning tools available to today's instructors . . . everything is new and exciting!" (Wereley 2020).
Teaching as craft	- Learning curve - Self-discovery - Professional development	The blog author recognizes teaching as an iterative practice that must be continuously refined. Example: "What I have come to realize over the

		past two months is that good teaching is fragile" (Cheung 2020).
Care ethics	• Social-emotional teaching • Humanization • Relationship building	The blog author desires to form authentic connections with students. Example: "We might forget that beyond the screens of our computers, there are real people with real social and emotional needs" (Arya 2020a).
Community awe	• Togetherness • Collegial encouragement • Advice • Amazement	The blog author is eager to form and/or deeply appreciates the formation of caring collegial connections. Example: "Now, take a deep breath and remember to Keep It Simple, Superstar" (Richardson 2022).

Results

My spectral reading of this dataset revealed four (4) overarching themes, termed: (1) endless possibilities, (2) teaching as craft, (3) care ethics, and (4) community awe. These themes, their properties, and sample statements from the blog entries are indicated in Table 2. Note that the analysis uses "blogger," "author," "instructor," and "scholar" interchangeably in reference to the primary author of the reflective SoTL publications (i.e., blog entries).

Endless possibilities

For the majority of bloggers (n=19), the unprecedented switch to the online learning environment spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic propelled the vernacular adoption of an experimental pedagogy. While recognizing that the transition to emergency remote teaching (ERT) came with "a host of new challenges and points of frustration," instructors consistently framed the shift as uniquely advantageous: it "presents new opportunities for enhancing our teaching and learning," says Wereley (2020). Notably, the common challenges that arose often stemmed from failed attempts to replicate the dynamics of the face-to-face (F2F) learning environment: "I was attempting to simulate F2F learning experiences" (Richardson 2020). However, instructors did not appear to dwell in pedagogical failures, instead focusing largely on "new ideas" (Gruber and Smith 2021) sparked by the functionalities of the online learning environment and the possibility of improved pedagogical futures. As Rudyk (2020) says: "I have come up with so many new ideas on better ways to deliver my in-class lectures when we are able to return to the classroom."

Further, curiosity and surprise emerged as frequently cited emotions, as several bloggers (n=12) (emphases below added by me) discovered educational technologies and alternative assessment methods:

"I was *amazed* at the power and sophistication of the online learning tools available to today's instructors . . . everything is *new and exciting*!" (Wereley 2020).

"While there might be no perfect online substitute for in-class debate, online teaching might *offer possibilities for achieving other objectives* . . . I would be *curious* to *learn more* about what the various possibilities might be" (Chandler 2020).

"I was also *pleasantly surprised* about how much [contract grading] changed my relationship with marking . . ." (Sears and Brown 2022).

Reminiscing about the pre-pandemic classroom also emerged as sub-code (i.e., "restorative nostalgia"), as instructors idyllically recalled pre-COVID teaching experiences. Several bloggers expressed missing their in-class interactions (n=8): as Lyons (2021) recollects, "I think back to the students in CHEM 1001 singing the periodic table. I still remember Nick singing blindfolded with duct tape wrapped around his head (ouch!)." The desire to revive these moments primarily manifested in the bloggers' willingness to experiment with how to enhance social-emotional connectivity.

Teaching as craft

Consistent with prior research on the affective domains of scholarly blogging (Davies and Merchant 2007), reflective writing (Kathpalia and Heah 2008), and the field of SoTL (Barske et al. 2019), the analyzed corpus revealed a rhetorical tendency toward enhanced emotional expression. Authors consistently provided invaluable insights into the emotional experience of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, openly discussing their perceived vulnerabilities, anxieties, and discomforts, as well as their joys, discoveries, and excitement (Table 3):

Table 3: Sample statements indicative of negative and positive affect

Statements indicating negative affect	Statements indicating positive affect
"From the outset, my learning curve seemed impossibly steep . . . I was green in every respect" (Wereley 2020).	"Developing and teaching online course content is exciting and rewarding work. You will enjoy yourself!" (Wereley 2020).
". . . I find online delivery exhausting as it takes tremendous amount of planning, time and energy to create a caring and supportive pedagogy" (Kaur 2021).	"I'll tell you, as a teacher, there's nothing better than teaching a class and at the end of the class feeling like 'that was a good one'" (Njegovan and Justason 2021).
"Both experiences—ostensibly polar opposites— have stuck in my mind because of the discomfort I felt with each" (Abboud 2021).	"There was no dead air space and they turned on their cameras. I had the biggest smile on my face afterwards" (Njegovan and Justason 2021).

Many bloggers (n=18) also equated the experience of teaching during the pandemic with development: "You yourself get to be a student again . . . this is actually a professional development opportunity for us" (Rudyk 2020). The recognition of teaching as an iterative process that requires continuous development and modification emerged in accounts of self-discovery, which ranged from the recognition of inexperience ("I honestly wasn't sure what to expect!" [Sears and Brown 2022]) to statements of hopeful growth ("This opportunity allows us to rise to the challenge, do better, and be the best teachers we can be" [Rudyk 2020]). Commonly cited characterizations of teaching during the pandemic included: "a work in progress," "a learning experience," and "a learning curve."

Further, the identification of teaching as valuable scholarly practice (Boyer 1990) emerged in several blog entries. For example:

> "I was forced to figure out how to provide material without enough time to formulate a proper plan that was informed by evidence and experience" (Andrews 2020).

> "I do actively try to work on teaching as a craft and as a skill, and I know that it is certainly a skill that requires practice and it requires effort to do well. I think that's it is sometimes underappreciated" (Njegovan and King 2022).

The evidenced desire to actively cultivate a teaching identity counters pre-COVID literature that suggests that there is "little evidence" that faculty "are reconsidering their pedagogical approach" and experimenting with pedagogical innovations (Brownell and Tanner 2012, 339).

Care ethics

For almost 70% of scholars, a desire to connect with students and cultivate a learning environment responsive to student needs, was a defining characteristic of the teaching experience during the COVID-19 pandemic (n=17). Specifically, terms such as "compassion," "care," and "support" were frequently cited within this thematic category. Descriptions of student needs (emphases below added by me) notably transcended the traditional scope of instructor responsibilities and duties, with a distinct focus on how to address the socio-emotional dimensions of learning:

> "We should *not assume that students are physically and mentally available* on fixed schedules during the pandemic times" (Arya 2020a).

> ". . . what students remember most about their classes is not necessarily the material that you covered, but rather *how they felt about the experience you made possible* by your teaching practices" (Andrews 2020).

> "Keeping students *emotionally engaged* is critical. We knew that. But it requires listening to them" (Arya 2020b).

Instructors also expressed concerns about social isolation, confusion, and anxiety, and the impact these variables would have on students' abilities to meaningfully engage in coursework. As Ali Arya (2020a) said, "There are human beings out there, even if we don't see them. And we all need each other. Now more than before."

Specific strategies for humanizing the online learning environment in a moment of mass devastation also emerged in the majority of blog entries as a means of practicing and extending an ethos of care. Dave Andrews (2020) posited humour as a strategy to enhance approachability, relatability, and intimate community formation, Tranum Kaur (2021) began every class by asking students to "share their feelings," and Marika Brown (2022) experimented

with contract grading as a means of fostering care and flexibility. Many scholars (n=18) also described flexing their pedagogical imaginations in order to attend to identified student needs:

> ". . . many students can easily fall behind because they don't have the social cues from their colleagues and their friends. So, we would send weekly announcements to remind them of things" (Njegovan et al. 2021).

> "I would outline exactly what they needed to accomplish that week to stay on top of everything" (Lucas 2020).

As well, the instructors included in the sample population largely experienced deep satisfaction by receiving student feedback on the topic(s) of emotional connectivity and the formation of relationships. As Sabourin (2020) recalled, "Another student approached me after that same class to tell me that they appreciated the personal nature of the feedback and how it was different than anything they had experienced. They even showed their parents!"

Community awe

Despite semantic markers of perceived anxiety and uncertainty toward teaching in the online learning environment, as well as an influx of self-deprecating remarks indicative of negative affect (see Table 3), 90% of instructors explicitly entered or occupied the role of "advice-giver," providing words of collegial encouragement ("You got this!!!" [Rudyk 2020]) and practical success strategies for instructors to employ:

> "You don't need to know it all right away, but you need to start somewhere" (Streeter 2021).

> "One method to accomplish this is to keep a list of all the lists. Now I know what you're thinking, and I promise this is not insane" (Richardson 2021).

> "You can keep things really simple the first time round. Don't feel that you have to use all of the available tools right away" (Gruber and Smith 2021).

Only one (1) instructor explicitly stated that they were not able to "give any expert advice on teaching, but [only] to record some reflections" (Chandler 2020) to use as an archive of teaching experience for future professional development. The "advice-giver" bloggers demonstrated an implicit interest in forming pan-institutional communities of scholarly teaching practice by focusing their reflective research on shared teaching experiences—ranging from pedagogical experimentations to failures and successes—that were largely removed from disciplinary contexts, content, and norms. See indicators of interest in pan-institutional togetherness and community formation below (emphases added by me):

> "So, despite the distance, *let's learn from and share with each other* to master this new system together" (Streeter 2021).

"It's always important to me to foster this kind of culture where *we are colleagues* and *I'm here to support you* in your learning journey" (Njegovan and Bedore 2022).

"We are all truly *in this together*" (Petrovic-Dzerdz 2020).

Finally, an additional sub-code that emerged within this category was "amazement," as instructors expressed gratitude and wonder over the contributions of—and support from—their fellow colleagues. As Marika Brown (2022) says, "Working with such incredible, generous, caring instructors and seeing them come up against the inflexibility of conventional grading time and time again is really what encouraged me to try to find alternatives for my own course." Instructors (n=12) notably embraced collegial mentorship, facilitative support, and support networks to aid in the unprecedented—and highly volatile—ERT experience.

LIMITATIONS

This study is not without its limitations. First, this project focuses solely on research published in English and is geographically limited to universities based in Ontario (CA). Future research may consider increasing the sample size to include: (1) reflective SoTL research borne out of the college sector, and/or (2) an expanded geographic or language scope to assess potential variance in thematic patterns. The sample size is further limited by the selected data source, since only the thematic patterns of those who have taken an interest in academic blogging have been included.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to identify absent-presence in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) produced during the COVID-19 pandemic across the Canadian blogosphere to assess their implications for the field. My spectral reading of 25 reflective SoTL works yielded a set of disciplinary and methodological pillars (Table 2) that were found to collectively characterize research outputs on the experience of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic across the Canadian blogosphere. They are endless possibilities, teaching as craft, care ethics, and community awe. The discursive patterns that emerged in the corpus of data provide compelling evidence of a hardening disciplinary and methodological characterization—an "attitude"—of SoTL given that, even amidst crises, SoTL practitioners persevered in employing an appreciative methodological orientation, emphasizing articulations of "what works" over academic traditions of "negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis" (Justice and Jamieson 2012, 198).

In light of these findings, I challenge Manarin et al.'s (2021) identification of "what works" as a narrow methodological perspective for the rigorous evaluation of teaching and learning. This study offers new insight into the value and rigour of an affective vernacular—a focus on "what works"—for scholarly research on the teaching and learning experience. It calls for a comprehensive reassessment of the generativity of "negative dialogics" (Di Leo 2013), particularly for application within the field of SoTL. By discursively embracing positive affectivities, which are "usually invisible or neglected or thought by most to be dead or gone"

(Gordon 1997, 194)—particularly in moments of extreme crisis—the SoTL practitioners referenced in this study were able to capture of a more nuanced understanding of the teaching and learning experience by engaging "*with* rather than *against*" the present (Fitzpatrick 2019, 33). Collectively, they challenged the oft-accepted rhetorical modes of negation and suspicion by employing "generous thinking" to capture the fullness of the teaching and learning experience, even in a state of crisis (that is, possibility! Amazement! Wonder! Excitement! Togetherness! Discovery! Love! Joy!).

The discursive patterns identified here not only underscore the value of relationship, care, experimentation, and knowledge-sharing within the SoTL community, but they also signify the formation of a disciplinary and methodological attitude that is grounded in these very pillars. While there is still much to gain from problematic orientations and fragmentary critique that "retains the adversarial force of a suspicious hermeneutics" (Felski 2011), this work demonstrates that appreciative, generous, and reparative research orientations have much to offer. Further qualitative research into the SoTL produced during the COVID-19 pandemic— beyond that of scholarly blogs—is recommended to determine the extent of "generous thinking" in the corpus of SoTL, so that practitioners may continue to vie for the legitimation of appreciative approaches to knowledge production within (and beyond) the field.

This research realizes Derrida's (2006) aspiration of the "new scholar" that is capable, "beyond the opposition between presence and non-presence, actuality and inactuality, life and non-life, of thinking the possibility of the spectre, the spectre as possibility" (12). To return to the question that marks the beginning and end of this paper, I assert that it is through the holistic ocularity of an appreciative disciplinary and methodological orientation that we may continue to see, attend to, and converse with ghosts, since "everything," as Derrida says, "begins by the apparition of a specter" (2006, 2).

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY
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