Finding a Researcher's and a Teacher's Voice in a Plethora of Responsibilities:
A Duoethnography on Administrivia

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Abstract

"Some are born great; some achieve greatness; and some have greatness thrust upon them."
Twelfth Night, Act 3 Scene 4

This article examines the differences and similarities between two faculty members as they discuss their entry into the academy after successfully teaching in secondary schools. Both brought with them the "maturity" gained from a work hiatus prior to continuing their education. Joe taught English and drama in Canada for 12 years and completed his masters part-time before embarking full-time on doctoral work. Rick taught high school English in San Francisco for seven years prior to enrolling in his doctoral program.

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Joe: After completing my degree in three years, I expected to return to the classroom partially to pay back my sabbatical year and partially because I did not yet see myself as an academic. However, my dream job was posted, and I pulled my 12 years of pension (BIG MISTAKE), paid back my sabbatical leave and took a job at the University of Lethbridge as a drama teacher educator.

Rick: I delayed completing my degree in curriculum theory and research because I went to school in New York City, in fact, had a romantic "walk-up" apartment in Greenwich Village and enjoyed a semi-bohemian life. But graduate I did and then sought to begin researching and writing about curriculum change and imagination. Accepting a job to design and direct a small teacher preparation program at a large university on the West Coast, I thought that life was good.

Joe: Taking a temporally distant and reflective stance we now employ duoethnography (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013) to reconceptualize the past with present understandings and redefine the present with new perspectives on the past (Pinar, 1995). Focusing on our experiences as new faculty members we reflect on "service creep" as we tried to create new teaching and research selves while having, perhaps due to our wealth of previous experience, administrative duties "thrust upon us".

Rick: In my case, I had to assume major responsibilities really of a senior faculty member (starting a new program in teacher preparation that combined theory and practice, developing community partnerships for the program, and in a way breathing life into a slightly deflated unit, being public and over-exposed). While this experience may have been more extreme than most beginning faculty members' experience, in other ways it was similar: We are all thrown into environments that challenge our narratives and especially our nascent and possibly fragile research self.

Joe: I, too, was given the charge to coordinate the design for a third professional semester with an extended field experience component. In keeping with my collaborative beliefs, I polled faculty, determined their disparate views and presented my findings at a faculty meeting. I found that people were driven by pedagogy, philosophy and pragmatics, but the greatest of these was politics. More on that later…

I naively took my first university position to teach the teaching of drama and looked forward to a classroom of my own and putting my playful "tone" (Van Manen, 2002) on my style of instruction. The Faculty of Education prided themselves in their strong reputation as teacher educators and coming from the public school system, I share in this focus. Research was in the back of my mind and, at the time, I thought that service would be attending an annual retreat, a few faculty meetings and service to outside organizations like the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Journal of Curriculum Theorizing and the Fine Arts Council of the Alberta Teachers Association. Not only was I not prepared for duties that would ensue; they were not even on my radar. My calling to be a teacher educator contained a major, behind-the-scenes dimension.

Rick: This was my first academic position following graduate school. I sat on the plane going to my job interview and thought of what I wrote in my application essay to graduate school six years earlier. When I applied for my program, I was still teaching English at a secondary high

school in San Francisco. The school was started by a federal court mandate that declared that the educational needs of the primarily African American students in this part of the city were being neglected. The school was established to offer an enriched educational environment to these students. In my application to my doctoral program, I said that I wanted to continue to work in a tradition of improving society by contributing to a sense of humanity in teaching as a calling.

The plane landed, and I eventually got the job. As a new faculty member, I was given the responsibility of starting a new secondary teacher preparation program and directing it. Even though the program hadn't been designed yet, there were six students in the program, taking courses with current (inservice) teachers in another master's program. I remember thinking that I got to design my life.

Joe**,** I think that it's interesting that you use the word "people" to describe your coworkers when you could have used the work "colleagues." In my case, I will use the word "colleague," but only in the singular. From the beginning, I was lucky enough to start my career in higher education being mentored by a wonderful person. She was a literacy professor and believed in the co-construction of knowledge, both within a written and a lived text. Having to be focused as a new faculty member, I worked with her in the foreground, with the other people—and here I use that word, as well—more in the background.

- From my first day, I had to "hit the ground running." Here are some of the service duties that I listed on my annual review for my first year:
- Design a new program on one campus that links to similar programs of a multi-campus system
- Establish a committee of area school superintendents and principals to inform the program design
- Be on a cross-campus education committee
- Be on a school district "workplace" committee
- Be on a school grounded governance committee as a university representative
- Work with students enrolled in an emerging program
- Teach five courses, all new preps outside my own discipline (technically this is teaching, but the time to design these courses fell under service work)
- Work with adjuncts and other faculty teaching courses in the new program
- This is a partial list of my duties.

Fast backwards five years to 1993. I sat in an iconic restaurant in downtown Seattle called "The Dog House." The restaurant had been open since the 1930 and the large mural of "all roads lead to the Dog House" was covered in decades of cigarette smoke. Sitting in my booth, I imagined a smoky vision of the future life I wanted as an academic. I began to visualize my new life, although at the time, I wasn't aware of the importance of personal metaphors, as a guide for a future path. As a professor, I saw myself working in a "noble" profession, mentoring novice teachers to contribute to a more just and equitable society as they worked with their students. I formed this image in the dialect between the deep respect for the humanities that universities represent, which I gained from my family, and the prescriptive, behavioral teacher preparation program that I graduated from. It was this image that sustained me through my mix of stress and exhilaration as a graduate student and during my early days trying to survive in academia.

I have tried to stay true to this image and let it sustain me in my tumultuous world of academia.

Joe: I"m exhausted reading your list and your phrase "Be on…" gives me pause. Like my phrase "people" instead of "colleagues", you could have used the phrase "Serve on…". For me, these people were not colleagues. Coming out of a job interview, I regarded them more as my judges/bosses than those I could build meaningful relationships. For the most part, they were friendly enough but there was only one with whom I developed any sort of working relationship. She valued the manner in which I used improvisational drama as a form of inquiry and suggested a conference. In her other capacity, I had a working "for" relationship and here I had established a working "with" relationship. Could "Be on…" be a "for" experience and a "Serve on…" a "with" one? This ties into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with "with" being intrinsic and "for" being extrinsic.

Back then, I didn't feel called to serve on committees that didn't interest me. They became tasks that got in the way of things that I felt called to do. The politics of staffroom marks meeting at the end of the public school year paled to politics of university committees where conflicts induced by self-governance reigned. I found more arguing for entrenched beliefs that would influence policy and through that practice than collaborative discussions. Were the stakes too small?

The task, of designing the third professional semester, fell somewhere between the two. I had and have a passion for teacher education, underpinned by a strong belief in reflective practice. I agreed to serve based upon this belief but soon realized that not all shared this stance. I was lobbied by a number of sides, some wanting more theory, others little faculty involvement in the practicum and those that regarded it as building stronger school/university partnerships. While there were political and philosophical differences, the pragmatics of superimposing this on an already busy program for faculty was daunting. The Dean later publically announced that I was given an impossible task. I hear that this semester has functioned successfully for many years. I then saw a big difference between called and delegated.

Rick: What I began to experience—something I couldn't initially put my finger on—was a sort of double standard. Amidst the camaraderie I was expected to do more work--often the challenging work--that others were not expected to do. In a way, I was actually flattered at first, being treated like a senior faculty member and being given the most challenging assignments. Later, after this became a clear pattern and other new faculty were mentored, given release time, and even initial start-up funds—none of which I received—I began to wonder if homophobia were at play. But then I noticed that a curtain of silence began to be closed around certain types of experience: It was a curtain of indifference to difference.

Joe: From your story I now ask, "Can inclusion be a form of assimilation, or coercion to comply?" Rather than adapting to and accommodating difference, by asking the new comer to be a team player, are we really accepting them or exploiting them? The specter of tenure and promotion can distort the authenticity in our calling to self and our calling to serve. While I personally, perhaps foolishly, gave little concern to the tenure process, I know that many colleagues did. The systemics of having "colleagues" determine one's fate may replace certain aspects of calling with conformity.

Interlude: A major tenet of duoethnography is using the past to reconceptualize the present, the present to reconceptualize the past and both to envision future action. In this second part of this duoethnography, we will now deconstruction the present, asking, "What do these initial experiences provide us now as researchers, teachers, committee members and colleagues? How might our exploration actually contribute a renewed vigor to our present ways of attempting to keep our research-selves alive? How might coping mechanisms we used as a beginning faculty member when we had a different sort of energy than we have now, contribute to our current coping mechanisms? In telling our stories, we trust that they will resonate with others (Barone, 1990), assisting beginning academic in navigating their initial journeys.

Rick: As we examine our early and now more current workplace situations as text in this duoethnography, I am wondering about the performative nature of this text. Performative acts-- unpredictable, contingent, and generative--work to destabilize discourses within settings (Rodriguez & Lahman, 2011). Joe, you are an extrovert and create performative acts. Have you considered that your recognition of the judgmental nature of your work environment might imply that you were placed on a stage with a "hostile audience"? I can see how this might have struck you in a profound way on many different levels.

I mention this possibility because this situation is different in my case, but raises an interesting line of inquiry into my own experience. As new faculty, I truly wanted to collaborate with a group of open-minded colleagues who would create a critical and generative space. I was so excited by this idea. Subconsciously I may even have considered this a performative space. I remember building a low deck in my back yard during my first year and thinking that it would actually double as a stage. Of course, the deck was never used as a formal stage. As an introvert, which I would say that I am, I found my own stage and let the curtain of indifference wound tightly around it. I burrowed deep into my metaphor and thoughts about the calling we chose. I then tried to create my own life working with students and developing as a scholar—almost always with colleagues outside my institution. The few work colleagues I began to develop meaning research collaborations with all found themselves employed elsewhere in a short period of time.

So I developed what became perhaps my primary coping method—the construction of the personal stage, on which to author my own sense of the meaning of the profession. In the difficult early years, I learned the importance of being positive. And, yes, I've been lucky in a number of ways in academia. I've worked in a beautiful location with exceptional students who've contributed a depth of new meanings to my image of working for social justice and societal change. Behind the curtain of indifference, I've been given more programs to develop, all of which I have tried to form around ideals of social justice and change.

I still refer to my teaching metaphor to keep my balance. But I also work with people in a range of countries—Canada, New Zealand, Italy, the United Kingdom—in order to develop a broader perspective about this work. I don't do research or write directly about these reforms. My own scholarship has countered neoliberal reforms in more humanistic ways. My metaphor is firmly grounded now in this scholarship. This work keeps me balanced.

I have also become friends with and learned from a number of excellent colleagues and scholars. And I think that I've written a few pieces that have contributed to humanity and encouraged people to become more thoughtful, tolerant, and compassionate.

But I truly appreciate your passion, Joe. I've found that to survive in my setting, I've had to become more painfully dispassionate about many aspects of my work.

Joe: Sad Rick, and I am certain that you are not alone. For me, I followed my passion regardless of whether it counted or not and was rewarded. That said, having taught both in Canada and the United States and spoken to many colleagues at institutions on either side of the 49th I do appreciate that for the most part, Canadian institutions create better spaces for academics to answer their unique callings. While in the United States, I found the degree of meritocracy to be oppressive and as an administrator, at the time, I could not align with the oppressor.

        Two other themes that I resonate with your comments are choosing a) one's cast and b) audience, to prolong the metaphor. In a recent review of my curriculum vitae, I have found that I have directed the devising of over fifty-five participatory social issues performance/workshops with students, faculty and members of the community. Like you, for the most part, I located my players outside of my academic units. At first, I found it lonely and unproductive, but over time, through conference attendance, I discovered kindred spirits who shared mutual interests and wanted to "play" and put on plays with me. Primarily my undergraduate and graduate students were my research colleagues.

        Finding "legitimate" audiences proved more difficult. Such creative works as arts-based performance, while valued by audiences had little "currency" in the academy. These experiences later gave me something to write about. I fed my passion and let that be the substance of most of my scholarship. Once that was established, I turned my attention back to administrative and service duties. I felt a deep responsibility in creating/changing infrastructures to enable others who shared similar interests and beliefs, perhaps a new calling. I became political.

        I was elected to Senate at two Canadian Universities, served on a faculty association, took on roles with major committees, including research ethics and program review and was an external reviewer for programs, dissertations and tenure and promotion. I did so with the intent of providing a counter-hegemonic voice to decision-making processes. Looking back I can still see my fingerprints on a number of policies including the acceptance of either MLA or APA style for an interdisciplinary journal that originally only accepted MLA. I regarded the previous policy as privileging one group over another. Criteria and processes for awards and admissions were also made more inclusive due to my participation. I came to recognize that service could assist myself and others' diverse scholarship (Boyer, 1990) through fair and just policies. I started writing this duoethnography with the belief that administrative duties were obstacles to scholarship and while they can be, through this conversation I have come to believe that it is important to take a stand for self and others.

Joe (Aside): As I was writing this section, our faculty received an email requesting that if any of us were thinking of submitting a proposal for an infrastructure grant within the next three years to send an outline within four days. I dropped this and other things to semi-attend to it. Such administrative requests do disrupt the flow of my scholarship, further justifying the importance of a sabbatical.

Rick: I don't think that I would have chosen the word "sad" to describe how I've arranged my work situation. I guess what I was trying to describe was how it's important to find agency and to construct a personal infrastructure under less than ideal situations. This was not the situation that I had hoped to find, but seeking awareness in this situation has helped me to both work with and around inevitable limitations in my setting and to develop a personal contribution, including a scholarship focused on imagination and possibility, and a work profile focused on leadership, like you. Woody Allen's movies sometimes depict New York as an interior city, with people looking inward. I now see that my own interior space has contributed to a generative balance, perhaps a dialectic between an individual space and a just collective space, both on and off my campus.

I also think that this focus has given me a certain "armor" in terms of deflecting criticism or trying to make improvements to my institutional work fabric. This duoethnography has been helpful to my understanding many of the pressures that have shaped my actions at work. But at the same time, these pressures have strengthened my commitment to social justice and my commitment to learn from alienating situations. In this passage, Greene (1971) is discussing curriculum. If we replace the word "curriculum" with the words "academic life," new possibilities for the dignity of the calling appear:

> The stage sets are always likely to collapse…Disorder…is continually breaking in; meaninglessness is recurrently overcoming landscapes which once were demarcated, meaningful. It is at moments like these that the individual reaches out to reconstitute meaning, to close the gaps, to make sense once again. It is at moments like these that he will be moved to pore over maps, to disclose or generate structures of knowledge which may provide him unifying perspectives and these enable him to restore order once again. His learning, I am saying, is a mode of orientation—or reorientation—in a place suddenly become unfamiliar…. The curriculum, the structures of knowledge, must be presented to such a consciousness as possibility. Like the work of literature in Sartre's viewing, it requires a subject if it is to be disclosed; it can only *be* disclosed if the learner, himself engaged in generating the structures, lends the curriculum his life. (p. 262)

This duoethnography for me is framing a lived awareness of an academic life focused more on reorientation than orientation and disorder than order. It is interesting that we are both emphasizing a responsibility for acting towards social justice as central to the dignity of the calling. This interpretation of the dignity of the calling is further developed by Huckaby and Weinburgh's view of duoethnography: "Duoethnography attends to the relations of differences as a heuristic form of analysis" (In press). It is not merely our interpretation of our academic narratives that is important here, but also our construction of a new call for action to deepen our awareness of the humanistic groundings of our calling and their implications for the improvement of society.

Joe: I attended a play this afternoon (October 5, 2014) and during the talk-back one actor commented that trust was not about trusting a person but trusting the unknown. What I enjoy about duoethnographies is such a trust. We restory ourselves in dialogue with the unknown or as Fulwiler (1982) claims, we write "to think with." (p. 19). We write to learn, to make meaning. But we also write our way into action. Implicitly imbedded in this duoethnography is my emerging relationship with a new colleague who is team teaching a course with me. While I do

not want to impose my vision, I do want to share insights that can be rejected, accepted or modified. In one conversation I claimed that I am an anarchist at heart. Rather than legislate behaviour, I prefer to give individuals enough space so that they can be the best they can be. That should be the prime directive of tenure and promotion committees. This duoethnography and the emerging collegial relationship has reinforced such a stance, one that works hard at getting out of the way and lets another's calling just be.

Rick: Yes—maybe the dignity of the calling is ultimately trust in and promotion of a humane ways of being together.

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