

# Chapter 4

## Confronting the Ethics of Power in Collaborative Self-Study Research



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### 4.1 Introduction

Despite the focus on exploring *self* in self-study research, all forms of practitioner-researcher are socially located. Consequently, self-study is as much an exploration of the self, as much as it is of the not-self—the various other individuals that interact with a practitioner-researcher at any given time during a study (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). Conducting research about the self and interacting with others inevitably leads to ethical questions about issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, and the nature of assent. Within collaborative self-studies, additional interpersonal ethical tensions arise concerning issues such as fairness and equity.

In this chapter, two teacher educators explore the knotty ethical tensions that existed when conducting self-study research with colleagues. We situate our perspective on ethics through the lens of power. According to Canella and Lincoln (2011), the ethics of social science research requires the cultivation of a consciousness that is aware of the sociopolitical condition and involves “engaging with the complexities of power and how it operates in the social order” (p. 84). For self-study research, questions of ethics must also be framed by the recognition of power.

We begin this chapter by situating our perspective on ethics and power in self-study by reviewing the kinds of ethical questions about human dynamics, friendships, and professional status that self-study research has already addressed. Then, we move into two vignettes that illustrate the role and operation of power within these fields. Finally, we conclude with suggestions for collaborative self-studies on

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addressing the ethical tensions that emerged during our separate studies. Ultimately, we believe that the vignettes in this section can teach us about the unique ethical complications that emerge during self-study research and the necessity to anticipate how these complications influence not just the empirical product, but perhaps more importantly, our professional and personal relationships.

## 4.2 The (In) Visibility of Power in Self-Study Research

Foucault (1998) argued that “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere” (p. 63). Challenging the notion that power flows hierarchically, Foucault conceptualized that power circulates, and flows in all directions. From this perspective, all social interactions are sites where power is enacted and contested. Yet, given the social location of self-study research, those who employ this methodology rarely make the *circulation* of power visible or open to inspection. Most often, power in self-study is visible as a hierarchy. This is understandable, given that teacher educators operate within institutions where the distribution of power is unequal. As such, the most robust area within the self-study research landscape that acknowledges power are studies that address institutional power. The academic institution, with its own landscape of interconnected power relationships, implicitly and explicitly works to govern the actions of teacher educators and teacher candidates. Without careful attention to the dynamics that exist within the architecture of power in a university classroom, teacher educators can act in ways where power is brandished in ways that can intellectually and/or socially harm candidates.

Rice (2017) offered a good example of the possible ethical dilemmas that arise for teacher educators exerting institutional power. In his study, he explored an interaction with a student in an online course concerned about the grade she received for an assignment. Rice responded by indicating his rationale for the grade, and the student once again disagreed with his assertion. He shared in his study, not only the frustration with the episode but also a response he wrote, but did not send that expressed his frustration with the student and the quality of her work. Instead, he resent to the student the original email and the rubric. In exploring his reasons for not sending the email, Rice wrote, “I did not send the email because I did not believe it would support the relationally educative environment I wished to create” (pp. 92–93). Rice recognized that in order to maintain a positive experience, “the teacher forgoes the position of power and takes up the position of more capable other” (p. 96). From this ethical stance, Rice rationalized that with this particular situation:

Power is not about being in control or having authority over students, something I do not feel I was able to communicate with my disgruntled student. I worried that she saw me as wielding power over her where I was simply attempting to act as the more capable other, helping, and encouraging my online student to successfully complete the assignment... (p. 96)

For Rice, disrupting the perception of a positive educational experience created an ethical dilemma related to an institutional identity that granted him the unrestrained power to grade and respond to his student as he wished. In aligning the principle of a positive educational experience with his conduct as a teacher educator, Rice was able to resolve this ethical tension. This study is illustrative of how the concern over beliefs and values “alignment” often highlighted in the self-study literature also act as wonderings about the ethics of deploying an institutional identity that is complex, context-specific, and undefined (Berry, 2007; Bullock, 2009; McAnulty & Cuenca, 2014).

Another area where the relationship between power and ethics is addressed in self-study research is during collaborative work. A common configuration among self-study researchers is as critical friends. The use of a “critical friend” is a common practice within the methodological tradition of self-study research that offers both professional and empirical benefits. As Berry & Crowe (2009) concluded, “when colleagues share critical conversations about practice, new possibilities for practice can emerge, as well as new ways to analyse and respond to problems” (p. 31). Additionally, critical friendships help researchers rethink values, overcome prejudice, and consider the study of practice holistically (Kroll, 2005; Loughran & Brubaker, 2015). Although critical friendships are additive to self-study research, depending on the nature of the friendship, they also come with a series of ethical tensions related to power differentials that must be navigated between the friends.

In some critical friendship studies, the dyad are colleagues who work in different institutional contexts. For example, Schuck and Russell (2005) examined the nature of a critical friendship while working in Canada and Australia respectively. In their study, they revealed some of the problematic assumptions that existed in the formation of the friendship, such as shared expectations for the work of a critical friend and the status differential between the friends. The differential that often exists between friends is often the most complicated ethical terrain to navigate. In the case of Russell and Schuck, the differential was experienced mostly by Schuck who saw herself with relatively lower status because of differences in academic rank between Australian and Canadian institutions. The analysis revealed that these differences were distant or invisible to Russell, but were important to Schuck as she questioned the ethical propriety of critique across friends she perceived were of different of unequal status.

Other critical friendships feature efforts to harness the professional development of self-study. However, like Schuck and Russell, status differentials within critical friendships led to some ethical concerns about the circulation of power. One example is Butler and Diacopoulos (2016) who engaged in a joint exploration of student teaching supervision through a critical friendship. Their study featured a similar faculty/graduate student dynamic. They concluded that despite having a good working relationship prior to the collaboration, “that relationship consisted largely of the traditional advisor/advisee and teacher/student roles. If we were to find success within our critical friendship and co/autoethnographic work, we had to learn to navigate the tensions that would inevitably emerge.” Ultimately, Butler and

Diacopoulos revealed that they had to work slowly and intentionally to overcome the ethical dilemmas of power inherent in an imbalanced critical friendship.

Beyond the dyad configuration, collaborations in self-study research also feature groups of faculty working collectively on a common empirical goal. These collaborations have generated insights into how teacher educators can better understand their professional identities, support personal learning, and engage in systematic program reforms (e.g., Dinkelman et al., 2012; Taylor, Klein, & Abrams, 2014). Although collaboration studies also feature status differentials, the egalitarian nature of the collaboration helps mitigate the ethical tensions related to the enactments of power. For example, Warren, Park, and Tieken (2016) explored the nature of a collaboration between faculty and doctoral students to produce community-engaged scholarship. In the cultivation of this community-based stance toward empirical research, the team learned critical lessons related to power and ethics. More specifically, the members of the team had to learn how to be acutely aware of the power dynamics within the collaborative, “whether created by student/faculty status, years of research experience, or fluency with a particular idea or understanding.” Members had to establish norms such as collaborative decision-making in order to actively “equalize those power differentials in order to ensure that all parties have an authentic voice in decisions, from making choices about research design to making meaning out of data” (pp. 253–254).

Similarly, Chryst, Lassonde, & McKay (2008), three untenured professors in the same institution collaborating on developing teacher candidates as reflective practitioners shared the kinds of tensions that existed when working together. In particular, they noted how initially, each researcher was certain about their perspective on the ethics of classroom conduct and the rigorous classroom, “and literally brought to the table a shield of literature to protect her positions.” With a similar status position and a common research goal, the ethical questions for this collaboration centered on negotiating trust between the members of the group. As they navigated these differences through dialogue, they began to examine the nature of their own certainties around ethics and rigor, and “began to carefully consider the consequences of our students who do not conform or sway toward our particular belief system” (p. 51). Ultimately, the trio found collaboration beneficial and was able to productively work around their ethical differences.

However, the egalitarian spirit of collaborative studies do not necessarily lead to the resolution of ethical dilemmas. Allender and Taylor (2012) detailed incidents within a group of collaborators conducting a self-study focused on exploring the teacher education literature. Because the contributions and responsibilities of each author in the study were not clearly defined from the onset, there was an escalating conflict about what counted as participation in the study and what data could be used without the attribution of the researchers/participants. As a result of this conflict, some of the researcher/participants were bullied, felt hurt, and became disillusioned with the academic enterprise. The authors concluded that the inconsistent perceptions of ethical behavior among this group of academic collaborators fostered not only a breach of academic ethics but also interpersonal ethics. Ultimately then, this study raised important questions for collaborations in self-study regarding the ethical application of academic publishing principles to self-study research, what

counts as a substantive contribution within a collaboration, and the ethical response to perceptions of injustice.

Each of these studies make visible the ethical dilemmas related to power as a hierarchical concept. However, there are few studies that acknowledge the circulation of power within the status differentials that appear within the power architecture of institutions in higher education. One of the few examples is Milner (2010), who studied how his identity as a Black teacher educator influenced his preservice teacher candidates. He recognized that although he clearly had power as professor in the course:

... my students in the class had power (by virtue of their skin tone) that could easily override my power. A simple visit to the dean's office could make the dean skeptical about me or possibly even lead him or her to think I was a racist because I made some of the students feel "intellectually or socially uncomfortable." Moreover, they had the power to drop the course and to give me low teaching evaluations. Also, the students had the power to leave that classroom context and go into society—even the hallway—and regain their power and privilege. They had power because they were White. The students had the power and the privilege to "tune me out" or to counter my every position. (p. 601)

Milner recognized how his natural and institutional identities as a Black teacher educator complicated the ethics of challenging students' hegemonic perspectives. Ultimately, he mitigated this concern, because after sharing his story, some of his students began to share their own stories that pointed to race, racism, and inequity. He saw that his telling "seemed to have broken down some barriers...and students became willing to engage in the intellectual work necessary to learn more and to become more knowledgeable" (p. 601).

In order to fully recognize the range of ethical dilemmas that are related to power within self-study research, it is critical for practitioner/researchers to make visible the circulation of power, and not just power as a hierarchy. In the following sections, Meredith, a science teacher educator, will share her experiences collaborating with an academic peer and shared graduate students, raising questions about the various ethical questions that emerge from these different relationships. Afterward, Alex, a social studies teacher educator, will discuss the dynamics of power involved in apprenticing graduate students into self-study research, and the challenges of maintaining authenticity and criticality as a prospective gatekeeper to the methodology. Ultimately, these narratives shed light not just on the nature of the differentials that exist during the teaching/conduct of self-study research, but how power tends to circulate across status differences.

### **4.3 Meredith's Story: Learning How Power Circulates as Different Needs Arise**

My story begins with deciding to include self-study research into a doctoral seminar that I developed for mathematics and science education doctoral students. At the time, there were nine doctoral students enrolled, four from the mathematics

education program and five from science education. Each of the nine doctoral students were in their first or second year of the program and as such were just beginning to teach courses in our preservice teacher program. The preservice courses varied from content for teachers, methods of teaching, to field supervision. For the doctoral students, this shift to teacher education was very new, as some had come from teaching contexts that were not K-12 classrooms, so the thought of devoting time to think critically about pedagogy was new. Therefore, I thought introducing them to the field of self-study research would give them the space to think about the development of their own practice while simultaneously engaging in the reading about others' self-study experiences. In our doctoral seminar, we read and analyzed several self-studies examples, some associated with the doctoral students' content areas and some not, as well as foundational pieces such as LaBoskey's (2004) chapter. Throughout our discussions of these articles, I asked the doctoral students to think about how the authors were articulating problems of practice, or assumptions in their thinking about teaching, that possibly relate to what they are experiencing in their early stages of their program. The final component of the graduate seminar required the doctoral students to prepare a self-study research proposal to guide them in exploring and understanding some aspect of their developing practice as teacher educators. I advised each student with written feedback and one-on-one discussions about their ideas. We focused these conversations on understanding the purpose of what they wanted to explore about their practice and the questions they were asking to guide them in this reflective journey. We made sure to keep the focus on the *self*, but with an understanding of the importance of considering the participatory role of others' (e.g., students, peers) in the reflective journey.

At the conclusion of this course, three students approached me to ask if I would continue working with them as they put their proposed self-studies into action. I eagerly agreed, excited about the opportunity to work with them and learn through their experience. However, at the time I remember thinking—what is my role here? Am I their teacher still or a peer? What is the relationship of our collaboration now that we are no longer in class and they are approaching me to participate in this reflective process. At the time I did not have any answers to these questions, rather I decided to let things play out, see how they would naturally unfold as the graduate students pursued their own self-study research. In other words, how would their needs direct the power shifts in this collaboration?

We decided to call our group the *Community of Practice for Self-Study (COPSS)*. I also suggested to the three graduate students that it might be beneficial to ask Matt (pseudonym), a faculty member in mathematics education, because he and I had recently been discussing how we are supporting graduate students across our two program areas and the department with respect to their knowledge and abilities in becoming teacher educators. Additionally, the contexts for the graduate students' self-studies were math and science elementary methods courses, which were taken at the same time within a semester. Matt, an assistant professor at the time, agreed, and so another status level was added to the mix. At the time, I recognized and journaled about this status difference—as a tenured, associate professor I was

wondering how Matt's and my relationship was going to be perceived by the graduate students? And perhaps equally important, how did Matt view our collaboration as the two faculty members of the group? These questions and others associated with understanding the power dynamics of COPSS lead me to conducting my own self-study as Matt and I worked with the graduate students on their self-studies. I presented on my own self-study experience at the 12th Castle Conference (see (Park Rogers, Jacobson, Allen, Borowski, & Roy, 2018), while supporting others to learn about and conduct their self-studies (see Allen, Park Rogers, & Borowski, 2016; Roy & Park Rogers, 2016).

I felt shifts in our power dynamic occurring early on and attribute it to several things: (1) the initiation of self-study being a course assignment rather than a self-awareness of constraints or problems of practice, (2) the students viewing me as an expert in self-study when I myself felt like a novice, and thus perhaps a bit of a fraud, and (3) serving multiple roles in relation to these students development as teacher educators. For example, for two I was their major advisor for their Ph.D., I served as a critical friend individually and within the COPSS setting (so dual critical friend roles), and I was also the course coordinator (or co-coordinator) for the courses that the doctoral students were teaching in, so I had some investment in the structure and learning experience the students were having in the course as well. I was constantly struggling with the power structure that playing all of these roles at once may have had. How could I be a non-judgmental, supportive, but challenger of their ideas when I was connected to the development as teacher educators in so many ways? What should be the boundaries of my involvement (or should there be)? At what point does my position of power as advisor/mentor/teacher get in the way of these students truly diving into understanding the reasons for their pedagogical decision-making and their willingness to take the risk in confront these reasons. If they see me as their "teacher" or the "expert" how do I ensure the self-study process is being internalized and driven by their own natural curiosity about the craft of teaching teachers, and not what they think is 'required' of them.

Reflecting on what I learned from this experience the image of an infinity symbol comes to mind (see Fig. 4.1).

I view our COPSS group, where we shared about our collective experiences with self-study, as the intersection where the shifts in power often occurred. It was during these group sessions that I was often playing multiple roles of mentor, advisor, program coordinator, collaborator, and learner. However, I believe it was this wide spectrum of roles from one of power (mentor or advisor), to co-inquirer (collaborator), to learner that helped me to navigate through the power differentials that could have potentially stifled our relationship. Recognizing the need to conduct my own self-study while working with my students helped me to keep grounded in making assumptions about my own work, and thus their work as well. As one of the doctoral participants explained, "it was evident you were experiencing self-study with us". By positioning myself in this role of experiencing the process with them I believe I was able to move through the intersection of power I initially felt at the beginning of our collective experience.

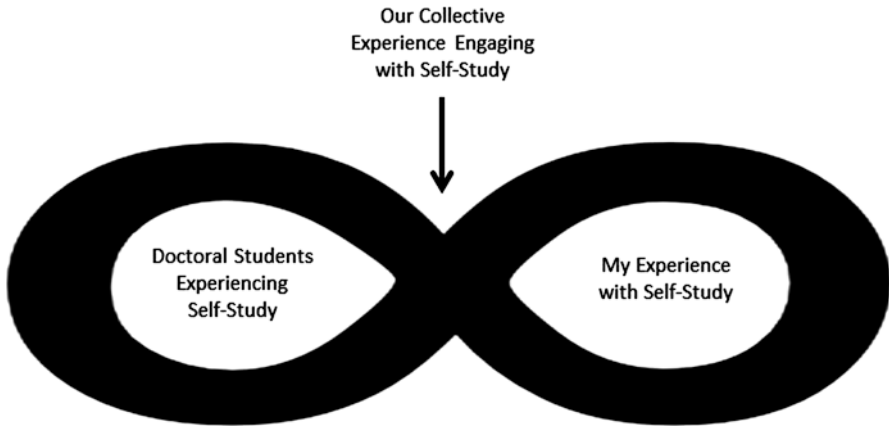


Fig. 4.1 The intersection of power shifts

#### 4.4 Alex's Story: Revisiting a One-on-One Collaboration

My story is much like Meredith's: navigating the ethical responsibilities associated with mentoring emerging teacher educators into the profession through/with self-study methodology. However, my story focuses on a one-on-one collaboration with Joe, a graduate student during my first few years as an assistant professor at a previous institution. Arguably, in a one-on-one relationship, the dynamics of power can be more palpable. Being alone in deploying and receiving power creates both different pathways for power to circulate, and also tends to mask power more creatively. Joe was assigned to help me with my research agenda and instructional responsibilities in social studies education. After a few semesters of working with me as a graduate assistant in my social studies methods course, I felt that Joe was ready to take on the mantle of the elementary social studies methods course.

In order to mentor Joe through his initial teacher education experience, I suggested that we conduct a self-study that examined his emerging identity. I was committed to mentoring Joe during the semester, and developing a few guiding questions and prompts during our mentoring debriefs seemed mutually beneficial. For professional purposes, this seemed like a win-win. I could mentor Joe through a teacher education experience and also share self-study as a research methodology. In fact, much of the self-study literature heralds the "professional development" aspect of self-self-study research (Swennen & Bates, 2010). So, I thought, what a wonderful way to guide Joe through this initial process. Intentions aside however, the initial proposition itself was shot through with power. As his advisor and mentor, with relatively more power and teacher education experience, I asked him to be openly vulnerable about entering an unfamiliar space and uncertain territory, and then I asked him to record those vulnerabilities so we could share them with the world at



some point in the future. In short, in my zeal to be efficient, I co-opted his experience of learning to be a teacher educator.

In spite of (or perhaps, because of) this exertion of power, Joe agreed to the mentoring/study of his work as a novice teacher educator. During the semester, we met six times, and engaged in hour-long conversations where we discussed the struggles and challenges that Joe faced in his elementary social studies classroom. Because I cared for Joe as a person first, and a teacher educator second, I always did my best to frame our discussions as constructive and friendly. Often, Joe shared some of his insecurities as a new teacher educator, and the practical and pedagogical challenges he faced as the sole instructor of record in an elementary social studies methods course. I tried to both share some of my own insights about the development of preservice teachers, some of the gaps I observed in the overall curriculum of the elementary teacher education program, and a lot of “trust the process” advice, where I tried to praise Joe’s practice, but also understood that he probably wouldn’t see the dividends of his practice until the end of the semester. At the conclusion of the semester, we transcribed our critical friend conversations, and along with other data sources such as reflective journals and course materials, we generated a series of findings around Joe’s emerging identity as a teacher educator, and produced a manuscript published in *Studying Teacher Education* (McAnulty & Cuenca, 2014).

Looking back at that manuscript, power absolutely confounded the ethical positions we took toward our mentoring/research collaboration. First, *my* ask to conduct a self-study of *Joe* itself was dubious, because the decision to conduct a self-study should be up to the individual. Certainly, a mentor can encourage self-study for new teacher educators. The personal practical knowledge that self-study methods surface is important for novice teacher educators. However, that should have been Joe’s decision to conduct a study of himself, and the invitation to serve as a critical friend should have come from him, not my suggestion. In the manuscript, Joe was forthright about the trepidation he felt as a novice teacher educator. He noted, “Although I was happy to take on a new assignment, I also experienced significant feelings of doubt during the intervening summer months...even shadowing Alex for one year seemed like an insufficient training” (p. 40). This was a sentiment shared with me during the summer months when we discussed the upcoming semester. Yet, it was a sentiment that I failed to connect with the prospective vulnerability of self-study research. Instead, I assumed that the source of these feelings of uncertainty were the same that most teacher educators have when they approach a new semester or new course.

Second, despite my belief that the duality of my roles as a mentor and critical friend to Joe were balanced and mutually beneficial, in fact they were not. During moments when Joe was expressing uncertainty with his practice, my role as his mentor allowed me to ignore the power I was exerting as a critical friend working with him on a self-study of his practice. I found his expressions of doubt honest, but failed to see them as products for the tape recorder that was blinking red during our conversations. When I shared my thoughts on his stories of the challenges and opportunities he faced teaching the social studies methods course, I was free to

comment on his beliefs, pedagogies, and struggles. In the midst of those conversations, I shared my own struggles with him, but those were not on empirical display. As a result, my efforts to mentor Joe genuinely through his challenges were stunted because he constantly had to process my words and responses as both a mentor and critical friend, responding to his pedagogical development. Regardless of our friendship and shared belief in the power of reflection to generate knowledge, we were still in an mentor-mentee relationship, and I recognized that Joe was selective in the kinds of challenges that he faced and he made visible for us to discuss. As I noted in the manuscript, although I believed that Joe was honest and forthright during all of our critical conversations, “a more equal power dynamic within the critical friendship could have helped him sort through a different set of influences that were challenging to discuss because of the imbalance created by our positioning” (pp. 48–49).

From an academic standpoint, the ethics of our study were sound. There was consent, we protected the anonymity and confidentiality of those that surrounded the study, and we did not use any outwardly deceptive practices with each other as researcher/participants. Also, the collection, analysis, and publication of the research were conducted using ethically sound principles. Moreover, I think Joe was honest in his assessment that the study ultimately helped him reflect on aspects of his identity and development that would have not otherwise been possible without the empirical lens of self-study. As a result, I still stand by the benefits of the study and its possible contributions to emerging teacher educators and the research literature on novice teacher educators. However, the framing of the study is itself, what happens “behind the scenes” even when using a methodology as transparent as self-study is where questions of ethics emerge. When is it right for a mentor to suggest self-study? Should a mentor serve as a critical friend? What are the norms to discuss ethical tensions within an imbalanced collaboration? What are the lost professional and empirical opportunities in an imbalanced self-study collaboration?

Like Meredith’s story, I don’t believe that there was ever a time when power was not circulating in our relationship. Yet, my position in the collaboration was more encumbered with power, so the ways in which it circulated looked slightly different. Unlike Meredith, I wasn’t actively participating in the act of self-study. Therefore, the duality of my role as mentor and critical friend most likely created moments of pause, redaction, and silence for Joe. The unspoken awareness that we shared of the inevitable production of our conversations for public consumption meant that the only way for Joe to exert his power was through the selectivity or absence of the words he expressed in our conversations. In short, power was made invisible by good intentions. We entered the collaboration in good faith, but the imbalanced conditions of power led to conduct governed by questions of vulnerability, judgment, and susceptibility. As self-study researchers engaging in collaborative research characterized by imbalanced relationships, the ways in which the invisibility of power governs our actions must be actively considered, even if they ultimately stay “behind the scenes” during the production of research.

## 4.5 Attending to the (In)Visibility of Power in Self-Study Research

The self-study scholarly community has consistently demonstrated the benefits of collaboration. Working with colleagues to empirically interrogate questions of practice has led to important outcomes such as intellectual connectedness (Hug & Moller, 2005), the reframing of assumptions and beliefs (Weibke & Park Rogers, 2014); and substantive program improvements (Cuenca, Dinkelman, Schmeichel, Butler, & Nichols, 2011). Yet, self-study collaborations also have a prospectively ethically challenging aspect when colleagues are imbalanced by power and status. Although some researchers have gently raised the ethical issues that emerge during a collaboration (e.g., McDonough, 2015; McGinn, Shields, Manley-Casimir, Grundy, & Fenton, 2005), more attention needs to be given to the ways in which power shades the ethics of engaging in collaborative self-study research.

Perhaps the call to further explore the ethical questions of power in collaborative research is more pressing because of the developmental allure of self-study research. In both stories, the intent to engage in self-study research emerged from earnest efforts of faculty to acculturate prospective teacher educators with the reflective mindset and empirical tools of self-study that advanced them both as researchers and practitioners. Ostensibly, socializing graduate students into an academic field is what mentors ought to do. For both of us, teacher education is at the core of our identities as scholars and practitioners. Therefore, preparing doctoral students for academic life also means cultivating a concern to attend to issues of the pedagogy of teacher education and the complexities of teacher preparation. However, our earnestness as faculty should not serve as an alibi for actively recognizing the conditions that power imbalances create. The personal and professional transparency that self-study demands must be framed through an ethic of care that is constantly monitored.

Moving forward, our stories provide a few lessons for collaborations that feature imbalanced status configurations. First, when sharing an affinity for self-study research with colleagues or graduate students, the provocation to “study this” or “conduct a self-study about that” should be weighed against the possible ethical implications that exist when working within an imbalanced relationship. What kinds of pressure are those with lesser status under the impression that a provocation is a directive? What are the demands of vulnerability are shared in the collaboration? Are the expectations within the collaboration distributed equitably? If our mentees or graduate students coming into the practice of self-study because they are “encouraged” or are completing a program requirement, is the self-study authentic?

Both stories illustrated how different status configurations of collaborations (one-on-one or a mixed group) led to ethical questions of the morality of conduct with a power differential. More specifically, when working with graduate students, how should faculty mentors navigate the distinct ethical questions that arise in mentoring teacher educators and teacher educators learning to be teacher educators through self-study? As Brandenburg and Gervasoni (2012) suggested, the ethical

implications in self-study research are not always obvious in advance, since “much of what occurs in self-study research is in response to unfolding insights” (p. 164). Consequently, engaging in a self-study collaborations featuring power imbalances also requires responding to ethical questions that emerge from unfolding insights. We both questioned the forthrightness of our collaborators during our studies, not because we mistrusted their character, but because the architecture of power inherent in the collaboration gave us pause. For faculty who serve as mentors of prospective teacher educators, the nature of self-study research means that there is a constancy of ethical questions that also unfold in real time.

Another lesson for collaborators, and more specifically, the collaborator(s) with greater relative status, is to heed the ways in which power circulates within a relationship. There must be an intentional stance on the part of this collaborator to be attuned to implicit and explicit acts of resistance, and anticipate the ethical positionality of the other. Despite the challenges we raised in this chapter about our work with graduate students, these collaborations are necessary in order to apprentice the next generation of teacher educators (Abell, Park Rogers, Hanuscin, Lee, & Gagnon, 2009). Moreover, even collaborations among institutional peers often feature different kinds of power and status differentials. Our stories illustrate how alibis such as “good intentions” or “mentoring” can prevent individuals from ethically considering others. Consequently, it may become easy to overlook the gestures, actions, and words that those with less power in a relationship signal or exert.

In order to mitigate some of the unfolding ethical challenges that emerge during collaborative efforts, McGuinn et al., (2005) suggested the co-creation of a statement of principles to help guide the collaboration. The creation of guiding principles about issues such as authorship, roles, responsibilities, and mechanisms for group accountability helped McGuinn and colleagues enact a “living ethics” that guided their contributions, participation, discussions, and relationships during the study, which led to a healthy, respectful, and ethical collaboration among researcher/practitioners. However, even this co-creation must also be cognizant of the ways in which the dynamics of power confound negotiation.

To make power truly visible self-study collaborations, particularly those characterized by status differentials, must be framed by an ontology of interpersonal care. An ontology of interpersonal care begins with the premise that humans are social beings, and that individual actions of moral significance influence and impact others. When humans are viewed as relational and socially interdependent, compassion and empathy are prioritized in the relationship over independent moral reasoning. Thus, from a care standpoint, the circulation of power is constantly made visible within a collaboration because of the need to be empathetic toward others. For the collaborator(s) with more power in a relationship, actively embracing interpersonal care means constantly attending to the relationship and considering whether actions are creating inequitable or ethically ambiguous conditions. As Noddings (2002) claimed, we cannot consider questions of justice without developing a theory of care. While not providing a rubric for determining moral action, if collaborative

efforts are framed through an ontology of interpersonal care, this serves as a guide for action as power circulates within a self-study collaboration.

Although writing about the supervision of student teachers, and not a collaboration, Trout (2013) offers useful insights into how an ontology of interpersonal care reframes the nature of relationships characterized by a power differential. She notes that when student teacher supervisors engage in an ontology of care, “they actively consider different perspectives because caring requires understanding other’s views...the interest and motivations of others...and builds upon these to guide the learning process” (p. 77). When prioritizing care for other individuals in a collaboration, questions about “what to do” become reframed from the perspective of the other. As such, power becomes visible and accounted for as each actor attempts to care for the other. Given the ubiquity of collaborations in self-study research, our empirical community would benefit from efforts to make power more visible both during the collaboration and in the reporting of the collaboration.

## 4.6 Conclusion

In one of the few texts on the ethical issues that face practitioner research, Zeni (2001) provides a guide for ethical decision-making. Under the category of relationships, she writes the following question for researchers to consider: Analyze the power relationships in this group. Which people (e.g., students, parents) do you have some power over? Which people (e.g., principals, professors) have some power over you (p. 159)? In essence, our chapter turns this guiding question inward, and asks self-study researchers engaged in a collaboration to ask the same kinds of questions: Who do you have some power over? Who has power over you? With those answers in mind, we ask self-study researchers to frame their answers through an ontology of interpersonal care. Given the circulation of power, how can self-study researchers care for others within a relationship? What do silences mean? Are there gestures or actions that are signaling the inequitable exertion of power? Moreover, how can we make the attentiveness to power within a collaboration more visible in our actions during a study and in the production (e.g., manuscript) of a study?

As faculty who believe in the power of self-study research, we will continue to mentor, advise, and teach courses that speak to the developmental and empirical importance of self-study. However, reflecting on our stories of collaboration, there are moments during the unfolding nature of self-study research where ethical questions predicated by power were ignored.

Ultimately, we believe that reflecting on our stories about power dynamics during collaborative work will help us become better mentors, advisors, and collaborators that actively acknowledge the circulation of power. Likewise, we hope that the stories in this chapter will motivate readers to engage in collaborations where power is visible and interpersonal care is prioritized.

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