Duoethnography as a Pedagogical Tool that Encourages Deep Reflection

Hilary Brown and Joe Barrett

As former teachers in the public sector, and, at present, teacher educators in a Faculty of Education, our past collaborative research was initiated through our genuine affinity for and love of teaching. Our casual discussions centered on the ways in which we each approached our teaching practice. We shared how and why we chose the content we wanted to teach and how we delivered our respective programs, and we discussed models and innovative teaching strategies beyond the traditional. As a result of our discussions, for our subsequent research we decided to infuse our teaching practice with an innovation approach. At the instructional level in our fields of expertise, Hilary being a Primary/Junior/Intermediate Foundational Methods instructor and Joe an Intermediate/Senior Health and Physical Education (HPE) instructor, we chose to implement duoethnography as a dialogic pedagogical tool and guide our teacher candidates through a deeply reflective process that interrogated both how methods students understood *diversity* and, second, how HPE students understood *mental health*. In short, we attempted to provide our teacher candidates with a tangible strategy to "get at" their understanding of diversity and mental

H. Brown (✉) • J. Barrett
Department of Teacher Education, Brock University,
St. Catharines, ON, Canada

health in a way that could potentially bring meaning to them personally, and, more importantly, make them learn how to negotiate their newly found understanding in their own teaching practice, with the recognition that all such knowledge are always "placeholders."

In order to guide our readers through the process of implementing a new approach we begin our chapter with background information on duoethnography in connection to how we used it as a pedagogical tool. Immediately we follow with an overview of the guiding principles or tenets of duoethnography that we felt complemented the depth of reflection we were aiming for with our teacher candidates. In order to solidify that connection, next we juxtaposed duoethnography as a pedagogical tool to Dewey's (1910/1933) notion of reflection as well as Larrivee's (2009) four levels of reflection. This in turn is followed by an in-depth description of the course assignment. From this point we shift from theory to practice and in the next section share our individual experiences implementing duoethnography as a pedagogical tool. We do so by honoring the voices of the teacher candidate as they began to think critically about themselves, their assumptions, and their teaching choices in direct relationship to undergoing a duoethnography. At the end of the chapter we come back together and share what we learned from our collaborative experiences.

Toward a Sense of Agency Using Duoethnography

Since duoethnography "challenges and potentially disrupts the metanarrative of self at the personal level by questioning held beliefs" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 15), we believed adapting this new research methodology and using it as a pedagogical tool that could also culminate as an assignment would evoke the critical and self-reflection necessary for the teacher candidates to experience the value in this beneficial lifelong skill.

Norris and Sawyer (2012) defined duoethnography as "a collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers of difference juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world—duoethnography embraces the belief that meanings can be and often are transformed through the research act" (p. 9). This research methodology offers a lens toward the exploration of an experienced phenomenon and a concomitant study of the process through which individuals make meaning out a particular phenomenon (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). We were intrigued by its possible use as a pedagogical tool to explore both

diversity and mental health as the experienced phenomena with the hope of "gaining critical awareness of [the student's] own narratives of experience through a dialogic process" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 3). Working with a critical partner, teacher candidates could uncover personal stories, memories, and experiences making explicit their assumptions, perspectives, and beliefs relating to diversity and mental health (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). We hoped that the employment of duoethnography as a pedagogical tool would lead teacher candidates to leave their teacher training with a greater sense of agency relating to both diversity and mental health instruction, while learning a unique way in which to support students. This exercise could also serve to lift the veil on teacher candidates' preconceived notions and existing judgments associated with the phenomena under study. Sawyer and Norris (2013) identified duoethnographies as "both a research process (form of data generation) and a research product (dissemination)" (p. 77) and we envisioned it as both a pedagogical process (evocation and analysis of experience) and teacher education product (greater sense of agency in relation to diversity and mental health instruction and ways in which to support students). The guiding principles or tenets of the duoethnographic process created a context for guiding teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners at all four levels of reflection: surface, pedagogical, critical, and the self. Our aspiration was that the latter two levels would be where our teacher candidates would spend most of their time. A discussion of the tenets follows.

The Guiding Principles or Tenets of Duoethnography

Norris and Sawyer (2012) list a growing number of emergent tenets (eight focused upon here) that make the duoethnographic process "distinct and strong" (p. 24). The first tenet draws on Pinar's (2004) notion of *currere* where the duoethnographer's life embodies a living, breathing curriculum. Our life histories become the site of the research. Within our personal curriculum we become engaged with ourselves through the other as we interrogate our past in light of the present with hope to transform our future. Second, duoethnographies are polyvocal and dialogic, meaning the voice of each participant is made explicit during the research process which leads to the third tenet of disrupting the metanarrative. The juxtaposition of the two stories or living curricula the duoethnogra-

phers have disclosed has an inherent third space (Bhabha, 1994) where the stories can potentially be restoried. This can only occur if the fourth tenet is present and that is when differences between the two participants have been clearly articulated. When differences are present this gives the duoethnographers an opportunity to question "meanings held about the past and invite reconceptualization" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 24) which is the fifth tenet. The sixth and seventh tenets flow from the notion that reconceptualization is necessary and that "universal truths are not sought" (p. 24) and that this reconceptualization is a "form of praxis where theory and practice converse" (p. 24). The final tenet, at the time of writing, reflects the negotiated space one enters when undergoing a duoethnography and the ethical stance which requires participants to be deliberately vigilant. These eight tenets are the guiding principles and dispositions that duoethnographers strive to adhere to in their research. They created a perfect fit for what we were attempting to achieve with our students and ourselves. Since our goal was to develop a practice that disrupts the status quo at the level of the teacher educator as well as of the teacher candidate, the seed took root for us to implement duoethnography as a pedagogical tool so that our students could have an opportunity to unearth any underlying prejudices they may hold while we do the same.

DUOETHNOGRAPHY AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL THAT ENCOURAGES DEEP REFLECTION

We adapted duoethnography as a research method and applied it as a pedagogical tool in the form of an instructional strategy where we had each teacher candidate explore, in conversation with another teacher candidate, the autobiographical and cultural events and influences that have shaped their beliefs, personality, and decisions (the implementation process within our own courses will be described later in the chapter within our individual stories). Within the duoethnographic experience, two texts were juxtaposed in order to create a new hybrid text residing within an interactive third space (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). The intention for creating this third space (Bhabha, 1994) was for the partners to challenge each other "to reflect on their own life in a deeper, more relational, and authentic manner" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 10). Hence, reflection is at the heart of the duoethnographic process.

Reflection

John Dewey (1910/1933) explored the concept of reflection. He considered it to be "an active and deliberative cognitive process which involves sequences of interconnected ideas that take into account underlying beliefs and knowledge" (Pedro, 2006, p. 130). He contrasted reflective thinking with "habits of thought that are unsystematic, lack evidence, rely on mistaken beliefs or assumptions, or mindlessly conform to tradition and authority" (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006, p. 2). With this in mind the process of the duoethnographic assignment is in direct alignment with Dewey's notion of what it means to be reflective. Dewey also believed that teachers who strive to be reflective share three common characteristics. First, they are open-minded and are willing to listen to more than one side of an issue, and give attention to alternative views. Second, reflective teachers are responsible and carefully consider the consequences of their actions, and, finally, they are wholehearted, meaning they are committed to seek every opportunity to learn (Dewey). These are the quintessential traits we wanted our teacher candidates to embrace when in conversation with their duoethnographic partner. The traits are in direct alignment with the tenets of the duoethnographic process. For example, being open-minded and willing to listen corresponds to the tenet of allowing the voice of each participant to be made explicit. In addition, being willing to listen to more than one side of an issue and giving attention to alternate views is consistent with the duoethnographic tenet that affirms the intention that the metanarrative will be disrupted. Our hope was that if our teacher candidates experienced an approach that required them to be open-minded, responsible, and wholehearted when in an explicit conversation with a classmate focused on a topic such as diversity and/or mental health, that if successful it could potentially "form the basis for not only considering alternatives, but also for taking action to continuously improve [his/her] practice throughout [his/her] teaching career" (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006, p. 2). Our desire for teacher candidates to take action further addresses the tenet that invites the duoethnographic partners to reconceptualize their present understanding of an issue in light of their partner's dialogic provocation. At the same time it gets at the notion that theory and practice need to come together for change to occur which is also a tenet of duoethnography. This level of engagement requires the participants to be willing to move from a surface and/or pedagogical reflection into a deeper level which encompasses both critical and self-

reflection. In their duoethnographic partnerships, the negotiated space shaped by the ethical stance the partners arrived at infused by the inherent dialogic process (also tenets of duoethnography) encourages a deeper level of reflection than one person may arrive at on his/her own. In light of the connection between Dewey's notion of reflection and the tenets of duoethnography, we anticipated that the duoethnographic process could potentially guide teacher candidates into this depth of reflection.

Critical and Self-reflection

There are multiple levels of reflection. Larrivee (2009) presents a continuum of reflection from the simplest level, surface reflection, followed by pedagogical reflection proceeding to the higher-order levels of reflection of critical and self-reflection. Surface reflections tend to focus on what is working and what is not working in order to maintain order with little consideration of the value of these tasks. Pedagogical reflection tends to focus on the theory/practice divide: What teachers say they do in practice in relation to what they actually do in the classroom. Critical and self-reflection are considered higher-order levels due to the fact that one's biases, assumptions, values, as well as the consideration of the ethical implications of one's actions are brought to the surface in order to be interrogated, questioned, and challenged. Even though we taught all four levels of reflection our vision was to have our teacher candidates delve into forms of both critical and self-reflection. We did this by promoting an environment where awareness beyond the immediate was not only fostered but also encouraged as a normative function for a teacher candidate to possess. Through the duoethnographic project we guided our teacher candidates into these spaces and encouraged them to confront aspects of themselves that they perhaps had not considered before. We did this through the promotion of critical and self-reflection.

Critical reflection is the process by which people identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the historical and cultural origins of the assumptions, question the meaning of assumptions, and develop alternate ways of acting (Cranton, 1996). At this level of reflection "teachers reflect on the moral and ethical implications and consequences of classroom practices on students." They "extend their considerations to issues beyond the classroom to include democratic ideals" (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006, p. 12). Through the process of critical reflection people come to interpret and create new knowledge and actions from their lived experiences. The

intention is that they will change as a result of their newfound knowledge. Self-reflection on the other hand presumes that understanding oneself is a prerequisite to understanding others. It focuses on "examining how one's beliefs and values, expectations and assumptions, family imprinting, and cultural conditioning impact students and their learning" (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006, p. 13). While immersed in the duoethnographic process the teacher candidates needed to move between being critically reflective and self-reflective which allowed the creation of an interactive third space to open up where hybrid knowledge and understanding were enacted. Through this experience we hoped our teacher candidates would come to a better understanding of self in relation to diversity and mental health, and in turn find a way to disrupt teaching practices that were incongruent to their ontology and/or epistemology. Before we share the outline of the assignment some background information on duoethnography will help situate our study.

DUOETHNOGRAPHY AS PEDAGOGICAL TOOL AND FINAL COURSE ASSIGNMENT

We adapted Rick Breault's (2012) duoethnography assignment to suit the topics of diversity and mental health issues. The following steps were both outlined in print and shared orally in our respective classes each week over the course of four class sessions. This is an abridged version.

- **Part 1: Initial Conversation (week 1–2)**

1. Find a conversation partner. Ideally, you should find someone with whom you share some important characteristic but someone who is also different from you in some significant way.
2. Devote one hour to a conversation about diversity/mental health. Record the conversation.
3. Transcribe the conversation. Take notes on what you think were important insights into your own teaching.

- **Part 2: Summarizing the Conversation (week 2–3)**

1. Write a summary of your own experiences as a student as it relates to diversity/mental health.

2. Write a similar summary for your conversation partner. This description will be your interpretation of what you heard in the conversation.
3. Be prepared to share your descriptions with each other and discuss how accurate and consistent your interpretations seem to be. Did you hear each other as you heard yourselves or as you intended to be heard by the other person?

- **Part 3: Searching Stories (week 4)**

After you have shared your interpretations, you need to search your stories for the impact they are having on your present preparation as a teacher and your future effectiveness in the classroom.

DISTILLING MEANING FROM OUR EXPERIENCES WITH DUOETHNOGRAPHY

In this section, we share our efforts to challenge the status quo—in this case, teacher candidates' biases, assumptions, and beliefs through dialogic explorations using duoethnography. First, we present each of our stories and, then, conclude with our shared and individual perspectives derived out of our interpretations of our learning about teaching using duoethnography.

GUIDING TEACHERS TO BECOME CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE (HILARY)

There are two main beliefs I have come to realize about my teaching and learning practice. First, I teach to disrupt the status quo that exists in education today specifically accountability and standardization whereby transmission of knowledge through testing has become the foci. In contrast, I choose to teach from a position of responsibility instead of accountability employing a holistic approach where balance, inclusion, and connection (Miller, 2007) are central features of my practice. "*Responsibility* and *accountability* point in different directions. We are *accountable* to a supervisor, someone above us in the hierarchy, but we are *responsible* for those below us, [hence] a sense of responsibility in teaching pushes us constantly to think about and promote the best interests of our students" (Noddings,

2012, p. 206). The notion of promoting the best interests of our teacher candidates leads me to the second theme I have come to realize about my teaching and learning practice, attending to the Other.

The Other is most often represented by "colonized, historically marginalized and oppressed groups" which fall under the "broad categories of non-Western, third world, developing, underdeveloped, First Nations, indigenous peoples, third world women, African American women and so on" (Chilisa, 2012, pp. 1–2). My worldview most definitely includes these broad categories but I also include people who have diverse learning needs in terms of learning styles, formal learning identifications, and physical disabilities, people whose socio-economic status is below the poverty line, people with mental health issues, and English language learners to name a few. I also teach acutely aware of language I use and the stories I share that highlight sexual orientation, gender issues, religion, ethnicity, and so forth.

Teaching to disrupt the status quo and honor the Other often challenges the assumptions of teacher candidates. With this in mind, it is important to note that I am open to having my preconceptions about teaching and learning challenged and disrupted at the same time as the teacher candidates. When I invited the teacher candidates to have a conversation with someone of difference during the duoethnography project they found themselves in unfamiliar territory. Simultaneously, I was working within unfamiliar territory since I had never attempted to implement duoethnography as an instructional strategy. As a result I viewed both the teacher candidates and myself as collaborators working through a disorienting dilemma where we were all experiencing feelings of discontent, restlessness, and insecurity but in slightly different ways.

Why Diversity?

I teach concurrent education teacher candidates in their fifth and final B.Ed. year. As a result of learning educational theory together as a cohort, a distinct group of learners with specific needs is organically shaped. The duoethnography assignment was developed both to evoke deep reflection and to challenge the teacher candidate's assumptions. I chose the topic of *diversity* for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, it was my hope that the consensus perspective would be challenged. In a consensus perspective education is seen as a means of providing skills training and knowledge transfer as well as basic societal values. The problem with

the consensus perspective is that there is a refusal to acknowledge schools as sites where intergroup and class distinctions are reproduced or as arenas that do not serve the interest of less privileged members of society. Through an interrogative perspective, however, specifically critical theory, understanding the intersections of class, power, and privilege is critical to understanding how schools carry out their mandate and more specifically the role teachers play in that mandate. Second, duoethnography is a practical pedagogical tool that brings to the surface how class, power, and privilege underscore our actions. The juxtaposition of dialogic stories framed around the theoretical concept of diversity was a way to discover the teacher candidate's initial understanding of diversity. My hope was that this process would lead to a practical resolution whereby participants would become aware of their assumptions, biases, values, and beliefs and throughout the process negotiate with themselves how they were going to transform their preconceived notions in order to challenge the consensus perspective that drives education today.

My Experience with Duoethnography

I headed into this assignment with an optimistic mindset. I believed the topic of diversity was current, relevant, and interesting. I thought the concurrent students were going to immediately embrace this pedagogical tool and enjoy the process of deconstructing the concept diversity through critical and self-reflection. However, three challenges quickly emerged. First, even though I was aware that students took a course on diversity in their second year, I did not foresee that many students would come into the duoethnographic assignment believing they already *knew everything* there was to know about diversity. Second, I did not anticipate that they would resist talking to someone they did not know well. Finally, during the first session, in spite of the fact that the majority of students did find a conversational partner "who was different from him/her in some significant way," what emerged was that the Concurrent Program itself encouraged students to think the same way. One pair of students used the metaphor of the "funnel" to describe their experience in concurrent education. They determined that their backgrounds were fundamentally different but that the past four years had shaped their worldview and funneled their experiences through the philosophical underpinning of constructivism which encouraged them to adopt the same educational lens. My optimism was

temporarily deflated but I persevered with my belief that we can all learn something even if the experience was not positive.

After the initial conversation, teacher candidates moved through the phases of the assignment from engaging in the accuracy and consistency of their partner's interpretations in comparison to their own interpretations, to the final phase where they distilled meaning from their reconstructed personal stories. In this phase they had the option to create their final piece through any mode that met their individual learning style. Some examples were poetry, short story, children's story, a formal paper, painting, collage, dance, digital media, sculpture, and so forth. The students chose a modality that brought meaning to their story while at the same time reflecting upon their future teaching and learning practice.

With Research and Ethics Board (REB) clearance granted at the conclusion of the assignment, I invited all 115 students to participate in a study sharing their duoethnographic experience. I inquired into whether they would allow me to use their course feedback form as well as their final duoethnography assignment as data. One hundred and four students consented, 8 declined, and 3 were absent when the invitation was extended. I was surprised by the number of students who allowed me to use their work as data since many students were initially irritated by the topic, the process of the assignment, as well as partnering with someone they did not know well. One student wrote:

> In the beginning I really didn't see the point of doing the assignment probably because I didn't know what I was supposed to do in the first place. After we got further into the assignment, I started to appreciate it and got to know a little bit about others, though it was a little awkward.

Another student mentioned that she "found this activity challenging at first because it was hard to open up with someone I had never met." This was a consistent theme throughout the data. However, some did embrace the opportunity:

> I found it very interesting how I was paired with someone I barely knew and our lived experiences were also different but our beliefs were very similar. I believe I have experienced some personal professional growth through small group discussions. It made me realize how important and useful collaboration among colleagues is!

Another theme that emerged was the process of reflection itself. Having an opportunity to reflect authentically at the level of self-reflection was new for a number of teacher candidates: "I learned how to dig deeper in my reflections—something I have always struggled with because I usually never go beyond the surface." Another woman stated, "Once I started doing the assignment I didn't realize how deep and personal it got for me. In the end I learned more about myself and my beliefs through this reflection." Being invited into a conversation with an unfamiliar partner moved the majority of the students out of their comfort zone. However, through the dialogic process they were respectfully encouraged to tap into their own living, breathing curriculum and use their life histories to examine why they believe what they believe. This example illustrates the depth of the first tenet whereby understanding the past can assist a person in transforming his/her future. Some students, however, commented on how trivial the first conversation was: "I found it difficult to have a deep conversation as most people were too polite or politically correct." However, she went on to offer suggestion for future improvement, "perhaps starting earlier to get used to your partner or allow us to switch and get multiple perspectives would improve this." Not all duoethnographic partnerships developed a healthy and trusting negotiated space as one of the tenets dictates, but perhaps starting earlier as this participant suggested will alleviate this concern. Finally, a consistent theme that emerged was that on the one hand the duoethnography lacked structure and explicit direction, which they found frustrating, yet, on the other hand, many participants concluded that feeling disoriented was worth it.

> I feel that this assignment could have been better explained. I understand that you did not want us to feel pushed into a certain direction. However, a little direction with clear instructions would have made this process more enjoyable for me. The duo project was an interesting task. When I got to the end, I began to understand how this could help me. I have had some difficult moments during this class. I feel that it helped me grow as a person. I have learned to adapt to situations that I am uncomfortable in. I have also learned to interact with differing teaching styles and philosophies.

Another woman stated that:

> At first it was uncomfortable to have vague(ish) instructions on assignments because I like direction. However, I think this strategy and the way you

teach is actually how we should be taught (it got easier with time!) I hope to use this approach with my students—it definitely takes a confident teacher.

Both teacher candidates took away from the experience what they needed. This result is in alignment with the tenet that reconceptualization is necessary and both can and should move theory into conversation with practice. For me this was a win/win situation as both participants have grown in their own respective ways through the authentic implementation of a constructivist approach and one participant mentioned that she would be implementing this approach with her own students. Having an innovative pedagogical tool modeled created a disorienting dilemma. One woman summarized it in this manner:

> Your instructional strategy definitely took on the philosophy of constructivism as you fulfilled the role as guide in learning allowing us to take our own path in self-discovery and understanding. While I enjoy this strategy I could see the others were uncomfortable with this needing more structure. Like a classroom for my own students I think balance needs to be attained to allow all students to profit. The assignment was inventive and allowed those with good communicative skills to practice them but again this project (deconstructing diversity) has been over exercised.

The duoethnography assignment was not appreciated by a small percentage of the teacher candidates. One person wrote: "I did not feel the assignment was helpful in my growth. I felt the assignment was more of a time filler. Over the past 5 years we have talked about diversity so much and my opinions have not changed." This person did not come to a place where he wanted to reconceptualize his position on diversity. What became very clear as I read through the data was that no matter how hard I tried to meet the Concurrent students' unique learning needs, not all the teacher candidates transformed as a result of undergoing a duoethnography.

However, that being said, using duoethnography as a pedagogical tool definitely challenged the status quo and triggered many teacher candidates to think about their own biases and how they play out in their teaching practice. A range of responses were expressed from simply uncovering one's biases—*combining with another person to discuss diversity helped me to uncover more biases that I had*, which led to potentially acting upon those biases: *I am more aware of the choices I am making as a teacher as well as the biases and beliefs I have as a person that I take into my teaching.*

A deeper reflection illuminated how biases affect one's teaching:

> What was so powerful for me was that through the discussion I recognized some of my biases in relation to diversity AND the reasons I have developed those biases. I learned a lot about the environment I have grown up in how it influenced me and how I can change it. I feel I did experience growth through this course. It allowed me to reflect on my [teaching] block and what I did and why. I also learned a lot through other's experiences. I also feel I learned through the duoethnography: I learned about myself and my beliefs.

In the end some teacher candidates did arrive at a deeper understanding of diversity itself:

> The duo assignment actually encouraged me to self-reflect and express myself and explore these biases that I hold and whether I actually understood what diversity meant. At first I thought it would be simple to define the term diversity: however, it wasn't until the end of the activity I realized the complexity of the term and it was a challenge to define.

This type of response illustrates that the living curricula the duo partners disclosed did create a third space where their stories could potentially be restoried, where meanings from the past were challenged and space for reconceptualization could potentially occur. This was what I was hoping for when implementing this assignment with my teacher candidates. This fulfills yet another tenet behind the principles that guide duoethnography. Throughout the data analysis phase it became clear that the teacher candidates were pushed out of their comfort zone when faced with the task of deep reflection.

This type of interrogative assignment has established that as a teacher I have a *choice* of how I want to approach my teaching and learning practice simultaneously with my teacher candidates. By using duoethnography as a pedagogical tool I took a risk by inviting my teacher candidates to take an ethical stance and within a partnered negotiated space expose their vulnerabilities around the topic of diversity. They in turn either accepted or turned down the invitation to openly engage within the negotiated space. However, ultimately what became a central point of interest were my teacher candidates' future students. With them in mind I asked myself these questions. Do I want my teacher candidates to enter this profession with an open mind willing to listen to more than one side of an issue and

give attention to alternative views? Do I want my teacher candidates to carefully consider the choices of their actions by interrogating their biases? And, finally, do I want them to remain wholehearted, committed to see every opportunity to learn? "Yes" is the unequivocal answer to all three questions. I know I strive to embody all three characteristics that are common to reflective teachers. But most importantly what I learned from the wide-ranging responses I received from the teacher candidates was that for the majority they, too, embody all three characteristics. What they need is to be continually pushed into uncomfortable spaces and learn in those moments that this is where meaningful knowledge is generated and, in turn, I will continue to push myself into those spaces as well.

Exploring Teacher Candidates' Notions of Mental Health (Joe)

As a new tenure track faculty member responsible for physical and health education teacher education (PHETE), I came to the faculty with a desire to provide co-constructed student-centered PHETE training. As with the experiences of Bullock and Christou (2009), Kitchen (2005), and Ritter (2007), I was entering into this phase of my teacher education career as a novice teacher educator and I approached this new direction with trepidation. In the midst of my developing pedagogy of PHETE, I was struggling with how to meaningfully situate the teaching of mental health education within my program. I knew I had a moral obligation to help teacher candidates find ways, in their teaching, to address the needs of students in the face of the emerging mental health challenges faced by children and youth in Canadian schools (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012).

Initially, my mental health education pedagogy largely focused on transmission of knowledge. This did not satisfy my overwhelming desire to help teacher candidates prepare for their teaching of and dealings with the estimated 1 in 5 Canadians under the age of 17 experiencing distress and impairment of function resulting from a mental health disorder (Waddell & Sheppard, 2002). In place of an innovative and student-centered pedagogy, I found myself enacting a pedagogy of PHETE where I used direct instruction to teach the signs, symptoms, and etiology of mental health while struggling with the contradiction between content, process of teaching, and desired learning outcomes (Russell, 2012). I was failing my students in this component of their PHETE training and I needed to change my practice.

The impetus for change was derived out of the review of my course evaluations. One evening while reading course evaluations I turned on the television and found myself passively interested in a program which featured an interview with Professor Temple Grandin from Colorado State University. She is a leading animal sciences professor and autism advocate. As the interview progressed, my passive interest gradually shifted toward active engagement and fascination with her message. In the interview, she clearly and concisely shared her perspectives on her own life's work and its impact on society. After years of struggle in mainstream society, it was evident that she knew who she was and, equally important, she knew how she had arrived at a clear conception of self—she was clear in her derived realizations about her life experiences and impact of those experiences on her life's work.

As the interview concluded, I picked up the course evaluations and read through teacher candidates' reflections on their PHETE training. I found numerous expressions of concern regarding preparedness relating to the teaching of mental health education in schools. One teacher candidate indicated:

> I thought mental health was very much looked at as a stigma in society and was swept under the rug because it was not something that should ever be talked about. If you have a mental illness you have a problem. I believed that the teaching of mental health was very much ignored and feared by many teachers. I feel this correlates with the lack of education I have had on the topic. I never had any sort of discussion on mental health in either elementary school or high school, and I have discussed it very minimally in university. I feel as though even with our teacher's college training we receive little or no support on how to deal with mental illness in the classroom or even discuss what it really is and what it means.

I realized that my current course structure was leaving teacher candidates to deal with a disconnection that would neither be remedied nor addressed prior to the conclusion of their PHETE training. They were left on their own to confront a rather narrow and reactive view toward student mental health. I found myself interpreting the teacher candidate reflections with a lens toward improving teacher candidates' sense of agency with mental health education and student support (Marcel, 2003). I chose to operationalize a sense of agency, from a teacher education standpoint, as a teacher candidates' ability to take action, be effective, understand his/her

conception of self, and demonstrate competence utilizing co-constructed student-centered pedagogy. In the face of stigmas attached to mental illness and the lack of awareness of how to recognize and support students with mental health challenges (Barrett & Dewar, n.d.; Gowers et al., 2004; Walter, Gouze, & Lim, 2006) some of my students were not embarking on a teaching career able to interpret their roles and responsibilities associated with student mental health education. This teacher candidate wrote:

> Mental health. What a loaded term. When I think of mental health I am immediately drawn to personal family experiences and I often become somewhat emotional or angry when thinking about it. Because I do not suffer from a mental health issue, it is very hard for me to try to put myself in student's shoe that has a mental illness. I am an extremely black and white person and I find it hard to relate to people that suffer from mental health issues.

That evening I became consumed with the notion that I could do something more to ensure a sense of agency that would lead to the enactment of (a) teaching of mental health education curricula, (b) supporting of student mental health and wellness, and (c) fostering of nurturing learning environment for all students. I found myself enveloped and painfully self-aware of this nodal moment (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). I was moving between feelings of helplessness, fascination, and a desire to better understand or explore how I might help my students achieve a sense of agency with mental health education instruction and student support. Inspired by Dr. Grandin and the honesty present in my students' course evaluation statements, I made the decision to have my future teacher candidates begin with an exploration of their own journey and experiences with mental health. According to Grandin (2011), "The best thing a parent of a newly diagnosed (autistic) child can do is to watch their child, without preconceived notions or judgments, and learn how the child functions, acts, and reacts to his or her own world" (p. 5).

Dr. Grandin's words would serve as a metaphor for my learning to teach PHETE teacher candidates about how to explore their own notions, underlying prejudices, and understandings of mental health using duoethnography. While traditionally defined as a research methodology, I believed that duoethnography as a pedagogical tool could provide teacher candidates with an approach to the juxtaposition of life stories and histories in relation to mental health (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). I was also

hoping that through teacher candidates' duoethnographic explorations of mental health that they would help each other find their way to reconceptualized and transformed notions of mental health education teaching and support of students afflicted by mental health disorders.

In the Beginning There Was Reflection

In preparation for our duoethnographic exploration of mental health, I turned to an existing body of work which identified a clear and evidence-based need to help teacher candidates address personal biography, their existing beliefs, values, and intentions derived from their own personal experiences, where failing to do so may lead to a rejection of messages and lessons learned through PHETE experiences (Matanin & Collier, 2003; Morgan, 2008; Placek et al., 1995). I kept coming back to the experiences of Dr. Grandin. Through her life struggles, the process that she had moved through was evolutionary and at its root reflective. I, then, considered the work of Lyons (1998) who offered, "the development of reflection is considered not simply as change, but as the evolution and integration of more complex ways (or processes) of engaging in critical examination of one's teaching practices" (p. 115). I felt strongly that the core tenets of duoethnography could provide the theoretical underpinnings necessary for me to help to develop a reflective student-centered experience that emphasized a "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases [one's] ability to direct the course of the subsequent experience" (Dewey, 1944, p. 74). I, like Hilary, had no prior experience with the implementation of duoethnography as a part of my pedagogy of PHETE. I leaned into the uncertainty, with my students. Together, we confronted both a challenging topic, mental health, and the challenge of using duoethnography processes in teacher education practice.

Teacher Candidates as Duoethnographers

PHETE candidates began a duoethnographic assignment after they had completed one of their three scheduled practicum placements. Before introducing the assignment, I wanted them to have had a field experience in K-12 schools that would offer a reference point for the realities faced by current secondary students in an HPE context. When introducing the assignment, teacher candidates were asked to find a partner and be

prepared to share with their colleagues how and why the two individuals comprising the dyad were fundamentally different. Initially, there was a flurry of questions. What do you mean by different? How different do we have to be? Do we have to be different in a certain number of ways?

I decided against providing any further guidance and I encouraged them to go into the exercise free of any external constraints that I might place on the exercise. I watched as teacher candidates moved freely through the room engaging in sometimes brief and other times extended conversations. From this initial exercise, teacher candidates were creating their "duo" that would provide the context for their exploration of mental health. As the facilitator of learning in this early phase of the duoethnographic exploration, I was pleasantly surprised by the thoughtfulness and understandings about what made each individual in the "duo" fundamentally different. In most instances, the differences were deep and layered taking into account, demographic factors, interests, and epistemological differences. Free of my constraints, they engaged and were ready to learn where this initial exercise might take them. I introduced the teacher candidates to the methodology of duoethnography as previously outlined in this chapter.

At the conclusion of this exploration of duoethnography as pedagogy, I was drawn back to the words of Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) positioning that the "self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other" (p. 17). Was I able to improve PHETE candidates' sense of agency relating to mental health through the use of a duoethnography as a pedagogical tool? All 22 of my PHETE candidates provided consent for the use of their completed assignments and course feedback forms as data. The data collected were analyzed using line-by-line open coding to determine emerging themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After the entire data set was reviewed multiple times, the responses were categorized into emergent themes. Although not the main focus of the study, the student data were included to underpin and inform my learning to teach PHETE teacher candidates about how to explore their own notions, underlying prejudices, and understandings of mental health using duoethnography. Specifically, PHETE candidates' dialogues were included to elucidate (a) the perceived value, if any, PHETE candidates placed on the use of duoethnography as a pedagogical tool, and (b) the extent to which the assignment impacted their sense of agency relating to mental health instruction and support. With respect to the process, one student wrote:

> Overall, I really enjoyed the whole assignment. Working with a partner in a safe environment really allowed me to open up about past experiences.

Another student offered:

> Duoethnography and my partner made me more aware of how my views and perceptions are interpreted by others … it was scary. Everyone has their own story but rarely are we provided with an opportunity to analyze how those stories influence our behaviours.

Core to the tenets, some of my teacher candidates were able to share freely and safely, "recalling meaningful events and reading personal beliefs within a playful yet disciplined dialogic frame—part of the currere and subsequently the duoethnography" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p.15).

Teacher candidates also noted that they could see themselves using this instructional approach with their own secondary students:

> I learned so much about myself. I will most likely use this strategy with my own secondary students.

This practice-focused sentiment was echoed by a peer who noted:

> I see tremendous value in its use in school settings. I can see this being a valuable tool to use for in-service teacher training. Many of the teachers I worked with on practicum would benefit from an exploration of their biases, and perspectives in a low pressure conversational manner.

Finally, one candidate shared the following:

> Using duoethnography to explore this topic could help secondary students see that there are others who have the same kinds of thoughts about life, stress, and health. Using something like this could better equip students to emotionally handle the ups and downs in life and continue on. If you were doing this again, I would suggest you create large duo groupings so that we can hear more from others. Keep the process the same but allow me to pair up with more of my colleagues. I would have benefited from reflecting upon multiple perspectives.

Using duoethnography resulted in a bridging of theory and practice for many of the teacher candidates—an unexpected, yet, desirable outcome.

Teacher candidates reported on ways in which duoethnography could (a) be improved, (b) support student learning and, (b) support in-service teacher professional development. Grounded on the tenets, our duoethnography design led to a teacher candidates' recognition that "its value and meaning are found in its contribution to the improvement of life experience" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p.33).

Finally, I also wanted to determine whether PHETE candidates' sense of agency relating to mental health instruction and student support were impacted through the use of this duoethnographic exploration of mental health. One student wrote:

> When I am confused and unsure about something (mental illness) I am more likely to pretend it isn't there. If I don't know how to handle a situation I am very unlikely to enter it as I would fear doing the wrong thing. This could be detrimental in the classroom, as something will need to be done for these students with mental illness. I will get to know my students on a more personal level and therefore am more likely to be the one they will go to when wanting to discuss these issues. I therefore need to be ready and not just push them aside or pawn them off on someone else because I now recognize that I might be the only person they feel comfortable talking with.

Nine of the 22 PHETE candidates made specific reference to growth and change in perspective. One PHETE candidate stated:

> Overall, this activity has really helped me grow as an educator. I've never really taken the time to sit down and review how I feel about mental illness. It has allowed me to point out my biases and taught me that I need to change if I truly want to be an effective teacher for my students. I have discovered that I not only lack education about the topic but also lack real world exposure to those suffering from mental illness. This activity has taught me that I need to be more aware of my students' feelings and change my own beliefs about mental illness in order to better serve my students.

Another student shared the following:

> To be honest this exercise has been completely eye opening for me. I did not realize how much my personal family life has had an impact on how I feel about mental health. I feel as though I have a lot of bias when it comes to mental health because I have watched two different people that I love go through it.

In a similar fashion to Hilary's students, self-reflexive engagement led to the creation of a third space and more importantly, for many, led to change. True to the tenets, many were able to find their way to safe and comfortable conversational spaces despite their differences. In those experiences, it was evident that teacher candidates were engaging in communal *yet critical conversations* with a focus on the self through the "other" deconstructing meanings held in their own past and still inviting reconstruction of meaning and stories (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). As in the case of Hilary's students, some partnerships could not overcome their differences and, as a result, were frustrated with the assignment openly questioning the purpose and value associated with the exploration. I left the assignment questioning on two fronts. First, were the differences between the candidates acting as barriers to their engagement in currere, a core tenet underpinning their duoethnography? And last, were those frustrated with the process "ready" for an immersive self-reflexive and dialogic exploration centered around a challenging topic such as mental health? I would suggest that despite the challenges faced in the present exploration, the value associated with the exposure and experience still needs to be realized and this may require further study by teacher education faculty choosing to utilize duoethnography as a pedagogical tool in teacher education practice.

Conclusion

During our collaborative research project, our discussions consistently arrived at the same intersection and that is our communal commitment to providing the best teaching and learning practice possible. Keeping in mind that in the academy one's teaching practice is generally not as well respected as one's research agenda, this reality added an unwavering tension in our ongoing dialogue. As a result of our ontological as well as epistemological commitment to teaching and learning, we were both willing to take risks to continually improve our practice. As teacher educators we find it *necessary* to continue to hone our craft so that our teacher candidates experience best practices in action. It is our hope that they, too, will embrace the notion of how important it is to take risks by trying new techniques in their own classrooms. In our roles as teacher educators this collaborative study helped us to name what we attempt to do every time we step into a classroom. By naming ourselves as risk takers we acknowledge that this path is not for everyone but leading our teacher candidates

through a disorienting dilemma was the only plausible way to get at these important issues that are pervasive in teacher education today.

Our duoethnographic explorations have provided us with a way to support one another through the implementation of a new pedagogical tool in order to improve our teaching and learning practice. Implicit in our ambition to improve our teaching and learning practice is the notion that this will also promote the same ambition in our teacher candidates. Throughout the implementation of the duoethnography assignment, many teacher candidates began to question their assumptions which invited them to move to the level of self-reflection. This reaches to the heart of teaching and learning when one is able to examine how one's beliefs, values, expectations, family imprinting, and cultural conditioning impact students and their learning (Larrivee & Cooper, 2006). We witnessed students engaged, at times, in the struggle of uncovering some not so complimentary revelations about their lives while we uncovered some of our own. While in the exploration of the self, most of the teacher candidates, as evidenced by their written feedback forms critiquing the duoethnography assignment, their final assignments, and overall course evaluations, were able to identify their own biases and assumptions related to diversity and mental health. From this awareness the students came to a newfound consideration of how their biases and assumptions could potentially negatively or positively influence others, more specifically their future students. From this new understanding many wanted to develop alternate ways of acting. They used action-oriented language to express how they were going to interact with others differently. For Joe, this result was different from previous teaching encounters. He had no previous evidence of student growth or pedagogical competence associated with mental health education. Hilary, on the other hand, had had similar results when using other constructivist teaching strategies (see Brown, 2012).

Dewey (1910/1933) believed that for people to be reflective they needed to be open-minded and willing to listen to more than one side of an issue, while giving attention to alternative views. He also believed they should carefully consider the consequences of their actions and ultimately he viewed reflective teachers as wholehearted, meaning they were committed to seek every opportunity to learn (Dewey). These are the traits we promoted and fostered throughout the duoethnographic assignment. Near the end of the assignment we eventually observed these traits in our teacher candidates as they maneuvered through the challenging task of both critical and self-reflection

While engaged in the duoethnographic assignment, we, too, struggled alongside our students. By stepping into the unknown and implementing an experimental pedagogical tool we too experienced a disorienting dilemma which we had to navigate. By diligently working through the assignment, we have come to believe that duoethnography can serve well as a pedagogical tool. It was a risk was worth taking. Our students valued the experience with many indicating that they would choose to use duoethnography with their own students in their future education classes. We, too, will continue to use it in our classes. It is a pedagogical tool that can be used to purposefully deconstruct one's personal biography contextualized around the exploration of a phenomenon such as diversity and mental health but other topics could be explored as well. Duoethnography in this context provided a defined path to meaningful reflection and action for both our teacher candidates and our selves. Moreover, our collaboration provided us with the occasion to deconstruct duoethnographic explorations in our respective classes, but also reconstruct our own teaching and learning practice in a more meaningful and fulfilled manner. We believe we must continue to offer opportunities for our teacher candidates to do the same.

References

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York: Routledge.

Breault, R. (2012). *Duoethnography with entering preservice teachers*. Paper presented at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Brown, H. (2012). In order to be you have to be: Modeling a constructivist approach for teacher candidates. *Brock Education, 21*(2), 36–52.

Bullock, S. M., & Christou, T. (2009). Exploring the radical middle between theory and practice: A collaborative self-study of beginning teacher educators. *Studying Teacher Education, 5*(1), 75–88.

Bullough, R. V., & Pinnegar, S. (2001). Guidelines for quality in autobiographical forms of self-study research. *Educational Researcher, 30*(3), 13–21.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Cranton, P. (1996). *Professional development as transformative learning: New perspectives for teachers of adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dewey, J. (1910/1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Lexington, MA: Heath.

Dewey, J. (1944). *Democracy and education*. New York: Free Press.

Gowers, S., Thomas, S., & Deeley, S. (2004). Can primary schools contribute effectively to tier I child mental health services? *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 9*(3), 419–425.

Grandin, T. (2011). *The way I see it: A personal look at autism & asperger's.* Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

Kitchen, J. (2005). Conveying respect and empathy: Becoming a relational teacher educator. *Studying Teacher Education, 1*(2), 194–207.

Larrivee, B. (2009). *Authentic classroom management: Creating a learning community and building reflective practice.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Larrivee, B., & Cooper, J. M. (2006). *An educator's guide to teacher reflection.* Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Lyons, N. (1998). Reflection in teaching: Can it be developmental. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 25*, 115–127.

Marcel, A. J. (2003). The sense of agency: Awareness and ownership of action. In J. Roessler & N. Eilan (Eds.), *Agency and self-awareness* (pp. 48–93). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Matanin, M., & Collier, C. (2003). Longitudinal analysis of preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 22*, 153–168.

Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2012). *Changing directions, changing lives: The mental health strategy for Canada.* Calgary, AB: Author.

Miller, J. P. (2007). *The holistic curriculum* (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Morgan, P. (2008). Teacher perceptions of physical education in the primary school: Attitudes, values and curriculum preferences. *Physical Educator, 65*, 46–56.

Noddings, N. (2012). *Philosophy of education* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Westview Press.

Norris, J., & Sawyer, R. D. (2012). Toward a dialogic methodology. In J. Norris, D. S. Sawyer, & D. Lund (Eds.), *Duoethnography: Dialogic methods for social, health, and educational research.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Pedro, J. (2006). Taking reflection into the real world of teaching. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 42*(3), 129–132.

Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Placek, J. H., Dodds, P., Doolittle, S. A., Portman, P. A., Ratliffe, T. A., & Pinkham, K. M. (1995). Teaching recruits' physical education backgrounds and beliefs about purposes for their subject matter. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 14*, 246–261.

Russell, T. (2012). Science teacher education, self-study of teacher education practices, and the reflective turn. In S. M. Bullock & T. Russell (Eds.), *Self-study, science teaching, and science teacher education.* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Ritter, J. K. (2007). Forging a pedagogy of teacher education: The challenges of moving from classroom teacher to teacher educator. *Studying Teacher Education, 3*(1), 5–22.

Sawyer, R., & Norris, J. (2013). Understanding qualitative research: Duoethnography. New York: Oxford University Press.

Strauss, C., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Waddell, C., & Shepherd, C. (2002). *Prevalence of mental disorders in children and youth.* Research update prepared for the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

Walter, H. J., Gouze, K., & Lim, K. G. (2006). Teachers' beliefs about mental health needs in inner city elementary schools. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 45*(1), 61–68.