Re-centering Teachers in a New Ecology to Empower Teachers' Agency and School Change; Engaging Teachers in Critical Inquiry and Action Research Based in a Global Community of Practice Online

by

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ABSTRACT

This mixed method action research study sought to empower teachers from Kenya and the United States together in a community of practice online. Three research questions were asked: 1) How might participants' awareness of their teaching situations and their roles within their systems grow? 2) How might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an online community of practice counteract *demoralization* in teacher participants? 3) How might *teacher agency* grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented inside their schools? Qualitative data were collected from online group sessions, interviews, written reflections and open-ended questions. Data were transcribed, analyzed, and coded. Quantitative data were collected from pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires, which were analyzed using SPSS software. I found that participants grew in their awareness of their teaching situations and their roles through the surfacing of five main themes: lack of time, lack of administrator support, fear, isolation and an overall sense of devaluation. Demoralization was not counteracted and in fact, grew in half of the participants (n=5) and stayed the same for the other half (n=5). However, this result was nuanced in that participants who took meaningful actions to solve problems also experienced joy and enthusiasm. Lastly, I found that teacher agency was grown in 8 of 10 participants. Those who engaged in meaningful actions to solve problems they defined grew agency while agency did not seem to grow in those participants who took no action or who took action that did not align with their values.

DEDICATION

For all the teachers and the administrators who seek to empower.

I must first acknowledge my great grandmother, Mathilda Mitchell, my *mumu,* who I never actually met except in the stories of her *sisu* (Finnish for strength and grit). She was with me as I sought conduits to liberation in this study. For her daughter, my grandmother, Signe Coleman, and my aunt Judith Barr, who were brilliant, creative and hilarious; I wrote this in part for you. For my mother, Patricia Hurley, a longtime teacher, who has guided me with her deep wisdom. For my father, Vince Hurley, who always believed his daughters could do anything they wanted to do; so we did. For all my sisters and their support: Anne, Catherine, Bethy and Susan, especially Susan who listened for hours on end about the current field of teaching. For Justin and Dominic, my brothers-in-law who have always been supportive, and finally to my nieces and nephews: Nick, Joe, Anthony, Christopher, Signe and Olivia -may you all contribute to making the world a better place simply by being who you already are.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Stories of teacher shortages populate the headlines (Walton & Pollock, 2022) and school leaders and communities scramble to understand why teachers are quitting in record numbers (Walker, 2022). Scholars have long written about teachers being burned out (Johnson & Naidoo, 2017) or demoralized (Santoro, 2021; Tsang, 2019), but recently these stories have accelerated, and in 2022, 55% of U.S. teachers reported they were planning to retire early (NEA, 2022). The U.S. is not alone in this. Teacher protests and sick-outs are occurring around the world, with teachers refusing to continue in their current situations. In countries as diverse as the United Kingdom, Kenya, and Jordan, educators are protesting their lack of adequate pay and their working conditions. Amitai & Van Houtte (2022) report that teachers leave for many reasons such as increased hours and workload, low pay, increased non-teaching childcare duties, increased risk of violence, and an overall lack of trust in their professionalism by administrators and their communities. For teachers who stay, the struggle is multifaceted and central to their role and identity as educators.

John Dewey's (1938) theories often serve as core teachings in graduate education programs (Schmidt & Allsup 2019) and help define teachers' roles. According to Dewey, teachers have a responsibility to structure educational environments that promote educative learning experiences (Schmid & Allsup, 2019) and lead students in meaningful experiences of learning (1938). Today though, many of the curricular responsibilities have been transferred out of teachers' hands (Lewis et al., 2019), and teachers are increasingly becoming separated from "the good work of education" (Santoro, 2021, p. 61) or the decision-making that goes into creating learning experiences based on students' abilities. This has occurred for various

complex reasons but the central impact on teachers is their inability to operate with agency.

Teacher agency is an emergent phenomenon that occurs in a school ecology if the structure and context support its growth (Priestley et al., 2016). It is nurtured in a teacher within a certain kind of environment. *Teacher agency* needs both elements of *personal capacity* and *school ecology* (Priestley et al.., 2015) to operate. When teachers achieve it, they conduct themselves professionally, and maturely, and exhibit a high level of mastery over subject matter content and the task of teaching, grading, and planning. They are also able to exhibit a high self-awareness within their context and partner with colleagues to discern and evaluate appropriate programs of study, steps in academic action, and particular messaging of critical content to various stakeholders (Priestley et al., 2015). Several variables inhibit the growth of teacher agency. These include a lack of support from administrators, a sense of not being trusted and valued by their communities, and an overall feeling of demoralization from being unable to do their jobs in ways that can effect change for their students. These feelings often emerge from feeling helpless to effectively do the job and are distinct from burnout, which points to some kind of teacher weakness and inability to handle stress (Santoro, 2021). Demoralization is the product of a lack of *teacher agency*.

These inhibiting variables arise from a business-style model in today's schools that position teachers as customer service agents (Gee, 2000) providing service to students and their parents, and changing the teachers' role from one of the educational leaders that Dewey (1938) envisioned to one of customer service worker and test giver (Gee, 2000). The Covid-19 pandemic further changed the role by

requiring a sudden elevated technological expertise from teachers, along with a demand that they manage the danger of Covid-19 exposure without proper supplies (Zamarro et al., 2022, Ryan et al., 2024). Many teachers left (Zamarro et al., 2022), but those who stayed shifted into a higher-tech version of themselves (Quezada, Talbot, & Quezada-Parker, 2020). The role of teacher has also changed due to the continuing trend of mass school shootings. Teachers now inhabit a role that has become rife with danger in the United States (Wike & Fraser, 2009). Educators might comply, resist, or ultimately leave if this demoralization, loss of control, and lack of trust are pervasive. Paulo Freire (2000) argues that people who are oppressed may not even know it, but markers of oppression are silence, compliance, lack of critical thinking, and fear, among others. If a group of teachers or administrators were to attempt to shift any of the roles, relationships, resources, rules, or results of the whole education system, they would likely fail, as the power comes from the district and state level and is greatly influenced by the power of lawmakers and political lobbies, or even, parents with power (Wright, 2022). Laws and rules will not change quickly, and the problem of a lack of *teacher agency* is urgent. One solution might be to help empower teachers and later administrators, by taking them outside the system for training and support. Instead of continuing to seek support and understanding in this 'wicked' system, teachers might try building their own ecology, outside the system—to 'remoralize' themselves.

Aim of the Study

With this action research study, I hoped to empower educators to work together in a new global ecology, outside of schools and without the need of their district leadership. I hoped this might allow demoralized teachers to renew their sense

of professional dignity and engender an engaged, agentic, and remoralized group. My hope was that insights gained might be of practical use for educators in the field - both teachers and district leaders - who wish to improve teachers' working situations to remain in the field with a renewed vigor and sense of purpose and authority. My overarching goal was to find a way in which teachers could change their agentic roles within their schools to ultimately change how teachers operate in schools. This study guided a global group of teachers through a cycle of critical inquiry online, as they reflected on activities they completed in their schools. It investigated how the *conscientization* of their teaching within their situations (Freire, 2000) changed, noting any growth in *remoralization* (Santoro, 2021) and teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2016).

Larger Context

Teachers are experiencing a "general sense of feeling disrespected and devalued as professionals" (Dunn, 2018, p. 2). Teachers cite a lack of administrator support as the number one cause of their burnout (Johnson & Naidoo, 2017). Kazak (2021) explains how teachers experience a "status deficit" owing to how society views them. While school administrators do not suffer this same deficit, they too are leaving the field in record numbers (Jotkoff, 2022). Many of these issues seem tied to structural and systemic concerns related to the way that education practitioners are viewed and treated as part of many political contexts today. The current school model also creates friction between the goals of teachers and administrators, creating a challenging reality for today's teachers. Over three million Americans work as teachers (NCES, 2023), but a record number are leaving (Walker, 2022), and fewer and fewer are being trained. In fact, the United States is currently undergoing a

historically unprecedented teacher shortage (Love, & Love, 2023; Walker, 2022). Teachers cite feeling demoralized as one of the main reasons for this (Santoro, 2021). Over half of all schools in the United States are facing staffing shortages (Love, & Love, 2023; Walter, 2022). In the US, teachers report an increase in harassment and assault by students and parents (Will, 2022). In response, dissent is growing. In 2018, teachers in unions marched in the streets, and the list of cities continues to grow. Citing issues such as needed raises, lowered class sizes, and access to nurses, Los Angeles teachers went on strike for the first time in 30 years. In Chicago, they simply walked out in January 2021, over a lack of appropriate Covid safety measures, foremost among other issues (Zamarro et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2024). In San Francisco, a teachers' strike was averted at the last minute by significant district concessions including a $9000.00 flat rate plus a 5% increase. Fresno announced they would strike for the first time since 1978 with 92% of the union members voting and 93% of those members voting to strike (The Sun, 2023). If these two US metropolises are any measure, these three million teachers do not seem satisfied with their working conditions (NEA, 2022). It is interesting to note that similar responses are echoed in other countries. The UK teachers' union staged a march for similar reasons in November of 2023 (CNN, 2023). Kenyan teachers simply failed to show up for several days in defiance due to lack of pay. In Jordan, teachers' protests in 2020 were crushed by the military (Lacouture, M., 2022).

Teachers' roles have shifted far away from agentic educational leaders (Dewey, 1938; Atkinson, 2017). Pervasive *neoliberal* district and state leadership mandating performative tasks tied to financial bottom lines (Symeonidis and Stromquist, 2020; Atkinson, 2017) diminish teachers' ability to decide how to teach

their students and operate as the educational leaders they were trained to be. School leaders tasked with *neoconservative* agendas aim to fully manage their teachers' curriculum, grading, communication, and classroom management (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020; Atkinson, 2017), and teachers are left with little to create. Many have noted that they are increasingly operating as elements in the education machine (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020; Atkinson, 2017). Teachers are meant to operate freely, utilizing their own critical thinking and understanding of their art to craft lessons masterfully for their students' best learning (Atkinson, 2017; Dewey, 1938). However, policymakers have entered into the relational interaction between teacher and student and mandated test and lesson standardization on scale (Hastings, 2019; Atkinson, 2017).

Teachers' power to make decisions continues to decrease, as various political groups are led by parents (Wright, 2022). Proposed legislation in numerous states is attempting to curtail students' access to historical facts and other information that political factions on the right have deemed "anti-American" (DeSantis, 2023). Political actions like this can be seen as sending teachers a message that all of their specialized training and credentials do not matter, as they are stripped of the ability to make basic content or everyday pedagogical decisions (Santoro, 2021). And messages like this only contribute to the substantive and growing problem of teacher demoralization that this study aims to address.

While teachers' reactions to outside incursion vary, burnout and demoralization seem to be common denominators in their responses. This kind of legislation targeting the decisions teachers have historically made has risen dramatically since 2021 (Gross, 2022). Worryingly, a rise in teacher harassment and

even physical assault fueled by conspiracies rife on social media has increased dramatically over the same timeline (Moon & McCluskey, 2023). Less and less control over decisions inhibits teachers' growth and use of agency. While most K12 teachers and site administrators (76%) are women, their demands for support and equity do not seem to be swaying the predominantly male (80%) leadership in districts (Hoyt, 2003).

Teaching has always been a *pink-collar* job (Hargreaves, 2019), or one that is done predominantly by women (2019); these are jobs parallel to the *blue-collar* jobs that define a traditionally male role, and one that is not considered professional, unlike *white-collar* positions, historically held by white males with power and education. Sylvia Allegretto of the Economic Policy Institute noted that teaching has been a woman's job for centuries, noting, "Public school teachers have been underpaid since public education started in the United States in the late 1800s. That's when women began to be recruited for these jobs" (Allegretto, 2022, n.p.).

Despite extensive training and professional certification, some argue that teaching is still considered only semi-professional (Hargreaves, 2019). What teachers experience in their low pay, for example, is rooted in the systemic misogyny still pervasive throughout the United States (Castagno, 2019) and most of the world. While 76% of U.S. K12 teachers are female, all genders experience the effects (Simon & Hoyt, 2022). In an empirical, longitudinal study done in the United Kingdom, Hargreaves et al. (2019) explained that teachers and doctors are unequal due to the female origin of teaching and the male origin of practicing medicine, among other variables including a lack of a specialized lexicon, a lack of salary, and a lack of research- all as compared to doctors who have these. In the end, they define teaching

as a semi-profession, most akin to nursing, another *pink-collar* job. As the U.S. Secretary of Education Cardoza noted in an interview on teachers' inexcusably low salaries (2022), "Would we even be having this conversation if 76% of the teachers were male?"

This pink-collar aspect of teaching cannot be denied. Teachers simply do not have the social capital that traditionally male professions hold (Hargreaves, 2019; Santoro, 2018), and the esteem they hold is closely tied to their compliance with the societal norms expected of "nice women" (Castagno, 2019). The public esteem teachers once held has deteriorated since the COVID-19 pandemic, when teachers experienced a public backlash (Ryan et al., 2024) as they resisted teaching students in unsafe situations without proper precautions in place (Zamarro et al., 2022). Working in a traditionally *pink-collar* field in a time of increased stress heightened the lack of agentic operation available to teachers.

Situated Context

Initially, I was interested in the pattern of the broken working relationships between teachers and administrators that I had witnessed in my tenure as a schoolteacher and school administrator over several decades, spanning a variety of different domestic and international K12 school settings. After many years working in various school leadership roles, as well as in nonprofit teacher training roles in developing countries, I became curious about why so many experienced educators appeared to be so angry and distrustful of each other - teachers of administrators and administrators of teachers. I have worked both as a teacher and an administrator primarily in the United States for over twenty years, with some brief experience in the Middle East, in the Arabian Gulf in 2011 and 2012, and the Levant in 2017 and 2018.

While working as a school administrator in all three locations, I began to notice patterns in how teachers communicated with each other and how different that was from how they communicated with administrators. As an administrator, I listened as other administrators approached their teachers in various ways, some collaboratively and helpful to teachers, but others less so. In fact, behind the scenes, many often expressed their concern about teachers' lack of willingness to work with them. Some even communicated a kind of contempt toward teachers whom they felt were unable to handle complex matters, concluding they were lazy. These beliefs were not rare. Neither was the distrust or even hatred shared by some teachers for their administrators.

As a teacher, my colleagues were open with me and shared ideas and frustrations; as an administrator, they were much less so. I noticed how teachers would often either act like they did not understand simple requests or refuse to take on more tasks. I wondered if their responses were acts of resistance in a situation where they felt like they did not have any voice or power. I became aware of their sense of frustration directed at me at times, or the administrative role I inhabited, and saw their distrust of my intentions. They wanted to know if I had been in the classroom, and how recently. When I shared with them that I had been, their receptivity increased. As a teacher embedded in a public middle school, I understand that teachers need to feel as if their administrators understand their task if they are to effectively evaluate teacher performance.

On a hopeful note, Rubenstein and McCarthy (2011) studied six public school systems where administrators and teachers worked together in collaboration. They concluded that it could work, but it had to be part of the policy and working operation

of the school or district. They explained that this new way of operating needed to be "protected from those who benefit from perpetuating the myth that administration and unions, by nature, want different things" (p. 34). The school system creates people who benefit from this divide. Curious about the interactions I saw, and in an effort to understand and empower both teachers and administrators, in 2021, a year into the Covid pandemic, I began my journey as a doctoral student at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College in the Leadership and Innovation program at Arizona State University, hoping to find a way to bridge this divide. I situate my research in several schools online in a virtual hub which I hope will serve as a new kind of ecosystem by which teachers might be empowered to act with more agency, and administrators might listen and engage meaningfully with their teachers.

In an earlier iteration of inquiry on this topic, teachers from the U.S. were asked if they were demoralized (Santoro, 2021) and how and to what extent their sense of personal identity and perception of their value affected their ability to achieve *teacher agency* (Biesta et al., 2016). Some codes and selected quantitative data are listed in Appendix A and Appendix J, respectively. In a straightforward inductive single-strand qualitative action research study with three participants, I interviewed, transcribed, coded, and analyzed data from each individual interview. I found that all three subjects felt and expressed anger, two felt a moral obligation or call to action whereas one felt and expressed resignation, and all three self-identified as exhausted. All of these themes can be correlated with Santoro's (2021) demoralization and Freire's (2001) characteristics of oppressed people. The findings encouraged further study on how demoralization (Santoro, 2021) and burnout affect teachers' agency (Priestley et al, 2016) through a cycle of critical inquiry about their

situations (Freire, 2001). Learning more about this possible remoralization of teachers in an online global community of practice matters, because if it is possible, then teachers might be able to shift the lever of power in school systems by working together outside the systems, and in the process begin to decide where and how teaching will be changed, and by extension how schools will look. The aim of this mixed methods action research study focuses on how this might be done by teachers working together around the world.

Problem of Practice

After two decades of work in schools in the United States and several other countries, I began to see a pattern of teachers choosing not to engage in the conversation of education with administrators, or worse and more often, not being allowed to do so. Teachers reported that their aim became to "just close their doors and teach" (Hurley, 2022) as a sort of coping method. They opted to simply comply with directives without engaging because their administrators did not want to hear their input (Ryan et al., 2024). In my experience, I saw those who attempted to engage and make a change either leave or mentally disengage. These observations led me to further study why this might be happening and to empower teachers to observe how their roles are impacted by the broader context of the school system.

Innovation

The innovation for this study was grounded theoretically in Friere's (2000) *Critical pedagogy*, Priestley et al.'s (2015) concept of *teacher agency*, Santoro's (2021) concept of *demoralization*, and Wheatley's (2019) Berkana Two Loop model of emergent change. Prior to this study, I gathered *pioneering* educators into a loose

network, and for this innovation, the more committed members continued in a *community of practice* (Wheatley, 2006).

Online Community of Practice

I worked with members of an online network built to engage teachers and administrators together in a global conversation about their experiences and roles in their teaching situations. The goal of this network was to find shared meaning or purpose (Wheatley, 2006) in order to build teacher agency in an online ecology that could be used to effect change in individual participant's schools. Members within the network who were identified by the researcher as *pioneers* or innovators (2019) and were willing to engage with others in a way that was aimed at furthering the understanding of the field (2019) were invited to join a smaller online *community of practice.* There they engaged together over a period of two weeks with a commitment to each other in a cycle of critical inquiry. Through a series of guided conversations and actions with myself as facilitator and participant together with a Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D. counterpart also acting in the same facilitator and participant role, educators attempted to answer questions for themselves and other educators that lead to a changed understanding of their situations (Freire, 2000). These chosen *pioneers* (Wheatley, 2006) were individuals who were in turn told they could invite a colleague from each of their schools to join the study. The whole group of teachers from several schools met initially as a group where the introductory information about each participant, the problem of practice, and the goal of engaging together to 'find shared meaning and purpose' (Wheatley, 2010) and talking together to solve problems (Santoro, 2021) took place. Throughout the process, participants were guided in a dialogue of critical inquiry about themselves and their situations together online, and

through these actions and reflections, participants were encouraged to act with an increased agency within their schools. Inside the schools, they conducted action research steps aimed at growing their awareness and agency. In particular, participants observed and reflected on their own teaching situations, focusing on gaps in their ecology.

First, we engaged together in dialogue as they observed their schools' strengths and gaps, working together in a *cycle of critical inquiry* (Freire, 2001) about their work. Participants talked together to attempt to solve similar problems (Santoro, 2021). This entailed action through conversations and activities in the online group, as well as *reflection* through written and verbal responses to questions and actions inside their schools (Leijen et al., 2021; Freire, 2001). Participants answered pre-survey and post-survey questions (Santoro, 2021). Interviews were conducted with several participants. This data aimed to answer the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. How might participants' awareness of their teaching situations and their roles within their systems grow?

2. How might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an online COP counteract *demoralization* in teacher participants?

3. How might *teacher agency* grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented inside their schools?

Key Terms

Teacher Agency means the ability to operate maturely and professionally and is dependent on an individual teacher's capacity but also a certain ecology in the

school. *Demoralization* means a kind of moral outrage and sadness due to being unable to operate as a professional teacher due to being "separated from the good work" (Santoro, 2021) of education and teaching. *Remoralization* means its opposite, finding a path to reconnecting with the work and one's moral center. *Conscientization* means gaining an awareness of one's situation, in this case, one's teaching ecology. *Oppression* is being in a situation that does not allow for expression. *Personal capacity* involves the traits associated with a mature and professional person such as taking the initiative, maturity, wisdom, kindness, and professional ability. For this context, it is commonly referred to as "master teacher."

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

My problem of practice came about as I focused on the tension I had witnessed between teachers and administrators, in the field of secondary education. Serving in both roles for over a decade, in a variety of school settings internationally, I saw both groups as being well-intentioned but frustrated. Thus, this study focused on how this frustration and tension affected both teachers' and administrators' agency and further, whether or not this wall between the two groups could be torn down, to allow a new understanding of what it means to be a professional educator, to emerge. In this chapter, I discuss how the theoretical framework of Freire's (2001) Critical Pedagogy figures in the background of my thinking, and the Berkana Two Loop system model informs and guides the study design, collection, and analysis of data as well as my understanding of school communities. I have also utilized Priestley et al. 's (2015) and Biesta et al.'s (2015) descriptions of teacher agency, as a way to support teacher agency amid challenges of burnout. Finally, Santoro's revelatory explanation of teachers as demoralized rather than simply burned out resonated deeply with my lived experience of well over two decades and has shifted even my understanding of my own work.

As noted in Chapter One, Dewey shows how teachers can structure educational environments to promote educational learning experiences, changing students for the better (Schmid & Allsup, 2019). He advises that a teacher's ideal stance is one of 'playfulness and seriousness', which he terms an 'art' (Skilbeck, 2017; Dewey, 1938). Dewey believes teachers thrive in classrooms where they practice a kind of democracy. He explains in his essay (1938):

One may safely assume, I suppose, that one thing which has recommended the progressive (education) movement is that it seems more in accord with the democratic ideal to which our people is committed than do the procedures of the traditional school since the latter have so much of the autocratic about them. Another thing that has contributed to its favorable reception is that its methods are humane in comparison with the harshness so often attending the policies of the traditional school. (p.12)

Dewey explains how teachers must be leaders in the classroom, professionally crafting experiences for their students (1938). Due to the pervasive neoliberal approach mandating performative teaching approaches that are tied to financial bottom lines, they are left with little to create. Instead, teachers are seen more like elements in the education machine (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020; Atkinson, 2017). Teachers are meant to operate freely, utilizing their own critical thinking and understanding of their art to craft lessons masterfully for their students' best learning (Dewey, 1938). However, policymakers have entered into the relational interaction between teacher and student, with mandates for standardization and scale (Hastings, 2019).

In his study, Atkinson (2017) explains how neoliberalism and neoconservatism wreak havoc on today's education system. Relying on Dewey's Democracy and Education, he argues that these forces "breed a narrowed, over standardized curriculum and a hyper-testing environment that discourage critical intellectual practice and democratic ideas" (p. 1). Hastings (2019) echoes this concern in his Neoliberalism and Education, wherein he explains that neoliberal forces have entered the school in the form of a narrowed focus. That is, the curriculum is viewed

as complete if it prepares students for their future high-paying jobs (Hastings, 2019). According to Hastings, this brings up important questions about the purpose of education, and this incursion also brings up vital questions about the role of teachers.

As asked in Chapter One, if neoliberalism attempts to simplify all of the elements of schooling into the potential for investments and return on investments, then where does that leave teachers? What is their current value? Aside from looking at the financial bottom line, *neoconservative* external control of teachers has also increased. According to Symeonidis & Stromquist (2020), in their discussion of the need for teacher unions, surveys done by Education International in 2015 and 2018, show how accountability measures through privatization policies affect teacher status and go as far as to describe this trend as a restructuring of the profession. They describe this as a new sort of professionalism. Dewey's view of the open, democratic classroom is lost in the face of these external attempts to craft the learning, and by default, the role and perception of teachers (Hastings, 2019). This "new professionalism" controls not only the curriculum but also the time spent on each aspect of teaching (Symeonidis & Stromquist, 2020).

As Dewey initially described classrooms as open and democratic so the best learning could take place, so Nomi (2019) recommends that teachers be invited into open, democratic spaces wherein they can learn to operate more freely with moral and professional agency. Santoro spoke to the same idea as she found this kind of space can allow teachers to "re-moralize" after being demoralized by so much overreach into the classroom (Santoro, 2020). Stitzlein & Rector-Aranda (2016) build on Dewey (1938), favoring the same idea, and describe these open democratic spaces as places where teachers can talk and solve problems (2018). They discuss how to form them to

bring about change in the classrooms through strategic thought and action (Nomi, 2019; Stitzlein & Rector-Aranda, 2016). The vital first step is to open the space and invite teachers (Nomi, 2019; Santoro, 2020). Santoro suggests utilizing restorative justice practices to heal the divide between teachers and administrators within these spaces (2016). By engaging teachers back into the good work, they can become "re-moralized" (Santoro, 2020).

Similar to Wenger's (2002) communities of practice which are made up of people who choose to engage in the world together through practices that are meaningfully negotiated, these open democratic spaces allow teachers to meaningfully negotiate with each other and the world. Wenger (2002) explains how participants develop practices and take part in the community as a matter of choice. Group membership may be assigned from an external source initially, but people choose how and if they will engage meaningfully (1999). Engaging with colleagues professionally through their own initiative is a way teachers can steward the profession and their own agency (Nomi, 2019) Santoro (2020) clarifies: "It is necessary to reframe the moral dimensions of teachers' work in terms of caring for the integrity of the profession, not simply caring for students" (p. 87). For teachers to re-engage as professionals, they must step out in courage and work together to salvage the profession instead of focusing solely on the children as their only charge. In order to do this, they need a structure or ecology in which they can incubate this kind of re-engagement, such as Freire's theory of critical pedagogy.

Freire's Overarching Theory of Critical Pedagogy

Freire argues in his primary research work that oppressed people may not even know they are oppressed, but their silence, compliance, lack of critical thinking, and

fear, can point to their oppression (Freire, 2001). He explains that by engaging in the praxis of a critical inquiry cycle, people may begin to see their oppression and then choose to liberate themselves by giving priority to the process of critical inquiry. This study will take teachers through a cycle of critical inquiry about their work to see if they choose to liberate themselves. This core work of critical inquiry cannot be ignored. Like Dewey (1938), Freire explains in detail how learning and the relationship between teacher and student can look. He explains how teachers and students enter into a critical inquiry together, and so I wish to emulate this praxis in my study with teachers and administrators, who both serve inside a system that has commodified their work, oppressing them and suppressing teachers' agency. If teachers could voluntarily experience a cycle of critical inquiry and engage in problem-based learning together with administrators in a space where all opinions are valued and equal, they could choose to liberate themselves into some kind of new situation. The lens for this iteration of the study is that of critical inquiry through dialogue with teachers and administrators so that together we may eventually see what is next if they choose to do so. William Butler Yeats (1920) stated in his poem *The Second Coming* that "the center will not hold" (line 3). The ultimate goal of this study is to de-center teachers' dialogue, by taking them out of the schools and re-engaging them with administrators in a new way together online to see if they might eventually choose to re-center themselves and their work, somewhere new, or even not at all if that is their choice.

Like Dewey (1938), Friere (2001) explained that the best teaching practices engaged students in critical thinking for their own emancipation. Unlike Dewey, Friere comes from the perspective that one is either oppressed or oppressor (Fritze,

2010; Friere, 1970). He believed that the teachers' primary role was that of emancipator, helping to liberate students by teaching them the tools by which they are oppressed, and how to escape these bonds (Fritze, 2010; Friere, 1970). Freire explained how the oppressed people accept or internalize these ideas and thus become dependent on the oppressor (Fritze, 2010). Schools do not allow teachers to operate like other high-status professionals such as doctors or lawyers, who exhibit professional agency, autonomy, and a high level of accountability. Instead, teachers are highly controlled (Nomi, 2019; Hastings, 2017; Santoro, 2016; Hargreaves, 2013). Schools today regulate the entire day and schedule of teachers including when and where they may work, even outside of teaching hours (Santoro, 2020).

In classrooms today, politics play out, forcing their way into the very heart of the relationship between students and teachers. Neoliberalization commodifies teachers and neoconservatism controls teachers, directing them to do as they are told (Santoro, 2020). In Freire's framework, these policies, their makers, and employees are the oppressors, and teachers and students are the oppressed. Even administrators, to a lesser extent, are oppressed in that they are not free to operate as academic leaders with teachers, but more like business managers driving the work toward high test scores. Friere explains that oppressed people internalize the oppressors' lies under pressure (Fritze, 2010). In Freire's view, Fritze explains how these oppressed people learn helplessness as they have surmised that their views and experiences are not valued, as they have become less valued (2010). She explains Friere's finding that oppression overcomes those under its control with "values and norms" (p.1) and forces their silence (2010). Giroux (2010) explained that "Freire rejected those regimes of educational degradation organized around the demands of the market,

instrumentalized knowledge, and the priority of training over the pursuit of the imagination, critical thinking, and the teaching of freedom and social responsibility" (p. 716). Friere saw education as a practice of liberation through the very act of trying to get free of these oppressors and as part of the duty of an educated person (Fritze, 2010; Freire, 1970). By engaging teachers and administrators together in a unique environment the researcher hopes to engage these educators in a dialogue that allows them to see their oppression.

Berkana Two Loop System Model

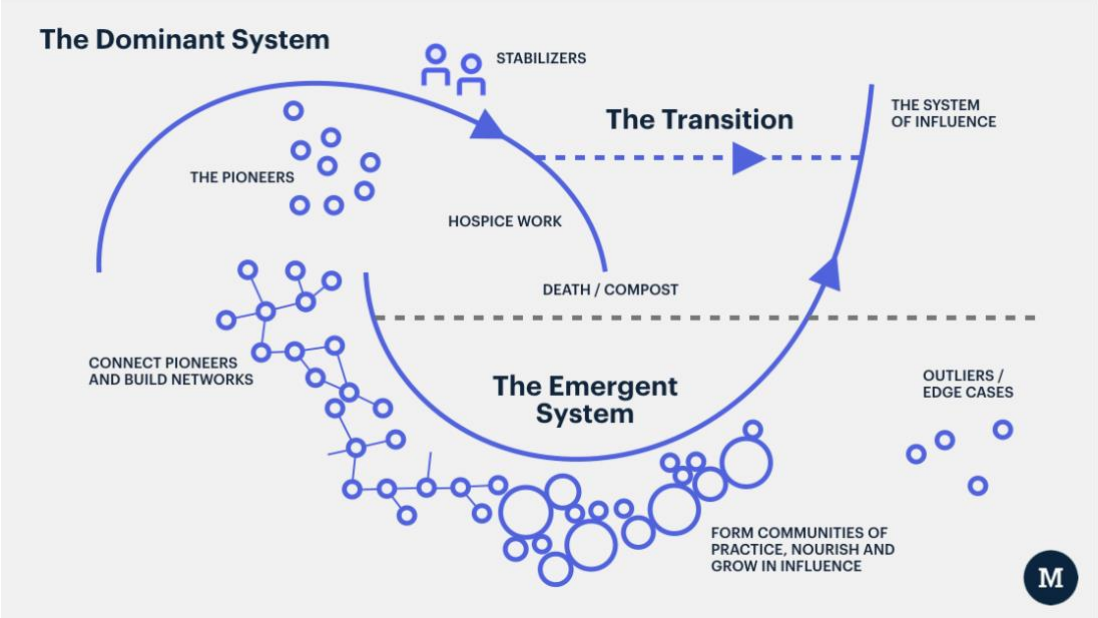
In this study, the aim was to create an online space where teachers and administrators can work together to re-imagine a new and emerging system within their current schools. The Berkana Two Loop system model provides a way to understand how this process can work. This model emulates a natural biological system, creating systems that are human-based and human-serving. They are organic and not in line with the typical dominant system model that takes a more mechanistic view, one that looks at a system like a machine that can be broken down into parts.

The theory behind this model rests on the idea that all of our human-made systems for people rest on "hidden relationships" (Taylor, 2018, n.p.) and shows how a system rises and falls. As the system strengthens, some stewards carefully tend it and hold its power. The system exerts so much power that elements are built around it, to serve it. For example, after oil was discovered it soon rose to dominance in the world as the primary source of fuel. Entire countries' economies are built around it. All systems reach a peak however and begin to die (Figure 1). According to this model, *hospice* workers then care for the system. In the oil example, this moment came when fossil fuels began to be depleted. However, right after this moment,

innovators/pioneers see the inevitable end and walk out. They leave to create their own system. They need to build a network and social capital. They begin to innovate and create new ideas. Then they must name themselves. They create a network of innovators in an organized community of practice that by learning together and "failing fast" nourish themselves and the new system. As the system creates *illumination*, it rises into the dominant system, and so the cycle continues. Participants will reflect on how their perceptions interact with this model. They will analyze their schools' systems to evaluate how they may or may not work as a pioneer.

Figure 1

Berkana Two Loop Model of Emergence



Related Research

In Hanson et al.'s (2018) interviews, they found that the Berkana Two-Loop model showed best what happened in a township that was a statewide leader in 'standards-based teaching driven by external accountability and state assessment' before peaking as the dominant system. Then, by questioning how to create more

personalized learning with technology and *station teaching* a new system emerged. As the Berkana model demonstrated, once a system hits its peak and breaks down "isolated alternatives slowly begin to arise and give way to the new" (n.p.)

As Reich and Mehta (2021) of MIT Teaching Systems Lab and Harvard School of Education respectively detail in their article on how to reimagine schools and learning post- Covid, the Berkana model elements of *amplify, hospice and create* are a strategic and pragmatic way to use the Berkana model. They show how teams of educators can analyze what is working in schools and amplify it. That is, if talking about a lesson helps students learn, do it more. They argue to hospice what is not working and create what is needed. These cases show how the Berkana model can be used effectively to create a new system. Reich and Mehta (2021) show that when done strategically, the Berkana model can be used by educators in schools today.

This research study aims to create a new system through ongoing inquiry (Hanson et al., 2018) and the creation of a nourished community of practice (Taylor, 2018) outside of the school itself. The current administration in the primary research school site noted that all teacher communication via email should only be "necessary and productive" (BRSSD, 2023) and explained that all conversation that might be perceived as negative in tone was not in alignment with a growth mindset" (BRSSD, 2023), thus, teachers explained that they do not feel safe to engage in these conversations at work. This underscores the need for a fresh flow of conversation as well as liberation from a "culture of silence" as described by Freire (1970) and detailed below. Further, because this study aims to create a network of innovators from several schools, a primarily online group is most convenient for busy educators. My research focuses on the interactions and relationships between teachers, as well as

between teachers and administrators. Using the Berkana Model, I hope will begin to *hospice* the current way administrators engage with teachers. I hope the emergent system will be this precise point of interaction between teachers and administrators, as they engage together in planning and creating new ways to work together on current and new projects. It could give rise to a whole emergent system as this shift in engagement between key stakeholders might function as a powerful lever.

Teacher Agency: Built In an Ecology on a Foundation of Personal Capacity

Priestley et al. (2016) describe teacher agency as something that can be achieved from a foundation of a teacher's personal capacity within a conducive school ecology. Agency, therefore, is not an attribute one has but rather is achieved only in a supportive community with the right elements in place. Currently, schools do not train teachers in discrete lessons to grow agency; if teachers can achieve it somehow, they often encounter obstacles to operating with it, within their school system due to district directives or national mandates. How can teachers operate with professional agency in this type of context? Biesta et al., (2015) define professional agency in the following way:

> Agency, in other words, is not something that people can *have* - as a property, capacity or competence - but is something that people *do*. More specifically, agency denotes a quality of the *engagement* of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves. (p. 626)

Priestley et al. (2016) explain further that one must have as a foundation a personal capacity to achieve agency, as well as the good fortune to be embedded into a local school ecology that is conducive to teachers who wish to operate with agency. Biesta et al. (2015) found that teachers' beliefs about their work and purpose matter and impact the extent to which they will achieve agency. They describe the very

tension between teachers and administrators noted earlier and explain that teachers' perceived lack of administrator support affected professional agency achievement (Biesta et al., 2015; Johnson & Naidoo, 2017). Johnson and Naidoo echo this finding in their study. They found that teachers of students with HIV who, after experiencing high levels of stress due to their difficult assignment, cited lack of administrator support as the primary factor causing their stress which eventually led to burnout, despite the high stress caused by the emotionally difficult task of teaching very ill children. This study considers how teachers are aware of and affected by their perception of unsupportive administrators, and that it affects their ability to continue the work (2017).

Personal Capacity: A Foundation for Agency

Priestley et. al. (2016) explain that while teacher agency is not personal capacity itself, it is vital to allow agency to emerge. While a number of variables make up what they describe as personal capacity as this foundational part of agency, skills, knowledge, beliefs, and values are included (Priestley et al., 2016). Notably, Priestley et al. (2016) argue that it is important to "attend to the nature of what will be those past experiences in the present, which is where the importance of teacher education lies" (Priestley et al., 2016, p. 31). Teachers' professional development should include the kind of training that allows growth in personal capacity because it leads to teacher agency.

The Ecology of Agency

The environment or ecology Priestley et al. (2016) describe would be "both relational- highlighting how humans operate *through* their social and material environments - and temporal- as agency is rooted in experience, orientated to the

future and located in the contingencies of the present" (p. 20). So while the ecology of teacher agency is certainly the teacher's actual community of the school, it is also formed by the relationships of the people who engage in the task of educating together, as well as the integration of a teacher's past engaged in the present, and projecting to the future (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 20). For this study, I examined how, if at all, an ecology conducive to agentic growth could be created with an online and global community of teachers. Variables that allow for an agency nurturing environment include professional development, allowances for mistakes and growth, and good relationships with teachers (Biesta et al., 2015). Teachers stay at schools where they are treated like individuals with growing skills and expertise (McKim, D., 2023).

Zhu et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study to find out why teachers left a teaching program in China. They found that the teachers left because they were treated with no reference to their actual selves, but instead as if they were there only to deliver a canned curriculum. This interfered so greatly with their own stories of themselves, that they left. Zhu et al (2020) showed how a lack of support from the administration did not allow teachers to achieve agency and they soon left teaching. Like Johnson and Naidoo (2017) found in their study, teachers' greatest stress was caused by the lack of departmental support. Zhu et al (2020) suggested that administrators should better support teachers' professional identities. In a study done as a follow-up, Xun et al (2021) examined beginning teachers' agency and resilience in the face of COVID-19 and found that their agency was centered on facilitating students' academic learning (p. 2). Using the theoretical framework of an emergent, ecological teacher agency of Priestley et al. (2016), Xun et al (2021) found that new

teachers' agency was strongly influenced by the administration, and they suggested administrators should "use their agency to support teachers' social well-being by facilitating teacher agency to build resilience"(p. 3). Furthermore, they noted that teachers' agency and the personal capacity for resilience were closely tied and suggested professional development examine this.

Lejien et al. (2021) explain the elements that make up teacher agency, how they relate, and how it can be strengthened via reflection. They use a pragmatist approach and elaborate on Priestley's ecological model, discussing at length the 3D temporal-relational phenomenon: iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative. They hypothesize that it can be improved through three types of reflections: reflection in action, reflection on teacher behavior, and critical reflection. They note that teachers' awareness of their own agency improves via the 3D model and that reflection also leads to improved agency and speculates on possible practices for teachers.

Teacher Agency: An Evolving Ecology

Teacher agency has recently been defined as "an alternative means of understanding how teachers might enact practice and engage with policy" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 626). This is an ecological understanding of agency, in that it defines teacher agency as inherently tied to the context and community in which a teacher works. A teacher acts "by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p.137; Biesta et al., 2015, p. 626). A teacher's relationships and stressors within the environment are intertwined with their teacher agency in any given school. Agency has also been defined by what it is not. It is not something a teacher can obtain "as a property, capacity, or competence - but is something that people do, or more precisely, something they achieve" (Biesta &

Tedder, 2006; Biesta et al, 2015, p.626). Like Emirbayer and Mishe, who describe agency as made up of a "chordal triad" of routine, purpose, and judgment that interplay with each other (1998, p. 972; Biesta et al, 2015, p. 626), Biesta et al show that these three dimensions are informed by past experiences, are engaged with the present and are focused on the future (2015, pp.626-627). Priestley et al. (2015), explain agency as an "emergent phenomenon of the ecological condition through which it is enacted (p.3). Teacher agency "denotes a 'quality' of the engagement of the teachers with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the teachers themselves" (Priestly et al., 2015, p. 626). Biesta et al (2015) explain that while teacher agency does not refer to the quality of a teacher, it is "highly dependent upon the personal qualities that teachers bring to their work" (p. 636). To simplify this idea for the purpose of this study - to see if an intervention can help teachers achieve agency - this section will discuss just several of the myriad personal qualities upon which teacher agency relies. Further, like any environment, the unique ecology that gives rise to the achievement of agency is complex. Priestley et al (2016) explain "agency is seen as emerging from the *interaction* of individual 'capacity' with environing 'conditions' (p.22). This study focused on just one element of this ecology inside the participants' respective schools: administrative support. However, the very nature of the ecology itself will also be questioned and tested. Priestley et al. (2015) and Biesta et al. (2015) both describe the variables of the agentic ecology as situated in a school. This study expanded this ecology into a global and online community of teachers. Thus, in order to answer the research question, this study on whether or not ecology that supports agentic operation can be built outside of a school for use within a participant's school.

Creating An Open, Democratic Online Ecology for Professional, Moral Agency

While professional teacher agency is discussed in line with competencies and covered extensively in teacher training programs, the study of moral agency only really exploded in the early nineties (Campbell, 2008). Sockett's (1983) early explanation of the term remains the principal operating definition, however, even today. He describes it as,

> nothing very fancy - simply, [the idea] that a person considers the interests of others, does not make discriminations on irrelevant grounds, and has a clear set of principles or virtues in which he or she believes and on which he or she acts (p.108)

This moral agency is central to a teacher's work (Sockett, 1983; Dewey, 1938). Teachers get into the profession for moral and ethical reasons (Nomi, 2019; Santoro, 2016). Moral agency is formed first, as the person grows into an adult and forms her value system (Nomi, 2019), and then professional agency is formed through training and built on the foundation of personal capacity, within a conducive school ecology (Priestley et al., 2015). Moral agency operates alongside this professional agency eventually, as the very human teacher interacts with the students in ways that allow them to become free and unencumbered learners prepared for participation in a democracy (Dewey, 1938). As these neoliberal and neoconservative constructs are imposed on the learning in the classrooms, and thus, on the teachers, the core role of the teacher begins to change (Symeonidis & Stromquist,2020). From neoliberal bottom lines to neoconservative accountability measures (Atkinson, 2017), the value of teachers has been minimized (Santoro, 2016), and teachers know it.

In response to this devaluation of their role, and the controlling accountability measures, teachers have become demoralized. Santoro (2018) explains that

"demoralization occurs when teachers can no longer engage in what they consider good work" (p. 174). Santoro (2011) explains for the first time that what has long been described as burnout as Johnson and Naidoo (2017) describe, is in fact, demoralization. When teachers are considered simply as content-deliverers (Hastings, 2019) or unreliable actors who need monitoring (Nomi, 2019; Santoro, 2016), they perceive their status has changed from what Dewey described as leaders in a democratic classroom, practicing the art of teaching (1938). Their beliefs and their perception of their value impact their achievement of agency (Biesta et al., 2015). They cannot engage in the professional and moral task of educating children who go on to operate as thinking members of a democracy, as they are simply there to do as they are told (Atkinson, 2017). They are degraded and disconnected from Dewey's art. Santoro (2020) explores how though teachers are required to take ownership of their work and students' learning, their own moral agency is considered egoic and suppressed. She examines a sort of moral madness these teachers experience in response. In The Teacher Status Report, Hargreaves et al. (2007) report that teachers' status has gone down and is no longer considered a high-status profession: teachers and those connected to them have seen a sharp drop over the last forty years, where teachers began as high status (Hargreaves, 2007). Dewey initially described classrooms as open and democratic so the best learning could take place (1938), so Nomi (2019) recommends that teachers be invited into open, democratic spaces wherein they can learn to operate more freely with MPA. Santoro spoke to the same idea as she found this kind of space can allow teachers to "re-moralize" after being demoralized by so much overreach into the classroom (Santoro, 2020). Stitzlein and Rector-Aranda (2016) build on Dewey (1938), favoring the same idea, and describe

these open democratic spaces as places where teachers can talk and solve problems (2018). They discuss how to form them to bring about change in the classrooms through strategic thought and action (Nomi, 2019; Stitzlein & Rector-Aranda, 2016). The vital first step is to open the space and invite teachers (Nomi, 2019; Santoro, 2020). Santoro (2016) suggests utilizing restorative justice practices to heal the divide between teachers and administrators within these spaces. By engaging teachers back into the good work, they can become "re-moralized" (Santoro, 2020). Santoro (2020) clarifies: "It is necessary to reframe the moral dimensions of teachers' work in terms of caring for the integrity of the profession, not simply caring for students" (p. 87). For teachers to re-engage as professionals, they must step out in courage and work together to salvage the profession instead of focusing solely on the children as their only charge.

Demoralization: Teachers Can Be Remoralized

Doris Santoro (2021) argues that K12 teachers are demoralized because they are separated from the "good work of education" and that they may be remoralized by talking together and solving problems. She explains how teachers may further remoralize by working in a variety of different ways to grow their voices, their leadership, their student-centered action, and their activism. Santoro's (2021) primary research explains the idea that K-12 teachers are demoralized, not burned out, which has been popularly mythologized lately. She argues that saying teachers are burned out is just adding more blame to teachers, inexorably defining them as too weak to cope. Instead, she says they are separated from the "good work" of education," which she says,

> operates as a moral evaluation that examines a profession's moral purposes and rewards. The focus of the assessment is not on the personal characteristics

> of individual teachers. Instead, it is the moral evaluation that teachers may make in reference to the work they do. Teachers' moral centers are articulated in the values and commitments they bring to and attribute to the work (Santoro, 2021, p. 49).

She explains that teachers can remoralize themselves through a variety of means, such as teacher leadership, student-centered work, activism, and using their voice (Figure 2). The idea that teachers can remoralize themselves by taking particular and focused actions is very important to teacher empowerment. The idea that teachers can empower themselves if they decide to is similar to Freire's (2000) theory that oppressed people can liberate themselves if they choose to do so. Santoro (2021) worked directly with teachers in the U.S. to understand how some were able to regain a sense of themselves as empowered professionals engaged in the moral work of teaching (2021).

Santoro's (2021) theory is applied in two ways to this study: sharing her concept of demoralization with the teachers and sharing with them how they may attempt to remoralize - in the way we engage together in the innovation process as well as in ways they can try in their own situations.

This literature has been central to my own understanding of why teachers are angry, protesting, and leaving the field. In a discussion with a teacher participant on the theory of demoralization (Santoro, 2021) during an earlier cycle of research leading up to this study, the teacher silently began to cry. This was a seasoned master teacher who shared that she feels tired and angry and is planning her exit, despite her decades-long passion for teaching. She said the concept of demoralization resonated with her because it rang true. Up until that very moment, she had self-identified as burned out but realized that she was not the problem. It seemed a great relief to her.

This moment of epiphany is what the field of teaching needs. Santoro's (2021) work not only defines the situation for teachers, but charts a course to freedom, or liberation.

Figure 2

Santoro's (2021) Remoralization core categories

Santoro's (2021) concepts of demoralization and remoralization layer with Freire's (2001) Critical Pedagogy work, and not only help define the situation for teachers as that of oppression (potentially), but charts a course to potential freedom, or liberation for those who self-identify as demoralized, or oppressed, and choose it. This liberation might come through Santoro's (2021) process of remoralization. Paulo Freire (2001) argues in his primary research work that people who are oppressed may not even know it. He explains that markers of oppression are silence, compliance, lack

of critical thinking, and fear, among others, and states that by engaging in the praxis of a critical inquiry cycle, people may begin to see their own oppression and then choose to liberate themselves by giving priority to the process of critical inquiry. Engaging teachers in a cycle of critical inquiry about their work will allow them to liberate themselves if they choose. This core work of critical inquiry cannot be ignored. Like Dewey (1938) before him, Freire (2001) explains in detail how learning and the relationship between teacher and learner can look. He explains how they enter into a critical inquiry together to solve problems, similar to Santoro's (2021) advice.

Lastly, due to the nature of the intervention online, I aimed to create "an inclusive, equitable online class climate" (Pacansky-Brock, 2020) in the vein of a humanizing online learning model (Barclay 2007; Weiss 2000). Core values inherent to this model are trust and empathy. Moreover, due to the varied knowledge bases and education levels of the participants, it was vital to build an online ecology that felt safe so that teachers felt comfortable to share their thoughts and feelings about their teaching situations and roles. As they proceeded through the praxis of the critical inquiry (Freire, 2000) they were asked to engage with uncomfortable topics when they identified gaps and weaknesses in their schools. Having a group in which they felt they could share was crucial to their learning and growth.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research design, participants, innovation, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures are described. This study took place online utilizing video-conferencing software. The earlier iteration of this study began in the San Francisco Bay Area with individual qualitative interviews with teachers. The work then moved online to a small group dialogue.

Research Design

In this study, participants were teachers and administrators working in several different secondary schools both public and private around the world, who worked together in a new kind of ecology online. To understand the impact of the learning community process on the teachers' sense of agency, the study used a mixed-methods case study approach. This involves 1) administering quantitative questionnaires using ASU IRB-approved instruments to pre-test (February) and post-test (March) educator attitudes, experiences, and beliefs, 2) facilitating individual qualitative semi-structured interviews with teachers and several focus group discussions about their perceptions of their work based on random sampling among the teacher groups and 3) assessing teacher perception of emergent change with a model called the "Berkana Two Loop". Qualitative data on growth through agency and perceived change in schools, and quantitative data from before and after the intervention were triangulated for validity and shared with all of the research participants both to confirm findings and to allow participants equitable access to the data. Participants were accommodated with culturally appropriate recognition of time and expenses throughout this process.

Research Questions

1. Research Question 1: How might participants' awareness of their teaching situations and their roles within their systems grow?
2. Research Question 2: How might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an online COP counteract *demoralization* in teacher participants?
3. Research Question 3: How might *teacher agency* grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented inside their schools?

Participants

In anticipation of this study, a network of global educators interested were invited to gather together. These educators, those who hope to work together on something new, are called *pioneers, a term developed* by Margaret Wheatley (2019). This *loose network of educators* is made up of educators who are former colleagues of mine. They are primarily from the United States, Jordan, UAE, Mexico and Kenya. Since international schools typically offer two-year contracts educators move on to new countries often. Because of this, participants are involved from a variety of other countries with no affiliation to the researcher. These include the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Nigeria. This group, called Global Educators Together, is open to invited educators who in turn will be allowed to invite their interested educator friends and associates. This network is a private group, open for educator participants to join, drop in for participation periodically or consistently, and even leave at their discretion. The network phase of the innovation required no commitment from educator participants (Wheatley, 2006) and was built for the highest level of equity in

the form of access. With the commencement of this innovation, several members of Global Educators Together were selected by the researcher using purposive sampling. Variables affecting selection included expressed commitment to the process, willingness, and ability to meet five times, and placement in an operating school. The biggest limiting factor was time. Earlier iterations of this study corroborated time as a limiting factor for teachers. For this innovation, the more committed members continued in a *community of practice.* (Wheatley, 2006). The members of the community of practice I named *Global Educators Together* are listed below. Their age range, education level, years of experience, level and subject taught are detailed (Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Descriptions

	Name	Age range	Education	Years taught	Level/Subject
Kenyans	Giana	26-39	Diploma	6 -10	Primary/multiple subjects
	Louise	26-39	Other	6-10	Primary/Lit and ELA
	Peter	40-50	Bachelors	11-15	Secondary/Math
	Andy	26-39	Masters	6 -10	Secondary Math
	Edith	26-39	Diploma +	11-15	Primary/multiple subjects
	Olympus	26-39	Diploma	6-10	Primary/multiple subjects
Americans	Jude	51-70	Masters	+16	Secondary/Lit and ELA
	Sidney	26-39	Masters	6-10	Secondary/Lit and ELA
	Bernard	26-39	Masters	< 5	Secondary/SPED
	Hana	26-39	Masters	< 5	Primary/multiple subjects

The researcher and the Kenyan scholar, Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D, invited participants and those teachers invited other colleagues or teacher acquaintances, in four cases. Table 2 outlines the relationships between participants. All of the Kenyan teachers chose to partner with a colleague at their school, while all of the US teachers chose to work alone.

Table 2

Participants' Connections

Invited by	Relationship	Name of participant
Researcher	Former connection through Kenyan non-profit work	Giana partnered with Louise, her current colleague whom she invited.
Kenyan Scholar	acquaintance	Peter partnered with Andy, his current colleague whom he invited.
Researcher	Former connection through Kenyan non-profit work	Edith invited her current colleague, Olympus, whom she invited.
Researcher	Former colleague	Jude (worked alone)
Researcher	Former colleague	Sidney (worked alone) and invited Hana who also worked alone at her separate school.
Researcher	Current colleague	Bernard (worked alone)

Research Innovation

The innovation for this study was grounded theoretically in Friere's (2000) *Critical pedagogy* and Wheatley's (2019) Berkana Two Loop model of emergent change, and explored two concepts, Santoro's *demoralization* (and its remediation: *remoralization)* and *teacher agency*, as defined by Priestley et al. (2015) and expanded on by Biesta et al. 2015). It consists of two parts: dialogue in an online community of practice (COP) in three hour-long sessions, and in-school action research activities by the teachers. Throughout the process, participants were guided through a cycle of critical inquiry about their awareness and perceptions of teaching situations as educators in their schools, both together online, and either alone or in pairs in their schools. Through these actions and reflections, participants were encouraged to decide on a problem to solve- one they had identified as a gap or

weakness in their ecologies. They decided which area to focus on and which action, if any, they would take. In essence, they decided if and how they wanted to act with increased agency inside their schools. In the sessions, described briefly in Table 3 below, participants were guided through a process of observing and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of their school ecologies (Priestley et al., 2015), learning about demoralization and remoralization (Santoro, 2021) and understanding how they might choose to change their situations for the better, if they chose to do so (Freire, 2000).

Table 3

Innovation overview: Online sessions, in-school tasks, questionnaires

Phase	Details
Pre-Intervention	Questionnaire via Google Forms (10 of 10 participants completed this data collection point)
Session 1: Online COP	Platform – Zoom Introduction of participants, researcher, scholar and the study. Discussed tasks for the week
In-school action research activities during Week 1	AR Week One Goal: Observing strengths and problems or gaps Create an informal reflection journal at least three times this week. Chat with your partner teacher at your school and ask them what their thoughts are on the same question: What strengths and problems/gaps do they observe? If you don't have a partner, you can just ask any colleague at your school these questions.
Session 2: Online COP	Reflect together on strengths & gaps, Learn together about Demoralization, remoralization, Tool: slide show
In-school action research activities during Week 2	Choose a problem, take action, reflect in Google classroom (Do this Monday/Tuesday) Reflect and choose an action: write lists or a paragraph for each a. What is missing from your ecology? b. How does your ecology of teaching affect your decision-making and actions? (Priestley et al., 2015) (Do by Wednesday) Choose one area to take action this week. Note: It may be that you feel demoralized in one area. What can you choose to do to begin to remoralize yourself? It could be that you do not have an element of your ecology that you need to operate with teacher agency. What could you seek out this week to help fill in that part of your ecology? (Do by Wednesday)Take an action step. Note: Use the remoralization chart on the key terms page to choose an action OR find something online or from a colleague that is missing in your ecology. (Do by Friday) Reflect in a few sentences on what you did. How did it go?
Session 3: Online COP	Reflect together on identified problems, actions taken, outcomes
Post-intervention	Questionnaire via Google Forms (10 of 10 participants completed this data collection point)
Open- ended survey	Three-question survey via Google Forms (6 of 10 participants completed this data collection point)

Lammers (2022) noted that going to where your participants are, is vital for research. Further, as Paulo Freire's (2001) critical pedagogy is a grounding theory in this study, the use of a free social media platform that most people have access to, was a choice made to increase access, a form of equity. I hoped any teacher who was interested in participating, could do so, and that proved to be the case. I had initially set out to include teachers from the US, Kenya and Jordan. However, no Jordanians were willing to join. This likely had to do with the situation in Gaza, but that is speculation. Timing proved less difficult than anticipated due to the 11 hour time difference. The Kenyans expressed comfort meeting at night and the US teachers preferred the Saturday morning time slot. However, I rotated it once to be equitable and this proved confusing for participants. Going forward, I recommend choosing the evening/night session for the Kenyans and the morning session for the US teachers. Possibly due to variances in culture, this worked well. Staying consistent with the timings was crucial for full participation. The Kenyan participants seemed happy to meet at the times invited, whereas the Americans struggled no matter the time. This might be due to the theme of lack of time that was much more pronounced with the Americans. The lack of equity on the times was mediated but not wholly solved. This ability to join and leave at will underscores Freire's (2001) ideas of an individual choosing to give priority to liberation - which arguably this innovation might have provided. The control of the researcher was lessened and the participants were left to decide. This equal footing is Freirean in the sense that participants and researchers engaged together in problem-based learning. They sought to understand the problem of teachers leaving the field through the lens of demoralization (Santoro, 2021) and critical inquiry (Freire, 2001). This entailed *action* through conversations and

suggested activities in their school, as well as *reflection* through written and verbal responses to my questions. Leijen et al. (2021) explain how an increase in agency was reported when teachers reflected on their actions. Through the *praxis of this cycle of critical inquiry* (Freire, 2001), teachers *talked together and attempted to solve common problems* (Santoro, 2021) in order to understand if they could be remoralized and liberated. The remoralization Santoro (2021) describes can be achieved in a variety of ways, and as they became aware (*conscientization),* they chose to pursue one or more means outside of the research study. In the innovation process, some of the planned actions and reflections centered around Santoro's (2021) remoralization methods.

Overview And Timeline

The intervention took place over three sessions online with the full COP community of educators (Table 3). Participants from each school worked together or alone as they chose outside of the COP on five action research steps focused on observations in their schools. The proposed timeline: *December 2023*: I connected with teachers, and I conducted the quantitative questionnaire pre-tests (Appendix M) and individual qualitative interviews (Appendix D). *January - March 2024:* One online learning community was formed and worked together for two weeks. Teachers conducted action research steps in their schools and reflected back with their learning community.

Table 4

Innovation Timeline

Session Number	Critical Inquiry (CI) and Action Research (AR)
1. S Mar 2	CI 1: Introduction/ getting to know our situations. Complete pre-Innovation questionnaire if not yet done. How do you fit into your school? Reflection on your teaching situation and your role. Action research introduction. Introduction to key terms. AR 1: Ecology analysis Evaluate your immediate system ecology for strengths/gaps.
2. F Mar 8	CI 2: What comes up as a gap/problem in your school ecology, if any? CI 3: How does your ecology affect your decision-making/actions? (Priestley et al., 2015) CI 3: Reflect on AR 1. Remoralization introduction, inquiry CI 3: (Do by Wednesday) Remoralization inquiry. Choose one area to take action this week. AR 2: Choose a gap in ecology to work on, take an action and reflect (Do by Wednesday)Take an action step Note: Use the remoralization chart on the key terms page to choose an action.
3. S Mar 16	CI 3: Reflect on AR 1. Remoralization inquiry OR find something online or from a colleague that is missing in your ecology. Do by Friday. Reflect. AR 3: Observe how teachers' agency works in your situation. AR 4: Using your findings from AR1 and AR2, How can you help? AR 5: Reflect on how you may be/or could be effecting change in your school using Berkana Two-Loop Emergent model. How can you nourish and grow in the emergent system? Write or draw.

Online Community of Practice

Through a series of three guided dialogues where I acted as facilitator and participant together with Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D. a Kenyan school who helped troubleshoot cultural issues and provided important context, participants attempted to answer questions for themselves and other educators (Freire, 2000) . These chosen

pioneers (Wheatley, 2006) were invited to work alone or in pairs in their schools (Figure 1). Teachers met initially in a group where the introductory information about each participant, and the goals of engaging together to 'find shared meaning and purpose' (Wheatley, 2010) and talking together to solve problems (Santoro, 2021) were shared. Within the community of practice, a cycle of critical inquiry into how teachers see their teaching situations and their roles within their systems, occurred. Included in this critical inquiry were reflective questions (Appendix F) based around the three research questions on their awareness, their level of demoralization (if any) and their teaching agency for later application. They were asked to observe their school ecologies, identify its strengths and weaknesses and choose a problem to fix. Eight of the ten participants took action. Topics covered included equity and power within the system as defined by Freire (2000) and hooks (2000). They took actions of their choice (or not) and reflected back on how this worked. Then they explained what they had learned from the process, and how they had grown, or remained unchanged.

Session 1 Online COP

This was an introductory session in which I introduced the participants to the work and asked them to introduce themselves. They met together in small groups in breakout rooms and met and talked briefly. During this session, I asked participants to discuss strengths and weaknesses (Appendix F). They charted their observations of this three times through the week and turned this in to the Google Classroom. In the form of reflections (Appendix H). Then they broke out into breakout rooms and discussed this in small groups. Break out room discussions were not recorded. After explaining the task of observing and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of

their teaching citations, I introduced them to the Google Classroom with several documents posted for their use during the week (see Appendix B).

Session 2 Online COP

In session 2, we met as a whole group to discuss participants' impressions of their ecologies. They were asked to observe the strengths and gaps of their teaching situations or ecologies and reflect three times throughout the first week. When we met in the session I asked them to chare in small groups in break out rooms that were not recorded and then to share their understandings in the whole group. We discussed Santoro's (2021) demoralization and remoralization terms and Priestley et al.'s (2015) concept of teacher agency. I introduced these ideas to them through a slide show that Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D. requested for easier understanding for the participants, after the first session. This was especially helpful in light of the later realization that due to the lack of computer access, many participants in Kenya were connecting to the group sessions and work materials via their mobile phones. The Google Classroom, which I had used as a repository for all documents could not be accessed easily or not at all for some participants.

Session 3 Online COP

In the slideshow for session 3 (Appendix F), I highlighted the main concepts and questions discussed earlier. We first reviewed the concept of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015) breaking down into the parts they defined of personal capacity and ecology (2015). We discussed their ecology, what was missing from it and how the gaps in their ecology might be filled, through remoralization (Santoro, 2021) or other ways. Then the participants came back together to discuss their findings. They each defined the problem they chose to address in their schools, what action they

chose to take and how it worked. Lastly, I showed them what we had accomplished through a theoretical lens, explaining the innovation cycle (Appendix F) as well Freire's (2000) process of liberation and systemic change originating with a small action by a pioneer such as themselves (Wheatley, 2006). With the assistance of the Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D.

In-School Action Research Activities for Weeks One and Two

Participants observed their colleagues and themselves in their school roles and made preliminary findings (Figure 3a) about the strengths and gaps in their ecologies. They then wrote their reflections and came back to session two to discuss with their fellow participants, the Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D. and myself. The Kenyans, who all chose to partner, also shared with their partners along the way. The US teachers, who all chose to work alone, did not share during the weeks in their schools. After observing and reflecting for a week, we shared these reflections and discussed what they meant to us together in the 2nd group session. I introduced the tasks for the next week (Appendix B, F). Participants decided on which gap or weakness they wanted to address themselves in their second week. Instead of asking if they wanted to address a problem, I asked them which problem area they wished to address. They reflected from general prompts given in their Google Classroom (Appendices B, H). After that, they decided on a strategy and took action. Then they reflected in writing on what they did and how it went. We followed up together in the last session. Participants explained what their ecological gap was, what action they took and what came about as a result. Participants shared which actions they took, if any. Two pairs of participants in Kenya affected some level of change in their whole system and the Berkana Two Loop Model of Emergence (Figure 1). Afterward, they shared the

results and continued an engaged critical dialogue on their teaching praxis. This entailed *action* through conversations and activities in the online group (and with their partner if they had one), as well as *reflection* through written and verbal responses to questions. (Freire, 2001; Leijen et al., 2021).

Action Research Activity 3: Berkana Analysis

During this last action research activity, participants were asked to analyze and discuss how they fit into Wheatley's (2019) model of emergence (Figure 1). By growing a new or emergent system with an ecology more conducive to agency, teachers were encouraged to engage their school colleagues in this task. Together they inquired about their perceptions of their roles as well as their expectations by others about their work. By utilizing such a model inside their schools, they created an organic, emergent system embedded inside their schools.

Quantitative Instruments

This study utilized quantitative questionnaires (Appendix M) about teachers' demoralization, agency, beliefs, values, and sense of professional identity among others. The teacher demoralization scale (Hultz, 2021) utilized was modified and questions were added about self-perception about roles and positions within the school (Appendix G). Several questions inspired by the Beck Anxiety Inventory and the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory were added to this amalgam to create a new inventory. The new inventory allowed me to understand how teacher agency grew through this innovation by learning how teachers' perceptions of their teaching situations, and their roles within their school changed. Additionally, this amalgamation of known and time-tested valid inventories aimed to track how

teachers' changed perceptions of their agency might change their perception of their role within their system, and their sense of demoralization.

Qualitative Interviews, Group Dialogues, And Reflections

This inventory was paired with semi-structured qualitative interviews (Appendix D) and the online community of practice sessions. The sessions themselves were a focus group interview for teachers. The flexible interview protocol was designed to address the research questions focused on participants' perceptions of their teaching situations and roles, demoralization (and remoralization), teacher agency and any emergent questions arising from participant contributions.

Data Collection Procedures

Six qualitative interviews, three pre-intervention and three post-intervention, were done throughout the innovation process with three interviewees to gain a better understanding of the participants' perceptions of their roles at intervals throughout the innovation process. Participants were chosen by purposive sampling and interviews were conducted in a semi-structured method and took place over video conferencing software (Zoom) for roughly 30 minutes each. Each participant was asked the same questions about their perceptions of their roles as teachers, their place within their schools, and their perceptions of their work as educators. Several focus groups in the form of whole group sessions were conducted by video conferencing software (Zoom). Lastly, the innovation sessions, three in total, were conducted through video conferencing software (Zoom) for one hour over two weeks in March of 2024. Interviews, focus groups, and the innovations dialogues were recorded, and transcribed using free video-conferencing software.

Participants were provided with basic ideas on what they might choose to reflect on their observations in Week 1 but were encouraged to decide for themselves how they would go about this. In Figure 3, the reflection prompt posted on the shared Google Classroom is shown. Participants were offered several styles of journaling and were also provided with ideas to get their reflections started. Inside their schools, most conducted action research steps aiming to grow their awareness of their teaching situations and their roles within their systems. They were offered ideas of action through Santoro's (2021) remoralization chart, in the hope that they might replace their feelings of demoralization (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Suggestions for how to start a reflection journal

How to Begin a Reflection Journal

You may write a traditional journal. You may simply jot bullet point notes or add sketches or even photos. You may want to type directly into this reflection journal document or you may want to write notes on paper and upload your pages as pics into this journal. This is meant to be an informal catchall of your thoughts on a few topics over one week. You can best fulfill the purpose of this reflection journal by letting your real self shine. Please write in the language of your choice for your greatest sense of comfort. There is no right or wrong way to do this, and no length requirement. The goal is for you to really see your situation in a new way.
Here are some ways you could do it or you might produce a different way:

- Take a notepad with you through the week and jot down your thoughts in sentences, sketches, or bullet point phrases.
- You might feel inspired to "show' what you mean using a photo or a free-form sketch.
- You may want to capture your partner's good idea by writing down her or his exact words
- You might want to chart your thoughts
- You may want to write some fully formed paragraphs.
- You may want to chat with other teachers at your school and capture their ideas.

Ideas to get you started: Consider your situation. What do you see as strengths in your teaching situation? This can include your own strengths and gaps, your administrators', your school's, district's, parents' students', educational system, or truly anything that impacts you, in your teaching situation. Our goal this week is to investigate our contexts. I encourage you to write, draw, take notes, or express in any way you wish. There is no right or wrong way to complete this, and no required length. I am seeking your thoughtful consideration of your situation. One way to get started is to think of an example of when you see a strength or a glaring problem. If you feel stuck, please reach out and I will help. Note: please use the language with which you feel most comfortable.

Bernard chose to jot his reflections in note form and uploaded and scanned a pdf of his work to the Google Classroom for week 1 (Appendix H) and the rest of the participants all used Google documents which they uploaded to the designated Google Classroom (Appendix H). In week two, all participants completed the reflections, with the exception of Jude, who did just one, in Google documents (Appendix H). The U.S. teachers all chose to work alone, and the Kenyan teachers all chose to work in partners. Despite working in partners, they all uploaded individual documents with the exception of Giana and Louise. Giana turned in the pairs' combined work each

week (Appendices N, O). Further, she turned their work in on Facebook messenger, likely due to the lack of access to computers. They had access to phones, however. How to create a reflection journal was discussed in the first Session in addition to the instructions (figure) provided in Google Classroom. Interestingly, no participants chose to write out their reflection on paper with the exception of Bernard.

The quantitative instrument, a questionnaire, were given as a pre-test before the community of practice innovation at the end of February, and after as a post-test in mid-March. Questionnaires were conducted through the use of Google Forms. After each participant confirmed consent through ASU IRB letters of consent, I sent them the pre-intervention survey. The participants completed and submitted the questionnaires prior to engagement with the COP. After the three COP dialogues and the two weeks of in-school action research steps were completed, the participants completed the post-test questionnaire. Upon completion of the survey, participants were compensated for their time at the rate of $50 for the entire innovation. Funding came from an ASU fieldwork grant and was transferred via PayPal to the US teachers and to the Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D., who then transferred the monies owed to all Kenyan participants via Mpesa. All participants confirmed receipt. I personally funded and compensated the Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D. at the rate of $100 for the three sessions and his help with distributing monies to the participants after the intervention. The collected data were automatically amalgamated using Google software.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected through interviews and field notes from community of practice sessions were analyzed and coded using MAXQDA software. After facilitating individual qualitative semi-structured interviews with teachers and several

focus group discussions about their perceptions of their work based on random sampling among the teacher groups; this data were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and coded prior to analysis using MAXQDA software. For coding purposes, I utilized thematic coding weaving together both inductive and deductive approaches, to include some a priori codes based on the research questions (and a few codes drawn from prior cycles), as well as allowing for emergent themes and new connections. To arrive at my five themes I used in-vivo and a priori coding for my first cycle. I then began coding with my theoretical constructs in mind: Freire's Critical Pedagogy (2000) and Wheatley's (2019) Berkana Two Loop Model of System Change, as well at two theoretical concepts: Santoro's (2021) idea of demoralization and Priestley et al.'s (2015) and Biesta et al.'s (2015) description of *teacher agency*. I took what I saw as the main elements of the theories and concepts that applied to my research questions and split them into parts and organized them by research question. Then I coded my transcripts and reflections using these codes. Lastly, I find it important to note that I went through this process iteratively, as I refined my understanding of the participants' words in connection to the theories. After I coded, I went back through the coding, the transcripts and the reflections to write out an individual story of each participant's journey through the intervention. I extended this analysis more by laying a table detailing the journeys of participants (Table 7). Lastly, I added a brief summary in narrative form as well (Appendix I).

Quantitative data were collected and analyzed from online interviews, workshops, and field notes in MAXQDA. One collection was created for data and one for the case study report. The database represented all sources of data collected in the study. MAXQDA was used to organize it. This allowed for greater reliability,

allowing the data to be understandable and retrievable, and to come back to the data as needed. Most importantly, it ensured the validity of the study by preserving the chain of evidence. An annotated bibliography will serve as an index and a summary of the evidence gathered. As this grew, and themes began to surface, the method shifted over to the second, defined narrative material style of organizing by themes. This merged with the third style of organizing the data into "open-ended answers" (Yin, 2018, p.133) to the research questions when the themes become clear. SPSS software was used to analyze the quantitative data from pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Notes and conclusions about these findings were added to the report, which is in one of the MAXQDA collections.

Based on findings from earlier iterations of the study, theoretical propositions are that teachers are oppressed (Freire, 2000) and demoralized (Santoro, 2016). Qualitative codes are noted in Appendix A and selected quantitative data results are detailed in Chapter 4 (Table 8). For this study, Freire's focus on how to guide people to their liberation, or rather how to guide them to their own decision to liberate or not was used. This pairs with Santoro's path to remoralization. The aim was to observe if guiding teachers to remoralize and liberate themselves leads to their increased agency. Pattern-matching to find patterns based on how or why participants act in their roles and perceive their roles was used to analyze qualitative data. The study relied on Freire's (2000) Critical Pedagogy with a focus on what oppression and liberation look like in teachers. Some of his points include how oppressed people act. For example, he explains that oppressed people are silent and compliant, or conversely, fight with each other or openly rage at the oppressor. Earlier iterations of this study predict that teachers are oppressed and the researcher will match their behaviors through a pretest

and posttest triangulated with interviews and workshop fieldnotes. Furthermore, the concepts of teacher agency (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2015) and remoralization (Santoro, 2021) were correlated because several of the factors echo Freire's (2000) idea of liberation.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study aimed to investigate an intervention focused on empowering teachers from Kenya and the United States together in an online community of practice to build agency. By engaging them together, I aimed to learn if the ecology needed for teachers to operate with full agency in their schools might be created online. Chapter Four lays out the overall findings, detailed answers to the three research questions on awareness growth, demoralization and agentic growth of the participants through the intervention, and the themes I found in response to my research questions. I sought to answer the following questions:

1. Research Question 1: How might participants' awareness of their teaching situations, and their roles within their systems grow?
2. Research Question 2: How might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an online COP counteract *demoralization* in teacher participants?
3. Research Question 3: How might *teacher agency* grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented inside their schools?

In this intervention, I invited ten teachers from the United States and Kenya to work together with a Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D. and me in an online community of practice (Appendix I). I engaged six Kenyans, three female and three male, evenly split in elementary, middle, and high school who were in private schools in either Amboseli and Eldoret counties in Kenya. Of the four U.S. teachers, three were female and one was male. Two teachers worked in a middle school, and one each in elementary school and high school. Three were in public schools and one was in private school

and all were located in California. Kenyan teachers will be described individually in connection to a partner since they all self-selected to partner up and engaged together in the work throughout the intervention. Their individual responses and reflections are also shared.

Intervention

The intervention took place online in a community of practice for just over two weeks and involved meeting with the whole group of ten participants, as well as a Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D., Dr. Harry Bett, who has published on teacher training in Kenya, and me, in 3 hour-long sessions. Three teacher participants were chosen to take part in one-on-one pre-intervention and post-intervention 30-minute interviews. I chose the interviewees purposively by selecting a representative mix of Kenyans and US teachers based on their willingness to take part in the interviews. These interviewees were Peter, Edith, and Sidney. Sidney took part in an earlier iteration of the study and enjoyed engagement in the interview format. During Week 1, participants observed strengths and gaps of their ecologies in their own schools three times, and in Week 2 they described a gap or something missing in their ecologies—they decided on an action that might fix this problem and then reflected on how it went (Appendix B). We then convened as a large group online to discuss and reflect on their experiences. Between whole group sessions, participants completed two tasks described below in the *Intervention Participation Chart* (Table 4). All participants completed both a pre-intervention and post-intervention survey (Appendix M), and six chose to give additional written feedback after the sessions (Appendix E). Participants engaged at varying levels throughout the intervention. This is detailed in the intervention participant chart (Table 4). Participants' digital preferences and usage

are further laid out in the digital engagement preferred chart (Table 5). This explains how participants chose to participate throughout the intervention. Sometimes this was not due to preference but a lack of computer access in the case of the Kenyans.

Data Collection Methods and Participation

During this study, I used a mixed-methods approach. While the focus was on the qualitative data, I administered a pre- and post-intervention survey to gauge participants' development over the course of the community of practice. While the sample size of ten is small, these quantitative measures helped supplement the qualitative work and provided me with more information about each participant and their experiences. All ten participants completed an 89-question pre-intervention Google Form survey before the first full-participant session and an identical post-intervention survey after the completion of the last session. Questions covered the three main topics of awareness growth, demoralization, and agentic operation. Data were collected, input into SPSS, and analyzed for descriptive statistics, comparing means for paired samples t-test for the identical and pre-intervention post-intervention questionnaires. Demographic questions were excluded from the SPSS analysis.

Qualitative data were collected, transcribed, analyzed, and coded from three one-hour-long synchronous sessions online using Zoom video conferencing software, three thirty-minute pre-intervention interviews, and three thirty-minute post-intervention interviews with three participants (two from Kenya, Peter and Olympus, and one from the United States, Sidney), and through 58 written reflections on several assigned tasks for the ten participants(six from Kenya, and four from the United States), and from an optional three question open-ended Google From survey (Appendix E) completed by six of the ten participants after the sessions (U.S.

participants offered four responses; Kenyan participants offered 2 responses). Table 5 below details their patterns of participation in the intervention. Participants uploaded their written reflections on Google Docs into the Google Classroom named Global Educators Together (GET) (see Appendix H) and uploaded their reflections to Google Docs and PDFs to share their chosen actions and what they thought about their school ecologies and their roles within their school systems (see Appendix H). All ten participants took part differently throughout the intervention. The following chart details their participation and engagement throughout the intervention (Table 5).

Table 5

Innovation Participation Chart

	Pre/Post survey	Session 1, 2, 3	Pre/Post Interview	Week 1 Reflections x3	Took an Action	Week 2 Reflections x3	Optional additional response
KS	n/a	1, 2, 3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Giana	pre/ post	1, 3	no	Giana & Louise worked together.	yes	3-Giana uploaded doc w both her and Louise's name in FB msg	yes
Louise	pre/ post	1, 3 Giana and 3 asked for an add'l session	no	Louise & Giana worked together.	yes	Louise & Giana worked together; Louise verified answers in session 3	no
Peter	pre/ post	1, 2, 3	pre/ post	Peter & Andy worked together	yes	Completed all. Turned in separate but unique documents with similar ideas to Andy's.	yes
Andy	pre/ post	1, 2, 3	no	Andy & Peter worked together	yes	Completed all. Turned in separate but unique documents with similar ideas to Peter's.	no
Edith	pre/ post	1, 3	pre/ post	Edith & Olympus worked together	yes	Completed all. Turned in separate but identical documents to Olympus.	yes
Olympus	pre/ post	1, 2, 3	no	Olympus & Edith worked together	yes	Completed all. Turned in separate but identical documents with Edith.	no
Jude	pre/ post	1, 3	no	1	yes	yes	yes
Sidney	pre/ post	2, 3	pre/ post	all	yes	yes	yes
Bernard	pre/ post	1, 2, 3	no	all	yes	yes	yes
Hana	pre/ post	1, 2, 3	no	all	no	yes	yes

One set of Kenyan teachers, Giana and Louise, turned their work on the Facebook group via messenger due to the lack of computer access and their apparent lack of experience with Google Classroom. Notably, all of the Kenyans chose to work together as partners, and all of the Americans (U.S.) chose to work independently. See Table 6 below to note how different participants engaged in different modalities.

Table 6

Digital engagement preferred mode

	Engaged on FB group	Turned in work on GC	Used WhatsApp	Emailed
Giana	✓		✓	
Peter	✓	✓		
Louise	✓		✓	
Andy	✓	✓	✓	
Edith	✓	✓	✓	
Olympus	✓	✓	✓	
Jude	one time	✓	✓	
Sidney	one time	✓	✓	
Bernard	one time	✓	✓	
Hana		✓		
Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D.	✓	✓		✓

Table 7 below shows an overview of the main actions each participant took through the intervention. Specifically it shows the gap each teacher (or pair of teachers) identified in their school ecology and how they felt it affected them. Then it lists the problem they chose to address, the action they took to address it, and the result they recorded.

Table 7

Individual Participants' Journeys Through the Process of the Intervention

	Gap identified & How they felt the gap affected them as a teacher	The problem they chose to address to lessen the gap	The action they took	Result
Giana & Louise	Admin support; Lack of curriculum; Lack of tech; Lack of input; Checked out; Just doing it for a paycheck	Lack of new curriculum materials	Connected with local teachers via already planned event; Created WhatsApp group; Found online resources	Materials gained; More upbeat; Increased Awareness; Agency; Remoralized
Peter & Andy	Lack of admin logic; Lack of tech; Problems not solved	Kids absent due to fees	Met with parents & partnered sponsors	Fees paid; Community built; Teachers empowered; Critical thinking engaged; More students in class
Edith & Olympus	Lack of Training/Content; Time; Syllabus not completed	Content; Time	Focused on Student-centered; Teacher leadership parts of remoralization chart; Researched content	Increased enjoyment; Resources
Jude	La[redacted]edom of speech and act[redacted]k of student accountability; Fear/silence	Her "kindness" in not allowing students to leave in the middle of a lesson.	She would let them leave and track absent kids to help them.	She completed her grades. Less stress? Less anger directed at her?
Sidney	***Isolation*** from other teachers, lack of curriculum; Lack of time; Lack of admin support; Overwhelm, Fear	Isolated from other teachers and lack of curriculum	Interviewed fellow teacher – may be a bid for connection Asked to join group	waiting
Bernard	Lack of Time; Parent demands; Admin support intermittent; felt tired, depressed	Parent demand No emotional support	Created email template for parents, Lunched w/ colleagues	Template helped Lunching was nice but added more work
Hana	Lack of Time; Could not finish teaching tasks; Exhausted, Frustrated	Not enough time	Create prioritization	Did not use it due to lack of time b/c engaged in other tasks

Overall Data Findings

The individual experiences of the participants, shared in reflections, group discussions, one-on-one interviews, and questionnaires, helped develop and define several themes which are explored in detail in the qualitative findings below. These themes include: a lack of time to plan and grade due to additional unskilled labor and childcare tasks, a sense of *isolation* from their colleagues, *a lack of administrator support* that took several forms, *a pervasive sense of fear* of administrators and aggressive parents, and an overall sense of being *devalued* as a professional in their roles. These themes are described and supported by the participants' thoughts, as

shared in their written reflections, interviews, and group sessions. Through the surfacing of these themes, I was able to answer my three research questions. I found that 1) teachers grew more aware of their teaching situations through this intervention, 2) the intervention did not counteract their demoralization but half actually felt an increase while the rest stayed at the same level. However, participants who chose to take meaningful action to solve a problem in their teaching ecology through student empowerment, professional development, or prioritizing their own learning felt a surge of joy and empowerment, though their overall demoralization still did not decrease. When a participant chose an action that went against their own professional judgment however, or if they chose no action, they felt the same level of demoralization, or perhaps even an increase in it and did not report growth in agentic operation. Moreover, I found that 3) the online community of practice (COP) provided enough of an ecology that allowed for teachers to operate agentically in their schools. Some participants were even able to insert a new process for keeping students in school despite unpaid fees in one case, and some created an online regional network of teachers learning the new curriculum together, in another case. Though this study relied heavily on the large amount of collected qualitative data from numerous (3) pre-intervention and (3) post-intervention interviews, (58) written reflections, and (3) hour-long conversations that took place in three sessions with the whole group, quantitative data were also collected and are correlated by section with thematic qualitative findings below for the reader's ease. Notably, however, just 10 responses rose to my attention, as they showed a statistically significant (see Table 8 below) change from the pre-intervention survey to the post-intervention survey. It is important to note, however, that statistical significance is likely lessened due to the

small sample size of N=10. Each of these 10 findings will be addressed below in connection with their qualitative counterpart. By pairing them with the relevant qualitative thematic findings, I hope to provide the reader with easy access to both vital qualitative and quantitative data findings as I discuss the findings for each research question, in turn.

Answering Research Question 1: How Might Participants' Awareness of Their Teaching Situations and their Roles within the Systems Grow?

Participants' perception of their teaching situations and their roles within their systems changed and pointed to how their awareness grew throughout this intervention via the surfacing of five themes: a lack of administrative support, fear of administrators and some parents, a lack of time, a feeling of isolation, and an general feeling of being devalued. Among these themes, teachers explained how a lack of administrator support caused extra work, stress and a sense of being devalued in their roles. In conjunction with these five themes—which emerged through qualitative data analysis of interviews, written reflections, and conversations in sessions—quantitative data analysis (two-sided t-test) of the pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires yielded 10 statistically significant changes in participants' responses (Table 5). Overall, these items correlate with the five qualitative themes and will be discussed in greater detail in the following themed sections. Generally, participants reported increases in negative feelings about their teaching situations and roles. For example, they reported feeling angrier ($p=.015$), going from an average rating of 3.1, up from 2.6 prior to the start of the intervention. An exception might have occurred in their report of decreased use of student-centered actions ($p=.037$) but this might be due to a rising awareness about student-centered actions.

Table 8

Comprehensive SPSS output of statistically significant changes (T-test)

No.	Question	Pre-survey avg score	change	Post-survey avg score	2 sided p (in order)	RQ
13	I feel angry.	2.6	↗	3.1	.015	RQ2
15	I feel demoralized.	2.9	↗	3.6	.025	RQ2
12	I have been tempted to give higher grades than those earned to lessen the parental pressure on myself.	1.9	↗	2.7	.053	RQ1
33	I feel that my input is desired by my administrator(s) on academic matters.	3.7	↘	3.0	.010	RQ1
27	In the last year I have been trained in up-to-date content for the subject I teach.	3.0	↘	2.0	.015	RQ1
39	I feel trusted and treated as a professional by the administrator.	3.7	↘	3.3	.037	RQ1
40	Professional development (teacher training) is conducted by a faculty member who was trained in the method by an expert at an earlier time.	3.1	↘	2.7	.037	RQ1
55	I set pedagogical and/or curricular goals in my classroom.	4.5	↘	4.1	.037	RQ3
70	I take student-centered actions	4.6	↘	4.2	.037	RQ3
30	My administrator supports me in parent and/or faculty meetings.	3.5	↘	2.9	.051	RQ1

Note: 5 always, 4 very often 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

The places where the quantitative data analysis does not correlate with the qualitative data analysis (e.g., increases in demoralization) could be due to varying

levels of awareness and understanding of the concepts by these teachers. As their awareness grew, their understanding of their own predicament may also have grown. This might be similar to the Dunning-Kruger effect where a person's confidence in their knowledge of a subject declines despite increased understanding (Dunning, D. 2011) of it. However, this will be discussed further in the following thematic sections, and more research would also be needed. To enter into this thematic discussion, we begin with the theme of *lack of time.* This will be followed by *isolation, lack of administrative support, fear and devaluation.*

Lack Of Time

As teachers reflected on their teaching situations, they explained how they experienced a lack of time to do their work. The American teachers simply did not have time to prepare, teach and grade with the number and amount of non-teaching duties now assigned. Sidney explained that there is no curriculum at her school and described the additional demands on her time due to this, saying "We're expected to constantly be creating new 'rigorous' curriculum, use standards based grading, have a rubric for everything AND give extensive feedback. I don't have time for any of that" (Sidney's Reflection, Week 1). In Kenya, teachers noted that the new national curriculum adds time to the workload. Olympus stated, "I talked of inadequate time for workload. This is because in Kenya, since 2017, there was (an) introduction of a new curriculum and the new curriculum - the content, compared to the previous curriculum, is too much, so time is missing" (Session Three). Bernard stated, "…missing from my ecology is time to do the work- that's common. We're all feeling that one but definitely feeling pressed for time" (Session 3).

Moreover, with 24-hour access to teachers in American schools, parents demand immediate responses and attention despite the fact that teachers usually teach about 150 students (Morrisey, 2016). Toward this point, Bernard discussed his lack of time to do his job and the stress and overwhelm that came with this. He noted how, "just dealing with a lot of challenging communications is honestly, it's emotional, exhausting. It's a lot of emotional labor" (Bernard, session 3). He went on, explaining the disproportionate influence parents have with administration and over teachers, and how most of his days are negatively impacted by overly long parent meetings and too many meetings. For example, he noted that a parent meeting scheduled for 30 minutes took an hour and a half, and this is quite common.

Dealing with a lot of challenging communications is honestly, it's emotionally exhausting. It's a lot of emotional labor. And then, once I expend so much on something as simple as just communicating to families. Their student misbehaved or is not completing the work in a certain way. I mean, I'm just saying it takes a lot of emotional labor (Bernard, session 3).

Participants from the U.S. and Kenya explained the demands were not just teaching related, but noted a number of tasks including unskilled labor and childcare work to their weekly to-do lists. Peter noted, "one of the things that's missing is the fact that we faced a lot of workload. Excessive workload, I would say. And we were teaching multiple subjects, and at the same time we had to do some administrative tasks. Also, we had to engage in covariance activities, and it was exhausting" (session 3) . Similar to all US teachers, Hana struggled with her many assigned additional non-teaching duties. The main problem she identified was a lack of time to do her work because of all of the non-teaching tasks she was required to do. The action she chose

to do as part of the intervention was to create a schedule to-do list, split first into "must do/could do," and then added actionable steps for each item listed in order "to keep me accountable, prioritize my needs, and get me out of the house at least once a day" (Hana's reflection week 1). She was, however, unable to execute this action step due to lack of time. The addition of non-teaching duties made up of non-skilled labor tasks like childcare was notable. These tasks included activities like recess duty where teachers may or may not be allowed to provide consequences for behavior depending on the school, crosswalk duty where teachers must dress in yellow vests holding stop signs to serve as crossing guards before and after school, bus duty wherein they are required to leave early from their teaching to run the logistics of the bus line with hundreds of students, dances, socials, carnivals and concerts chaperoning after schools because the administration cannot entice parent volunteers to help. As a result, teachers are struggling to get their actual professional work done. While teachers from both Kenya and the U.S. discussed this lack of time, the U.S. correlated it directly to exhaustion and inability to complete their work. Hana described the breaks in her day as 15 minutes during the student recess and 30 minutes for the students' lunch, explaining that her school was able to,

secure someone to help multiple people watch during the students' recess or break time, and so we are no longer on duty at that time so definitely that offers like a quick, short break that has changed it for many of the teachers, because otherwise we were just kind of on all day. (session 2).

The Kenyan teachers mostly did have extensive breaks in their days and expressed shock at the U.S. schedule (Sidney's post-intervention interview). Sidney reflected on this conversation after her first week as well. She stated,

After speaking with another teacher in Kenya, I learned they have 3 breaks throughout the school day (each at least 20 minutes). All of our breaks are 5 minutes, no snack, no "recess," only lunch, which is about 35 minutes but feels like 15. Days like today fly by, I'm not even sure I remembered to take attendance (Sidney's Reflection, Week 1).

Another U.S. teacher, Hana, went on to describe how she found it difficult to complete all of her work:

Enough time to do the work I think is the biggest lack in my ecology. In addition to all (that) our regular job entails, I am also part of different committees and other duties. This year, we get 40 minutes on Tuesdays and Thursdays during our school day, but otherwise our designated prep time is 2:45-3:15 pm. Often we must meet with teachers and/or fulfill other duties that take up that entire time and (this) doesn't leave enough time to get work ready for the next day, lesson plan, make copies, tidy the classroom, etc. (Hana's reflection Week 2).

Overall, the lack of time and exhaustion caused by the increasing number of unskilled labor tasks assigned to teachers inhibited participants from collaboration and further exploration of remoralization. This was one of the main concerns of the US teachers. They were so exhausted that it was visibly evident on Zoom, and one participant, Jude, reported the reason she missed Session 2 was due to exhaustion.

Peter and Andy cited excessive tasks as a problem. "Our workload is overwhelming due to large class sizes, teaching multiple subjects, assigned administrative tasks, and additional responsibilities outside of the classroom" (Peter's Reflection, Week 2). Through this intervention, punctuated by three sessions,

participants repeatedly expressed and exemplified their raised awareness of themselves as teachers, the roles they played within their school settings and how they might like to operate in the future. Data from the pre-intervention survey and the post-intervention survey as well as the interviews A, B and C, and the participant reflections were used.

Teachers attempted to make fixes that addressed this with varying results. Peter prioritized tasks and delegated. Hana attempted to do this but ironically did not have time to complete the task, noting, "Something Peter (pseudonym) said earlier about a prioritization of tasks is something that I tried to work on this week." Since she had so many tasks to complete already, she explained her results. "I don't have a lot to say about how it actually worked this week because I didn't do a lot of working on it this week. But I'm hoping to continue those efforts of writing out the absolutely have to do by this date. (Hana session 3). This theme came up many times across both countries' participants but was noticeably worse for the US teachers. The intervention affected their awareness of this, and in two cases, Bernard and Hana, and to some extent Peter and Andy, focused their actions on saving time.

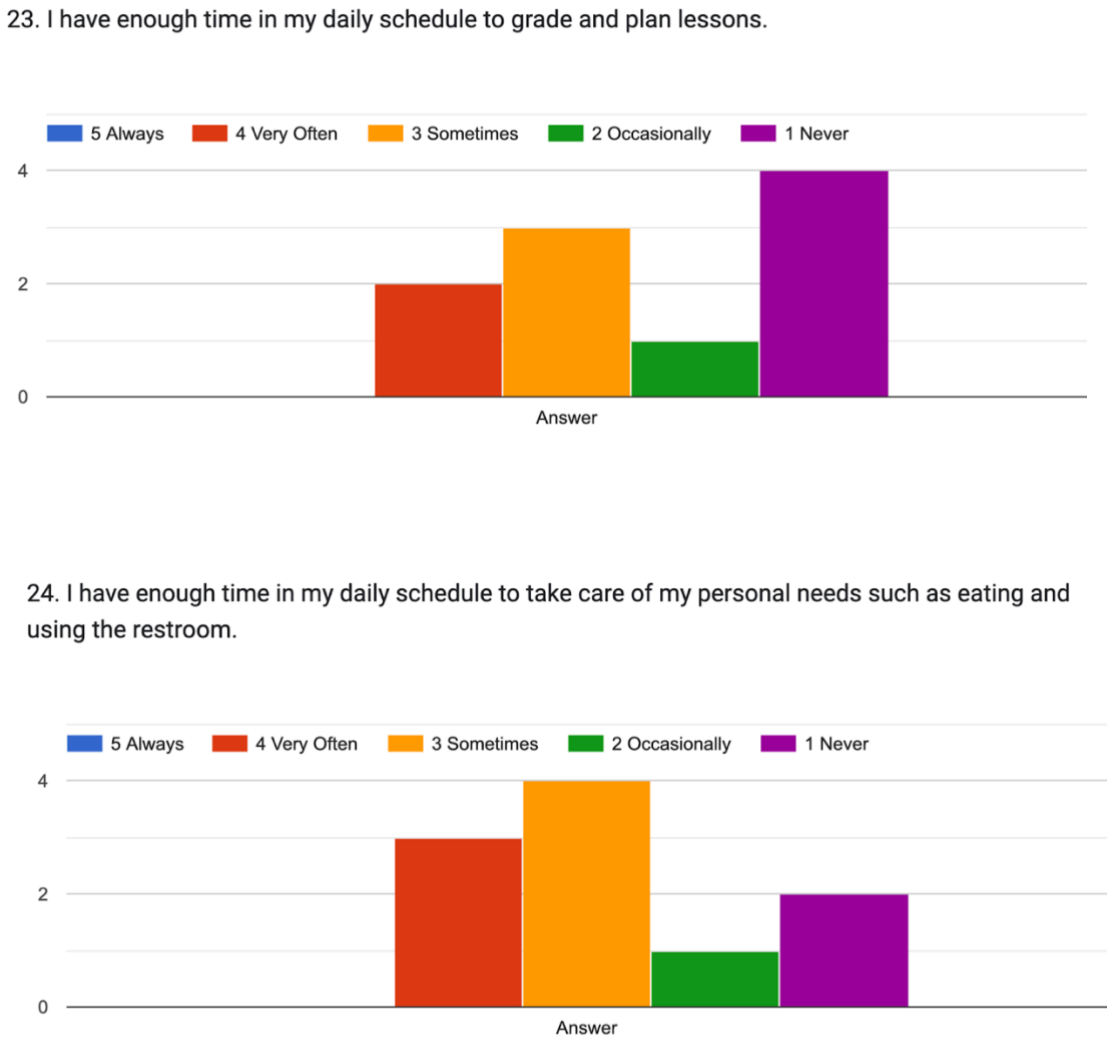
Hana explained her feelings stating, "I think what I identified through that was that I find myself spending more hours outside of my contract time playing catch up, which then, of course, takes away from my work-life balance, which is unsustainable in (the) long term" (Hana, Session three). Bernard created a set of email templates that he reported positively affected his sense of stress due to lack of time. Hana chose to create a prioritization to-do list but chose not to do the action citing a lack of time. Peter and Andy explained how they delegated some of their workload to other teachers (Session 3), and this helped. Peter explained how they delegated what

teachers taught based on what they were strongest in, and their peers helped decide this together. They reported this action helped save time.

Through the intervention, the US teachers struggled with time to a much greater extent than the Kenyan teachers though all participants cited this as a theme. They cited this as one of their greatest struggles. Teachers noted how not having enough time in their daily schedules was a significant problem. Four teachers answered that they never have enough time to grade and plan, while two said they never have enough time to eat and use the restroom. The theme of lack of time to do the work of teaching was pervasive throughout all of the data analysis, and this is represented in the figure below. Generally the participants did not have enough time to do the tasks associated with their task of teaching and take care of their basic human needs. For example, the number of participants who always had time to plan, grade, eat, and use the restroom was zero. There were no exceptions to this, however two reported being able to plan and grade very often, and three to take care of their human needs very often.

Figure 4

Post-intervention questionnaire 23, 24



Isolation, And Finding a Way to Collaboration

The second theme many participants experienced was isolation. Near the end of week 1, Sidney initiated action without invitation. She solicited the assistance of a neighbor teacher at her school site (who was not part of the intervention) and interviewed him on his strengths and weaknesses. She reported that he found similar gaps in the ecology such as a lack of aligned curriculum. The second problem he experienced was isolation from his peers. To address this, he chose not to work in his

classroom alone for the 30 minutes he was allotted but instead reached out to peers to eat with them. He enjoyed this and felt better; however, the downside or price of this was that the work he usually got done during the lunch time needed to be completed at home in addition to the usual hours of paperwork he usually did each evening.

Spending time with teachers rather than working through lunch was refreshing. I tried to spend time talking about both school and non-school issues, making an effort to build in this natural boundary in my day. It definitely improved the overall quality of my days, but I did find myself needing to work more in the evening as a result (Bernard's Reflection, Week 2).

At the same time, many of the other teachers similarly expressed feelings of isolation. For the Kenyans, it was an isolation from other schools' teachers and the greater global education community with its pedagogical resources, notably due to their lack of technology and proper and regular training; instead their administrators or school owners utilize the outdated and ineffective cascade method described by Harry Bett (2019). For those in the US, the isolation was due primarily to a lack of time. Their schedules were so full that several discussed a lack of time to eat or use the restroom, and their isolation from others was due to their decision to take care of their assigned teaching and extensive and ever-growing non-teaching duties. Samples of these duties included several kinds of unskilled labor tasks such as serving as crossing guards and "recess" duties overseeing several hundred middle school students alone or with one other teacher, substituting for colleagues during their only paid prep time, and complying with individual parent demands for meetings so that they not only missed their actual teaching hours but also had to create substitute plans

while they were away. This time pressure and overwork issue was a recurring theme in both countries and teachers expressed feelings of being overwhelmed.

While Kenyan teachers are isolated due to the lack of technology and internet access in their areas of Amboseli and Eldorat counties, American teachers are isolated due to their lack of time. Sidney further noted, “I think the biggest thing I was missing is a teacher community. I don't really have anyone to collaborate and work with, and so I always feel pretty alone and stressed out” (session 3). Peter and Andy, who partnered together, reported that only the principal had access to a computer and within the faculty of 50, only 3 or 4 teachers had a personal device. This lack of access keeps them isolated from resources and people and they lack the ease to connect. Giana and Louise solved their similar quandary by using a school-mandated activity to network and create a WhatsApp group because they all have mobile phones though data is an added expense. Peter and Andy similarly used a school event to facilitate a connection with a visiting sponsor to parents who were unable to pay fees. When they began to push out of their isolation, they began to solve whole school problems that administrators failed to address such as finding funding for unpaid school fees or sourcing content for mandatory training. They innovated by utilizing social media platforms to connect and share ideas but can only access these through mobile phones and the minutes are very expensive in the current economy. While Americans have a high level of access to technology, this can lead to too much accessibility that requires their time and attention, as teachers noted that students and parents are constantly emailing with questions.

Teacher participants shared that the intervention allowed teachers to feel less alone in their practices, notably because they shared common struggles. The

intervention was temporary and Sidney noted that it was interesting and fun, while Hana noted that it was an unusual opportunity to get to speak with Kenyan teachers. However, the impact of the intervention was limited in that it was brief and only continues to an extent on Facebook and WhatsApp with messaging and periodic roundtables on different education topics like Artificial intelligence. Sidney noted that while it was helpful, she would prefer to have a local group at her school, as that would be helpful to discuss the real issues she was facing. The Kenyan teachers who collaborated on this intervention with partners were able to make their actions more substantive, and one pair, Giana and Louise, even reached out to local teachers and created their own fledgling teacher network on WhatsApp. Participants increased their awareness of their teaching situations and the isolation or lack of community that it had caused, and they expressed it through their discussion across several themes. Through their words and actions they expressed their development and strengthening of consciousness (Barreiro, J. (1986/1974)In his post-intervention interview, Peter expressed his raised awareness of his situation but explained how he learned he was not alone in his demoralization and how help this was for him. Edith echoed this feeling of solidarity with US and Kenyan teachers when she explained that knowing others were feeling the same way helped her feel less alone. In interview A, Sidney said it helped her feel better, and that it made her happy to feel less alone, but also sad that others were feeling the same. This sadness felt pervasive among the American participants especially and is tied to their demoralization, which is described in detail in a later section.

Lack of Administrative Support

Participants discussed the theme of a lack of substantive administrative support as a gap in their ecologies. For instance, Hana detailed a situation where tensions rose in a faculty meeting when the principal spoke in a meeting, saying:

> Yesterday we had a staff meeting where the principal presented some district numbers (for transparency purposes) talking about a decline in enrollment across the district and what they'd been talking about in the weekly Principals' meetings they have. This triggered a couple of staff who felt the data wasn't accurately reflecting our situation, and (correctly) identified false numbers in regards to our class sizes. This came from a 4th-grade teacher who has 32 students in her class. She was very frustrated by this and spoke out against it. The principal was trying to remain more neutral, but I think his neutrality was mistaken by this staff for complacency/disrespect/lack of empathy and it caused a rift. (Hana's Reflection, Week 1).

Participants expressed how the lack of administrative support involved a lack of protection with demanding or unreasonable parents. Parent demands, harassment and parents overruling teachers' pedagogical decisions was a theme repeated throughout the participants. In Kenya, Louise stated,

> This (lack of support) also comes from the parents because sometimes having this new curriculum, we tend to ask parents to provide for us with so many items… So most of the activities that are supposed to be done, the parents need to provide these materials, for example. Personally, I teach home science. So sometimes you find that our homes' syllabus requires us maybe to cook eggs. This (is) where the parents come in, they have to provide eggs for the learners so that they can learn how to cook. There was a time we were told to maybe boil sweet potatoes, you know. The parents again have to provide these sweet potatoes. So you find that they say we are asking (for) too many things and we are asking them to have to provide so many things of which they need to provide for these lessons to take place. So that is what is missing in our ecology. (Session 3)

In the US, Jude explained that she was exhausted by the battle of demanding that her high school students turn their homework in on time and sit through the class. She began to just allow them to leave:

> In the past I may have been against it as it is kind of contagious and can be disruptive. Now, if a student needs to go, I figure they need a break and I am letting them go (Jude's week 2 reflection).

As a master teacher with a passion for student learning and empowerment, this might suggest she has learned that speaking up gets her named as a problem. Thus, she has decided to pick her battles carefully and simply allows students to leave class whenever they want to and lets them turn in their work whenever they want to. She noted, **"**It's more about trying to pick my battles, I guess" (Session 3).

From the Kenyan perspective, Giana and Louise reported weaknesses coalescing about parent resistance to teachers' requests and directions, a lack of administrator support – even edging into administrator harassment in order to comply with parental requests, though often uninformed. Giana noted, "...you need to work because you need money, so you just adhere to the real rules and regulation(s), and teach and go home. Let's say, teach and go home, just as the management want you to do (Giana, Session 3). Overall, the teachers continually expressed how they did not feel trusted or treated as professionals throughout the intervention. In the paired t-test, results showed a statistically significant decrease, as seen in Table 8.

Figure 5

SPSS output of statistically significant changes (T-test) for Question 39

No.	Question	Pre-survey avg score	change	Post-survey avg score	2 sided p (in order)
39	I feel trusted and treated as a professional by the administrator.	3.7	↘	3.3	.037

Note: 5 always, 4 very often 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

This decrease might be due to the teachers' rising awareness of their teaching situations, and their roles within their systems as they collaborated with other teachers online and observed their own schools. However, more research would be needed to conclude this. Moreover, it is important to note that the small sample size as the t-test may not have as much validity. However, the qualitative data, in the form of interviews, reflections, and conversations in the three sessions tell a story of a strong feeling of being distrusted. Sidney noted in her interview how she wished the professional development at her school was delivered as if she and her colleagues were professionals "instead of them coming in and teaching you things like we're idiots" (Sidney, post-intervention interview).

Throughout the intervention, these teachers struggled with having access to wi-fi and to computers and Giana submitted documents for both via her phone. Louise confirmed her answers verbally in Session 2 and Session 3. In Session 3 Louise spoke up explaining that she wanted to add on to what Giana said about the lack of dignity and respect. She noted that in Kenya, the Government itself is not yet sure of the direction of the curriculum and so the teachers simply have to wait for direction without input. "We are in the darkness. We just wait for whatever that is going to

happen. We are going to follow suit bearing in mind that the grade 8 are the pioneers of this new curriculum" (Louise, Session 3).

Sidney saw a general kind of disconnection between all adult stakeholders – administrators, parents, and teachers as the problem. She noted in particular a lack of administrator presence, in fact, she did not feel she could even gain access to the principal most of the time, and also highlighted a lack of parent awareness of "what even goes on at school" noting how they were not ever present except when their children were struggling. (Sidney's pre-intervention interview) The teacher participants felt angry and helpless and emotionally dissociated from their main task of teaching. Repeatedly, they stated that they are now just "doing it for the paycheck." In fact, when I shared with the participants that NEA had reported that 55% of American teachers planned to leave the field of teaching in the next five years (NEA, 2022), Peter said it is the same in Kenya, but closer to 70%. Giana and Edith agreed with this statement, and Peter went on to state that every teacher is trying to leave (session 3). Edith explained that she had enrolled in more schooling in an attempt to make more money and expressed concern for her future when she described what happens to older teachers in Kenya. "You, you see, teachers retire, for here in Kenya, teachers retired at the age of 60, when I think, yeah, when a teacher returns and goes home, the lifestyle changes because you are paid peanuts, you are not able to sustain your family with it," underscoring that "they need to understand that when they retire they don't have enough to sustain themselves" (Edith post-intervention interview). She explained that there was no way to grow as a teacher and be promoted to higher levels so her enrollment in school was a way to gain a high salary. Peter and Giana

also mentioned this lack of promotion in the sessions, saying that the ability to be promoted to higher levels of teacher would be motivating.

In the case of the US teachers, the lack of administrator and parent support shifted more into easing the burden of students to the point that they would not feel discomfort. The lack of administrator or parental support in the situation of Jude created mounting pressure on the teacher to allow rule-breaking in the classroom and a lack of work accountability. Jude explained,

> I recognized some things that students do that really irritate me, that have to do with culture in the classroom, and that one of the best ways to attack it is to be really, just to not care anymore and stop worrying about it. And you know, if a kid has to go to the bathroom 5 times during the movie like, just let them go and stop trying. I teach 11th and 12th graders. So it had to do with this classroom culture that creates chaos from the students, and that I need to react better to that. There's still some problems. There's still some student issues that challenge that. So it's not a lawless society. It's more about trying to pick my battles, I guess. (Jude, Session 3).

The lack of administrative support was reflected past the unwillingness to protect teachers from overly demanding parents. Participants repeatedly noted that they saw the lack of quality training provided by their administrators to be a problem. All of the participants in Kenya and one of the US teachers also decried the lack of quality training in their comments, which also aligned with the findings in the questionnaire. Interestingly, as a group, participants reported a lower quantitative score after the intervention than before it, scoring the following questionnaire item a full point lower at the end of the intervention (as seen in Table 7). This decline in the score might possibly be due to a heightened awareness of their teaching situation evidenced through the process of engaging in the intervention, though it might also

emerge from minor fluctuations in perception and the effects on the mean. Due to the small sample size (N=10) even statistically significant changes require context.

Figure 6

SPSS output of statistically significant changes (T-test) for Questions 27 & 40

No.	Question	Pre-survey avg score	change	Post-survey avg score	2 sided p (in order)	RQ
27	In the last year I have been trained in up-to-date content for the subject I teach.	3.0	↘	2.0	.015	RQ1
40	Professional development (teacher training) is conducted by a faculty member who was trained in the method by an expert at an earlier time.	3.1	↘	2.7	.037	RQ1

Note: 5 always, 4 very often 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

They described receiving a lack of excellent training, and instead described receiving a form of Cascade method training (Bett, 2019). They noted that with the newly introduced curriculum (2017) they lacked sufficient training, which they viewed as a gap in their ecology. Moreover, they even reported a lower amount of this kind of Cascade method training in number 40 (Figure 5), reporting it at a level of just above *sometimes* at 3.1 to 2.7

Giana and Louise found two elements missing from their ecology: a supportive principal, and training that showed them respect and dignity missing from their ecology for agentic growth. To solve this problem, and fill this gap in their ecology, the action they chose to take was to conduct informal research online about the new required curriculum and they reported they adopted new teaching techniques. They also explained that they used social media – especially Facebook and WhatsApp

– to connect to other local teachers. This aspect of seeking local connections was echoed by Sidney in her post-intervention interview. Initially, in Session 3, Giana explained that they created a new network online using WhatsApp, and by using a Kenyan curriculum site, *Limo*, they were able to form a group with local teachers to teach each other and share resources, which Edith and Olympus had also noted. As Louise explained how they used a required school game event to network, noting,

> And (at) these games we meet different teachers from different schools. So, we've shared whatever is still missing in our ecology, that is support from the parent (and) support from the administration. So after we shared whatever we go through, and they also told us that that was exactly what they go through, I felt relieved. I felt like, you know, this is a problem that we all go through, so we need to adjust all of us, and by the end of that day we had formed a WhatsApp group. (Louise, Session 3)

Despite their lack of support from both administrators and parents, the teachers found a way forward to help their students. Importantly, they observed and experienced how their administrators did not provide the support they needed, in this case, effective training. They also noted how teachers were held accountable to great strictness but all other stakeholders – students, parents and administrators – were not. "With that little salary you're supposed to dress well, you're supposed to be smart. You have to cater for your family. (It is) very difficult. Yeah, you have to be a superwoman. I have to be a superwoman." (Edith's post-intervention interview). Like his partner Peter, Andy also highlighted the lack of logic used by the administration at the school. For example, students were encouraged to engage in the local town's learning fair as it highlighted various subjects, whereby the students could complete and learn but teachers were forced to continue their lessons without the absent students. This likely created more work for teachers who then felt they had to reteach lessons for the absent student (Peter's post-interview). This concern about the

administrators was commonly felt by participants in both countries. In session three Louise described the gaps in her ecology in the following way:

Proper training on the new curriculum here in Kenya, as I had stated earlier last. We also talked about how we, as Kenyan teachers, have not been taken through enough training on the new curriculum, and, I think, sufficient training is what is missing in our ecology. We also listed lack of support and lack of support in this regard, from maybe from the management, because I had stated earlier that my partner and I work in a private school, and most of the time the things we want to revolutionize in in the school, maybe in our teaching techniques you find that our director maybe is not in favor of, and that makes us, that holds us back as teachers. So in our ecology, those are the two main things that are missing: sufficient training and lack of support. (Louise, Session Three)

While they reflected on their experiences in their teaching roles, they all learned they were not alone, that the struggles described above were broadly felt. While some expressed this, the others agreed to it. Through this intervention, they began to see how their school site administrator impacted them, and began to discuss this in their reflections and in their discussion in the COP.

Sidney spoke of the online ecology of the intervention noting that "making connections, and all of that, and also sort of hearing everybody being in the same boat was comforting, but also depressing, at the same time" (Sidney's Post-Intervention Interview). She stated, "I want to go join my district's group, specifically, and do something locally if I could, in the future (Sidney's Post-Intervention Interview). She went on to explain that while she had enjoyed the intervention's collaboration, she

needed a group that could help her with her immediate gaps, such as a lack of curriculum, and did not have time to do anything more.

Fear And Its Effects—Silence and Paralysis, Anger and Avoidance

Overall, participants discussed how teachers were held accountable to great strictness, while all other stakeholders—such as students, parents and administrators—were not. Stemming from this, Giana, Louise, Andy, Edith, Olympus, Jude, Sidney, and Bernard expressed feelings of fear in regard to parents and their principals, and it should be noted that they are all in good standing at their various schools; two of the teachers are tenured, Jude and Bernard, although the Kenyans do not have that option, and Sidney is somewhat experienced at seven years but in the first year of a new school. Hana, the newest teacher in the participant group at just five years, clarified that she has a good working relationship with her principal, but that the principal's communication struggles due to the perception that some of his teachers are favored, and who enjoy special protections from the principal. As Hana stated, "A few teachers are more 'in the know' because of their relationship with the principal, which leads to tensions elsewhere*" (Hana's Reflection, Week 1). She explained her use of the asterisk with the following text:

Recently two teachers were asked to resign for the upcoming school year. As probationary (year 2) staff, this was completely within the rights of the principal…but their evaluations were satisfactory and it would seem that more than anything, these two staff were not well-liked by a few of the teachers who "run the school." This dynamic is one major downfall of a school and environment that I actually truly appreciate. (Hana's Reflection, Week 1)

Hana noted that she did not identify as one of the chosen few who "run the school." At the same time, the Kenyan teachers do not feel the level of fear expressed by the Americans. For example, while Andy did not respond to the optional three-question survey, he did respond to the 89-question post-interventional questionnaire (Appendix M). Notable in his post-intervention questionnaire there was a change in his fear level about speaking out if his opinion differs from his administrator. He went from **very often** to **sometimes** in his question 17 response. In fact, the American teachers' choice of problems to take action on was directly impacted by this fear, especially in the case of Jude, who described what was missing in her ecology and how it affected her in the following way of an outline:

Not sure if it's missing as much as it is ever-present. My ecology has a religious component that can be stifling. There is always (name omitted) looking over us so we need to watch what we might say or do. This is in addition to the admin, which by the way is supportive of maintaining community among students and faculty.

Am moderator of the school newspaper and students can't cover topics that might be offensive to (name omitted). (Jude's Reflection, Week 2).

Describing how this ecological gap affected her decision making or her actions, she stated,

> If I'm trying to discipline a student or a situation…I don't want to be stepping on anyone's toes. So again, part of it was just about trying to pick the right fight…the right times to step in and draw the line. And I found the more benevolent I am, the easier it is for the students. They don't feel so wound up. …Remember I teach 11th and 12th graders. The reason I say that is because there's an expected maturity at that level. Some of these kids are going to go to college. So you know, there is a standard of behavior, but the management can

> be very draining. You have to be watchful. And it seems really ridiculous when a kid is 16 and 17. So it's frustrating (Jude, Session 3).

Despite a fear of the authorities looking over her to the extent that she needed to censor herself, she did not address this problem. Instead, she chose to "to be kind to students regardless of the situation (they are coming in late, they didn't turn in their work, they have been absent with no communication)" (Jude's Reflection, Week 2). She chose not to act on her true concern because she felt nothing would change (Session 3). This self-censoring behavior was an obstacle to meaningful agentic action for Jude, creating a kind of cognitive dissonance in the teacher, where she is unable to operate authentically in her best professional judgment. The fear of the person looking over her shoulder (Jude's Week 2 Reflection) and the feeling of hopelessness that anything would change exemplified Jude's experience. Sidney echoed this feeling of fear explaining in her post-intervention interview that she most wanted to get involved with her union and help build curriculum with other colleagues, but was waiting to gain tenure so she could not be fired as easily:

> Once I have that, I don't actually feel like I'll have as much fear around joining these groups or starting these things or working toward what I want. Although it would be better to have administrator support. I wouldn't count on it or wait for it. (Sidney's post-intervention interview).

She decided to wait to take any action until after she came up for tenure after two more years. When I asked if she thought any of the actions that might lead to her remoralization, such as using her voice or practicing teacher leadership would run counter to her administrator's role, she stated without hesitation that they would likely not:

> No, not really. I don't see why they would. Although if I was arguing for things like more teacher work time I do see that as being counter, because I know I've heard the administrator say things like teachers waste time, or

> they're leaving early when they're not supposed to, and blah blah blah, and I hear a lot of teachers say that here also, which I think is weird, but no, other than being a teacher leader, helping people make fun lessons, encouraging collaboration, like all of that, (these) are all things that an administrator should be supporting and, all work to make the school a better place, and all the teachers happier and all that. So no, I don't see why an administrator would be against that unless it was things like changing their meeting schedule. (Sidney's post-intervention interview).

When asked why she would not take action despite that the proposed actions were not likely to cause administrator concern, she cited her general fear. The sense of fear in participants in the United States was felt by three of four participants, but was not felt by any of the Kenyans toward their administrators, to the extent it was in the U.S. Jude's awareness of her self-perceived inability to effect change seemed to have her opting out of attempting to impose any kind of order based on her knowledge and experience. However, as she states, she is attempting to "pick her battles"(Session 3). In an earlier iteration of this study, Jude said she felt fearful and silenced by her administration (2022) due to the nature of the current religious leader in her school's region. She expressed concern and explained that she felt stressed and constrained at school and even outside of school on social media due to this. Initially, in the current iteration of the study, she explained the main problem in her situation (the same one as before) similarly. However, the problem she chose to address was her own "lack of kindness."

The fear teacher participants discussed most often was due to aggressive parents demanding special treatment for their children. In the United States and Kenya, the growing aggression of parents caused participants a large amount of stress and extra work. Bernard addressed this issue by describing the untold hours he spent communicating and calming harassing parents. In fact, the amount of work the parents

caused with their demands for special treatment of their children dramatically impacted his ability to complete his assigned and contracted work. The action he chose to take was the creation of a set of email templates so that he did not have to continually write detailed and lengthy emails to parents. He reported that he felt very happy with the result of these and felt that this gave him time to do his other work at home. This fear, whether caused by a school principal or by parents, had a chilling effect on participants' use of meaningful actions to solve problems. After participating in the intervention, participants reported feeling fear still.

Devaluation: A Lack of Professional Pay, Dignity, and Respect

Lastly, participants discussed how they felt devalued as professionals. While this theme is explained in part by earlier discussions - such as the lack of administrative support, the lack of protection from aggressive parents, and the increasing number of non-teaching tasks like childcare- participants felt a broader sense of devaluation in their professional roles. In a way, this sense of devaluation serves as a kind of summary of felt and expressed themes. In this brief final section, I hope to show how participants expressed this sense of being devalued and how it affected them. Bernard explained, "The dignity and respect I felt kind of lacking in particular moments during my week, particularly dealing with families and parents to be really frank" (session 3). Bernard continued, noting that "Sometimes, like at the end of the day of really hard days with that emotional labor you can almost like feel like less of yourself at the end of the day" (Session 3). This feeling of being less than one's professional self at school was echoed especially by the discussions participants had about being unable to fully operate as professional teachers because their professional opinions are not considered or respected. Teachers continually cited a

lack of pay commensurate with their education and set of professional tasks, a lack of dignity and respect afforded them by their administrators and many parents, and the inability to rise to higher levels in their work. For one participant, it went further. Kenyan teacher Edith explained that parents even question a teacher's appearance. She noted how they say, "Now look at that teacher. Look how she is dressed…it's like shaming. They want you to be smart (British use), but they don't know what we are going through" (Edith, post-intervention interview). Edith noted how "parents poison the children against the teachers" (session three) using their "low wages to make us feel bad." (Edith's post-intervention interview). Giana connected this idea to her sense of demoralization, which she reported increased through the interventions (Table 7 & Table 8). "We also lack being treated with respect and dignity…You find that if you are not respected, then you feel you are demoralized, and you feel that you are not comfortable." (Giana Session 3).

The Kenyans in particular repeatedly explained how they feel frustrated by their inability to rise in status or position. Peter said, "You are just in one position for a long time" (Session 3). Continuing on he explained that this inability to rise, "leads to demoralization sometimes" (Session 3). Edith described the current system in her interior school expressing how she "would like for teachers to be promoted, at least in a bit - maybe after 3 years, after 5 years." (Edith's post-intervention interview). She explained that if a teacher were to go to college she could rise to the level of administrator, however (Edith's post-intervention interview). In Kenya, teachers also have the extra burden of being required to learn Kenya's new curriculum through many hours of training for which they are charged. As Giana mentioned, "we are not yet ready" (Session 3) because they are still researching how to do it, and thus

teachers feel disrespected by this kind of treatment. Edith and Olympus attempted to solve their lack of training by collaborating with peers and using *Limo,* a software application designed to help teachers learn the new curriculum in Kenya. Olympus said, “We also discussed with our colleagues in the school about content. And we also use the (social) media to search for the content (Session 3). Overall, teacher participants’ awareness of their roles within their schools grew from their engagement in this online ecology, and their reflection and actions facilitated in their schools. The emergent set of themes that characterized this research question included a lack of administrative support, a sense of fear, a lack of time, and a sense of isolation. This led to an overall sense of feeling devalued at work and sense of demoralization.

Answering Research Question 2: How Might Dialogic Engagement in a Cycle of Critical Inquiry in an Online COP Counteract Demoralization in Teacher Participants?

Doris Santoro describes *demoralization* as a kind of moral outrage and sadness due to being unable to operate as a professional teacher (2021) and explains that it occurs “because pedagogical policies and school practices threaten the ideals and values, the moral center, teachers bring to work - things that cannot be remedied by resilience” (Santoro, 2021, p. 5). *Remoralization* on the other hand is “the ability to access and conserve the moral rewards of their work- it is through a more action-based approach” (p. 5) that is contextualized and fit to the teacher. Prior to the intervention, 9 of 10 teacher participants identified as demoralized, and 10 of 10 did after. In fact, overall participants' feelings of demoralization increased to a statistically significant level as a whole group when measured using the pre-intervention and post-

intervention Likert scale instrument. Teachers reported feeling more demoralized after the intervention (see Table 8 below).

Figure 7

SPSS output of statistically significant changes (T-test) for Question 15

No.	Question	Pre-survey avg score	change	Post-survey avg score	2 sided p (in order)
15	I feel demoralized.	2.9		3.6	.025

Note: 5 always, 4 very often 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

The notable movement, however, was the degree to which participants' demoralization increased or decreased in relation to the growth of their understanding. As they grew in their awareness of their teaching situation and their roles in their systems, they may have become more aware of the difficulties and pressures they were facing. Their individual understanding of the concept of demoralization, as well as some of the situational stressors they faced, such as a lack of administrator support or a general sense of feeling devalued as a professional may have added to their overall sense of demoralization. Moreover, due to their collaboration with others online and in new networks (Giana and Louise), they may have come to realize how others were also experiencing individual feelings of anger or exhaustion. This realization may have validated their feelings. Despite feeling relieved (Louise, session 3) or "like we are not alone" (Edith, post-intervention interview) in the collaboration, it may have also inadvertently given rise to a greater sense of demoralization.

Table 9 details individuals' changed sense of demoralization, and it is interesting to note that exactly half of the participants reported feeling more demoralization up to 2 points higher, rising from never, sometimes or occasionally, to

very often in 4 out of 5 cases. The other case went from never to sometimes. The other 5 participants reported steady scores ranging from occasionally (1 person) to sometimes (2 people), very often (1 person) to always (1 person). This wide range of experiences might point to where participants' understanding was and how much they learned. Conversely, it may show their own teaching experience and awareness. It is notable that despite this wide range of experiences, no participant's score went down. This might explain the reality of teachers' difficult teaching situations in countries as diverse as Kenya and the US. However, much more research is needed on this commonality.

Table 9

Individual score change: 'I feel demoralized' from pre-int. to post-int.

	Pre-intervention individual score		Post-intervention individual score
Olympus	1	↗+2	3
Giana	2	↗+2	4
Louise	3	↗+1	4
Jude	3	↗+1	4
Hana	3	↗+1	4
Sidney	5	=	5
Peter	4	=	4
Andy	3	=	3
Bernard	3	=	3
Edith	2	=	2

Note: 5 always, 4 very often, 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

Anger is another marker of demoralization (Santoro, 2021) and quantitative data show this increased as well. Participants felt more angry as they continued through the actions in their schools despite their increased collaboration in the community of practice, and this is reflected in the Table 10 data below. This emotion is in line with Santoro's (2021) concept of demoralization in that teachers feel as if they are unable to do the good work of teaching.

Figure 8

SPSS output of statistically significant changes (T-test) for Question 13

No.	Question	Pre-survey avg score	change	Post-survey avg score	2 sided p (in order)	
13	I feel angry.	2.6		3.1	.015	RQ2

Note: 5 always, 4 very often 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

However, the participant sample was small at N = 10, and thus the quantitative instrument's measure holds limited utility. Given the sample size, it is not possible to be sure that even the statistical significance measure is not affected by or overly sensitive to the small participant number. It is interesting however and may have some practical significance—especially when connected with the other data. In particular, qualitative data yield a richer understanding of the experience of talking together with other teachers through the praxis of their critical inquiry into their teaching situations. If one were to only evaluate the quantitative data, one would see how the intervention did not counteract demoralization, as 50% of the participants reported feeling an increase, and 50% said it stayed the same (Figure 2).

However, the qualitative data show how as their awareness grew with observation of their school's strengths and weaknesses, their reflections on these, and the dialogic engagement with other teachers about this, their feelings of discomfort increased. Moreover, it is notable that the particular themes that arose for the participants - lack of administrator support, lack of time, isolation and an overall sense of devaluation as their awareness of their situations and their roles grew - are the primary causes of their felt demoralization. Through the intervention, their demoralization changed as their awareness grew.

Growth in Awareness Caused Discomfort and Increased Demoralization

Olympus, Giana, Louise, Jude, and Hana all reported an increase in demoralization. Edith's and Olympus' initial reflections were incredibly positive about their situations, citing administrator motivation and good planning and organization. They noted their strong class management ability and availability of resources for teaching. However, they also explained that there was a "lack of funds to facilitate learning" and "teacher bullying of students" (Edith & Olympus Reflections, Week 1). These apparent contradictions were further explained in session two which came after the week 1 reflections. As Edith noted, "The system is the one that fails us all the time" (Edith's Post-intervention Interview). Edith spoke more critically in her post-intervention one-on-one interview than her pre-intervention interview, stating in the post-intervention how it is a struggle but she aims to self-motivate and find the positive. Edith noted, "A lot of the time is energetic, but sometimes I also have some burnouts". (Session 2). She explained that she tries "to self-motivate myself" (session 2). In week 2, she and her partner Olympus focused on what they found to be missing in their ecology. Giana and Louise shared feeling demoralized and stated, "Yes you feel as if you are of no importance and your input is not of great importance"(Giana's Week two reflection). This feeling was echoed across all participants. Giana and Louise explained how parents did not pay the school fees on time or at all, absenteeism went unsolved. They explained how school administration compounded these problems by sending students home if their fees were unpaid. Additionally, teachers did not have the digital resources or training to properly conduct class when students were present. They explained that their private school's owner/administrator complies with random parental requests through

periodic top-down mandates. Giana and Louise reported weaknesses in their ecology coalescing about parent resistance to teachers' requests and directions, and a lack of administrator support – even edging into administrator harassment in order to comply with parental requests, though often uninformed. This theme may have resulted in Giana and Louise feeling more demoralized, at +2 and +1 respectively. As their awareness of their teaching situations rose, they became more demoralized. Moreover, as they learned about the concept of demoralization, many for the first time, they also realized that they identified with it.

For Giana, her demoralization might have increased after learning about the concept. Giana was a teacher I met in Amboseli when working with a nonprofit organization that provided teacher training in 2016. I was the trainer and Giana was one of the teachers. They maintained a loose connection on Facebook. Initially, Giana self-described as an administrator and I shared that only teachers could be participants. Giana asked for a Zoom meeting with me and Louise, her recruited partner teacher at the same school. In the Zoom meeting, she advocated for access to the study explaining that her role as administrator was mostly in name only as she had no decision-making power or power over other participants. Due to that, I invited her to participate in the study with Louise. She initially described her situation with frustration, explaining how the administrator who she referred to as the owner simply gave directives and the teachers were to do as they were told. Overall, she described a situation that did not feel positive or as an ecology conducive to professional growth. She and her partner, Louise chose to act on this in an innovative way, which they described as making them feel more excited and interested. Louise noted, "And so we formed our WhatsApp group…I think I'm a new teacher. I feel very motivated. The

attitude has changed. and it's good for me too. It works" (Session 3 Google document p. 16). Despite the reinvigoration, they felt both indicated an increase in demoralization on the post-intervention survey. This could suggest that their awareness of what their feelings were grew. Whether participants' demoralization grew or stayed the same, their awareness of how they felt in the face of their devaluation as professionals wore on them, and this was shared by both Kenyan and U.S. teachers.

When asked if they felt demoralized they responded affirmatively, especially due to the time it takes to research for lessons and the lack of content to teach. Peter noted how a lack of ability to rise or be promoted "leads to demoralization" (Peter's Pre-intervention interview). When asked what they might do to remoralize themselves (Santoro, 2021) and fill the ecological gap, they chose to focus on student-centered learning and teacher leadership (Santoro, 2021). They did this by talking to students and involving them in the teaching, talking to other teachers at their school, and through using social media to problem solve and get teaching ideas. They also chose to engage in conversation with their administrators. They experienced enjoyment from discussing with colleagues and were spurred to find online resources themselves for the new curriculum (2017) in Kenya. Half of the participants maintained a consistent level of demoralization. Sidney, Bernard, Peter, Andy, and Edith reported scores that stayed the same. Sidney and Bernard both took part in earlier interactions of this study and engaged with me in informal discussions periodically on the topic of demoralization. They expressed an understanding of their current situations and where they were in regard to their own remoralization. This aligns with existing work that

suggests teachers feel demoralized by their separation from the good work of education (Santoro, 2021).

These teachers reported that they felt demoralized in their work and through the intervention they learned the name of this feeling (Santoro). In an earlier iteration of this study, I explained the demoralization to Jude, a seasoned master teacher while interviewing her in a coffee shop in San Francisco, and she began to cry. Prior to the explanation, she said she thought it was her fault. Her tears expressed relief and perhaps reflected the suffering she had endured for so long. (Sidney and Bernard were also part of that earlier iteration and learned of the concept then). As participants' perceptions of their teaching situations and their roles changed and grew, their discontent with the status quo also rose. In one surprising case, however, this reversed. Jude who had been so moved by the concept, decided to accept her teaching situation's limitations, chose to "be more kind" (reflection 2) and chose to lessen her expectations of students, allowing them to leave class when they wished and not demanding deadlines for papers. As teachers realized that most of the participants were dealing with similar issues there was an initial sense of relief that they were not alone discussed in the section above on the theme of *isolation.* Soon after, they expressed more anger (Figure 1) and a general feeling of demoralization at the feeling of helplessness in the face of perceived injustice. They felt frustrated that the role they were trained for was in fact a role where they felt as if their input was not wanted and where they were not trusted or treated as a professional (Figure 1).

Once participants defined the gap in their ecology and the problem or problems they found in their ecologies, they were faced with a choice, should they take meaningful action or not? Some took bold action as in the case of Giana, Peter,

Louise and Andy, some took small steps such as Edith, Olympus, Sidney, Bernard and Hana and one teacher, Jude, took an unexpected step in order to cope with her silencing ecology. Participants Giana, Louise, Peter and Andy all exerted high agentic actions which might change the system within their schools. Sidney made small changes that may or may not shift her personal practice in a small way and Jude made a change that gave students dominance over her expertise, in order to stay out of the line of fire of demanding parents and administrators. As a seasoned master teacher, she simply chose not to fight and instead, complied with external demands. This varied growth represents a kind of teacher agency continuum. Bernard noted that he will continue with the template and enjoyed interacting with the Kenya teachers greatly. Bernard in the end chose these agentic actions to help his situation. He learned that he must choose to impose a "set of clear objectives for myself and concentrate on developing habits that promote remoralization" (Bernar's Optional Post-Intervention Open-Ended Survey).

Some Actions Counteracted Demoralization

The overall theme of this intervention was that of rising awareness and tentative initial actions and surges of excitement and joy if the step is taken. These incidents consisted of *remoralization* activities and in our short intervention were fleeting, and a general sense of demoralization remained. For instance, Bernard noted:

> I think the intentionality of taking action for remoralization helped a lot. I may have taken these steps otherwise but seeing it through the lens of remoralization and dignity added to the overall impact. (Bernard Week 2 Reflection)

Toward this point about the possibilities for reinvigoration, and despite the quantitative decline in some scores, the qualitative data told a deeper story. As Sidney noted,

> I feel like it was really helpful that like in 3 weeks, we got this crash course about what demoralization is and how to remoralize because I never had the words to describe what I was feeling…I did feel a little reinvigorating of things… I really liked learning about the actual concepts about how to remoralize, and I feel like that's something that I will talk to other people about this soon. (Sidney's Post-Intervention Interview)

Sidney and Bernard explain that this intervention helped them feel better, because it gave them the language to explain what they were feeling and some strategies on how to feel better. They expressed a kind of relief at learning the language. As a result, they saw the system and their role more clearly and felt more able to effect change more deliberately. They had a surge of joy and enthusiasm. As Sidney explained, "I learned about demoralization and remoralization. I have learned about ways to remoralize myself and I am actually excited and hopeful to remember to take these actions that give me purpose in my workplace" (Sidney, optional survey). She went on to explain that she will "definitely return to the remoralization chart in the future. I want to work with teacher activists to regain some of my power at school" (Sidney, optional survey). As they continued through the intervention, those who chose action based on fear or took no action increased in their feelings of demoralization.

Figure 9 shows how both Jude and Hana reported feeling more demoralized after the intervention. They both reported feeling demoralized sometimes in the pre-intervention survey and very often in the post-intervention survey. This increase is likely not due to an increase in awareness for Jude since she took part in an earlier

iteration of this study. During that cycle, she considered her teaching situation and her role in her system considerably, detailing it at length in two thirty-minute one-on-one interviews with me. More likely, she is exhausted, choosing to pick her battles carefully (Jude, session 3). However, her belief that nothing will change (session 3) might influence her report of increased demoralization after the intervention. In the case of Hana, the feeling of demoralization may have increased as she learned how more senior teachers felt. However, these are speculations and more research would be needed.

Figure 9

SPSS output of statistically significant changes (T-test) (I feel demoralized score change)

	Pre-intervention survey		Post-intervention survey
Jude	3	↗ +1	4
Hana	3	↗ +1	4

Note: 5 always, 4 very often, 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

Those who chose some kind of meaningful action either rated their demoralization the same or rose by +1. Table 10 correlates the pre-intervention and post-intervention feeling of demoralization reported on the questionnaires with the action or actions participants took. I described these actions as meaningful if participants described them that way, or as not taken or not in alignment with their values (Table 9). Interestingly, those who took no action or took action that did not align with their values increased their sense of denationalization. Both participants, Jude and Hana, reported going from sometimes demoralized to very often

demoralized. However, as noted before, this sample size N = 10 is small, and more research is needed.

Table 10

Scores changes on "I feel demoralized" correlated to actions taken

Pre-intervention survey			Post-intervention survey
(These participants took some kind of meaningful action)			
Olympus	1	↗+2	3
Giana	2	↗+2	4
Louise	3	↗+1	4
Sidney	5	=	5
Peter	4	=	4
Andy	3	=	3
Bernard	3	=	3
Edith	2	=	2
(These participants took no action or took actions that did not align with their own values)			
Jude	3	↗+1	4
Hana	3	↗+1	4

Note: 5 always, 4 very often, 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

Despite their demoralization score increase, participants engaged deeply in the process. As Peter and Andy explained:

> We decided to look at demoralization caused by socioeconomic factors and sought to help this ecology by trying to minimize absenteeism. We feel we can propose names of needy students to business community and government organizations so that they can be considered for bursaries and scholarships. (Peter's Reflection, Week 2)

These partners also chose a secondary action of communicating with fellow teachers and delegating work differently – as much as they could- so as to help the whole group. This theme of teamwork was strong throughout all of the Kenyan participants and wholly absent from the American participants, with the exception of Bernard, who had reached out to his colleagues (Bernard's Week Two Reflection, previously noted). Peter found that the demoralization he was feeling affected him personally so he chose to look for resources and techniques he found online. He chose

to prioritize self-care, seeking support, and engaging with the community. Throughout his reflections, this self-awareness and awareness of personal power to affect his situation grew. In session 3, he reported how this action worked out:

> We first had some people coming to a school, and they were looking for a way they could help us. Therefore we suggested that they can sponsor any students. We forwarded names of needed students who are constantly absent, and they promised to sponsor them to reduce absenteeism. Secondly, we had more engagement with parents. We realized that they did not have information on what to do. There is a disconnect between the parents and teachers. and that discussion was very fruitful in terms of we were then knowing what needs to be done by all of us. (Peter, Session 3)

Andy underscored the conclusions of his research partner Peter, noting the same weaknesses or gaps and strengths in the school ecology. Like Peter, he also highlighted the lack of logic used by the administration at the school that caused him unnecessary extra work when his students were urged to attend the town event but he was not allowed to skip or delay lessons for them. (Peter's post-intervention interview). Like Peter, Andy chose the same ways to try and remoralize himself using techniques that are more in line with recharging from burnout. This is an interesting disconnect in understanding and could be an interesting intersection to research. The chart offered to participants online was digital but both Peter and Andy noted it was "too small" to see, so they pursued resources online. This might be a limitation of the research and will be discussed later or it might be a lack of computer training. The community-oriented action this team chose to fill a gap in their ecology and remoralize themselves fell into the proscribed categories from the remoralization chart, so it is likely that the sessions remediated their understanding. (see if I can find some session 2 text to support this). The small size and limited readability of the chart

were also addressed by the Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D. in the session and were changed by the researcher for easier reading (Session 1).

Another participant, Sidney, described herself as being afraid to speak, particularly as she was at a new school - her third in three years, despite good performance reviews - and lacked tenure, making her fear being fired. She reported feeling continually dissatisfied with her teaching situations. Repeatedly she said she felt frustrated, isolated, and afraid to act or speak despite acknowledging that administrators would not likely get angry with the actions for students and teacher collaboration that she hoped to champion (Sidney's Post-Intervention Interview). She chose to join a Facebook group of teachers but was still awaiting acceptance into the group. This lack of additional action after the initial outreach may be reflected in the feeling "always" (a rating of 5) on the post-intervention survey statement "I feel demoralized" (figure 5)" after the intervention as well. This might mean that though her initial action of reaching out to a group might be a small action, it still yielded a slight lessening of the sense of helplessness and hopelessness that characterizes demoralization. At the same time it is important to recognize that demoralization will remain high unless there is follow through on action. It is also notable that she took the agentic step of spontaneously interviewing a fellow teacher about how he felt about his own teaching situation, during the observation and reflection period of this intervention. This move to connect with another teacher was unexpected and would be a beneficial addition for other teachers to try, if this research were replicated.

If participants chose to act on what they found to be missing in their ecology - a problem in their immediate system - and nine of ten did, their outlook changed. They felt better about their work and several reported joy or excitement. Sidney and

Louise both said they felt the excitement that was similar to being a new teacher again. Despite that joy, once the awareness of their situation grew, so did demoralization. However, they felt some joy when they took action. This apparent contradiction of feeling some joy or enthusiasm (Peter, Session 3) yet also feeling demoralization at the same or an increased level (Figure 5) pointed to the feelings most participants expressed.

There were two exceptions to this. Jude chose an action that effectively silenced herself and that frustrated her. She felt worse and reinforced her point that she was choosing her battles more carefully (Jude, Session 3). As participants worked to fill an ecological gap or solve a problem, some participants chose to focus on remoralization, which in essence, is finding a way to reconnect the work of teaching to the teacher's moral center (Santoro & Hazel, 2022). Participants had Santoro's remoralization chart to work with as a resource if they chose (table 8). It highlights five areas of focus: activism, student-centered action, voice, and teacher leadership. While all participants grew in demoralization or reported feeling the same level of demoralization, no participants counteracted their demoralization. However, those participants who engaged in meaningful actions to effect change they felt needed to happen, reported feeling hopeful and excited. Those who took no action or action against their values did not feel this hope.

Answering Research Question 3: How Might Teacher Agency Grow Through the Combination of an Online Critical Cycle of Inquiry in a Community of Practice with Peers Outside of School and Action Research Steps Implemented Inside their Schools?

Teacher agency operates in a school ecology that nurtures and allows it and is built on the personal capacity of the individual teacher (Priestley et al., 2015). Personal capacity includes *maturity, a sense of responsibility, professional training, and intellectual ability* among others. In essence, this inquiry into teacher agency asked whether engagement in the online community of practice fostered enough teacher agency to effect change in a participant's school. Participants collaborated with a partner from the community of practice in their school or worked alone, as was the case for the four American participants, to see if this created a supportive environment for agency growth in their schools.

The answer to this third research question about how this ecology might support teacher agency in participants' schools was found primarily through the analysis of qualitative data. The words teacher participants used to describe their experiences in sessions, interviews, reflections, and open-ended questions demonstrate how they began to work with agency in their schools during this intervention. The correlating quantitative data with statistically significant findings will be described for reliability purposes, with the understanding that this was a small sample (N=10) population. Broadly, participants gained encouragement and a kind of permission in this new ecology, and they were able to operate with agency in a new way in their systems by first practicing it in the community of practice online and then taking the leap to applying it in their systems.

Agency Growth Generation Techniques that Worked for Participants

Participants who used their required school activities to leverage the formation of new networks operated with teacher agency. Like Giana and Louise, Peter and Andy used the planned activities their school had already set up to network with a key stakeholder—in this case, a sponsor, and the absentee students' families, to broker a new deal. Notably, Peter and Andy chose a problem that directly affected their students' learning and happiness first (session 3). Thus, Peter and Andy sought and found a solution for their students. Throughout the post-intervention interview, Peter explained that learning about teacher agency was important to him. He reflected, "You can look into yourself and see which change you can …you solve, which change can you undertake within yourself. And maybe later on, you can make some major changes in your teaching career" (Peter's post-intervention interview). He connected the awareness in himself to action in his school setting. The action he and his partner took of connecting with parents socially to build community allowed them to discuss families' unpaid school fees and get their fees paid. This kind of action would usually be done by the administration in their school, since like many in Kenya, students are sent home if fees are not paid. His administrator however did not take any action on this, and the student dismissals have a negative impact on student learning, teacher planning, and teacher-parent relationships. By solving this problem, Peter and Andy show evidence of agentic growth, which might point to a system change in their school going forward. Peter sounded excited when he spoke of what the intervention gave him in session three. When asked in a later optional survey if he had any suggestions or general comments, he wrote,

> This interaction was a wonderful experience. I did not know at first that I will learn a lot because I thought maybe I will only give out information. Being in

> a position to meet and listen to other teachers' feelings about teaching was an experience out of this world. (Peter's Response, Optional Post-Intervention Open-Ended Survey)

When asked what he learned he said, "One: The concept of action research was new to me. I now appreciate it. .Two: Teacher agency and remoralization" (Peter's Response, Optional Post-Intervention Open-Ended Survey). When asked if he thought he might use any of these ideas in the future, he wrote, "Especially teacher agency. I can think of ways of [e]ffecting change within myself" (Peter's Response, Optional Post-Intervention Open-Ended Survey). Peter's full processing of the concepts showed how even a brief intervention of two weeks can effect change in a teacher's awareness of his own power within his school ecology and how he could use it to effect change for himself, his fellow teachers and his students. In the case of Peter, the action he took with his partner Andy changed the culture of his community by changing how financially distressed families were funded. By connecting the sponsor to the family and facilitating the agreement to pay tuition, Peter and Andy built relationships, and empowered themselves, the parents, the sponsor, and most importantly, the student learner.

Peter and Andy went further than any other participants besides Giana and Louise in that they were able to solve a problem in their ecology - that of unpaid fees that kept students from learning. By engaging with the parents they filled the tuition gap that administrators failed to remediate. However, when Peter initially approached the topic he started with small steps. He said later:

> I (have) got to prioritize some tasks and leave out some (of) our responsibilities because it was not possible to do all of them. So I would have to decide on which one to take on, and which one to leave at the same time. I would assign some colleagues to do some things for me. But of course that help is not forthcoming all the time. (Peter, Session 3)

Peter identified that he used his agency to decide which tasks to accomplish and which to discard and appears to have given himself permission to do this. However, he notes the remaining complication that help is not always forthcoming. Peter summarized his understanding of the situation in his one-on-one interview after the intervention when he said at the end of his review of their ecological situation, "Thus we have to look inward to the things that we can do for ourselves by ourselves such as seeking opportunities for career growth, engaging in activities that promote personal advancement" (Peter, Post-Intervention Interview).

Some participants tapped into collaboration, research, and asking each other questions and were able to operate in their school with teacher agency. Louise detailed how despite the lack of support she and her partner had from their administrator at their school, they were able to find a way to grow as teachers in collaboration with others. Giana and Louise created a local online network because their ecology was missing a way for them to train on Kenya's new curriculum. Louise explained,

> We mentioned about not having support from our management and parents. So what we've done over the week (is) we've tried to engage with other teachers that teach in private schools. And we have realized that the problem is common, that even for them they also have the same problem. So what we have decided to do (is) just to adjust. We accept that we will not always get the full support that we need. But again, because we need to make sure we teach to our maximum so that we can help this learner…And that is what we've been able to accomplish. (Louise, Session 3)

Thus, they used a required school event to network with teachers from nearby private school teachers like themselves, in order to build a network of teachers who could support and help each other learn the new curriculum. They utilized the WhatsApp software application on their phones to do so in order to connect. It is

notable that they realized that their administrator and the government would not change and support them, so they adjusted and found a way to learn what they needed to know in order to support their students. This agentic action altered their own teaching, and may impact their students' understanding and success, as well as the other schools. Time will tell. Of all the participants in this intervention, Giana and Louise went the furthest to effect actual change, not only in their own school but in their region. They reached out to other teachers and tried new ways to solve their problems. They first talked together and then had the idea to extend this conversation in much the same way we did in the intervention.

In the US, Sidney began to extend herself in much the same way, though she found a network that had already been built, noting:

> I had heard about this group of educators in my district where it's a Facebook group. No Admin allowed, and people communicate. I actually heard about it from Hana's friend who used to work in my district, and so I sent a request because I thought, I do want to get involved with some teacher activists in my community. I think that really helps my remoralization and helps my drive or being a change maker, or even just finding some people to chat to about the community that we work in. So they haven't let me in yet, though, but hopefully they will, and I'm kind of excited. (Sidney, Session 3)

Sidney's willingness to try to connect with teacher activists was a modest move, but even that step left her feeling excited. She wanted to become involved and talk to teachers in order to solve problems; it meant something to her. Hana reflected on what she learned from talking to teachers about their problems. She stated:

> I learned some strategies/approaches for taking back teacher agency. I also got the opportunity to hear that teachers across the globe share many of the same struggles. I hope to continue my work in effecting change to my ecology through task prioritization and scheduling. Taking back some of my personal time. (Hana, Optional Post-Intervention Open-Ended Survey)

Despite not actually taking her planned action step of using a prioritized to-do list, Hana still felt hopeful that she would do so in the future. It is notable that she understands this future action as one that *continues* her work to change her ecology. Based on her words, her work to change her ecology has already begun despite having only planned for action.

Participants who chose to find the time to take action by cutting other tasks were more able to operate with teacher agency. For instance, Bernard chose to address this time re-allotment in his action by taking two steps. First he wanted to stop or lessen the time he spent emailing with parents who did not agree with his teaching methods. To fill this gap he created a template that he filled and added to as needed. He reported back that this had helped as it had saved hours of his time. Secondly, he described an action he took inside his classroom that buoyed students and allowed him to operate with more agency. He explains the context in detail.

> We all feel incredibly pressed for time so something I tried to do this week is I had an item on my checklist every day…Our classes are more teacher-centered rather than student-centered, and so I tried to build in more student agencies, some more autonomy, which did two things. One, it gave me a little bit more time, so I wasn't having to juggle so many things all at once, and 2. It just allowed me to have more individual check-ins and my class did feel more student-centered. It gave me a little bit more time… I was able to help them be more self-directed on that, give them individual check-in time, but then also use some time for grading and my own paperwork. (Bernard, Session 3)

Bernard chose to re-allocate his time to get more of his work done. Because of the way he chose to do this, he not only operated with more agency, but his students did too. While several participants discussed focusing on their students more through the intervention, such as Edith who explained how her students gain so much from learning in school, and noted, "whatever we do give is worth something, you know.

Sometimes I feel so happy when I teach" (Edith's post-intervention interview). Despite this focus on student-centered learning and pedagogical goal-setting by Hana and Bernard, the quantitative results (Table 12 below) showed a statistically significant decrease in this. This might be due to their overall raised awareness of their teaching situations and roles or even what the concept of student-centered learning meant but more research would be required.

Figure 10

SPSS output of statistically significant changes (T-test) for Questions 55 and 70

No.	Question	Pre-survey avg score	change	Post-survey avg score	2 sided p (in order)	
55	I set pedagogical and/or curricular goals in my classroom.	4.5	↘	4.1	.037	RQ3
70	I take student-centered actions	4.6	↘	4.2	.037	RQ3

Note: 5 always, 4 very often, 3 sometimes, 2 occasionally, 1 never

Participants questioned themselves as they went through the intervention, going through a process of observation, discussion, action, and reflection. In the community of practice and with partner teachers, they also questioned and reflected about strengths and weaknesses. When they chose actions, they exerted courage to try without a guarantee of success. Sidney showed a moment of agency when she spontaneously chose to interview her neighbor teacher about his thoughts on his teaching situation. She reported wanting to know if he felt the same way as she did, and even reported her findings in her reflection (Sidney's Post-Intervention Interview). She exerted teacher agency and extended teacher collaboration to another

by doing this. Since he described her ecology as missing curriculum and collaboration. - an identical concern explained by most of the Kenyan teachers, the subsequent small action she took to remediate this was to request to join a facebook group. This act was promising for agentic growth, and despite the fact that she reported regretfully that they had not yet let her in by the end of the intervention, it was a notable action that gave rise to her excitement.

Participants found several paths to agentic growth: using required school events to network, and finding solutions for students; collaborating, researching, asking questions, talking together to solve problems, and choosing to reclaim time for their choices. Overall, most participants operated with increased agency in their schools. Participants also shared an additional benefit of feeling better and more authentically enthusiastic as they began to reclaim their professional selves. Bernard noted in Session 3, "Yesterday when I was just doing the reflection. I felt like more of myself than I did a week ago. So on the whole, just I think the intentionality of just thinking about remoralization did help this week, and I had a better week for it" (Bernard, session 3).

Choices that Did Not Generate Teachers' Agency

Some choices participants took did not generate teacher agency. It did not grow when a teacher took no action or took actions that did not align with her values. Hana explained that due to too many assigned tasks during the week, she could not take an action during the intervention, explaining that she had an intention to do so and had chosen an idea based on what Peter shared about task prioritization. She noted:

> I don't have a lot to say about how it actually worked this week because I didn't do a lot of work on it this week. But I'm hoping to continue those efforts

> of writing out the absolutely "have to do" by this date and then the other step can wait. (Hana, Session 3)

When choosing an action step in the Week 2 reflections using the provided remoralization chart (Figure 7) or the key terms page (Appendix B) Hana noted:

> My action step is to find/create a schedule so I can keep track of my to-do's and have actionable steps when I do find myself dissociating or just sitting down. Because, in that moment, I can't prioritize/think about the 9000 things I know I need to complete/begin. (Hana's Reflection, Week 2)

Hana explained that she struggled immensely to complete all of her work and maintain a reasonable work-life balance. She described having to take on many extra tasks while other teachers did not, and explained her school as generally very positive with the exception that some teachers are considered as "in the know" with the principal's directives while others are not (Hana's Reflection, Week 1). In recounting a communication issue from a recent meeting, Hana believed that she had understood what the principal had really intended to say, even though his actual words differed. She stated,

> During the meeting, the principal was talking about how we weren't losing any staff. He meant in regard to NUMBER of staff, but it was an uncomfortable scenario because two of the people in that room were asked to resign. I think the language used was just unfortunate, but the tension in the room was palpable (Hana's Reflection, Week 1).

She explained how she took the time to explain what the principal really meant to a colleague who did not share this inside knowledge and who felt upset by his words in the meeting. Hana explained how the teacher who was upset came to speak to her about it.

> Today she checked in with me in the morning and was still upset about it. She ended up crying out of pure frustration and then feeling morbidly embarrassed by that. I hope I successfully convinced her not to feel ashamed and that her feelings are valid (Hana's Reflection, Week 1).

Hana felt overwhelmed by her workload but chose to spend her time with an upset teacher on behalf of the principal due to his communication misstep. While this might be seen as simply one teacher comforting another due to stress on the job, Hana helped the teacher understand what the principal had intended, despite his actual delivered message. As one of the teachers who self-identified as having a good relationship with the principal, Hana may have felt a responsibility to her colleague to comfort her and better communicate the principal's intended message. There may be motivating factors to this but more research is needed to understand why some teachers take on the clean-up duties for ineffective administrator communication.

Agency did not grow when teachers took an action that did not align with their values. Despite her concerns about being silenced in her teaching situation, Jude decided her action would focus on allowing her senior high school students to leave class as they wished, and not hold them accountable for their homework deadlines despite her frustration with this (Jude, Session 3). Moreover, while she does not cite administrators as the problem, their silence in the face of pressuring parents and students is notable. Jude stated in an earlier iteration of this study that she felt silenced and felt fear due to the nature of the current religious leader in her school's district. She expressed concern and explained that she felt stressed and constrained at school and even on social media due to this. Initially in this study, she explained the main problem in her situation (the same one as before) similarly. In Week 2, Jude underscored that she experienced her ecology as stifling under the current religious leader in response to the reflection questions about what was missing from her ecology and how her ecology of teaching affected her decision-making and actions. She reflected, "it is something I have come to accept as a reality - (name

omitted). Many years ago, things with the (name of organization omitted) were progressive (In a positive way) and welcoming, inclusive, then came a new leader who sees religion as a means to allow discrimination. (Jude's Reflection, Week 2)

The next day, Jude went from stating the problem clearly to apologizing and stating that her words were not productive. She wrote, "Sorry this got me ranting. Not productive" (Jude's Reflection, Week 2).

Instead of choosing an action based on the problems she initially described, she described her potential action differently, focusing on increasing her kindness to students in the face of their lack of work completion or learning class. (Jude's Reflection, Week 2) She decided her action would focus on allowing her high school students to leave class as they wished, and not hold them accountable for their homework deadlines. As she detailed what that might look like with students frequently leaving class, she explained how she chose to "pick my battles" (Jude, Session 3). Jude explained that she chose to do this because she felt it was important to choose which points to push (Jude, Session 3), and expressed her view that holding her high school students accountable would prove ineffective. Based on this and her other comments along the way, it may suggest that she feels she does not hold enough power in her current ecology to get students to comply with common rules. When asked in session three if she was able to take any kind of small action, whether it was remoralization or another kind, Jude wanted to speak first. She said,

> I just want to say that letting go of some of these things really, just, it's better not to be trying to control too many things, and (I) know the important things have to do with the students' learning. Certainly, if their behavior is really out of line, but asking to go to the bathroom- sometimes kids just can't sit still and try to just be more generous toward the student, and not suspicious and corrective. (Jude, Session 3)

When asked if it gave her any peace, she replied,

> Yeah, because I realized it's - I can't change. There's nothing's (that is) going to change. So if I just reverse my attitude toward it, it really did so far change the situation. I can't promise. I've just got to keep practicing it. I'm not saying I'm brilliant by any means. It's something I'm going to have to keep practicing. (Jude, Session 3)

Jude missed the second session of the intervention, which served to detail much of the action step process (Appendix F) that was followed. When offered a make-up session, she declined. Jude took action in her school in a second way. She individually tracked and served an 18-year-old student who was absent and did not choose to follow up with assignments, she described her action as an "End of quarter accommodation: Making plans for a student who has been out sick for many classes. Still struggling with how to deal with end of quarter missing assignments" (Jude Reflection, Week 2), she explained that "through reflection she can make changes, and that the time spent doing this is valuable for self-improvement" (Jude's Optional Post-Intervention Open-Ended Survey). This might mean that Jude understood she was acting agentically by acting counter to beliefs noting her thoughts on her students' behavior. However, the choice she made ran counter to her beliefs and knowledge of high school teaching, and thus seems disconnected to her conclusion that changes can be made through reflection. The case of Jude was a troubling one, as she saw student accountability as a battle she chose not to fight (session 3). Yet, key findings showed some movement in agentic growth after the intervention for most participants.

Summary of Findings

As participants worked together as a whole group online and in pairs in Kenya, and individually in the US, they explained how they began to feel more

hopeful, noting that they remembered what the excitement of being a new teacher felt like. They reported that they remembered and felt that joy. They also remembered or learned about how their roles in their schools held power. In all but two cases this led them to engage meaningfully in actions to remediate a self-identified problem in their immediate environment. Those eight participants who took meaningful action, albeit small steps in several cases, felt a rise in a sense of joy and empowerment. In several cases this also manifested in more creative problem-solving and collaboration ideas. Generally, teachers reported enjoying the process but not having enough time or energy left to engage more. As they spoke together, they shared that they felt encouraged by each other and began acting more confidently and reported being more hopeful. They began to value themselves as teachers more and in some cases, stopped waiting for their administrators to value them. For instance, Peter summarized his experience:

> I realized that there are some things that I can do. I don't have to look, to wait for the administration to do everything to change the way they (sic)...and in most cases they may not change. So I think my perception changed. (Peter's Post-Intervention Interview).

Teachers expressed their deepening understanding of their roles in their own schools after listening to their peers online, reflecting, and taking action in the ways they chose in their schools. They shared these ideas verbally in sessions online and in reflections collected from a private Google Classroom. The surfacing of these themes shows evidence of a growing awareness in participants. As Jude shared in her option response after the intervention, "Through reflection, I can make changes" (Jude, Optional Survey after intervention). Their perceptions of their role deepened, and they began to see that the struggles they felt were common to most of the participants. This

gave them a sense of relief. They also explained that they used social media – especially Facebook and WhatsApp – to connect to other local teachers. They expressed their understandings in their written reflections, their survey responses, interviews (3 pre-intervention and 3 post-intervention), and their open-ended responses to the optional post-survey (that 6 of 10 completed). Interestingly, in a seemingly contradictory turn, this growth in awareness led to a statistically significant increase in a self-reported sense of demoralization. Overall, teachers grew more aware of their roles within a system and how the stress imposed by these systems affected them in similar ways to their peers. They shared that learning how other teachers were also dealing with these stressors, and that they were not alone, made them feel better. They expressed a rise in demoralization as they grew more aware of their own and their fellow participants' situations.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The initial aim of this study was to empower those teachers who did not have access to a conducive or nurturing ecology at their schools to grow their *teacher agency* in a new online and global environment, the COP. To evaluate this through the process of the two-week intervention, I asked three research questions.

1. How might participants' awareness of their teaching situations, their roles, and their roles within their systems grow?
2. How might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an online COP counteract *demoralization* in teacher participants?
3. How might *teacher agency* grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented inside their schools?

In this chapter, I discuss my findings, first in an overview and organized by research questions. Specifically, I explain how these data address the research questions and relate to key literature that frames the theoretical framework and concepts. Before concluding, I will explain the limitations and threats to validity and reliability, lay out the implications for research and practice, and suggest future research possibilities. I collected and analyzed qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, whole group sessions, 58 written reflections, and quantitative data from pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires. I triangulated these data by correlating statistically significant changes found through SPSS software to qualitative themes surfaced and organized by research question.

I realized through the process of listening to participants that the real aim of this study was to empower teachers to effect system change in their schools through

the praxis of critical inquiry (Freire, 2000) and dialogue and helping them solve problems together (Santoro, 2021). This process, for the eight participants who chose to take meaningful action, served as a brief but enlightening and liberatory process. The innovation for this study - an online community of practice reinforced by reflections based on observations and actions taken in participants' schools, was framed in Freire's (2000) *Critical pedagogy,* Wheatley's (2019) Berkana Two Loop model of emergent change, Priestley et al.'s (2015) concept of *teacher agency, and* Santoro's (2021) concept of *demoralization.*

Overview of Findings

Initially, I realized that my findings indicate how much of a struggle teachers are experiencing both in the US and Kenya. While the situations are different regarding their access to technology, their overall feelings of not being valued or seen as professionals were common. This concern centered around two core issues - teachers are not afforded the respect of professionals by their communities, and they are not able to fully do the tasks associated with teaching. This is noted especially in the lack of pay commensurate with professional work and their increasing lack of ability to make decisions that affect their students' learning. They pointed to how increasing priority is given to uninformed and intrusive parents who hold power over administrators either through money or social capital. Teachers' sense of devaluation has also increased due to the increasing number of non-teaching and unskilled labor tasks (e.g., childcare duties) that they are being asked to perform. While these seem to be worse in the US, they are also part of the teachers' tasks in Kenya. The core issue in Kenya is the lack of access - to quality training that is not Cascade training (Bett, 2019) and the lack of access to technology to access teaching resources. However, the

recent initiatives in Kenya to build out the infrastructure of internet and Wi-Fi connectivity may help exponentially in the future.

Research Question One

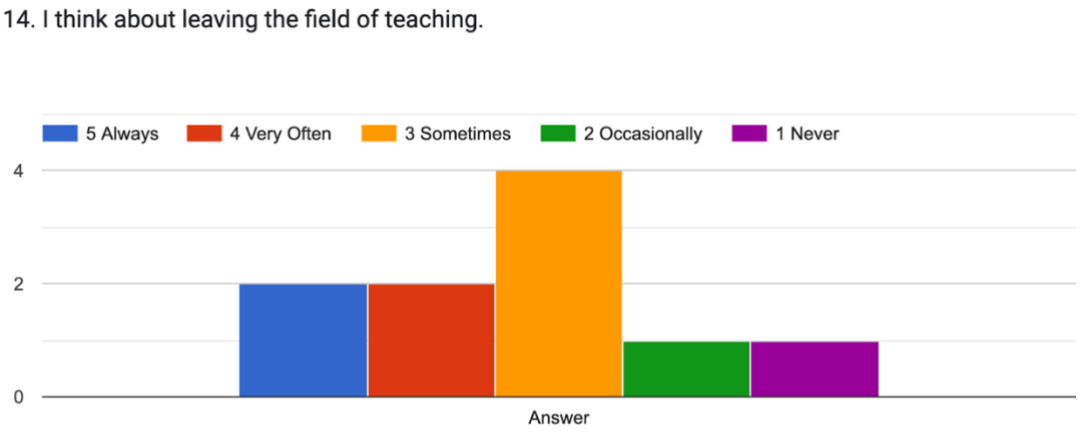
How might participants' awareness of their teaching situations, their roles, and their roles within their systems grow?

Qualitative data show how teachers' awareness of their teaching situations and their roles within their schools grew. I found this by surfacing five themes: a *lack of time, a feeling of isolation, a lack of administrator support, fear, and a sense of being devalued as professionals*. In both countries, teachers felt a lack of time as a central theme. Non-teaching and unskilled labor tasks such as childcare duties were increasingly assigned to professionally trained teachers and this encroached on their ability to get their teaching tasks done. This was felt to a much greater extent by the US teachers and all but one teacher participant in the entire study noted that they think about leaving the field. The feeling of isolation teachers felt came in two categories. The Kenyans felt isolated from resources such as computers and training, and the US teachers felt isolated from each other due to their lack of time caused by so many extra, non-teaching duties in addition to teaching. A lack of administrator support was reported through interviews, sessions, and reflections. This gap in the participants' ecology manifested in several ways ranging from administrator negligence to a general lack of understanding of teachers' material. Several participants experienced fear of their administrators and felt silenced. Their reactions to their administrators varied and this intervention gave a new avenue for some teachers to respond to these administrators. They found a way around the problem of unpaid school fees that the administrators had failed to solve. Teachers partnered with community members to

solve it for themselves and their students. The US teachers reported a sense of fear, and they expressed fear of their administrators but also of the particular parents who held power in the community, especially if their administrators did not generally support them. Across Kenya and the US, all participants but one reported feeling afraid of their administrator and all participants reported feeling afraid of parents. The fear teachers felt had various effects. Some were silenced and chose not to engage with the administrator. Instead, they remained silent and did what they were told. All reported feeling angry at work, and all but one reported that they thought about leaving the field of teaching. Thus, overall, teachers felt devalued. They pointed to salaries that are not commensurate with their professional training and experience, the increase in non-teaching and often unskilled duties like childcare, the disrespect they encounter with an increasing number of parents, and the overall lack of voice they have in academic and curricular decision-making.

Figure 11

Post Intervention: I think about leaving



As shown in Figure 11, quantitative data correlate with these surfaced themes. Teachers felt less trusted and treated as professionals by their administrators and noted that their input was less desired by their administrators on academic matters. Regarding training, they felt they had less up-to-date training in the last year, and that professional development (teacher training) was less often conducted by a faculty member who was trained in the method by an expert. Overall they felt less supported by administrators in parent or faculty meetings and more tempted to give a higher grade to lessen parental pressure. Teacher participants reported a growth in awareness of their teaching situations and their roles in their school through the surfacing of these five themes. This finding led me to ask if the praxis of critical inquiry helped to lessen these stressors.

Research Question Two:

How might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an online COP counteract demoralization in teacher participants?

Dialogic engagement in the COP did not counteract demoralization. In fact, quantitative data showed that demoralization rose by a statistically significant amount. Since this was a small sample (N = 10), it was difficult to extrapolate from overall statistics, so I looked more closely at individual quantitative responses. Upon deeper inspection, half of the teachers (N = 5) reported feelings of increased demoralization, and half (N = 5) reported unchanged levels of demoralization. No teachers expressed a belief that this intervention counteracted their sense of demoralization.

Qualitative data reveal a larger story, showing that increased awareness led to heightened discomfort and demoralization. While some actions appeared to temporarily counteract demoralization, participants still rated themselves as

demoralized by the end of the study. As their awareness of their teaching situations, and their roles within their schools grew, and they surfaced five main themes - a lack of time, a lack of administrative support, fear, isolation, and an overall sense of being devalued - teacher participants grew more demoralized. They felt worse because they grew even more aware of these struggles, and the fact that all of the participants also struggled with them. While they realized their situations more deeply and became more demoralized, several of them also learned that they were alone - that it was not their fault. This epiphany allowed them to drop some of the shame society places on them, as Edith noted in her post-intervention interview- "they want you to be superwoman." Once they recognized that there were problems in their school ecology and that they could take action to ameliorate them, those who took meaningful action felt better. Those who opted out of action, or took action not in alignment with their values, increased their demoralization (Table 8) and did not report feeling better, even temporarily. They were not able to reach *conscientization* (Freire, 2000). Jude was silenced due to her oppressive culture (Freire, 2000) and Hana was so overworked with duties outside of teaching that she could not access her teaching fully (Santoro, 2021).

Quantitative data show half of the participants (N = 5) reported having the same level of demoralization after the end of the intervention, and half (N=5) reported an increase in demoralization. The small sample size indicates a lessening of the impact of this finding as it did not hold across the board. For example, teachers reported taking more student-centered actions in their classrooms but reported taking fewer when asked about it in the questionnaire after the intervention. This might be due to their growing awareness, but more research would be needed to conclude this.

However, it was notable that no participant reported a decrease in demoralization in the post-intervention survey. The finding that all participants in Kenya and the U.S. experienced demoralization led me to ask how the intervention impacted their teacher agency.

Research Question Three

How might teacher agency grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented inside their schools?

Qualitative data show that the temporary ecology of this community of practice allowed 8 of 10 participants to act with more *teacher agency* in their school at varying levels and to varying extents. The most modest examples of new demonstrations of *teacher agency* included planning out time-saving strategies to take back time for a better work-life balance, and the most impactful examples included creating a regional network online to collaborate on required teacher training. Participants expressed varying levels of awareness of this agentic growth - from a small shift like Sidney spontaneously interviewing her neighbor teacher about his perceptions of his teaching situation and role (Sidney's post-intervention interview) to Peter's fuller realization that expressed deep awareness of his role within his teaching situation when he reflected, "You can look into yourself and see which change you can …solve, which change can you undertake within yourself. And maybe later on, you can make some major changes in your teaching career" (Peter's post-intervention interview). In the instances where teachers took no action or took action against their values, there was no evidence of agentic growth or operation.

Quantitative data yield little insight into the growth of agency as just one measure of agency. Only the measure of "setting pedagogical or curricular goals" showed a statistically significant change on the post-intervention questionnaire. The data instead actually showed a decrease in this aspect of the iterative (future) agency. However, like the remoralization element that also yielded a statistically significant decrease, this might be due to teacher participants' growing awareness of their schools' ecological gaps, and thus, their raised awareness of their failings.

Reflecting on Theoretical Perspectives: Critical Pedagogy

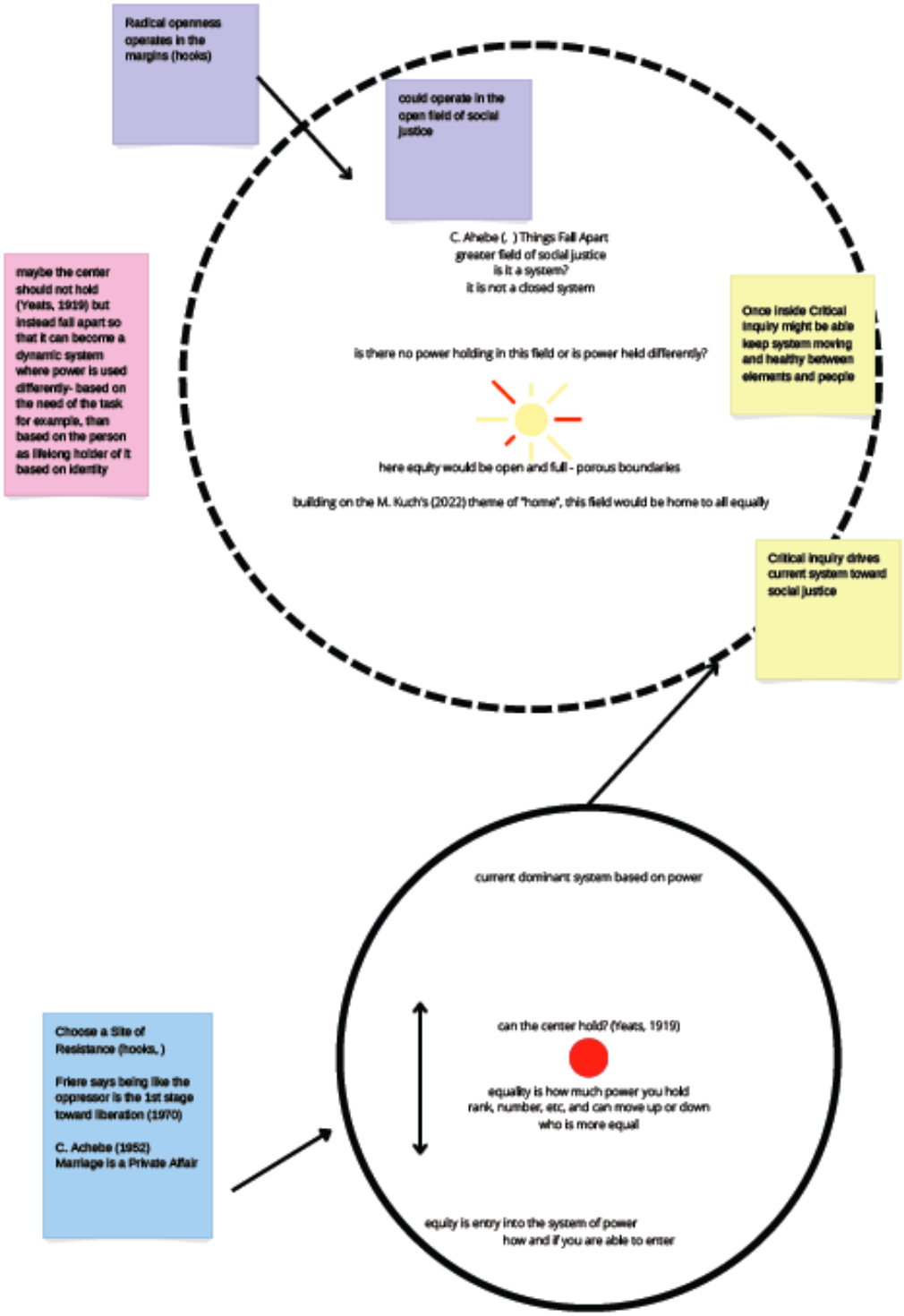
The overarching theory of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000) explains that people who are oppressed might be liberated if they choose to engage together in the praxis of critical inquiry. Freire describes how oppressed people may not even know they are being oppressed but indicators such as silence, compliance, lack of critical thinking, and fear may point to it. This study's intervention guided ten participants through a two-week cycle of critical inquiry. Through the examination of data in response to three central research questions, I examined and found evidence of this theory playing a central role for teachers in Kenya and the US.

Qualitative data from interviews, sessions, and written reflections yielded thematic indicators of the presence of responses to oppression in all of the teacher participants' schools. Participants observed and reflected on their situations and roles within their school and surfaced five themes - lack of time, isolation, lack of administrator support, fear, and a general feeling of being devalued. As teachers engaged together in critical dialogue and reflection, their awareness of their situations grew (Freire, 2000). The themes of the lack of administrator support, fear, and being devalued, parallel the indicators Freire (2000) described in his theory about oppressed

people. Further, the theme of fear caused other effects such as silencing and compliance, two more indicators Freire explained as indicators of oppression and a culture of silence. Fritze (2010) explains and underscores Freire's (2000) conclusions that oppressed people have internalized their oppressors' lies and learned helplessness because they realize their views and opinions are not valued. John Dewey (1938) explained that the teachers must be the leaders, and not simply compliant followers complying with top-down directives (Hastings, 2019; Symeonidis & Stromquist (2020). bell hooks (1994) offers another way out of this oppressive trap, explaining how oppressed people can operate with a radical openness in the margins (1989). The new online ecology in this study aimed to be in the margins - outside of schools and between Kenya and the US. By operating in the margins of the current dominant system (Wheatley, 2006) hooks explains how through the cycle of critical inquiry the dominant system can be pushed toward social justice (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

Paths to Liberation



In response to research question two, participants explained how they felt demoralized by their inability to be heard on academic matters and how they were treated with disrespect by administrators and many parents. I found that as their awareness of their situation grew, their discomfort also did. Freire (2000) explains that growth in awareness of oppression causes more feelings of being oppressed and it is not until people choose to take action to liberate themselves that they can actually be liberated, and in this case, be remoralized. I found that when teacher participants took some actions such as ones that affected positive change for student learning or their own professionalism, they counter-acted their feelings of demoralization briefly, though in the end they still reported the same level of demoralization or even an increased level, given that they have not yet moved beyond the initial phase of awareness. Teacher participants began to experience *conscientization* (Freire, 2000), that is they were "developing, strengthening, and changing consciousness" (Barreiro, J. (1986/1974) as they began to conduct their meaningful action research in their schools. They engaged in the *praxis* of action and reflection together in the COP. In response to research question three, I found qualitative data that showed how agency grew for teachers who took meaningful actions that aligned with their values but not for teachers who took no action or actions that did not align with their values. Teacher participants gained the ability to act on behalf of their own highest selves and this led to liberation (Freire, 2000). Freire explained that if people engage fully in the praxis of critical inquiry they can choose to liberate themselves through a conscientization of their situations. Eight of the ten participants engaged fully in the process and they expressed interest in continuing to work on the process after the intervention. One teacher did not fully engage in the critical inquiry due to overwork and lack of time.

Despite this, she explained that she had started the process and planned to continue it later. One teacher described her school as stifling due to the fact that the current religious leader did not fully engage in the praxis of critical inquiry and chose to take action that did not align with her values. In essence, she complied with the stifling culture and silenced herself. Giroux (1988) critiques this kind of compliance as a form of 'accommodation to power,' where teachers, rather than resisting oppressive structures, find ways to survive within them. This ultimately perpetuates the cycle of oppression, as seen in this teacher's sense of resignation and inability to enact change. In the end, she did not liberate herself stating that “nothing will ever change” (session 3). She chose not to give priority to the praxis of the critical inquiry and instead chose a way to survive in her oppression environment.

Quantitative data correlated with the findings that teachers reported feeling consistent feelings of fear, a lack of support, and an overall feeling of being devalued. These types of experiences and the feelings they cause can indicate responses to oppression in that they are reactions to persistent and intense stressors Kyriacou, C. (2001). Freire (2000) explained how conscientization grows as people engage in the cycle of inquiry. As most of the participants engaged, their demoralization stayed the same or rose so that the overall measure of their feeling of demoralization grew to a statistically significant level. Several other quantitative measures changed to a statistically significant level as well, keeping in mind that this was a small sample of N = 10, where statistical power is less. In essence, as participants engaged in the cycle of critical inquiry within their teaching situations, they felt much worse. They felt angry, they felt tempted to give higher grades to ease parental pressure, they felt their input was less desired by their administrators, and they felt less trusted and treated as

professional by their administrator and less supported in meetings with parents and other faculty members, by their administrator. They reported their professional training was less likely to be conducted by a faculty member who had been trained by an expert, and they even described their professional training as worse than when they started the intervention two weeks prior. They reported setting fewer pedagogical or curricular goals and taking few student-centered actions (Table 8). Teachers in the study grew in their awareness of their situational oppression and decided how to address it. The Berkana Two Loop Model of System Change can extend understanding of their place in their dominant systems as *pioneers* if they choose to take meaningful action, and eight of the ten participants did)

Berkana Two Loop Model of System Change

Qualitative data provide testimonials of teachers explaining how they observed and reflected on their teaching situations and roles in their schools, defined gaps in their school ecologies, defined a problem to address, took action to fill this gap, and reflected again together in the COP. The participants in this study acted as potential *pioneers* in their schools, working to shift from a dominant system with its ecological gaps that affected their situations and roles. By building the COP, I attempted to connect these pioneers and build a network as Wheatley (2019) described in her Berkana Two-Loop Model of system change (Figure 1). Wheatley described how pioneers build networks within their schools to shift the dominant system to an emergent one. For example, in chapter Four I noted that Peter and Andy detailed how they leveraged an outside sponsor visiting the school with parents who struggled to pay tuition and got the children put out of classes back into school. They jubilantly described how they took innovative and brave action to help these parents

and students and overcome administrative inefficiencies. They explained how they began to shift their school system in the area of tuition funding. Giana and Louise took their innovative change further when they used a school-sponsored event to network with other teachers in the region and formed an online network of teachers to share content and training tips on the required but unsupported government material. Their pioneering action taken just a week after defining the problem as a lack of training began to shift their school and possibly other teacher experiences out of their school. Meadows' (1999) theory of 'leverage points' in systems theory explains that small, targeted actions can produce significant shifts in a larger system. Peter and Andy identified a key leverage point by addressing the tuition issue and produced a significant shift in their larger system. By locating and pulling the right lever, a pioneer can shift a whole system. Peter and Andy used their agency to pull the lever and place students back in school. Bryk et al. (2011) research in networked improvement communities (NICs) emphasizes the power of teacher-led collaboration aimed at shared problems. By forming a regional network, Giana and Louise showed how this collaboration can be started by teachers in the field without exception leverage or power. They were able to act as pioneers in the dominant system by connecting with others.

In the US, Bernard created a time-saving email template for the high number of parent inquiries and began connecting with other teachers at lunch though this cut out work time. This networking in particular might begin to gather pioneers together and shift thinking and strategies like the email template. Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theories aligns with this idea explaining how new ideas and practices often spread through social networks. Hana did not have time to conduct her chosen

action, which appropriately was one to help her prioritize tasks to save time., so she was unable to innovate or connect except to attend the three sessions of the COP. Jude was dealing with a stifling situation at her school and was unable to take action that she felt meaningful so did not have the chance to innovate in any way that might eventually shift the school. Overall the Kenyan's pairing seemed to increase their odds of shifting their systems. Tsui et al. (2020) explain how innovation incrementally takes place as critical stakeholders engage in the process of change (Foster-Fishman et al., 2007). Tsui et al. (2020) explain how new processes emerged when teachers had to find a way forward through the pandemic and found a way by exploring the "adjacent possible" or an idea that is near to current practice and might work. Teachers in the study sought gaps in their teacher ecology and chose to take meaningful actions - in the adjacent possible - that just might fill their ecologic gaps. In several cases, their incremental attempts worked to shift their systems.

The findings on the Berkana model responded to research question one as participants' awareness of their roles within their school systems grew. Giana and Louise began to create a new network by using a school-sponsored sports day to connect with local teachers and start a WhatsApp group to connect on the Kenyan new curriculum material as well as other ideas. They worked as *pioneers* as described by Wheatley (2019). Peter and Andy began to act in new ways that circumvented the administration. They solved the problem themselves with parents and sponsors who were visiting. They connected past their school setting to engage with outsiders willing to give money. They felt empowered and began to shift their system. Sidney is starting slowly as she has a great amount of fear of her administrator and wants to make sure she gets tenure. When teachers work in an oppressive environment, they

respond by becoming enraged, leaving, complying, or shutting down completely (Freire, 2000; Fritze, 2010). If teachers are to open up and share their honest thoughts about their situations, so that they can solve problems, they need to feel safe and secure (Kolbe et al., 2020). Sidney's hesitance exemplifies the choice and the struggle teachers face when balancing agentic operation and the attendant risks it brings. When pioneers are supported through the new ecology online that operates with radical openness in the margins (hooks, 1989), they have a chance to operate effectively and with agency.

While both qualitative and quantitative data showed that demoralization was not counteracted, in response to research question two, the Berkana model helped frame what this might mean. Those teacher participants (eight of ten) who chose to act meaningfully gained a renewed sense of purpose and power that was strengthened in the COP online. In the Kenyan pairs, this was strengthened even more within the actual emergent system. When Sidney, who worked alone in her system spontaneously interviewed her neighbor teacher, she began to shift the dominant system in her school ever so slightly, while Edith and Louise took more dramatic action by creating a regional network. *Pioneer* participants shifted from feeling only demoralized to renewed in their passion, and they began to shift their systems. The legacy of Dewey's (1938) vision of democratic spaces emulated in this new ecology online created space enough for teachers to grow (Nomi, 2019; Stitzlein & Rector-Aranda, 2016). Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' suggests that by interacting with more experienced and agentic teachers, less experienced teachers may grow (Nomi, 2019). They must connect to other *pioneers* or they will not be able to move the lever to change the system. As Wheatley

(2019) suggests, systems change requires an almost organic composting of the material of the dominant system into an emerging one, and this takes time. The dominant system is quite literally dying and the pioneers of the emergent system are not only needed roles. Hospice workers (Wheatley, 2006) must be present to help the death of the dominant system.

Agency was grown through this study and the Berkana model shows where that can lead. As the cycle of critical inquiry begins to shift, a dominant system where a radical openness can be practiced in the margins (hooks, 1989) pioneers engaging together in the online COP. If teachers can remoralize together in a small community of practice or partner with another pioneer, they can shift their school system even more. The example of Peter and Andy showed how this might begin to happen in even a short time. They rallied their stakeholders to come together and used their professional teaching skills (both hold master's degrees in teaching) to teach the parents in the community the importance of paying their children's school fees. This is a difficult task in a community where most of the adult population is not formally educated and might not see the value immediately. The system of one of the American teachers was much less likely to shift as quickly because the teachers are so isolated from each other due to overwork from the multiple unskilled labor tasks they are assigned. They are demoralized and plotting their exits (NEA, 2022).

Quantitative data did not yield evidence of the potential system change that might happen as Wheatley (2019) described (Figure 1) since I asked questions about their current and past experiences only. The COP in the new ecology online nurtured the agentic actions of the *pioneers* in their schools. As they became aware of their new role- one of pioneer or innovator- who in their emergent situation, they came to

have a renewed sense of purpose and power. Those participants who worked in pairs were able to make more dramatic changes within the emergent system.

Concept of Teacher Agency

Priestley et al. (2015) describe *teacher agency* as that can be achieved from a foundation of a teacher's personal capacity within a conducive school ecology. Biesta et al. (2015) took it a step further explaining, "More specifically, agency denotes a quality of the *engagement* of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves" (p. 626). According to both Priestley et al.(2015) and Biesta et al. (2015), *teacher agenc*y needs a community to operate. In this intervention, I sought to create a kind of new ecology in an online COP whereby teachers from several schools could come together in a new kind of ecology to provide the community for each other. The Kenyan teachers, who chose to work together in pairs, extended this new ecology even more by being able to engage together while in their school. While Priestley et al. (2016) describe *teacher agency* as having a foundation of personal capacity which is made up of personal attributes like maturity and professionalism, an ecology must have enough attributes to support and encourage learning and growth in teachers. It must also provide a culture wherein teachers can engage each other. It has to be relational and temporal "as agency is rooted in experience, orientated to the future and located in the contingencies of the present" (2016, p. 20).

Qualitative data suggest strong evidence that agency was supported and grown in this study's COP. Teachers in eight cases began to take agentic actions in their schools (Table 7). As the participants' awareness of their teaching situations grew—exemplified through the five surfaced themes of the lack of time to do their teaching

tasks, lack of administrator support, fear of administrators or powerful parents, isolation from technology or each other, and an overall sense of being devalued—they also grew in their overall sense of demoralization (Table 8). However, as they began to engage together in the nurturing ecology of the COP and act in meaningful ways in their schools, they felt enthusiasm and a kind of freedom. When teachers feel they are making meaningful changes for students they feel pride in their professionalism (Lasky, S., 2005). The participants' awareness of their role inside their schools grew through these discussions in the community of practice and by viewing and reflecting on their teaching situations and acting to build their teaching ecology. This agentic action likely also built their personal capacity though this was not measured in this study because teachers must judge in response to different factors (Emirbayer, M. and Mische, A. (1998). While their ecology was addressed in this intervention, their personal capacity was also in play. For example, Sidney discussed again and again what the administrator was doing wrong but later began to shift to a focus on herself as a lever of change. Interestingly, I had posited that agentic actions were likely dependent on teachers counteracting their demoralization and becoming remoralized. However, I found that teachers were able to take small steps (add cite) of meaningful action aligned to their values to operate in an agentic way despite growth in demoralization. This was unexpected. The temporary spike in joy and enthusiasm teachers reported feeling when they took such action may be the reason they were able to carry on but more research would be needed.

Quantitative data did not however completely align with the qualitative findings. For example, teachers reported taking fewer student-centered actions, but in fact, they innovated to take more powerful ones, such as in the case of Peter and

Andy. As noted this is a small sample so the quantitative results' impact may be lessened, and teachers' awareness of student-centered actions, among many other teaching concepts, increased throughout the intervention. They may have been harder on themselves or more rigorous in their evaluation of what they were already doing in the classroom. More research would be needed to unpack the intricacies of this in more detail.

Concept of Demoralization to Remoralization

Their demoralization grew as they raised their awareness. They "talked together to solve problems" (Santoro, 2021, p. 43), and they took action to remoralize (Santoro, 2021) in their schools. By working together in the sessions online, and for the Kenyans, together in partners (the US teachers chose to work alone in their schools), teachers began to experience hope and joy as they reconnected with their craft. Sidney characterized this small shift noting, "I feel excited … I felt that little spark that I remember feeling when I was younger" (Sidney's post-interview) They were able to connect themselves to the "good work of education" (Santoro, 2021, p.) despite the unsupportive systems in their schools. Participants began to show some signs of remoralization or at least interest in activities that Santoro (2021) explains as ways to re-engage in the moral work of teaching.

Interestingly, as participants chose actions recommended by Santoro (2021) to move toward remoralization, they also began to show indicators of agentic operation. Santoro (2021) explains that a willingness and ability to act grows through collaboration in open, democratic spaces. In 1938, Dewey explained that teachers are meant to operate freely as they craft and lead their students in learning experiences. Later Nomi (2019) described how teachers should be invited into open, democratic

spaces where they can learn to operate with agency, and Stitzlein & Rector-Aranda (2016) argued that these are Deweyan 'small publics' "are places in which teachers can dialogue and exchange ideas about the problems they face in the classroom" (n.p.). The way they describe these 'small publics' is similar to how the new online ecology was used in this intervention. They explained how the spaces

> can be used by teachers as a starting point, or incubator, during the process of proclaiming frustrations and fighting for change. These small publics are important spaces teachers can return to again and again as they take risks and move beyond the safety of sympathetic audiences to frame problems and build coalitions and solidarity with other groups around those problems (n.p.).

The new ecology for this study was designed to create an open, democratic space first envisioned by John Dewey, and echoed by many in an attempt to offer teachers a place where their ideas could be heard. In this study, I took the idea online and made it global. Overall, teachers became more aware in the two-week study, and more demoralized.

Interestingly, participants reported a statistically significant decrease in actions defined by Santoro (2021) as remoralization actions, such as taking student-centered actions in the quantitative questionnaire (table 8), a remoralization activity from Santoro's (2021) remoralization chart (figure 1). However, the small sample size of N=10 likely lessens the importance of this. This limitation is common in small-scale interventions, where changes in quantitative measures may not fully capture the depth of participants' qualitative experiences (Maxwell, 2013). While the quantitative data suggested a decrease in student-centered actions, the rich qualitative data suggest a more nuanced narrative of teachers' evolving sense of agency. Additionally, qualitative data - through interviews, sessions, and reflections - exemplify how teachers were even more focused on their teaching situations and roles. Likely this

heightened awareness led them to a more critical review of their work. For example, as teachers proceeded through this meaningful work in their school and began to use their voice in the COP and then in turn in their schools, some began to "carve out a new role to support good teaching" (Santoro's 2021, Figure 2). However, the qualitative and quantitative data show how this intervention did not counteract and even increased demoralization in half the participants. Notably an increase in demoralization does not equate with lower levels of actions taken toward remoralization, but rather points to a feeling teachers have when doing the work. Santoro (2021) explains, "It is the moral evaluation that teachers may make in reference to the work they do" Santoro (2021, p.49). She simply points to several activities that can and might lead to a sense of remoralization (Figure 1). It is interesting to note that these activities would also point to agentic action for a teacher. As Biesta (2015) notes, teaching is inherently moral work, and moments of heightened demoralization often reflect teachers' critical engagement with the ethical dimensions of their practice. This moral reckoning, while painful, can also serve as a precursor to meaningful change and remoralization.

Limitations

While the three intervention sessions and six pre-intervention and post-intervention one-on-one interviews with participants were recorded, coded, and analyzed, the break-out rooms were not recorded. After each breakout session, participants were asked to recap what they discussed but it is likely that due to time or participant reticence (or inability to remember exactly), some data were lost. This occurred because of the choice of video conferencing software, Zoom, which cannot record multiple sessions. Zoom was chosen since it is free and mostly accessible and

intuitive for the participants in the study who are residents of California, in the United States, and various states in Kenya, namely Eldorat and Amboseli.

Some of the participants in rural Kenya struggled with internet access for all of the sessions. Participants were compensated for their time and internet access cost but the connectivity of the Wi-Fi was the issue. I chose to conduct the online COP based on the Kenyan news reports of recent internet advances in rural Kenya ((*Broadening Internet Connectivity in Kenya*, 2023). However, this new system did not seem to cover the Kenyan participants in Eldoret or Amboseli counties. Further, some participants, namely Giana and Louise, in Amboseli, did not have access to computers often so they completed more of the work than others on their phones via the social media platforms of Facebook and WhatsApp. If the study is replicated, it would be beneficial to provide partial compensation before the start of the study to ensure that participants can pay for the internet time required for the first session. If funding is available it would be good to provide laptop devices to all participants who need them and to ensure that all participants are in areas with consistent access to the internet. If this was not possible, then a researcher could choose the times when internet access is more likely. The excessive length of the identical pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys (89 questions) was likely too long for the participants and they might have been experiencing a kind of survey burnout which could affect their responses.

Threats To Reliability and Validity

There is a possibility that participants in the study may not have the same access to the online group due to markedly different time zones in the United States and Kenya. However, the workshop sessions were as evenly distributed as possible to

allow for equitable access to sessions. Some participants may likely feel less comfortable with English, the language of the innovation. However, English will remain the choice as it is the official language in the United States and Kenya, along with Swahili. I anticipated that English might be spoken less often by the Kenyan participants who may speak Swahili more often. To accommodate this concern, the co-facilitator is a Kenyan professor of communication who speaks English and Swahili fluently. However, this was not the case, and all Kenyan participants spoke English well.

I was the facilitator and participant in the critical dialogue and this might be seen to bias the integrity of the results (Bourke, B. (2014). However, since my aim was clearly defined and participants had ample opportunity to share their thoughts, this may have mitigated the concern, as well as the fact that differing opinions were carefully documented.

Implications For Research

According to Priestley et al., (2016), an ecology conducive to agentic operation is needed in a school for the teacher to operate with teacher agency. However, through this small study, I found that teacher agency can be grown through the praxis of action in a school and reflection in an online global ecology with like-minded pioneering teachers. While this would require much more research, this might mean that a school does not have to have a nurturing environment or ecology for teachers to operate with agency. Further, this might mean that teachers working together online could begin to shift their schools into emergent systems that nurture agentic operation. This study centered around teacher agency but it must be restated that a culture of silencing (Freire, 2000) is oppressive to teachers. They must be able

to operate with academic integrity and professionalism; this means they must be able to think critically and speak out. Researchers must continue to seek out solutions to give voice back to the teachers. This study shows one way. By moving the academic and pedagogical discussions out of the schools, teachers began to engage in the task of teaching again.

Future Research

Further research could be done via teacher training programs by a) teaching these skills taught in this intervention, and exposing new teachers to various scenarios of less-than-ideal ecologies - for example, letting them experience any of the five themes surfaced in this study - lack of time, a sense of isolation, a lack of administrator support, a sense of fear and/or a sense of devaluation - by way of case studies, interviews or immersions - and then by guiding them in the practice of collaborative, asking questions and solving problems together. Training new teachers to understand the actual limitations of schools and learn to work around them to operate with agency would be a fascinating next step in this research. It was interesting to note that the increase in agentic operation, what I am calling the growth of *teacher agency, occurred* concurrently with several cases of participants taking actions Santoro (2021) described on her remoralization chart (Figure 2). Further research on how a correlation might occur between agentic growth and remoralization would be very interesting.

According to Freire's (2000) theory of critical pedagogy, oppressed people will often fight with each other because they are frustrated and upset due to the oppression, and yet too afraid to express it toward the oppressor. When teachers describe their teaching situations and the stressors leading to their demoralization,

aggressive and demanding parents are one of the main problems. Notably, the parents who are aggressive with them are predominantly speaking about their mothers (Haisraeli & Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2023). In her 2023 book, *Momrage*, Minna Dubin (2023) details the anger of many mothers today, due to societal expectations and pressures, and also covers how they are dealing with it. She explains how the patriarchy silences women who complain and shames them for it (Dubin, 2023). In the future, it would be interesting to research how interaction between teachers, 76% of whom are female, and demanding mothers (who might be acting out their frustrations with the patriarchy against each other). Further, it would be interesting to create an intervention that leads them to choose liberation in much the same way as the current study did with teachers.

Implications For Practice

Data shows the possibility of teachers building new ecologies outside their schools - even with teachers from other countries - for the explicit purpose of generating teacher agency. However, the COP yielded much more than agentic growth. It also built the foundation of a real community. This aspect of the ecology was surprising because the intervention was just over two weeks long. However, participants noted how much they enjoyed this aspect. I built this intervention for the teachers who felt like they were shouting in the wind in their arguments for greater control over their work. They could start a COP as was done in this study with just one or two other teachers and follow the steps (Appendix B). I will continue my work with the participants of the COP who have an interest, and our goal is to create a workbook together for use by other teachers who would like to follow elements of our process (this would be available freely online). It is crucial to have a fully formed plan

and take it in small steps. Further, based on the findings it would be important to keep sessions short and keep the steps simplified at first. Teachers reported feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and unable to complete their work, so adding anything on top of this must be done gently and easily.

This research shows it's possible to move a core component of *teacher agency* outside of the school itself. This means that teachers who do not have access to a conducive ecology - which may mean they have a lack of time, a sense of isolation, a lack of administrative support, a sense of fear, and/or a sense of devaluation - can go outside of their school environment in order to gain the ecology they need in order to operate with *teacher agency.*

This may have implications for teacher empowerment and the structure of school systems. It could mean that teachers could be taught how to operate with agency by building online ecologies through their teaching training programs. Louise stated that she and Giana had to accept that their administration was not supportive, did not provide required and needed training, and even impeded their pedagogical progress at times (session 3). They accepted this and built their network, their ecology that began to support them by filling their training gaps, by filling their missing ecological gaps. Since the ecology for *teacher agency* does not have to reside inside the school itself, teachers can take control if they wish to liberate themselves into an ecology of their choosing. Once there, they can operate with agency out of the home base of that ecology - whether online or local. Giana and Louise built an ecology for their regional teachers because they had the same training needs. Sidney explained how a local group would be important to her because she could create a curriculum with her colleagues that could be shared (cite). The local ecology seems less

important than the shared understanding and goals of the group serving as the new ecology.

Lessons Learned

The process of this intervention was an enlightening one, and I learned several lessons. In planning for this study, I initially thought that a mixed methods approach with the possibility of triangulating qualitative and quantitative data results would prove the most reliable. However, after collecting and analyzing data from three sessions, six interviews, 58 brief reflections, and two 89-item questionnaires, I realized that the most substantive data came from qualitative data sources. The interviews and reflections were the most powerful in a sense because they yielded the clear voice of the participants. I found the first session, where I mostly explained the intervention process to have yielded little information. The second session provided some data but I found participants to be shy and quieter then. The break-out room discussions, which were not recorded but instead shared and reflected on after, were richer, as participants felt easier with speaking in a small group on a directed topic. Participants have shared that they would like to come together again regularly and I would expect more problem-solving to occur in the future as they get to know each other more. Trust takes time. Since I had a formed professional or social relationship with several of the participants - Giana, Edith, Jude, Sidney, and Bernard- we started the conversation with some built trust, but time and working together would likely build it more, especially between teachers from the two different countries.

One difficulty - a primary finding - was a lack of time teachers are experiencing. This greatly impacted the intervention, as did the different time zones to be discussed in limitations. Initially, I had planned the intervention to be two months

long with seven group sessions. After two earlier iterations of this study, I found that teachers would likely not be able to commit to so many hours. In response to those initial findings, I shortened the study to three sessions over two weeks.

I was surprised that two teachers chose not to take meaningful action, especially since they were excited to take part in the study, and one of them, Jude, had taken part in two earlier iterations of the study. However, this underscores the findings that even teachers who are enthusiastic and passionate can become so demoralized and oppressed by their teaching situations that they opt out.

While I was able to secure funding through a research grant from ASU, it was simply a token for the US teachers and due to the economic differences, a bounty for Kenyan teachers. This was a struggle I discussed more in the limitations below, and I think it may have impacted how teachers felt about the work, depending on their country. It might be interesting to have a partnered research study where Kenyan teachers are paid through grants from Kenya and US teachers are compensated from a US institution so that greater equity is achieved. I tried to avoid having US teachers paid more, but it ended as somewhat unfair compensation for them.

Going forward, I would design a year-long study with equitable funding to encourage teachers to prioritize their time, to take part. I would design this as a cohort of teachers who could be taught about the theory as they operate in their schools. If they could engage longer, they might be able to get to know each other better and have the time to deepen their problem-solving together.

On a personal level, I chose to go back into teaching from the role of site principal, academic dean, and deputy director. As an embedded researcher for the last five years, I experienced many of the same feelings my participants had, and the US

teachers' experiences resonated with me deeply. I remember one particular day when the principal at my current school directed us to write notes of encouragement to a specified number of our students. We were then directed to check those students off her list and to turn them in so that the administrators could check if they were appropriate. I experienced a kind of shame and forced infantilization like that many times in this setting, and felt how more and more teachers are being treated like the children we teach. In fact, as a union site representative, the site principal told me that teachers were to follow all of the same rules as the children. These kinds of experiences feel absurd and demoralizing. As I worked through the process of this research study, I found that teachers who are oppressed can act but it takes time and a community of practice can only be formed slowly unless there is a predominance of *pioneers*, as was in the intervention. With time, and a conducive ecology - even one online - teachers can begin to grow their agency and shift their systems to ones that respect teachers as professional educators.

Conclusion

I found that in just two weeks teachers' awareness of their situations and their roles within their systems grew. This was evidenced through their raised awareness of five themes which all spoke to this context and their work in it. I found their demoralization rose or stayed the same but did not decline. The participants' growth in awareness increased their discomfort. However, as most participants took action to effect change, they experienced joy despite still reporting the same or increased levels of demoralization. I wonder if the action were to continue if demoralization would be counteracted and shift into full remoralization (Santoro, 2021). More research of a more prolonged nature would be needed. Lastly, this intervention showed evidence of

teacher agency growing through teachers' work in the COP online and either alone as with the US teachers or in pairs like the Kenyan teachers. This study found that an online COP of teachers in Kenya and the US could serve as a new kind of ecology for teachers who do not have access to a nurturing or appropriate ecology in their schools.

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APPENDIX A

ALIGNMENT CHART & CODES

	Freire	Priestley et al. & Biesta et al.	Santoro	Berkana Model of Emergence
Community of Practice (COP)	Critical dialogue allows Conscientization will lead to liberation if participants choose for themselves (if they were not liberated already)	Through the COP a new kind of online and global "school" ecology	To remoralize, teachers need to "come together to talk and solve problems" (p. 43)	Figure 1 Pioneer participants build networks then COPs which nurture and grow in influence in emergent system
Action Research	Conscientization	By working in their respective schools, teachers build a movable ecology. Agency is grown by working in new ways in their system.	Figure 2 Teachers act in the professional community in small groups or partnerships with other participants and others uninvolved with the research. They act to remoralize.	Grow awareness of COP within emergent system

	Freire	Priestley et al. & Biesta et al.	Santoro	Berkana Model of Emergence
TEACHER AGENCY **RQ 1:** How might *teacher agency* grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented in their schools?	The ability to act on behalf of one's self leads to liberation	Personal capacity + appropriate ecology	Indirectly via collaboration in open, democratic spaces teachers gain the ability and willingness to act Figure 2 Professional community Voice Teacher leadership	COP is the ecology that grows and nurture agentic action of pioneers in the emergent system.
ROLE PERCEPTION **RQ2:** How might participants' roles and perceptions of their systems change within their systems?	Conscienziation	Personal capacity and awareness of role	Figure 2 Voice "Carve out a new role to support good teaching"	Participants become aware of the new role in the emergent system.
REMORALIZATION **RQ3:** How might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an online COP counteract *demoralization* in teacher participants? (is remoralization the same as agency growth or do they happen in tandem?)	Liberation via praxis of critical inquiry	Teacher agency	remoralization	Renewed sense of purpose and power strengthen core COP within the emergent system.

Codes derived from an earlier iteration of this study

Administrator manipulation
Administrator control
Administrator silencing
Administrator punishing/ punitive
Administrator dismissive
Administrator support
Administrator obstacle to instruction
Agency of teachers
Censorship
Collaboration: teachers talking
Collaboration: teachers talking online
Communication by administrators
Compliance
Control
Demoralization: Administrator influence
Demoralization: Administrator manipulation
Demoralization: Building Block Anger
Demoralization: Building Block Fear
Devaluing: Expertise disregarded
Gaslighting of teachers by administrators
Harassment by parents / stress / demoralization
Infantilization of teachers / teachers acting like children
Isolation of teachers
Liberation: speaking up / speaking out
Liberation: disagreement
Liberation: questioning despite consequence
Oppression: voiceless
Oppression: resigned from acting/speaking
Oppression: fear
Remoralization: Administrator influence
Sexism and Misogyny of administrators to teachers
Oppression: Shaming of self by teachers
Oppression; Shaming by Administrators
Oppression: Silencing
Political incursion in classroom
Teacher access to administrators
Teacher devalues skills/ self-worth
Undervaluing teachers
Teachers' concerns for students punished and shamed (mar2800 and sus6618)
Teachers questioning current goals of school

APPENDIX B

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS

Week One - Action Research Reflection Journal

What is action research (AR) anyway? It is research that is conducted by a practitioner in their real work environment in order to solve an actual problem. With your help, we will conduct action research in seven schools in Kenya and the United States, concurrently.

AR Week One Goal: This week our goal is simply to get a feel for your school situation by **observing strengths and problems or gaps there.** What you will be observing relates to all school issues (i.e. teaching and learning, relationships, management-related, etc.) In brief, it relates to all aspects of school life.

Tasks:
1) Please create an informal reflection journal at least three times this week.
2) Chat with your partner teacher at your school and ask them what their thoughts are on the same question: What strengths and problems/gaps do they observe? If you don't have a partner, you can just ask any colleague at your school these questions.
How to do this:
You may write a traditional journal. You may simply jot bullet point notes or add sketches or even photos. You may want to type directly into this reflection journal document or you may want to write notes on paper and upload your pages as pics into this journal. This is meant to be an informal catchall of your thoughts on a few topics over one week. You can best fulfill the purpose of this reflection journal by letting your real self shine. Please write in the language of your choice for your greatest sense of comfort. There is no right or wrong way to do this, and no length requirement. The goal is for you to really see your situation in a new way.

Here are some ways you could do it or you might come up with a different way:

- Take a notepad with you through the week and jot down your thoughts in sentences, sketches, or bullet point phrases.
- You might feel inspired to "show' what you mean using a photo or a free-form sketch.
- You may want to capture your partner's good idea by writing down her or his exact words
- You might want to chart your thoughts
- You may want to write some fully formed paragraphs.
- You may want to chat with other teachers at your school and capture their ideas.

Monday Reflection

This week our goal is simply to get a feel for your school situation by **observing strengths and problems or gaps.**

Ideas to get you started: Consider your situation. What do you see as strengths in your teaching situation? This can include your own strengths and gaps, your administrators', your school's, district's, parents' students', educational system, or truly anything that impacts you, in your teaching situation. Our goal this week is to investigate our contexts. I encourage you to write, draw, take notes, or express in any way you wish. There is no right or wrong way to complete this, and no required length. I am seeking your thoughtful consideration of your situation. One way to get started is to think of an example of when you see a strength or a glaring problem. If you feel stuck, please reach out and I will help. Note: please use the language with which you feel most comfortable.

Wednesday Reflection

This week our goal is simply to get a feel for your school situation by observing strengths and problems or gaps.

Ideas to get you started: Consider your situation. What do you see as strengths in your teaching situation? This can include your own strengths and gaps, your administrators', your school's, district's, parents' students', educational system, or truly anything that impacts you, in your teaching situation. Our goal this week is to investigate our contexts. I encourage you to write, draw, take notes, or express in any way you wish. There is no right or wrong way to complete this, and no required length. I am seeking your thoughtful consideration of your situation. One way to get started is to think of an example of when you see a strength or a glaring problem. If you feel stuck, please reach out and I will help. Note: please use the language with which you feel most comfortable.

Friday Reflection

This week our goal is simply to get a feel for your school situation by **observing strengths and problems or gaps.**

Ideas to get you started: Consider your situation. What do you see as strengths in your teaching situation? This can include your own strengths and gaps, your administrators', your school's, district's, parents' students', educational system, or truly anything that impacts you, in your teaching situation. Our goal this week is to investigate our contexts. I encourage you to write, draw, take notes, or express in any way you wish. There is no right or wrong way to complete this, and no required length. I am seeking your thoughtful consideration of your situation. One way to get started is to think of an example of when you see a strength or a glaring problem. If you feel stuck, please reach out and I will help. Note: please use the language with which you feel most comfortable.

Week Two Documents

1. Reflect and choose an action: write lists or a paragraph for each
    a. What is missing from your ecology?
    b. How does your ecology of teaching affect your decision-making and actions? (Priestley et al., 2015)
2. Choose one area to take action this week. Note: It may be that you feel demoralized in one area. What can you choose to do to begin to remoralize yourself? It could be that you do not have an element of your ecology that you need to operate with teacher agency. What could you seek out this week to help fill in that part of your ecology?
3. Take an action step. Note: Use the remoralization chart on the key terms page to choose an action OR Find something online or from a colleague that is missing in your ecology.
4. Reflect in a few sentences on what you did. How did it go?

Teacher agency: The capacity of teachers to act purposefully to direct their professional growth, find solutions to challenges they face, and improve their practice. Lafrance, 2022)	
Teacher Agency = Personal Capacity + Ecology	
Personal capacity Things like Maturity Knowledge Wisdom	Ecology Elements like the following: Supportive principal Excellent training Environment that supports learning Mentoring Enough time to do the work Being treated with respect/dignity

Demoralization	Feeling separated from the good work of education or feeling morally bereft as they feel they are not able to act in the way they think they should as a teacher (Santoro, 2021)
Burn out	Feeling physically and emotionally exhausted due to stress

Demoralization: Teachers Can Be Remoralized

Doris Santoro (2021) argues that K12 teachers are demoralized because they are separated from the “good work of education” and that they may be remoralized by talking together and solving problems. She explains how teachers may further remoralize by working in a variety of different ways to grow their voices, their leadership, their student-centered action, and their activism. Santoro’s (2021) primary research explains the idea that K-12 teachers are demoralized, not burned out, which has been popularly mythologized lately. She argues that saying teachers are burned out is just adding more blame to teachers, inexorably defining them as too weak to cope. Instead, she says they are separated from the “good work” of education," which she says, "operates as a moral evaluation that examines a profession's moral purposes and rewards. The focus of the assessment is not on the personal characteristics of individual teachers. Instead, it is the moral evaluation that teachers may make in reference to the work they do. Teachers' moral centers are articulated in the values and commitments they bring to and attribute to the work" (Santoro, 2021, p. 49). She explains that teachers can remoralize themselves through a variety of means, such as teacher leadership, student-centered work, activism, and using their voice (See Remoralization graphic below).

APPENDIX C

TEACHER DEMORALIZATION SCALE ITEMS

Draft 1 4/2014 Carlson-Jaquez, H. A. (2016)
(Modified, November 25, 2023)

Demoralization Conceptualization: The construct of teacher demoralization can be succinctly defined as the inability of a teacher to access personal rewards of teaching as a result of institutional policy and practice. Institutional policies that are likely to contribute to teacher demoralization not only prevent teachers from accessing these moral rewards (e.g. having the ability to meet students' individual needs) but also may ask teachers to compromise their personal morals. Instead of feeling like policy empowers them to do their best work, demoralized teachers feel as if policy restricts what they can do in their classroom to help students succeed. Unlike traditional views of teacher burnout which place the responsibility of coping with stressors on the individual, demoralization accounts for institutional practice that teachers are subject to, over which they have little or no control.

To protect your confidentiality, please create a unique identifier known only to you. To create this unique code, please record the first three letters of your mother's first name and the last four digits of your phone number. Thus, for example, if your mother's name was Sarah and your phone number was (692) 543-6789, your code would be Sar 6789. The unique identifier will allow us to match your post-intervention survey responses and your retrospective, pre-intervention response when we analyze the data. (e.g. Sar 6789, see paragraph above)

My unique identifier is: _____
Likert scale answers:
5 Always • 4 Very Often •3 Sometimes •2 Rarely • 1 Never

School Division Policy

- I feel constrained in my teaching by school division requirements.
- I feel good about the daily tasks that my school division asks me to carry out as a teacher.
- School division policy mandates facilitate meeting the needs of my students.
- Policies of my school division dictate much of what I do in my classroom.
- School division policies empower me to do what I feel is best for my students.
- Policies of my school division allow me to give equal attention to all of my students.
- School division policy mandates influence my teaching in a positive way.
- I have the flexibility under school division policy to cater my instruction to meet the needs of the students in my classroom.
- School division policy enables me to cater my instruction to suit the interests of the students in my classroom.
- School division policy mandates force me to teach a narrow set of standards within my content area.
- Current school division policy empowers me to help students who are at risk.
- School division policy mandates prevent me from doing the best teaching that helps students learn.

Classroom Management Teacher Self-Efficacy

- I can control disruptive behavior in the classroom.
- I can get children to follow classroom rules.
- I can calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.
- I can keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson.
- I can make expectations clear about student behavior.
- I can establish routines to keep activities running smoothly.

Demographic Information

- How many years have you been teaching?
- What subject are you credentialed in?
- What subject do you teach?
- What is your highest academic degree?
- What is your age?
- What is your gender?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL & QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol: Initial Briefing

My name is Mary Hurley and I am a teacher. I am conducting research on teacher demoralization and the possible ways teachers might "remoralize" and feel more empowered as teachers. The purpose of this interview is to learn about teachers' points of view and their lives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 154) by asking about their attitudes (Charmaz, 2006, p.57). We will meet today using conferencing software but use only the audio function. All data will be anonymized. May I audio-record this interview? As you respond to the questions, please do not mention the names of individuals in your responses. If at any time you wish to change your mind about the recording, you may do so. If you wish to stop the interview at any time, you may do so. Do you have any questions? During the interview, the focus will be on "understanding the teachers' perspectives, meanings, and experiences" (Charmuz, 2006, p.56) While I will likely ask all of the questions in order, I will follow the recommended "practice of following up on unanticipated areas of inquiry, hints and implicit views and accounts of actions" (Charmuz, p. 57). This is important because my preconceptions of what the subject will say might be wrong, and I need to let the subject help co-create the conversation. Charmas explains that the interviewer's role is to "listen, encourage and learn (p.57).

Interview Questions

Demoralization

What are your most significant concerns as a teacher today?
Can you describe a professional disagreement you have experienced with an administrator or with a parent or guardian?
What is it like to work as a teacher in your school? Can you share an example?
How do you feel about administrators in general?
How do you think they feel about you and your work?
How do the parents of your students think they feel about you?
What most inhibits your ability to operate as a teacher if anything?
What is your opinion on why teachers seem to be leaving the field?

Intervention

Describe the experience of working with the teachers in this workshop.
Did anything of your thoughts about teaching change?
Will you use anything you learned?
Explain anything that surprised you.

Remoralization

Can you describe how you collaborate with other teachers outside of mandated activities at work?
Do you have a mentor and if so, how does that person impact your work?
What do you most need now to operate at your highest level?
Can you share an experience that exemplifies your perception of administrators?
Can you share an experience that exemplifies typical interaction between teachers and administrators?

Interview Questions used for an earlier iteration of the study, approved through IRB

What are the things that give you the most joy?
What is it like to work as a teacher in your school? Can you share an example?
Do you consider yourself a professional?
What are your greatest concerns as a teacher today?
How do you use your "voice" as a teacher outside of work, if at all?
Can you describe a professional disagreement you have experienced with an administrator?
Can you describe a conflict or disagreement you have experienced with a parent or guardian?
Can you describe how you collaborate with other teachers outside of mandated activities at work?
Do you have a mentor and if so, how does that person impact your work?
Have you changed as a teacher since you began? How, and to what extent? Can you give an example?
What most inhibits your ability to operate as a teacher if anything?
What do you most need now to operate at your highest level?
Do you have anything else to add?

APPENDIX E

OPTIONAL OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AFTER POST-INTERVENTION QUESTIONNAIRE

What do you feel you learned?	
Sidney	I learned about demoralization and remoralization. I have learned about ways to remoralize myself and I am actually excited and hopeful to remember to take these actions that give me purpose in my workplace.
Edith	I have learnt a lot about my strengths and gaps and also remoralization (sic).
Hana	I learned some strategies/approaches for taking back teacher agency. I also got the opportunity to hear that teachers across the globe share many of the same struggles.
Jude	Through reflection I can make changes.
Peter	1. The concept of action research was new to me. I now appreciate it. 2. Teacher agency and remoralization
Bernard	I learned about professional communities, as well as international educators' comparative needs and shared experiences.
How do you think you might use any of these ideas in the future?	
Sidney	I will definitely return to the remoralization chart in the future. I want to work with teacher activists to regain some of my power at school. I am fearful and hesitant (waiting until I receive permanent status or tenure) before I make myself too outspoken, but I know that time is coming. I am hopeful that these actions can sustain my career in teaching and help me reconnect to the "love" I really have this job. I put love in quotes because I don't have it right now, I actively hate all of these gaps and issues about my job, but I really love the idea of teaching and I wouldn't want to do anything else. I get angry about the fact that the situation and ecology of my work has made me hate a job I should be able to love.
Edith	I will use them to improve my teaching profession.
Hana	I hope to continue my work in effecting change to my ecology through task prioritization and scheduling. Taking back some of my personal time.
Jude	Spending time reflecting is valuable for self-improvement (sic)
Peter	Especially teacher agency. I think I can think of ways of affecting change within myself.
Bernard	I want to set a clear objective for myself and concentrate on developing habits that promote remoralization.
Do you have any suggestions or general comments?	
Sidney	No! Thank you for the education and opportunity to participate!
Edith	I appreciate the research and being included in this venture. Am grateful.
Hana	Thank you for your work, and I am glad to have had the opportunity to join in this journey! It feels like a very unique experience to get to collaborate with educators in other countries the way we have.
Jude	I really enjoyed from other teachers. I appreciated hearing about their struggles, their wants and needs. I realized how fortunate we are in the USA compared to a place like Kenya. Thank you! Please let me know how I can help.
Peter	This interaction was a wonderful experience. I did not know at first that I will learn a lot because I thought maybe I will only give out information. Being in a position to meet and listen to other teachers' feelings about teaching was an experience out of this world.
Bernard	Thank you!

APPENDIX F

MATERIALS FOR BREAKOUT SESSIONS

(Please make a copy of this document to refer to during the study)

Breakout Session One: Fill in a few strengths and problems/gaps

Strengths	Problems/Gaps
Teamwork Self-motivation	Administrators tend to think that the teachers who have worked for long in an institution know better than those who have not.

Breakout Session Two: Fill in some aspects of your school situation

Personal Capacity	Ecology
Knowledge	Excellent teacher training

Teacher agency defined: "[T]his concept of agency highlights that actors always act by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment [so that] the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations. (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137; emph. added)." Priestley et al., 2015

Choosing our target for the week: What will you remoralize or grow in your ecology?

APPENDIX G

TEACHER ECOLOGICAL AGENCY (TEA) QUESTIONNAIRE

Excerpted From: Development and validation of a potential assessment inventory for assessing EFL teachers' ecological agency (Ghamboushi, 2022)

Iterational Statements

1. I draw upon my experiences in past as a learner to take principled decisions about my teaching practice in class.
2. I take advantage of my earlier experience of teaching to deal with everyday teaching challenges.
3. Personal beliefs and values that I bring to my class affect my teaching-related activities.
4. My professional knowledge and skills play a crucial role in the type of teaching actions I take in my class.
5. I attempt to identify and assign past patterns of behavior to deal with current dilemmas in my teaching profession.
6. I rely on my past personal and professional experiences to predict probable upcoming constraints.
7. I exert my past personal and professional experiences to find practically pertinent courses of action in my class.
8. I draw upon my day-to-day teaching experiences to make necessary changes in my teaching practice.
9. Teachers who have experienced other professions solve their daily teaching problems more effectively.
10. Teachers' schooling and education have an important role in the development of their potential to innovate.
11. I employ my personal beliefs and experiences to respond strategically to the challenging situations imposed by the school policy

Practical-Evaluative Statements

12. Teachers' professional environment affects their teaching-related activities.
13. The availability of teaching materials and resources can improve the quality of teachers' teaching practice.
14. I reflect critically to find the best solutions for the problems I face in my class.
15. The collaborative reflection process through which teachers engage dialogically with their colleagues impacts their teaching practice in a positive way.
16. School principals have an important role in establishing trust and providing facilitation for teachers.
17. School managers influence teachers' interpretations of the anticipated learning outcomes.
18. School principals affect teachers' understanding of which of their strategies contribute to the achievement of the desired learning outcome.
19. School leaders should help teachers set their goals to develop their students' learning.
20. School authorities should provide teachers with professional development programs to promote their knowledge and skills.
21. Teachers can make appropriate decisions and changes in their classes when they are given the voice and power to act.
22. The existence of robust professional discourse about education enhances the actions teachers take in their classes.
23. Access to wider professional discourses about teaching should be an integral part of teacher education.
24. Habitual ways of thinking about education hinder teachers to make informed decisions and take principled actions.

25. Social relationships between the teacher, school manager, and colleagues impact teachers' decisions and actions.
26. Teachers cope more successfully with challenges in schools and educational contexts that develop effective social structures and encourage social relationships.
27. The educational context that encourages innovation and a questioning mindset contributes teachers to make more informed decisions and take action in their classes.
28. Teachers can make righteous decisions and changes in an educational setting that encourages horizontal social relationships rather than hierarchical social relationships.

Projective Statements

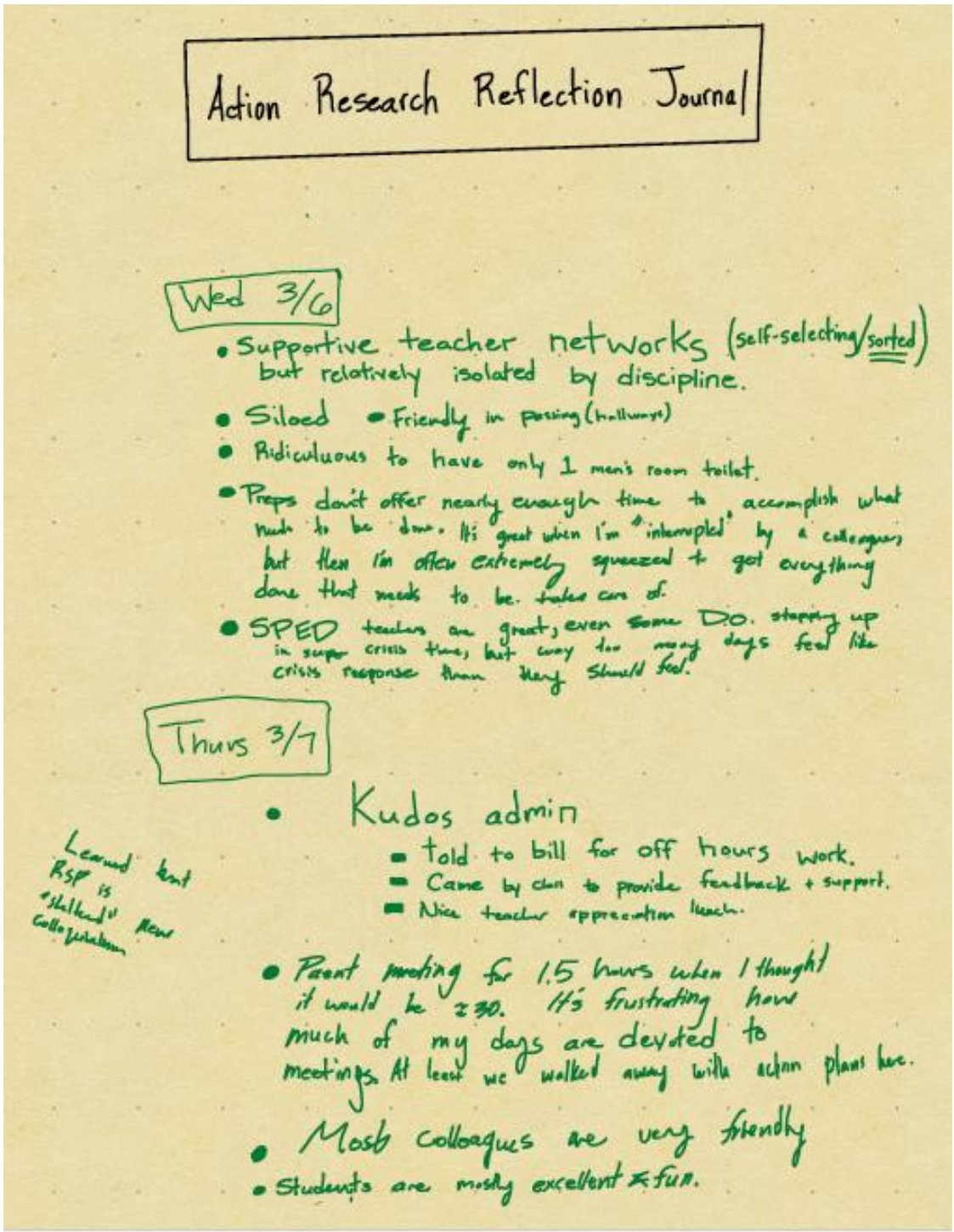
29. I set goals to promote my students' learning outcomes.
30. I do my best to maximize my students' potential.
31. I think teaching goals should not be limited to getting through the syllabus.
32. The utmost goal of education is to enable students to function effectively in society.
33. I set clear short-term goals in teaching to achieve the best results.
34. I set clear long-term goals to attain the desired outcome.
35. I try to keep my students interested and engaged.
36. Students' welfare and development are important to me.
37. I attempt to pursue my goals strategically in my class.
38. I am motivated enough to do my best for my students.
39. I am interested in introducing new forms of pedagogy to promote the quality of education.
40. I try to maintain a normal desirable state in my class.

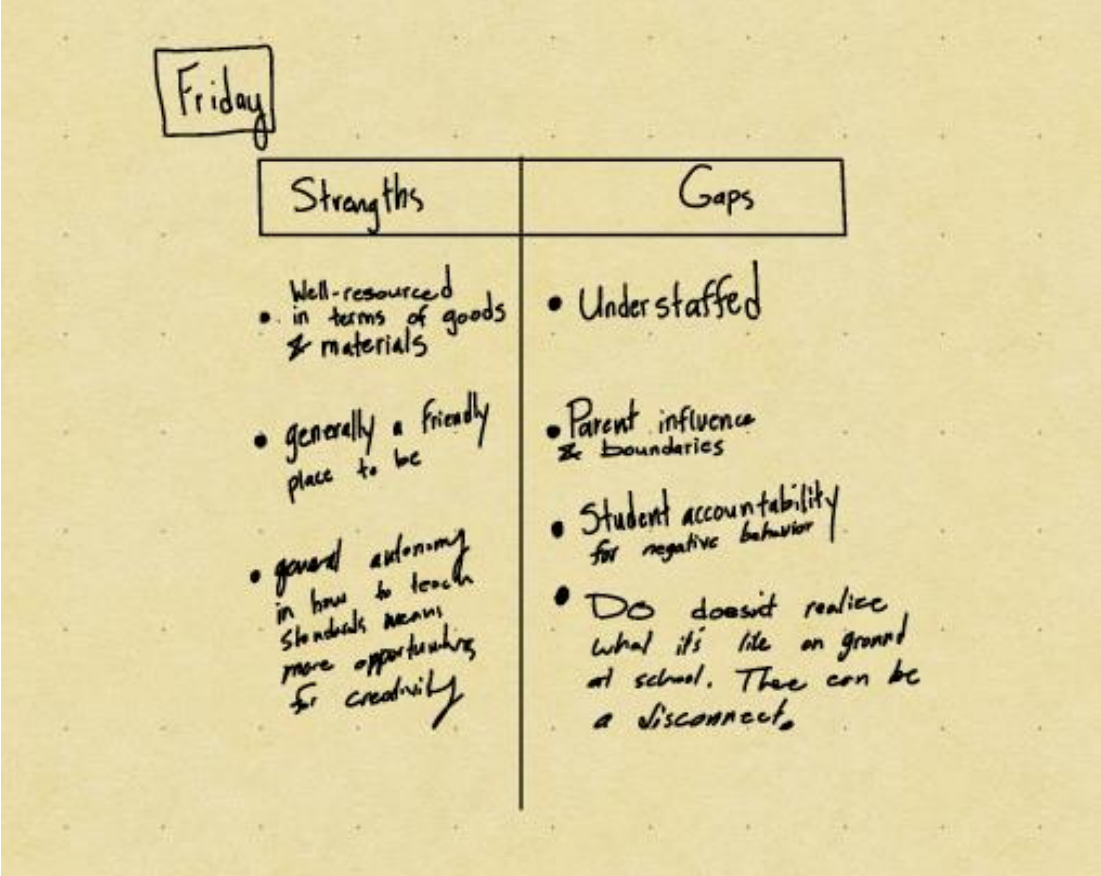
1=never; 2=only occasionally; 3=sometimes; 4=usually; and 5=always or almost always

APPENDIX H

REFLECTIONS (WEEK 1)

Bernard:


Action Research Reflection Journal
Wed 3/6
• Supportive teacher networks (self-selecting/sorted) but relatively isolated by discipline.
• Siloed • Friendly in passing (hallways)
• Ridiculuous to have only 1 men's room toilet.
• Preps don't offer nearly enough time to accomplish what needs to be done. It's great when I'm "interrupted" by a colleague, but then I'm often extremely squeezed to get everything done that needs to be taken care of.
• SPED teachers are great, even some DO. stepping up in super crisis time, but way too many days feel like crisis response than they should feel.
Thurs 3/7
• Kudos admin
- told to bill for off hours work.
- Came by class to provide feedback + support.
- Nice teacher appreciation lunch.
Learned last RSP is "shelved" after Collaboration
• Parent meeting for 1.5 hours when I thought it would be 1:30. It's frustrating how much of my days are devoted to meetings. At least we walked away with action plans here.
• Mostly colleagues are very friendly
• Students are mostly excellent & fun.



Edith's response to week one

4/3/2024

STRENGTHS IN TEACHING SITUATIONS

- Good time management for teachers and learners.
- Good leadership skills for administrators and learner leaders.
- Strong work ethics.
- Problem solving abilities.
- High emotional and intelligence.
- Teacher knowledge and adaptability.
- Good teaching methods.
- Availability of teaching resources.

PROBLEMS/GAPS IN TEACHING SITUATIONS

- Learner's family problem.
- Bullying of learners.
- Lack of funds to facilitate learning.
- Lack of effective communication for teachers and learners.
- Indiscipline amongst learners.

APPENDIX I

PARTICIPANT CONTEXTS

The Kenyan and American participants in this intervention work in quite different contexts from each other and I felt it was important for the reliability of this study to briefly explain each context.

The Kenyans

Giana and Louise work in Amboseli County. Giana is a Kenyan teacher who teaches middle school in a rural town in the Amboseli Valley. She has taught for several years and has a high school diploma. She is known to me from my prior work in the rural town in which I conducted teacher training for a nonprofit in 2016. At her private school, she has the role of an administrator and teacher. Initially, when I learned she had the role of administrator I was not going to include her in the study because I was focused on teachers. She asked for a zoom call to explain why she felt she should be in the study. Primarily she explained that she had no voice at her school as an administrator due to the top-down management of the owner, and simply had extra clerical duties in addition to her teaching. She stated that she had no authority over her fellow teachers. Based on this last factor, I felt it was important to add her voice. The initiative she took on her own behalf - this agentic action - to state her case to me felt important to document. Louise is a female middle school teacher at the same rural private school as Giana. She is a trained teacher and a well-spoken communicator. In session three she described the gaps in her ecology in the following way: "So in our ecology, those are the two main things that are missing: sufficient training and lack of support". (Louise, Session Three) Giana and Louise chose to work together and Giana recruited Louise to the study. In their reflections, they emphasized the strengths of a good location in the town, the good discipline of the learners making it easy to teach them and the good amount of free time teachers have in their schedule to prepare.

Peter and Andy work in Eldoret County. Peter is a Kenyan math teacher at a high school in Eldoret county in Kenya. He holds a Master's degree and serves as a head teacher at his large school. Andy also has a Master's degree and teaches high school math with Peter. Throughout our three sessions, Andy struggled to attain effective Wi-Fi. Because of this, he did not participate verbally in the sessions as much as the other teachers. However, he completed his detailed reflections on the actions he took in partnership with Peter (Appendix- reflections). Peter and Andy were recruited to the study via the Dr. Harry Bett, Ph.D., who served as a guide and help to me before the invention and who attended all three online group sessions to listen and offer his thoughts to the process. Peter and Andy discussed the strengths of their ecology as having non-teaching staff ready to work, low school fees as a sub-county school, adequate classroom facilities and access to a tool to assess teacher performance (Limo). They saw an excessive workload, and an overall lack of planning, direction and applied logic from the administrators, a total lack of technology at the school except for administrators, disinterested learners, overcrowding, limited textbooks and lab facilities, and overall view of teacher

performance as the only factor that impacts students' academic achievements as problems. They cited further issues due to socioeconomic challenges and the "difficulties related to poverty that contribute to student absenteeism, family issues, and community dynamics"(2).

Edith and Olympus work in Amboseli country. Olympus is a male elementary teacher with an Associate's degree in teaching. Edith is a female elementary teacher in rural Kenya and explained how she was eager to engage in this study and hopes to pursue more education as a way to grow in her practice and earn more money as a teacher. Edith recruited Olympus and they partnered together at a rural private school. Edith was the lead, as were Peter and Giana in their partnerships. Edith and Olympus turned in identical documents for the task reflection showing how they worked together. Both expressed their individual thoughts in the sessions that showed how they had worked together and how their thinking was paired. Edith and Olympus work in a school whose population is primarily Masai. Edith described the most significant obstacle to her teaching there. She said, "I can say mostly it is a language barrier. Communication here is very difficult because most of the learners don't even don't know how to speak Swahili, the national language"(Edith's post-intervention interview). She explained that the two national languages of Kiswahili and English are either unknown to her pupils, or a struggle for them (Edith's post-intervention interview) as it is for their parents. Since her students speak Maa at home in their Boma (Masai village) and Edith speaks Kikuyu, along with only one of her students, as well as English and Kiswahili, to the 45 who speak mostly Maa, there is a significant disconnect.

The Americans

Jude works in San Francisco. Jude is a mature female instructor of English language and literature at a private religious preparatory school in an urban area of California. She holds a Master's degree as well as a California teaching credential and has taught for over 20 years. She is known to me as a friend of twenty years and former colleague of eight years. Jude, like all of the American teachers, chose to work alone. As Jude explained the strengths in her ecology, she noted how she teaches three sections of the same course in the same classroom with stable administration. She explained this meant that all of the administrators had been in their roles there for many years. She described that having private school students was a strength.

The weaknesses of her teaching situation included: a fear of speaking freely due to religious censorship and students who do not wish to comply with classroom expectations saying "students have a lazy attitude" and the expectations of the administration.

Sidney is a female teacher of 30 years old. She holds a Master's degree in teaching as well as a California teaching credential. She teaches Social Studies and English to middle school students and has taught for 7 years. She is a former colleague to me and participated in two earlier iterations of this study. When asked to

describe the strengths she stated in week one, Sidney saw a general kind of disconnection between all adult stakeholders in her school – administrators, parents and teachers as the problem.

I feel like, just yeah, not having the community and like not having the support. I don't know if that's like the contributing factor, but it makes it incredibly hard for me to want to go to work every day like I just I don't want to go there. I don't want to do my job. I don't feel successful doing it. And yeah, it makes me want to quit. So, it makes it incredibly hard for me to even like, yeah, feel like I can make my decision. Making (it) is like exhausting.

Bernard is a male 32- year- old special education and English teacher who co-taught grade 8 ELA class with me at a public middle school in California. He has taught for 5 years. He has a master's degree in history as well as a California teaching credential in Special education. The strengths Bernard identified were: a friendly network of teachers and a general friendliness, and how admin allowed him to bill his off hours and gave him support and feedback in the classroom. He identified gaps as follows: understaffing, parent interference, lack of boundaries with the teachers, lack of student accountability and a lack of understanding by the district office of the situation on the ground which leads to poor communication and directives that do not work. (interview)

Hana is a 25 year old second grade teacher who was connected to the study opportunity through her personal friendship with Sidney. Hana has taught for fewer than 5 years but holds a Master's degree and a California teaching credential. Overall she expressed her sense of stress about the lack of time to complete her work. Hana was unique in that she reported teachers enjoyed a high level of input with an "empathetic" and "negotiable admin" (week 1 first reflection) but explained how there is still a lack of effective communication as "a few teachers are 'in the know' because of their relationship with the principal which leads to tensions elsewhere" (week 1 first reflection).

This communication appears to continue in evaluations as two second year probationary teachers with satisfactory evaluations were asked to resign and it would see that more than anything, these two staff were not well-liked by a few of the teachers who 'run the school'"(week 1 first reflection).

Overall, the ten participants represented diverse situations with many weaknesses in common. Several themes surfaced as they observed, reflected, discussed their problems together and took action in their schools.

APPENDIX J

THEMATIC CODING BY THEORETICAL ELEMENTS ORGANIZED BY RESEARCH QUESTION

FREIRE	BIESTA	SANTORO	WHEATLEY
Oppression: not knowing it Oppression: Culture of silence Oppression: Fear (this is a sign of oppression and it is, but it is also a response to oppression) Oppression: Lack of critical thinking Response to Oppression: Opting out Response to Oppression:Unquestioning compliance Response to Oppression:Rage Response to Oppression:In-fighting	Agency ecology: administrator support Agency ecology: community support I am thinking how so many of my codes could go into this. Personal capacity: maturity Personal capacity: sense of responsibility Personal capacity: professional training Personal capacity: intellectual ability Agency obstacle: treating teachers w/o reference to their actual selves Agency obstacle: lack of support Agency obstacle: lack of training Agency obstacle: lack of awareness Agency obstacle: lack of reflection	Demoralization: separated from the good work Remoralization: talking together to solve problems Remoralization: Voice Remoralization: student-centered action Remoralization: Activist Remoralization: teacher leadership	pioneer aspects and aspects of their systems as dominant stabilizer aspects hospice work or workers

RQ 1: AGENCY How, if at all, might *teacher agency* grow through the combination of an online critical cycle of inquiry in a community of practice with peers outside of school and action research steps implemented in their schools?			
FREIRE	PRIESTLEY/ BIESTA	SANTORO	WHEATLEY
The ability to act on behalf of one's highest self leads to liberation Oppression: not knowing it Oppression: Culture of silence Oppression: Fear (i have this in my chart as a sign of oppression and it is, but it is also a response to oppression) Oppression: Lack of critical thinking Response to Oppression: Opting out Response to Oppression:Unquestioning compliance Response to Oppression:Rage Response to Oppression:In-fighting	Teacher agency pers. Cap + appropriate ecology Agency ecology: administrator support Agency ecology: community support Personal capacity: maturity Personal capacity: sense of responsibility Personal capacity: professional training Personal capacity: intellectual ability Agency obstacle: treating teachers w/o reference to their actual selves Agency obstacle: lack of support Agency obstacle: lack of training Agency obstacle: lack of awareness Agency obstacle: lack of reflection	Indirectly via collaboration in open, democratic spaces, ability, willingness to act Agency ecology: community support Personal capacity: maturity Personal capacity: sense of responsibility Personal capacity: professional training Personal capacity: intellectual ability	The COP in the school grows and nurtures agentic action of pioneers

RQ 2 PERCEPTIONS How, if at all, might participants' roles and perceptions of their systems chang		
Conscienziation Conscienziation Asking questions Engaging Love Trust Dialogue decodification	Personal capacity and awareness of that role Personal capacity: maturity Personal capacity: sense of responsibility Personal capacity: professional training Personal capacity: intellectual ability	Remoralization voic Carve out a new role support good teachin Remoralization: Voi Remoralization: stud centered action Remoralization: Acti Remoralization: teac leadership

RQ: DEMORALIZATION How, if at all, might dialogic engagement in a cycle of critical inquiry in an or teacher participants?		
Liberation via praxis of critical inquiry. Remoralization needs to occur for liberation. Dialogue becomes CI Love Trust Research this more Praxis	Teacher agency. If teachers are remoralized they are able and willing to act agentically. Agentic actions which would be similar to the remoralization ones But there could of course be others Willingness Ability Joy Collaboration hope It is the 'sense' in Wheatley and it is the action Agentic action	Remoralization Demoralization: separated from the good work Remoralization: talking togethe to solve problems Remoralization: Voice Remoralization: student-centere action Remoralization: Activist Remoralization: teacher leadership

APPENDIX K

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Colleague:

My name is Mary E. Hurley and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Danah Henriksen, my dissertation chairperson and a faculty member at MLFTC. We are conducting a research study on the strategies of teacher 'remoralization' and agency growth in a new global online ecology of a community of practice. The purpose of this study is to understand better how and to what extent teachers can be 'remoralized' and grow in teacher agency through a new kind of global ecology online in a community of practice.

We are asking for your help, which will involve your participation in three workshop interventions conducted online and video recorded intervention (about one hour each), three problem-solving and observation activities conducted together with a colleague at your school (about one hour each), completion of an **online** survey on two occasions (which may take about 30 minutes, each time), and for three purposively chosen participants, an **audio-recorded** interview (about 30 minutes) concerning your knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about teacher demoralization and agency.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Choosing not to participate in the study does not affect your standing at your school. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study. The benefit to participation is the opportunity for you to learn strategies and practices related to teacher 'remoralization' and agency growth outside of your school, which have the potential to benefit your students, yourself, and your school. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

The online workshop will be video recorded, downloaded onto a password-protected computer, and deleted after completion of the study. Only Mary Hurley (Co-PI) and Prof. Henriksen (PI) will have access to it during the study and it will not be shared. Your signature below indicates your consent. In the survey, to protect your confidentiality, I will ask you to create a unique identifier known only to you. To create this unique code, use the first three letters of your mother's first name and the last four digits of your phone number. Thus, for example, if your mother's name was Mariam and your phone number was (602) 543-6789, your code would be Mar 6789. The unique identifier will allow us to match your post-intervention survey responses and your retrospective, pre-intervention responses when we analyze the data.

For those selected for the interviews, I will request to audio record your responses. The interview will not be recorded without your permission and all names (or provided pseudonyms) from all interview transcripts will be removed. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. I will ask for your oral consent at the time of the interview for those who are selected.

Your responses will be confidential. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Mary E. Hurley at mhurley9@asu.edu or (541) 797-4465 or Dr. Danah Henriksen at Danah.Henriksen@asu.edu.

Signature:_____
Date: _____
Thank you,
Mary E. Hurley, Doctoral Student
Dr. Danah Henriksen, Associate Professor

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Danah Henriksen at Danah.Henriksen@asu.edu or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX L

IRB APPROVAL

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Danah Henriksen
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - West Campus
-
Danah.Henriksen@asu.edu

Dear Danah Henriksen:

On 2/7/2024 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Recentering teachers in a new ecology: Engaging global educators online in critical inquiry and action research to empower teachers' agency and effect school change
Investigator:	Danah Henriksen
IRB ID:	STUDY00019495
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• CONSENT, Category: Consent Form; • INTERVENTION, Category: Technical materials/diagrams; • INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • QUESTIONNAIRE, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • UPDATED PROTOCOL TEACHER AGENCY IN A NEW ECOLOGY, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 2/7/2024.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Mary Hurley
Danah Henriksen
Mary Hurley

APPENDIX M

PRE-INTERVENTION & POST-INTERVENTION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. The administration at my school rewards teachers who comply with directives.
2. I feel pressured by the administrator(s) to comply with parent requests.
3. Administrators ostracize teachers who do not agree with them.
4. I have been or know a fellow teacher who has been bullied by an administrator.
5. Being nice is an important part of being a professional teacher.
6 I am pressured to work outside of contracted hours.
7. I am compensated fairly.
8. I comply rather than engage in a battle with a parent even if they are wrong.
9. I comply with the administration's curricular mandates even when I disagree.
10. Some teachers inform the administration about other teachers.
11. Some teachers ostracize teachers who have been targeted by administrators.
12.I have been tempted to give higher grades than those earned to lessen the parental pressure on myself.
13. I feel angry or enraged.
14. I think about leaving the field of teaching.
15. I feel demoralized.
16. I feel like a robot, taking orders and being forced to do as I am told.
17. I feel afraid to speak out if my opinion differs from my administrators'. [Answer]
18. I feel afraid of my administrator.
19. I feel afraid of some parents.
20. I act maturely.
21. I act knowledgeably.
22. I take the initiative.
23. I have enough time in my daily schedule to grade and plan lessons.
24. I have enough time in my daily schedule to take care of my personal needs such as eating and using the restroom.
25. I collaborate with my peers in meaningful professional discussions.
26. I feel connected and in contact with my fellow teachers at my school.
27. In the last year, I have been trained with up-to-date content on the subject that I teach.
28. Professional development (teacher training) at my school is conducted by a professional expert in the field.
29. My school fully trains teachers in new programs prior to their implementation. [Row 1]
30. My administrator supports me in parent and/or faculty meetings.
31. If parents use aggressive language with teachers, administrators support teachers. [Answer]

32. I feel that my expertise is valued by administrator(s).
33. I feel that my input is desired by administrator(s) on academic matters. [Answer]
34. I feel that my work is meaningfully evaluated by the administrator(s).
35. I have a teaching situation that nurtures my professional practice.
36. I feel respected at work by the administrator(s).
37. The administrator's academic knowledge is higher than mine.
38. I feel safe at work.
39. I feel trusted and treated as a professional by the administrator.
40. Professional development (teacher training) is conducted by a faculty member who was trained in the method by an expert at an earlier time.
41. I am expected to do non-professional childcare duties in my role.
42. Teachers are financially compensated for creating and/or facilitating professional development (teacher training) for their peers.
43. I feel pressured by parents to give high grades and/or modify assignments or tests. [Answer]
44. Parents complain to the administrator(s)about teachers.
45. Parents support teachers' authority.
46. Parents use aggressive language toward teachers.
47. Some parents have more say in the curriculum than teachers do.
48. Parents harass teachers.
49. My professional knowledge and skills play a crucial role in the type of teaching actions I take in my class.
50. I use my past experiences to find the best courses of action in my teaching.
51. I employ my personal beliefs and experiences to respond strategically to the challenging situations imposed by school/ district/state policies.
52. I effect change in my school.
53. I feel I can make appropriate decisions and changes in my curriculum as needed. [Answer]
54. I enjoy a robust professional discourse about education with my fellow teachers and administrators.
55. I set pedagogical and/or curricular goals in my classroom.
56. I am interested in introducing new forms of pedagogy into my classroom.
57. I feel able to fully control or define the learning and curricular choices in my classroom.
58. The administration mandates much of what I teach with little input from me.
59. Professional or constructive input to administration from teachers is viewed as being negative or arrogant.
60. My work is highly monitored.

61. Teachers whose opinions differ from administrators are more likely to have their work micromanaged or criticized.
62. I feel isolated from my teaching peers.
63. "I close my door and teach". That is, I attempt to just teach and avoid engaging with the administrators.
64. I talk together with my fellow teachers to solve problems.
65. I feel powerless. [Answer]
66. I feel able to assert my educational expertise within my role.
67. I contribute to decision-making about the school curriculum.
68. I use my voice to speak about education in the broader community.
69. I am an education activist.
70. I take student-centered actions.
71. I am teacher leader.
72. I engage with a professional teaching community outside of school.
73. I value and respect the administrator(s).
74. How many years have you been teaching?
75. What level do you teach? [Answer]
76. What subject are you credentialed in by the government?
77. What subject(s) do you teach?
78. What is your highest level of education?
79. What is your age?
80. What is your gender?