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About Us

Currents in Teaching and Learning is a peer-reviewed, open-access electronic journal that fosters exchanges among teacher-scholars across the disciplines. Published twice a year since 2008, *Currents* seeks to improve teaching and learning in higher education with short reports on classroom practices as well as longer research and theoretical articles related to pedagogy.

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"Learning to Risk Effort"

—Riley McGuire & Ashley Harvey

> But what are you trying
> to be free of?
> The living? The miraculous
> task of it?
> Love is for the ones who love the work.
>
> —Joseph Fasano, "For a Student Who Used AI to Write a Paper"

Dear readers of *Currents in Teaching and Learning*,

As we launch into another academic year, the tumult of the educational landscape—politically, technologically, institutionally—is sure to be on the minds of many. After years of grappling with a global pandemic, new modalities of teaching, shifting student demographics, and more, having an unprecedented year as instructors is starting to feel like the precedent; classroom crisis becomes routinized. Understandably, this can have a deleterious impact on faculty morale and motivation and, naturally, the same can be said of our students.

Professor and writer Ocean Vuong spoke to the specific contours of the labor of learning for the current generation of American college students in a recent interview:

> Our students…they are more and more self-conscious of trying. There's a kind of surveillance culture around social media. And they would say, "I want to be a poet, I want to be a good writer, but it's a bit cringe." Right, this cringe culture, I don't want to be perceived as trying and having an effortful attempt at my dreams. And, as a teacher, that's a horrifying sort of report from the field. And so, I think they are absolutely scared of judgment and so in fact they perform cynicism because cynicism can be misread, as it often is, as intelligence. Y'know, you are disaffected, you are too cool, you've seen it all. And so, they pull back. But in fact, they are deeply hungry for sincere, earnest effort. They often do it privately. They don't want to admit to each other that they're actually trying really hard to do what they want to do. (ABCNewsIndepth, 2025)

Contributing factors to this insecurity around trying, and its attendant risk of being unsuccessful, are manifold and interconnected. Vuong is right to bring up social media, which has fomented the fear that our shortcomings can be circulated, publicized for scrutiny and ridicule. No doubt a K-12 educational system that often prioritizes standardized outcomes above all else has had results antithetical to a culture of "earnest effort." And, of course, the popularization of the arsenal of tools under the umbrella of Generative A.I. has provided a seductive method to circumvent laboriously grappling with a writing prompt, a long reading, or a coding problem.

Indeed, in Hua Hsu's (2025) meditation on the implications of A.I. for college writing, the language of effort often appears in the responses of his student interviewees, though filtered through a particular Gen-Z parlance. When asked about taking the time to compose an email or work through an assigned classroom text, one student explains his recourse to A.I. by stating "I'm not tryin' to type all that" and "I wasn't tryin' to read that." Scaling up from the individual task, the same student asserts that "I'm trying to do the least work possible" when it comes to classes he is disinterested in, suggestive of the ways A.I. may accelerate the consistent erosion of the perceived value of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum. But, as Hsu rightfully points out, this isn't about student laziness, but rather a redirection of energy: "part of their effort went to editing out anything in their college experiences that felt extraneous." Regardless of one's own pedagogical orientation toward A.I.—from gleeful adoption to principled resistance—it provides a mandate to rethink the status quo of our teaching practices. As the technology races toward ubiquity among students, we must consider which of our assignments, readings, assessments, and learning outcomes are, upon examination, extraneous and, therefore, demotivating.

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Effort is a renewable resource. Student apathy can drain our motivation to teach, but, conversely, our commitment to crafting classroom environments conducive to trying—and work that feels worth the expenditure of time and thought—can reinvigorate our courses. In other words, to return to Vuong, we as educators have the ability to help "eradicate" an aversion to genuine effort:

> If you set the tone for your students and you welcome them—that you won't judge them, that they can be sincere and earnest without being condemned or ridiculed for it, that they can try their best and it won't be cringey to do so—then you truly liberate them towards their best selves. (ABCNewsIndepth, 2025)

The five pieces within issue 17.1 offer a wealth of approaches for setting such a tone in the ways we conceptualize, teach, and evaluate our courses. The articles cover a diversity of topics—supporting students with transitions, teaching literature reviews, deciding on test modality, understanding media literacy, and exploring interdisciplinary instruction—but are united by a dedication to making learning a worthwhile enterprise for instructors and students alike.

By applying Schlossberg's Transition Theory to undergraduate students' experiences with emergency remote teaching (ERT), Christopher Cummings, Kathleen Geddes-Jay, Nicholas Delaney, and Melinda Phillips begin the issue by directly grappling with questions of student and faculty motivation. In "Beyond the Pandemic: Utilizing Schlossberg's Transition Theory to Consider Implications for Major Transitions of University Students," they illuminate the grief, losses, and academic challenges that students faced during the COVID-19 pandemic as collected via surveys, while also exploring the adaptability that arose during ERT. In so doing, they suggest how educators can utilize transition theory as a tool to aid students in both the anticipated and unexpected upheavals involved in higher learning.

Jayne Baker, Tyler Evans-Tokaryk, Lance Stewart, and Michael Kaler tackle an academic staple in "Teaching Writing Skills in Sociology: An Intervention to Teach the Literature Review," utilizing tutorial interventions to instruct undergraduate students who are new to the genre. By composing tutorial modules complete with videos, examples, and practice exercises catered to specific steps of the literature review process, they make the often-daunting form of writing more accessible and beginner-friendly. By taking us "back to basics" and reimagining literature review instruction, the authors relay the importance of transferable writing skills and provide generative ideas to diversify writing instruction.

Similarly, Amanda Cappon and Lynne N. Kennette query a prevalent assessment tool by investigating whether online or in-class exams elicit better grades in "Comparing Grade Outcomes of Online and In-person Tests in the College Classroom: Does the Testing Modality Matter?" Through their data-driven study, they explore how one form of assessment can result in better grades than the other, citing test anxiety, students' backgrounds, and Universal Design for Learning principles as potential factors and avenues for further research.

The article "Insights into Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy: A Case Study of Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Institutions" turns our attention toward prospective educators. Yongpeng Zhu, Lakia M. Scott, and Yuyan Jiao assess the presence of Media Literacy Education (MLE) within teacher training: by gathering teacher educators' perspectives through surveys and interviews, they highlight the varying views on what media literacy is, how it should be implemented into teacher-training curricula, and its overarching cultural significance. Zhu, Scott, and Jiao bridge the gap in research regarding the integration of MLE into teacher education, demonstrating the need for further study and clear standards for MLE instruction.

Finally, in "Interdisciplinary Innovation: Integrating Community Case Studies for Ethics, Justice, and Grassroots Leadership," Ziwei Qi, Lori Kniffin, and Sammuel Byer present an interdisciplinary co-teaching model that combines different instructors' strengths and disciplines to deepen student engagement. By fusing their expertise in criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies, they constructed a course centered around community-engaged learning in which they explored issues of justice and ethics within their communities. They built partnerships with local organizations, enabling students to reflect upon immersive case studies. Through their example, Qi, Kniffin, and Byer reinforce the value of collaboration between educators, students, and the

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communities that house them to encourage leadership grounded in ethical practices.

Once again, I'd like to finish with some notes of gratitude for our team at *Currents*. Our terrific peer reviewers continue to enhance the rigor and impact of every article we publish. The support of the *Currents* Operations Advisory Committee—and, especially, Julie Habjan Boisselle and Dr. Hank Theriault—remains instrumental. Thanks, too, to our graphic designer, Shawn Needham. Conversations with WSU colleagues Drs. Kathryn Frazier, Jacquelyn Raftery-Helmer, Jamie Remillard, and Hardeep Sidhu informed this editorial. Most of all, I am full of appreciation for Ashley Harvey and Rhiannon Mansur, who have been student interns at the journal for a year now. No strangers to "effortful attempts," they have adeptly taken on all tasks I've thrown their way; for example, Ashley helped write this editorial and Rhiannon assisted in this issue's cover design. Now that their time with *Currents* is drawing to a close, I wish them all the best in their subsequent pursuits—and not without a tinge of envy for their future collaborators.

Happy reading,

Riley McGuire

EDITORIAL

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ESSAY

Beyond the Pandemic: Utilizing Schlossberg's Transition Theory to Consider Implications for Major Transitions of University Students

—Christopher Cummings, Kathleen Geddes-Jay, Nicholas Delaney, and Melinda Phillips

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic was an extreme example of transition for college students. Lessons learned from emergency remote teaching (ERT) and how to best support college students with challenging transitions endure into the present. Using a post-intentional, phenomenological approach, the researchers explored 27 participant experiences living through the pandemic while attending a small, public institution in the United States. Utilizing Schlossberg's Transition Theory, findings noted that unanticipated and nonevent transitions were significant during ERT, students felt significant grief over transition assets lost during the disruption, academic and social experiences were inseparable, and participant adaptability proved powerful. Implications for professionals in higher education student support are discussed.

Keywords:

Schlossberg's Transition Theory, college transitions, emergency remote teaching, pandemic, post-intentional phenomenology

The transition of learners as they navigate the landscape of college is an important focal point of college support services and faculty practices. Whether the primary focus is academic or social-emotional, guiding individuals through transitions is key to student perseverance and success (Schreiner et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic elicited changes in higher education in the spring of 2020 that demanded massive transitions of college students. Institutions were forced to shift to emergency remote teaching (ERT), sending students away from college campuses and limiting students' ability to control the learning environment. Better understanding the transition experiences of students during the extreme change brought about by the pandemic could allow for a better understanding of university students in more traditional transitions. Thus, a post-intentional, phenomenological exploration of college students' experiences moving into the pandemic through the lens of Schlossberg's Transition Theory was designed (Anderson et al., 2022; Schlossberg, 1981).

Though several years removed from ERT, lessons from this intense example of young adult transition have implications for understanding support and guidance needed as students encounter new transitions. Schlossberg's Transition Theory had not been formally utilized to study the college student experience in the United States during this massive upheaval in "normal" college life, and this theory was used to frame the understanding of the factors that impacted students the

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most during the pandemic transitions.

Two research questions guided these efforts:

1. From a learning perspective, what was the experience of living through the pandemic as college students?
2. From a mental health and wellness perspective, what was the experience of living through the pandemic as college students?

This study bears relevance for higher education professionals in understanding the experiences students endured as they transitioned to ERT during COVID-19 lockdowns and the lessons of how academic and social transitions can be best supported by key university stakeholders in the present and future.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

As the framework chosen for this study, Schlossberg's Transition Theory focused on identifying transitions, associated transition processes, and factors that influence transitions (Anderson et al., 2022; Schlossberg, 1981). The theory conceptualizes different types of transitions individuals may experience. Due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic-related shift to ERT in higher education, the nature of student transition experiences during the timeframe in question fit what Schlossberg termed "unanticipated transitions" (Anderson et al., 2022, p. 45)—major life changes that cannot be foreseen or expected. The authors also defined the "nonevent transition"; according to Anderson et al., "these transitions are the ones that an individual had *expected* but that did not occur, thereby altering their life" (2022, p. 28). Nonevent transitions had salience for college students due to the enduring nature of the ERT experience and its effects on the expected college experiences that may not have manifested.

The theory also addresses influential factors for the individual in transition. The authors present "[f]our major sets of factors" influencing transitions and "the ability of the individual to cope during a transition" (Anderson et al., 2022, p. 39). Dubbed the "4-S System," they include concepts of "situation," "self," "strategies," and "support" as a framework for identifying areas of both "assets and liabilities" that individuals bring into a transition (pp. 39-56). The situation factor is defined by the authors as the context in which the transition is happening. The self factor focuses on elements of the transitioning individual's personality and life. The authors describe the strategies factor as those coping responses one can use during a transition. Finally, they describe the support factor as the network of others who might be relied upon as resources during a transition. According to the authors, "individuals have both assets and liabilities as well as resources and deficits as they experience transitions" (p. 40), the sum of which fall into a balance to result in the net resources an individual can call upon as they cope with change.

Further, Anderson et al. (2011) addressed loss and associated grief, writing that mourning losses of familiar "surroundings and people or ways of functioning and interacting" is common during impactful transitions (p. 57). Ultimately, the theory emphasized the importance of individual perception of personal experience while simultaneously providing a stable foundation to explore participants' shared experiences. It is for these reasons that Schlossberg's Transition Theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study.

College ERT Experiences and Schlossberg's Transition Theory in Literature

Most research into college experiences during the pandemic focused on learning, mental health, and wellness. In addition to gathering information about college experiences during ERT, it was also important to note how Schlossberg's Transition Theory was being utilized in current studies with college students.

Broad Attention to College Student Mental Health and Well-being

The growing body of literature established broad attentiveness to student mental health and well-being in the wake of the pandemic. Some authors argued that college students represented a population of individuals particularly vulnerable to changes brought on by the pandemic (Cao et al., 2020; Farris et al., 2021). Studies from the United States reported decreases in healthy behaviors like exercise, nutritious food intake, and

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limiting substance abuse in most participants after being sent home during the pandemic (Rettew et al., 2021) and increases in perceived frustration with remote learning and correlated psychological symptoms (Tasso et al., 2021). One study of college students from the CUNY institutions reported high levels of depression and anxiety in more than half of its participants (Jones et al., 2021), noting twofold increases in mental health symptoms between 2018 and April of 2020. Another study noted the loss of motivation of both students and instructors in ERT, which led to grief and frustration (Spinks et al., 2023). Social-emotional and academic integration both decreased significantly for new students during pandemic lockdowns (Resch et al., 2023).

Further studies from outside the United States also reported impacts of the pandemic on broad populations of college and university students. Pandemic-related anxiety of university students was explored in China (Cao et al., 2020; Woon et al., 2021). Rotas and Cahapay (2020) reported that concern for mental health due to stressful pandemic experiences was a major theme in Philippine university student responses. Additionally, student perceptions of higher social support (Woon et. al, 2021) and psychological support (Ye et al., 2020) were predictors of positive mental health outcomes in Malaysian and Chinese students respectively. Hamza et al. (2021) found that Canadian university students without pre-existing mental health diagnoses saw sharper increases in overall stressors, while participants with pre-existing conditions saw little change or improvement.

Learning in a Remote Environment: Student Impacts and Perceptions

Another trend from the literature focused on instruction and learning during ERT. Studies found technologies used were less important to students than well-designed instruction (Gillis & Krull, 2020), instructor communication and flexibility (Thomas et al., 2023), faculty attention to student well-being (Olszewski & Hackey, 2024), and differentiated learning opportunities and student choice (Rippe et al., 2021). Others demonstrated that online teaching environments affected students' ability to concentrate (Rubtsova et al., 2023) and led to a lack of engagement (Lucas & Vicente, 2023; Su et al., 2023).

Student experiences surrounding ERT also featured prominently in the research. Empirical evidence highlighted dissatisfaction with remote learning and reports of cheating (Jenkins et al., 2023); negative impacts on learning due to lack of focus, motivation, and campus resources (Driessen et al., 2020); distraction (Göl et al., 2023); and the lack of social interaction while learning (Almendingen et al., 2020). Many students were forced to move off campus, disrupting the traditional learning environment (Blake et al., 2021) and daily living routines (Farris et al., 2021).

Schlossberg's Transition Theory in Recent Research

Much of the current research that connects college life and Schlossberg's Transition Theory focuses on the transition of freshmen to campus. Authors applied the theory to address online orientation courses (Ho, 2023) and online first-year-experience and transfer-student programmatic offerings (Roybal et al., 2021). The theory has also been recently utilized to examine the transition of different cohorts of freshmen students, including non-traditional students (Hayman et al., 2024), first-generation college students (Cheng et al., 2023), Black students to predominantly white institutions (Clayton et al., 2023), and student veterans (Barmak et al., 2023).

Only one study from a Ghanaian university utilized Schlossberg's Theory to analyze the transition of college students during COVID-19 ERT changes (Adjei et al., 2021). This study found that advising, engagement, and timely online support increased remote student success. No studies applied the theory to COVID-19 transitions in higher education in the United States. Lessons learned from exploring student experiences during this severe transition period can give higher education professionals better tools to address the daily transition struggles in the college population.

Method

A post-intentional phenomenology study (Vagle, 2010) was designed and approved through the research site Institutional Review Board (approval numbers IRB21-11 and IRB22-08). This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of participants' stories, including the meanings individuals and the collective group of participants ascribed to their experiences (Bhattacharya, 2017). Post-intentional phenomenology was also chosen for its ability to explore the complexity of an experience (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016)—in this case, transitioning to ERT as college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Being open to all the possibilities of understanding college students' lives during a confusing new social transition (Vagle, 2019) allowed the researchers to welcome unanticipated insights found in student interviews. To explore participant experiences, each researcher interviewed five to eight students for 20 to 60 minutes.

Sample Demographics

A diverse pool of 27 full-time, degree-seeking college students was recruited as participants. Self-reported data on race (48.1% students of color) exceeded institutional representation (18% students of color), while demographics on gender (66.7% women) approximated institutional representation (64% women). Additionally, 59.3% of participants were Pell-eligible and 55.6% reported first-generation student status at the time of the interviews.

Analysis

Deductive and inductive first-cycle group coding was applied to capture elements of the literature and theoretical framework and allow room for new findings. Attribute, a priori, and initial coding cycles were utilized with multiple codes permitted on data. The research team developed an a priori deductive codebook (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) and all researchers autonomously coded a team-selected transcript. The group met weekly to consensus code (Olson et al., 2016). Where differences existed, dialogue occurred to refine the codebook and develop agreement on the connotations of individual codes. Group coding of transcripts continued until coding reliability was high. The group labored to bridle preconceptions of individual coders. Once a priori coding application and codebook definitions remained stable, the number of coders was reduced to two for applying a priori codes to each transcript, and coding questions were brought to the research team's weekly meeting.

The final first-cycle coding utilized initial coding (Saldaña, 2021) and a similar team-coding process employed with the a priori codes. Open coding ensured that the post-intentional methodology of the study was honored, following the student experiences in any direction they led. Following the initial coding of three transcripts, a working open codebook was produced. After individual coding of the seventh transcript, coding decisions by all researchers had aligned enough to move to partner coding of each transcript. Like a priori coding, each transcript was coded by two researchers with discrepancies brought to the group. Saturation was reached at the seventeenth transcript, but all 27 interviews were coded (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). As an additional measure of trustworthiness, a third team member returned to each transcript to analyze for code definition changes after the open codebook remained stable.

Second-cycle coding utilized Saldaña's (2021) pattern coding to organize the data into axial theme and thematic structure units (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). During pattern coding, researchers identified commonality among participant experiences by grouping initial and a priori codes into thematic areas. The coding team was pleased to find Schlossberg's Transition Theory validated not only in a priori coding, but also through open and axial coding of this uncommon pandemic experience. This process ultimately reduced the data set into a thematic structure of four major areas.

Trustworthiness

The large number of participants for a qualitative study (Matlerud et al., 2016) combined with the relative, broad diversity of the sample supported multivocality triangulation (Tracy, 2019). Further, analyst triangulation (Patton, 2009) was used by having three or more sets of eyes on every line of transcript data and engaging in team dialogue over discrepancies in code definitions and application. Trustworthiness was also addressed using logical analysis steps that were well documented (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Nowell et al., 2017) and through the identification of biases (Amankwaa, 2016). In addition, coding was grounded in participant voices with progression from first-cycle codes to themes focused on connections between codes and relationships among

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Table 1
Example Code Progression from 1st Cycle Codes to Theme

Quote	Open Code	Axial	Final Theme
A: Probably more than anything I just missed seeing my friends. It was very difficult to only be able to talk to them over the phone or through text message because I didn't have that interaction that I, as someone who is codependent, I lost that really personal relationship for a while.	Missing Social Support	Grieving Support Asset	Grief Over Assets Lost
R: I felt like I should be going out and socializing and everything but I was like stuck home. Uhm, so I noticed like I was really angry and frustrated all the time.	Missing Social Opportunities	Grieving Support Asset	
Z: The change that was hardest for me to adjust to was not having the one-on-one interaction face-to-face wise with my professor. I didn't feel like I was able to get the help that I wanted.	Missing Direct Instructor Assistance	Grieving Support Asset	
F: That part was really upsetting because I've been waiting for a very long time to get into the field and then it was time and I couldn't do it. And that was just very upsetting.	Missing Experiential Learning	Grieving Situation Asset	
U: They get these simulations to where we're doing virtual clinicals, which is nowhere near as good as on-hand experience.	Missing Skill Development	Grieving Situation Asset	

concepts through cycles of constant comparison (Levitt, 2021). See Table 1.

Findings

The goal was to identify veins of commonality among participant experiences as filtered through the research questions and theoretical framework. This section explores the themes that emerged from the analysis process. The names used below for all participants are pseudonyms and non-gendered pronouns are used throughout.

Theme One: Experiencing Unanticipated and Nonevent Transitions

Excerpts from participant interviews demonstrated the abrupt and tumultuous nature of unanticipated transitions into the ERT environment. In their reflection on the first days of the pandemic affecting the campus, Yani noted how quickly the transition happened: "we didn't have an option to stay at all" and "they were just like, 'well, we're closing…You need to have your room cleaned, put back together and return your keys by 5 p.m. on Sunday.'" Further, Pat explained how they experienced the news of the shift to ERT: "[One] of my business professors was like, 'OK, I'll see you next fall' and I was like, 'What do you mean next fall?'…That's when it really hit me that like, we were actually going home."

Another participant, Indigo, reflected on a lack of preparation by faculty for the rapid shift to ERT, identifying feelings of frustration with their lack of preparation and the waiting and uncertainty about what would be expected. Like Indigo, Kai reflected on struggling with technological demands while simultaneously dealing with the unplanned responsibility of supporting their 14-year-old brother's educational transition to ERT in K-12 education. They recounted that "it was very hard to transition…We're all trying to figure out how to work this."

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Like each of the participants above, findings from all participants' stories demonstrated Schlossberg's (1981) concept of an unanticipated transition induced by the abrupt shift to ERT in March of 2020. Within the sample of participants, this phenomenon was universally experienced.

While all participants experienced unanticipated transitions, some of the participants also demonstrated Schlossberg's concept of "nonevent transitions" as ERT endured (Anderson et al., 2022, p. 46). Students expecting field learning opportunities recounted strong feelings about lost experiences they had long envisioned. Yani articulated experiences of prolonged uncertainty regarding a lost internship opportunity at Johns Hopkins University, noting "I got accepted," but after three semester-long postponements, "I still have not completed this internship that would have been a huge asset to my [medical school] application."

Like Yani, two participants majoring in education, Miles and Oakley, lost field experiences that altered their expected preparation and confidence for progression in their studies and careers. Miles spoke to the impact of significant delays in field opportunities because "schools just weren't allowing people in," saying that, as a college senior, "I would definitely have a lot more experience in schools by now, if not for COVID." Similarly, Oakley perceived a gap in learning experiences, entering their senior student-teaching placement feeling "nervous going into [the] classroom," adding that "I've never really done this since my freshmen year in college." Oakley further detailed lost opportunities, indicating "most of my time online we were writing lesson plans to not implement the lesson plans." Oakley reflected about the learning experiences they had expected to prepare them for a career as an educator, saying "it kind of felt like it was a standstill [in] learning for me."

Uri, a nursing major, experienced clinical opportunity losses. In their words, "we literally had our first clinical. It was orientation and then the next day we found out we're getting sent home." They continued, denoting a perceived lack of value in the simulations that would be used in the absence of clinical experiences. The ERT shift left Uri feeling like they were "not prepared to go into a preceptorship and be with another nurse and take care of people."

Yani, Miles, Oakley, and Uri shared personal experiences living through the prolonged forced-ERT environment that significantly impacted their long-expected educational opportunities. For these participants, lost learning opportunities impacted their confidence as they prepared to enter the workforce in their respective fields.

Theme Two: Grief Over Assets Lost

The second thematic finding of the participants' stories explored grief over loss of resources while transitioning into an ERT environment. More specifically, this theme explores participant losses related to the self, situation, and strategies factors from Schlossberg's 4-S System (Anderson et al., 2022). When discussing living through a socially-distanced ERT experience, participants spent much of their time speaking of how assets they lost had impacted—and were still impacting—their lives in these areas.

The first common manifestation was participant loss of assets related to sense of self, shifting from their pre-pandemic identity. Several participants focused their attention on aspects of themselves they used to be able to rely on as assets that, since the ERT transition, had become liabilities. For example, Kia spoke of a perceived loss of self, connected to depression and lack of motivation during ERT, saying, "I believe I was another person…being home and not feeling like yourself and then everybody else around you thinking that you're still the same person and you're hiding how you're really feeling." Similarly, Alex noted "it changed me as a person. I think it changed everyone as a person since it happened and it's just like people are still adjusting." Riley identified undesirable changes caused by the prolonged shift to ERT, stating they became introverted, and "if I can just do everything from my room and not socialize, I will. And that's not how I was before." The students' reflections on their social behaviors during and after ERT echoed losses or changes in their pre-pandemic self-identities.

Within the findings, participants also focused significant attention on losses of assets related to situational changes in the roles they were fulfilling. This was particularly true for those who were sent home and lost benefits associated with freedom from home responsibilities while at college. For example, at a time

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when they normally would have been away at college, Emory was placed into additional, unexpected family roles while their mother worked full-time. Emory noted, "I felt the responsibility to make sure that my niece was on top of her schoolwork." For Emory, changes from the familiar context of life on a college campus "just made me anxious overall and not want to do [academic work] at all."

Like Emory, Charlie said pointedly of their academic progress, "I started failing because my mom wanted me to work and help out around the house, so I would be tired and exhausted all the time trying to juggle helping out with my mom and working and in school." Similarly, Harding reflected on experiences balancing school with unexpected responsibilities of a job and helping their mother at home as "a lot more responsibility on me." Harding added that they frequently missed assignments due to the difficulty of managing the added responsibilities.

Coping strategies surfaced in the participants' stories as they reflected on behavioral approaches they were no longer able to rely upon in an ERT environment. One prominent manifestation of such lost strategies dealt with control over physical space. Emory spoke broadly of their loss, saying they "needed to…physically change [their] environment" but couldn't. Indigo mourned the impact of an inability to move to campus lab environments on their learning and well-being. Indigo powerfully demonstrated the strength of the connection between their learning, social experiences, and well-being during this time, recounting a difficult experience with a three-dimensional art class where they lacked studio space and basic equipment to build projects: "[It] got incredibly frustrating, to the point where during one class period, I was on the floor looking up inpatient care facilities because I decided that I would rather be someplace than have to do school." Other participants like Stevie, Taylor, and Yani reflected on the grief they experienced because of an inability to keep academic, home, and social lives separate—a clearly articulated strategy for life balance used by each of them before the pandemic that was no longer available to them.

Theme Three: The Impact on Supports and Academics

Theme three explores participant experiences with the fourth factor from Schlossberg's 4-S System (Anderson et al., 2022): support. Because isolation was such a prevalent feature of the ERT environment, student support networks were dramatically interrupted. Participant conceptions of academic and social experiences were inseparable, and when isolation impacted their campus support networks, it nearly always impacted their academic experience. In the participants' stories, there was a heavy emphasis on lost support networks that impacted opportunities for learning.

Several participants faced barriers to academic progress produced from inadequate support in an ERT environment. Jamie spoke of the missing motivation usually drawn from social elements of pre-pandemic educational experiences: "it was hard because sometimes I just wasn't feeling motivated in the morning… It's another day of you're just reading and you're not talking about [the reading] to really anybody else… You're just there by yourself." Grayson, a graphic design major, lamented the face-to-face instruction they were accustomed to before ERT, noting the lost value they perceived in virtual, video instruction "because [the professor] can't necessarily show me what they're doing." Like Grayson, Danny also spoke to barriers with learning while connected remotely, conveying a tendency to avoid speaking during video instruction. Danny, Grayson, and Jamie's experiences with the negative impact of social isolation on learning were common among participants, with data from every participant represented in the axial theme Isolation and Academics.

Participant stories, while often dark and focused on lost resources, also recounted moments of resilience and perseverance during their experiences. One example of participant adaptation comes from Bobby, who appraised ERT as a negative experience but was resolute on reaching their goal of graduation despite the circumstances. Bobby's perspective was exemplified when they said, "when you got goals in life, you really have no choice but to do what you really have to do." Like Bobby, Miles adapted by recognizing the changes they faced and learning how to succeed in redesigned courses originally developed for group music productions. Miles recounted their experiences, telling a story of re-learning how to successfully meet professor expectations based on instructional adaptations for the ERT environment. Danny adapted to ERT in part because they found

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the flexibility to benefit their personal learning style. Processing and completing learning sessions at their own pace was a significant situational benefit conducive to Danny's experience. A highly motivated participant, Pat also responded to the loss of on-campus opportunities by pursuing engagement and work opportunities in their home community, aided in part by a perspective that their losses on campus were opening new opportunities. During a challenging time, these participants reaped the benefits of adaptability in the rapidly changing environment.

Also, most participants described perceptions of growth and maturation opportunities from overcoming challenging experiences living through the pandemic. A specific example from Vic highlights their perspective: "everything about me changed and matured" and lockdown "gave me time to just reflect on things I could do better…Because we were stuck in the house. So what other thing is better to do than just work on myself. So, that's what I did." Similarly, Harding, a student with low academic achievement, reflected on the development of a new strategy for coping with remote access to professors. Harding reported, "during the pandemic, I actually communicated. Which actually helped with a lot of my work that was missing." Others, like Stevie and Yani, students with high academic achievement, noted more specific forms of growth through learning to reduce self-imposed pressure on academic achievement. Stevie and Yani emerged from the pandemic lockdown with a significantly reduced sense of the importance of academic achievement on their self-identities.

Limitations

This study was limited by several factors. First, the qualitative nature of the method significantly limits the generalizability of the findings. Though, for a qualitative study, the sample size was large, the findings only represented the experiences of 27 individuals from a small university of tight-knit students and faculty. Second, while no researcher interviewed a student with whom they had a working relationship, participants may have attempted to give answers they felt the researchers wanted as each researcher had connections to the students' university. Third, creating thematic findings across individuals in post-intentional phenomenology stretches the bounds of the methodology as researchers need to be careful to find balance between themes and respecting participant individuality (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016). The group worked hard to strike the balance between connecting experiences and honoring them individually.

Discussion

Data from the study aligned with prior research highlighting the disruptive impact on students of being sent home (Blake et al., 2021) and forced changes in daily routines (Farris et al., 2021), as well as on the impact of the loss of social interaction while learning (Almendingen et al., 2020). The participants experienced stark adjustments in resource areas they once perceived as assets which shifted to liabilities in an ERT environment. Although participant stories enumerated the effects of ERT experiences on each of the 4-S factors that Schlossberg's Theory identifies as impacting transitions (Anderson et al., 2022), participant stories focused most heavily on adjusting perspectives of what it meant to be supported and their changing sense of self within a university setting.

Further, loss and, subsequently, grief were significant focuses of every story shared by the participants. As noted earlier, such findings align with Schlossberg's Transition Theory as grief is often associated with impactful transitions (Anderson et al., 2011). The ubiquitous grief endured by the participants serves to highlight the power that loss wields over individual experiences and capacity during periods of disequilibrium. The experiences of disconnection and hopelessness were often found hand-in-hand with participants' identification of grief and loss.

As professionals supporting individuals' engagement in learning and, in turn, acquisition of their goals and dreams, those working in higher education are tasked with finding new ways to appreciate the impact of loss and grief on students when they are impacted by transitions. While the unanticipated ERT environment represents an extreme example of disruption due to forced isolation, what is left is an analog for understanding the experiences of individuals who struggle with transitions during typical years. Even in these typical years, the college transition may present unanticipated challenges that are disproportionately impactful for students who belong to groups that have been historically marginalized.

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As practitioners in higher education, this study's findings can help faculty and staff be mindful of the potential for disruptions in support networks and identity development for students belonging to groups with unique needs including first-generation college students, students of color on predominantly white campuses, non-traditional students, student veterans, students belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, student-athletes, students on academic probation, and students with disabilities. As put into practice, Schlossberg's Transition Theory can be used as a model to understand student transitions by studying students from these groups, but it can also be used as a stable foundation upon which to build interventions and programs that address key factors that influence transitions.

For example, based on these findings, professionals might conduct individual or group programming targeted at first-generation college students that purposefully acknowledge the dissonance they may be feeling within the complexity of a college campus. Furthermore, such programs could use the transition framework to purposefully highlight the importance of students developing a network of supportive individuals that mirrors, as best they can, the types of supportive relationships they valued during prior experiences. Such programming might also address the development of these students' self-identity as a student who belongs on their college campus, along with developing their sense of purpose for achieving their desired degree. Though the above example specifically addresses first-generation college students, the same logic can be applied to support the unique needs of any one of the aforementioned groups of historically marginalized students.

For varied student populations, college transitions play out differently. The researchers look to the body of prior research employing Schlossberg's Transition Theory as a framework for understanding transitions to identify and add to directions for future research. Hayman et al. (2024) and Cheng et al. (2023) call for further research on transitions of non-traditional and first-generation college students and their parents, respectively. Both sets of authors also call for longitudinal studies to understand transitions over a longer timeline. Barmak et al. (2023) identify limitations of their study of student veterans as leaving space for the future study of broader samples of veterans at different institutions.

Each of these calls for future research should be echoed, and the researchers of this study call for future investigations into transitions of other populations of students who may have complex needs. As mentioned before, these populations include those within the LGBTQIA+ community, nontraditional students, student-athletes, students on academic probation, and students with disabilities. Appreciating potential losses and grief of students who may experience dissonance in their college transitions may put professionals in a position to better serve their needs.

Finally, across the United States, ERT was also experienced in K-12 education. It must be recognized that disruptions at different stages in individuals' lives may have impacted students who experienced lockdown and shifts to ERT at different levels of their personal, social, and academic development before college. Based on this study's findings, higher education professionals need to be aware of the potential impact on these upcoming students related to mental health functioning, maturation, and academic losses. In other words, professionals must remain aware that the students entering institutions are different than those served prior to the pandemic.

Conclusion

In this study, participants described and made meaning of experiences with the ERT environment and their mental health, well-being, and academic endeavors. Through their stories, a new understanding was formed about the impacts of the transitions experienced, the effects of social isolation on learning, the losses and grief they dealt with, and the value of adaptability while facing radical changes. These findings helped the research team reflect on the many roles involved in supporting new students entering higher education. Additionally, Schlossberg's 4-S System and its framing of the stressors that are involved in all major life transitions can be used as a tool to support students as they transition through the identification of resources at their disposal to cope with whatever life changes they are experiencing. Armed with this new knowledge, higher education professionals everywhere will be able to better serve and empower their students.

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ESSAY

Teaching Writing Skills in Sociology: An Intervention to Teach the Literature Review

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Abstract

Literature reviews are a commonly assigned genre of writing in higher education across disciplines, as they are a way of communicating a body of knowledge that relates to subject matter or a research topic. However, students tend to be unfamiliar with the genre, not having received any prior instruction on how to write a literature review. To address this, a series of tutorial interventions were designed to build the skills required for this genre of writing. Assessed through a pre-test and post-test, textual analysis, and student survey, we found that instruction on the literature review improves students' grasp of the skills required to produce a literature review and that tutorials focused on the genre were regarded by students as helpful. However, many students reported challenges with key dimensions of the literature review—such as the ability to synthesize sources—that suggest new opportunities for providing instruction.

Keywords:

academic writing, academic writing instruction, genre, literature reviews, tutorials, writing in the disciplines

This project explores the impact of a tutorial-based intervention in a required, writing-intensive, second-year social science research methods course ("Social Science Research" SOC200)[1] : a series of four skills tutorials that introduce and teach the literature review as a genre of academic writing, along with an interactive asynchronous module on citing sources using the American Sociological Association (ASA) style of citation and referencing. Existing research indicates that many students have little experience writing a literature review, have trouble defining its most basic features, and generally struggle with synthesizing extant research and organizing sources thematically (Cisco, 2014). And yet, the literature review is commonly assigned across disciplines to assess students' knowledge and understanding of a topic, and typically without instruction on the requisite skills. We know that "just-in-time" skills interventions in tutorials aligned with a scaffolded assignment structure can be effective in improving students' writing skills (Baker & Evans-Tokaryk, 2023). The focus of our research is on an intervention to improve students' understanding of the literature review genre and their skills in writing one, and to gauge their perceptions of the strategies designed to produce these benefits. In the following paper, we describe a tutorial-based intervention designed to improve students' understanding of the literature review genre, provide an overview of the data collection methods we used to assess that intervention, and share our interpretation of the data we collected to measure the impact of this intervention. Our results indicate that a tutorial series designed around instruction of the skills required for writing a literature review improves student comprehension of the genre, and students found the intervention to be helpful and transformative. The textual analysis points to areas of difficulty in literature review writing, and this is confirmed by students in the survey who articulated where they struggled. We therefore conclude with opportunities to improve on the instructional practices described in this paper.

Literature Review

Writing across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines

Modern writing pedagogy draws heavily on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID) scholarship (Bazerman et al., 2005; Palmquist et al., 2020). WAC argues that writing—a means of both expressing learning and generating knowledge—cannot be isolated in a single course; rather, students need authentic and appropriate writing tasks and instruction throughout their academic careers. WID builds on this by acknowledging that there is no such thing as "writing in general"; one is always writing in a context (in this case, a disciplinary context), and every context carries with it expectations on all levels, from formatting and language to structure and epistemology (Wardle, 2017). Thus, WID recognizes that students in a biology course will use writing to do different things and to help them think differently than those in a philosophy course (Carter et al., 2007).

Focusing on genre in writing assignments helps advance both these aims in that it develops students' rhetorical or contextual consciousness, thus supporting WAC, and creates a space in which the importance of disciplinary considerations on every level (epistemic, structural, formal, etc.) can also be effectively taught, supporting WID (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). In our specific case, dealing with the genre of the literature review moves students into a context in which peer-reviewed journal articles are understood as utterances in the ongoing conversation of disciplinary self-definition, rather than as atomized, siloed repositories of knowledge. In short, literature reviews can help students understand themselves as participants in the scholarly conversation that extends well beyond their course. Working in this genre obliges students to understand this new context and learn how to speak appropriately in it, a suitable task for second-year students as it sets them up for future writing challenges.

Such work often involves the use and analysis of models, in which we are concerned with teaching what they do, what they look like, and how they work. Regarding the first aspect (what models do), understanding genre as something that is enacted and performed within a given rhetorical and social situation (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015) involves considering the communicative purposes of any given genre: one is always speaking to someone in order to do something. The second aspect (what the models look like) often brings templates and examples into consideration: while valid concerns have been raised about using them too bluntly or prescriptively, they can be used as means to effectively channel and stimulate students' creativity by pre-determining some of the formal issues (Benay, 2002; Fuller & Pence, 2013; Graff & Birkenstein, 2021; Lynch-Biniek, 2010). The third aspect (how the models work) provides students with data to analyze so that they can understand how genres work, permitting them to develop critical skills and criteria for assessment, as well as an appreciation for generic, rhetorical, and broader contextual issues in their reading.

Teaching the Genre of the Literature Review

The literature review—broadly defined by Cisco (2014) as the thematic synthesis of academic sources to provide a review of the theoretical and empirical findings of an area of research—is a common writing assignment in university courses across disciplines and degree levels (Ridley, 2008). Literature review assignments are commonly designed to improve student comprehension of academic research on a topic, enabling students to engage more critically in their field's ongoing evaluation of ideas, data collection, and research results (Rewhorn, 2018). Literature reviews thus require students to develop complex approaches to academic materials and appreciate multiple perspectives on a research topic before they can capture in writing what they have learned (Hays & McNiff, 2024). The writing phase of a literature review is challenging, particularly because the literature review genre differs significantly from the more familiar genres of research essays, argumentative essays, position papers,

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or even annotated bibliographies (Cisco, 2014; Fergie et al., 2011; Jackson, 2021). Because they are unfamiliar with the genre, students often become confused and frustrated with the process of writing literature reviews (Cisco, 2014).

An additional source of confusion for students is that the literature review is defined in many different and often conflicting ways (Cisco, 2014): it can be defined as a process of understanding academic ideas (Riley, 1997); a means of sorting research into identifiable categories (Machi & McEvoy, 2016; Rocco & Hatcher, 2011; Zorn & Campbell, 2006); or simply a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis (Price, 2017; Travis & Clair, 2018). The multiple definitions of the literature review genre push students to rely on familiar writing techniques such as summary or paraphrase, rather than the central technique of synthesis. For example, many students provide a series of individual annotations when attempting to write a literature review (Cisco, 2014; Inoue-Smith, 2020; Nordyke & Yacobucci, 2021). Given these challenges, educators across disciplines and education levels need to provide students with formal guidance and training on writing literature reviews that both defines the literature review and that clearly distinguishes it from other academic writing genres.

To make effective and appropriate use of any genre, a writer must understand not only its formal conventions, but also its exigence, goal, and purpose (Artemeva, 2004; Devitt, 1993). Thus, writing support in this area should focus on the "genre" of the literature review alongside the more typical emphasis on the body of research and writing process students should follow. Although there is abundant literature on teaching academic genres or a genre approach to writing instruction (Devitt, 2004; Hyland, 2007; Swales, 1990), existing research on the topic contains relatively little practical information on teaching the specific genre of the literature review in higher education (Hays & McNiff, 2024; Inoue-Smith, 2020). Resources for students are primarily guidebooks that focus on the process of identifying and organizing materials in the preliminary stages of creating a literature review (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; Galvan & Galvan, 2017; Garrard, 2020; Machi & McEvoy, 2016). Few provide detailed instruction on how to construct and organize a literature review (Cisco, 2014; El-Sakran, 2020; Jackson, 2021). Guidebooks may help students identify the relevance of a source, but most do not teach them how to do the work they must do: synthesize information into themes, discuss the significance of patterns, identify gaps in the literature, and organize information into a coherent document (Nordyke & Yacobucci, 2021). In short, there is an obvious gap in explicit instruction on the literature review genre and the entire process of writing one (Cisco, 2014).

The existing literature on literature review instruction does however suggest general strategies for teaching the genre. These suggestions include conventional instruction on genre—what a literature review is meant to communicate and how it should be structured—and the encouragement of hands-on practice with the process of summarizing and synthesizing the literature, grouping texts into themes, identifying gaps, and evaluating the significance of these gaps to the literature as a whole (Poe, 1990; Price, 2017; Shahsavar & Kourepaz, 2020; Walter & Stouck, 2020; Zorn & Campbell, 2006). While these interventions have addressed some of the writing conventions students need to use when writing literature reviews, other studies have emphasized the need for definitional clarity by focusing on strategies for synthesizing scholarly materials into cohesive themes (Cisco, 2014; Darowski et al., 2016; Hays & McNiff, 2024; Smith & Ferris, 2017; Travis & Clair, 2018). Both approaches not only help to clarify the definition and structure of literature reviews to students, but also aid in developing the necessary writing techniques to write a review successfully (Cisco, 2014; Darowski et al., 2016; Lannin et al., 2017; Price, 2017; Smith & Ferris, 2017; Travis & Clair, 2018). Our own approach aims to address both concerns simultaneously by incorporating definitional clarity and teaching the component skills required of a literature review.

Importantly, exploring the effectiveness of instruction is crucial considering the ubiquity of literature review assignments in higher education (Hays & McNiff, 2024). Student feedback is one important measure of a pedagogical intervention's success. For example, research on strategies for teaching the literature review has typically measured how intervention improves student perceptions of their confidence with that genre or perceptions of the effectiveness of instruction (Cisco,

Teaching Writing Skills in Sociology *continued*

2014; Poe, 1990; Shahsavar & Kourepaz, 2020; Smith & Ferris, 2017; Walter & Stouck, 2020). While these measures help us understand students' perceptions of themselves as writers, they do not establish whether intervention improves student performance as empirically measured through learning gains or grade changes. Demonstrating this point, Darowski et al. (2016) found that students reported that an intervention focused on synthesizing sources was helpful, but analysis of their actual writing indicated no statistically significant difference when compared to a control group that did not receive the intervention. Our aim, therefore, is to assess both students' perception and learning gains as measured by the learning outcomes that guided the development of our intervention. Thus, we use multiple measures to assess the multi-stage, course-based interventions that are focused on clarifying the definition and structure of literature reviews, to determine their effectiveness in improving literature review writing among higher education students, as well as students' perceptions of the interventions.

Design of Tutorial-Based Instruction in SOC200: Social Science Research

The focal course for our intervention is Social Science Research (SOC200), a course designed for majors and specialists in either of the two program streams in the Sociology Department: sociology or criminology, law, and society. The department is situated within a suburban campus of a research-intensive university. In the year our research was conducted, the university had approximately 15,000 undergraduate students, approximately one-third of whom were students who paid international tuition fees. At the time of data collection, the university did not have any mandatory first-year writing instruction courses. All writing support was provided to undergraduate students through the university's academic skills center and a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program that provided funding to support additional writing instruction across the disciplines. SOC200 participated in this program and received additional funding to allow teaching assistants (TAs) to lead weekly tutorials focusing on academic skills development, hold additional office hours, and provide detailed feedback on a scaffolded writing assignment that included a literature review.

SOC200 focuses on social science research methods and integrates discipline-specific writing instruction into the curriculum through weekly tutorials. As part of a renewal of the course's weekly tutorials, instruction on the literature review was revised across a sequence of four non-consecutive tutorials (see Table 1). The tutorial renewal focused on the literature review because the course instructor and TAs had observed over many years, including through conversations with students, that this was the area where students experienced the most challenges. The learning outcomes (LOs) associated with the revised tutorial sequence are presented in Table 2.

Tutorials focused on literature review writing—tutorials one, three, four, and seven—were designed to resolve definitional confusion and unpack the components of a literature review, such as synthesis, identifying gaps, etc. Tutorial one teaches critical reading strategies and tutorial three teaches techniques for using synthesis to put sources into conversation with each other, skills that are foundational to teaching the literature review conventions introduced in tutorials four and seven. Tutorial four introduces the definition of a literature review, showing students how a literature review differs from other academic genres—and specifically differentiating between literature reviews and annotated bibliographies. This tutorial's design draws on Cisco's (2014) pedagogical intervention in teaching literature reviews, using similar visual aids in instructing students on strategies for synthesizing sources that address themes that are connected to a research question (see Figure 1 for a sample visual adapted from Cisco, 2014). Tutorial seven then expands on the definition of the literature review genre by modelling a process-oriented approach to writing (i.e., teaching the process of identifying and synthesizing sources into themes throughout the planning, researching, and writing process).

To better acquaint students with the formal conventions of the literature review genre, excerpts from literature reviews in peer-reviewed journal articles were used as learning objects for hands-on writing exercises. The exercises for tutorials three and four had students work with paragraph-long learning objects to familiarize them with the specific structure and writing conventions of the genre. For example, students worked in small groups to identify where the author has articulated the gap that their research aims to address. In another activity, students were presented with a sample paragraph and the TA led students in a group discussion

Teaching Writing Skills in Sociology *continued*

Table 1
Tutorial sequence

Tutorial Week	Tutorial Topic
1	Strategic Reading
2	Research Topic and Research Question
3	Using Scholarly Sources *Asynchronous ASA Module available online*
4	Literature Reviews
5	Finding Scholarly Sources
6	Midterm Test Review
7	Academic Writing
8	Research Proposal
9	Research Ethics
10	Peer-to-Peer Feedback
11	Final Test Review

Table 2
Learning outcomes

1	Demonstrate an ability to write a topic sentence that introduces a paragraph in a literature review.
2	Set a strategy for structuring a literature review.
3	Synthesize findings of existing research that addresses the student's research question.
4	Demonstrate proficiency in referencing multiple sources in ASA format.
5	Clearly identify the gap in the existing research that addresses the student's research question.
6	Use evaluative criteria to assess the existing research that addresses the student's research question.

using prompt questions like "What is the author trying to achieve in combining citations together in this way?" Tutorial seven focuses on building from this knowledge to write a literature review; the tutorial exercise has students take brief statements from three different learning objects and synthesize them together to practice how to connect sources along a common theme and include multiple sources in a single in-text citation. To help achieve the task, students were provided with sentence templates drawn from *They Say / I Say* (Graff & Birkenstein, 2021), a student-facing academic writing handbook, such as "Our understanding of ___________ remains incomplete because previous research has not examined ___________." In addition to the tutorial exercises described, students independently completed an asynchronous online module on the ASA format that features instructional videos and interactive practice activities. The ASA online module was completed before students began to submit their written work in the course.

Methods

To explore the effectiveness of the tutorial redesign and accompanying asynchronous module, we gathered data via three sources in two sections of SOC200 in Fall 2021. The research received approval by our institution's Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education ethics review board (#41503). Together, these three measures allowed us to explore changes in students' understanding

Teaching Writing Skills in Sociology *continued*

Figure 1
Bucket analogy

of the literature review genre over the course of the term, analyze the work that they produced with specific reference to the learning objectives for the assignment, and, consequently, better understand the student experience of learning about the genre and applying that knowledge to their writing.

The first source of data is a one-group pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design implemented before and after the tutorial interventions that measures students' understanding and skills across the six LOs that informed our tutorial design. All students were randomly assigned into one of six groups, with each group assigned a pre-test and post-test according to a randomization design matrix. Each pre-test and post-test presented students with two brief excerpts of a literature review pulled from a peer-reviewed journal article, followed by a set of 24 multiple-choice questions, with four questions corresponding to each of the six LOs (see Appendix for one set of measures—12 multiple-choice questions—as an example). The multiple-choice questions were initially designed by the research team and then revised after consulting with other disciplinary experts in sociology and writing studies to ensure the questions accurately and comprehensively tested students on their knowledge of the literature review genre. The pre-test was administered between weeks two and three of the course, before students received detailed instruction on literature review writing; the post-test was administered between weeks nine and ten, after students had submitted their literature review but before they received feedback or a grade. To measure the effects of the tutorial intervention on changes in student understanding of the six LOs, an independent sample t-test was conducted to analyze differences between pre- and post-test results.

Second, we conducted a textual analysis of the literature reviews that students submitted as part of the scaffolded assignment. To conduct this analysis, the four researchers all independently regraded the literature review writing samples without considering the original marks or feedback provided by the course instructor and TAs. To facilitate this process, the research team designed a detailed analytic rubric (see Table 3 for an abridged version) that was tied explicitly to the six LOs and used language very similar to that in the rubric used by TAs for assessing the literature reviews as part of their regular course work. The textual analysis process also included a series of group benchmarking sessions to help ensure agreement among the researchers' scores. The four scores were then brought together and averaged. A linear regression analysis was conducted on the textual analysis data to measure the relationships among rubric criteria, including the effect of each criterion on the final grade of the literature review assignment.

Finally, we collected quantitative and qualitative data via a student survey. All students received an invitation to complete the survey after the literature-review-focused tutorials were complete and they had submitted their literature reviews for grading, but before they had received a mark for their submission. The survey included Likert-scale questions such as "How helpful were the tutorials in developing your ability to identify gaps in

Teaching Writing Skills in Sociology *continued*

Table 3
Abridged Textual Analysis Rubric

	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Adequate (2)	Marginal (1)	Inadequate (0)
Synthesis *Literature organized into dominant themes.*					
Evaluation *Judgements about sources' value.*					
Gap *Integrated in connection to evidence presented.*					
Structuring *Organization of paragraphs and paper overall.*					
Topic sentences *Relevance and focus.*					
Formatting Sources *ASA style of citation and referencing.*					

existing research that addressed your research question?" and "In general, how confident are you with academic writing?," alongside open-ended questions, such as "Was there any aspect of literature reviews that you believe should have been covered in tutorials?" Open coding was initially conducted to identify categories of what students thought should be covered in tutorials, leading to the identification of two central categories: topics that should have been covered but were not included in tutorials, and topics that were covered in tutorials but required additional instruction.

All Fall 2021 SOC200 students (over 200 students) were invited to complete the pre-test, post-test, and student survey and were given bonus points added to their final grade for doing so (1% for the pre-test and survey and 2% for the post-test). Though we aimed for a research sample that would reflect the distribution of final grades in the course, the sample skews more heavily to the higher grades due to the various measurement instruments and the necessity of focusing our analysis only on those students who consented to have their work included in the research project. This is an important but unavoidable limitation of our research. Approximately half of the students provided their consent to have their pre-test, post-test, student survey, and literature review (submitted as part of their regular course work) as part of the current project. However, not all consenting students had all four of these items. As a result, our final sample consists of 66 students (see Figure 2) and all statistical analyses presented below are for all 66 students. Of the students in our sample, 71% indicate English is their first language, while the other 29% self-identify as English Language Learners (ELLs).

Findings and Discussion

Were the tutorial-based interventions, alongside the ASA online asynchronous module, successful in transforming students' understandings of the literature review genre and of the best strategies for writing one? And what were students' perceptions of the genre and our attempts to assist them in navigating the genre successfully? In the sections that follow, we explore the impact of the tutorial interventions as captured via our three sources of data: pre- and post-tests, textual analysis of the literature reviews, and student surveys.

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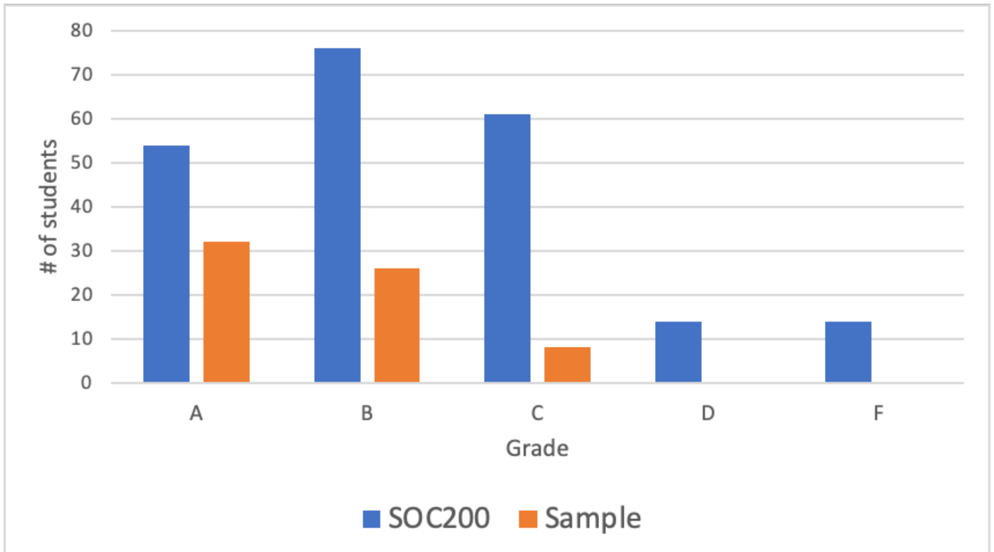
Figure 2
Distribution of SOC200 Students and Sampled Students



Pre- and Post-Tests of Students' Understanding of the Literature Review Genre

The pre- and post-test design allowed us to examine change across two time points in the average total scores and for each individual LO. As a quasi-experiment, we highlight the impact of the tutorial interventions that our results provide, though we cannot use the language of causality in discussing our inferences from the results due to the lack of a control group. Figure 3 illustrates the change in average total score between the pre-test and the post-test (from 16.0 to 17.8, out of a total possible score of 24). Though modest, the increase in the average score by the post-test suggests that the tutorial interventions improved students' understanding of the literature review genre. It is worth noting that the independent sample t-tests show neither self-rated academic writing ability nor ELL status had a statistically significant relationship with a student's score on the pre-test or the post-test ($p>0.05$). Also, students' ability to accurately identify the components of the literature review genre—as assessed on both the pre-test and the post-test—exists independent of their sense of themselves as an academic writer or their ELL status.

Figure 4 presents changes from the pre-test to the post-test for each LO. Across all LOs, there is growth. The most substantial improvement is with LO2 (set a strategy for structuring a literature review), which also had the lowest pre-test score. This growth appears to demonstrate the efficacy of our tutorial intervention, as two of the four literature-review-focused tutorials explicitly focus on structure, genre conventions, and strategies for organizing information. The next most substantial improvement is LO4 (using ASA format). Students practiced this skill via the asynchronous online module and through their first assignment submission where TAs provided formative feedback on their citations. The least amount of growth is in students' ability to write an effective topic sentence (LO1); they start strong in their understanding, and this strength remains at the post-test. Lastly, there was some improvement—but not much—in three areas: LO3 (synthesis of findings), LO5 (identifying the gap in existing research), and LO6 (using evaluative criteria). Here, too, the independent sample t-test shows self-rated academic writing ability does not have a relationship with any of the six LOs ($p>0.05$).

ELL students did not perform any differently for five of the six LOs, suggesting that they were perhaps impacted by the intervention in a similar way to native English speakers. ELL status did, however, have a statistically significant relationship to LO4 (ASA formatting) ($t=-3.050$, $p=0.003$), where ELL students' scores declined by -0.829 marks (out of a total of 24) between the pre- and post-test, a modest near one-point decline. The pre-test to post-test score for LO4 showed moderate growth when

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Figure 3

Average Total Score at Pre-test and Post-test

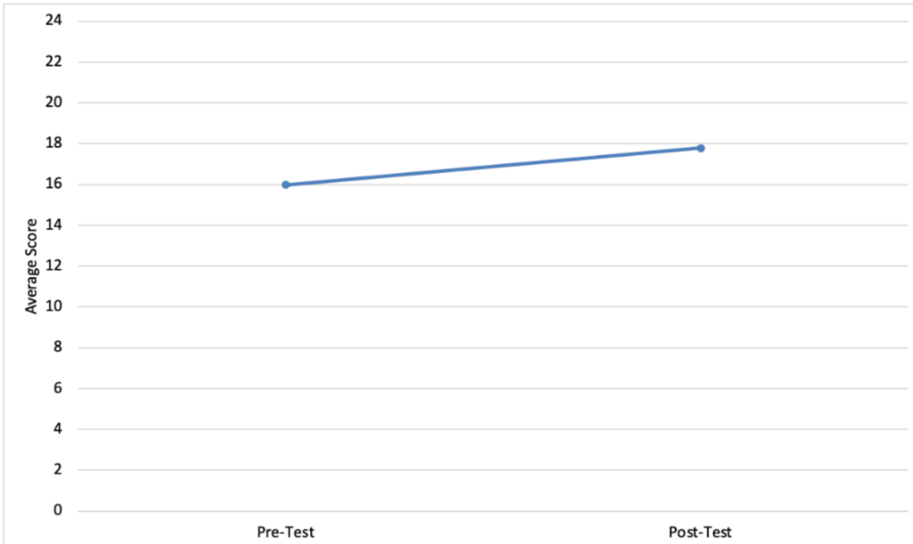
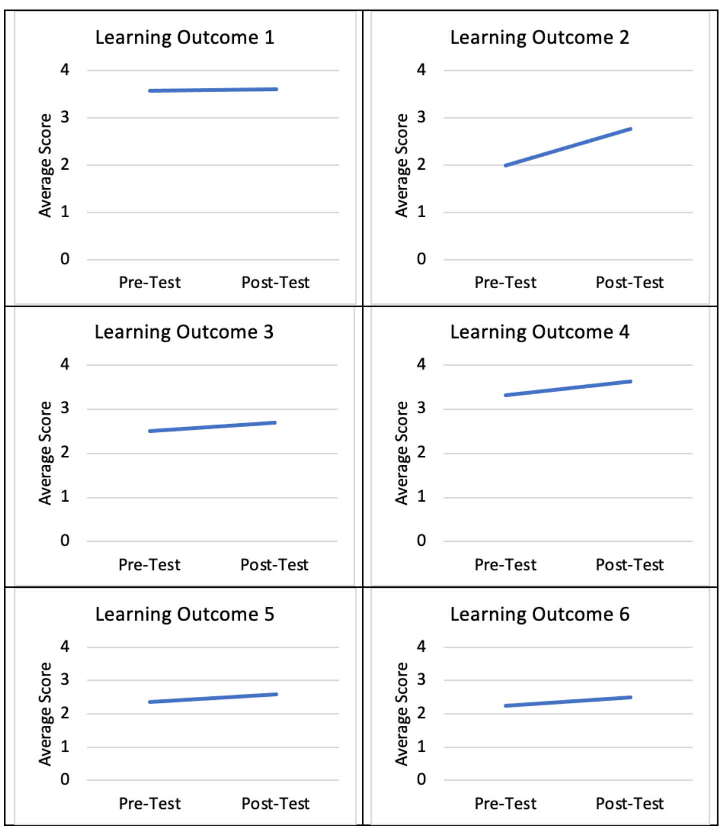


Figure 4

Pre-test and Post-test Scores by Learning Outcome



averaged across the sample, suggesting that most of the growth in understanding this skill is likely experienced by native English speakers.

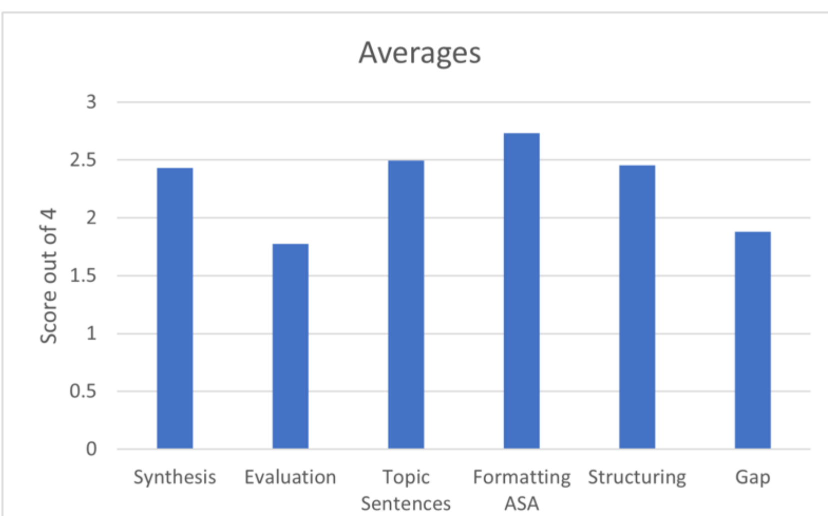
Textual Analysis of Literature Reviews

Figure 5 shows the results of the researchers' textual analysis of the literature reviews submitted as part of students' regular coursework. The x-axis represents the six evaluative criteria in the rubric that correspond to the LOs while the y-axis represents the students' scores averaged across the four researchers. Most scores are clustered around 2.5, representing a score between "Adequate" (C-range) and "Good" (B-range). Students did best (score of 2.7) in correctly formatting their citations and reference entries according to ASA style (LO4) and scored lowest (score of 1.8) on their ability to use evaluative criteria to make judgements about the value of their sources to their research question (LO6) and in their ability to identify the gap in the existing research that addresses the student's research question (LO5; score of 1.9). As we discuss below, students identified these as among the more challenging tasks of the literature review.

A regression analysis on the relationship between the six textual analysis criteria showed all scores were strongly correlated, significant with an associated p-value of < 0.001. The strongest correlation is between the structuring and synthesis criteria such that for every one-point increase in structuring, there is an increase of 0.9 in synthesis (r=.677, p=<.001). The connection between structuring and synthesis may be indicative of how tightly woven these skills are in the genre of literature review writing: for students to organize the information in their paragraphs and devise a logical structure for the literature review, they need to engage in synthesis. Our textual analysis of the corpus shed light on these types of interrelationships; lower grades in one criterion were often linked to lower grades in another. A student who devotes a paragraph to each source is neither synthesizing their sources nor organizing their paper effectively. Where students struggled to organize sources thematically (i.e., synthesis), they also had poor paragraph organization, such as very long paragraphs and/or paragraphs that contained too much information or contradictory information.

Each individual assessment criterion score had a statistically significant relationship to the total textual analysis score (p<.001). This is expected considering the dependent variable of total textual analysis score is a scale of each assessment criterion, in which case a one-point increase in any individual criterion would result in a one-point increase in the total score. Yet, the results indicate the impact of each criterion is greater than one. A one-point increase in structuring and topic sentence

Figure 5
Textual Analysis Average Scores by Evaluative Criteria



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corresponded to a 4.96-point (r=.847, p<.001) and 4.63-point (r=.790, p<.001) increase in the total textual analysis score, respectively. For every one-point increase in synthesizing, formatting ASA, evaluation, and gaps, the total textual analysis score increased by 3.73 (r=.841, p<.001), 3.63 (r=.756, p<.001), 3.62 (r=.811, p<.001), and 3.06 (r=.767, p<.001), respectively. These coefficients capture both the relationship between criteria and the effect on the total score, indicating that improvements in any single criterion corresponded to increases in other criteria. Importantly, native English speakers performed only slightly better on each textual analysis criterion than ELL students, and these differences are not statistically significant (p>0.05).

Finally, we conducted a regression analysis of the literature review scores against students' performance on the pre-test and post-test. This analysis demonstrated that all textual analysis criteria were associated with the pre-test and post-test total scores (p<.001), but that the correlations were stronger between the textual analysis and the post-test scores than they were between the textual analysis and the pre-test scores. This points to the effectiveness of the tutorial interventions and suggests that students' increased knowledge of the literature review genre (captured in their post-test scores) informed their approach to writing the literature review at the end of the course. Of the textual analysis criteria, the strongest correlation was between the ASA style and the post-test (r=.539, p<.001), which was the highest score in the post-test and the aspect of literature review writing which students found to be most straightforward (discussed below). The weakest, but still statistically significant correlation (p<0.05), is between the evaluation criterion and the pre- (r=.367, p=.002) and post-test scores (r=0.385, p<.001), which was among the aspects of literature review writing which students struggled with the most.

Student Survey Data

Among the most striking results that emerged from the student survey were the data that spoke to students' perception of their starting point: lack of writing confidence and prior instruction in literature reviews. Notably, 65% of our sampled students felt "not very confident" about the literature review genre of writing, and only two students (3%) reported feeling either "very confident" or "confident." This is despite 32% feeling "confident" and a further 41% feeling "moderately confident" about their general academic writing skills. Indeed, 86% of the students in our sample indicated that they had "average," "good," or "excellent" academic writing skills. These numbers show that students' confidence in academic writing and their perception of their writing ability did not translate into confidence in writing literature reviews. Given that so few claimed to have received instruction on the literature review genre prior to or concurrent with SOC200 (8% and 3%, respectively), their lack of confidence in this area is not surprising.

The student survey indicated which aspects of the literature review students found to be the easiest and most straightforward or the most challenging and complex (see Table 4). Perhaps unsurprising given its

Table 4
Student Perceptions of the Easiest and Most Challenging Aspects of Writing the Literature Review

Aspect of the Literature Review	% of students reporting this as easiest or most straightforward	% of students reporting this as most challenging or complex
Synthesizing sources	32	52
Evaluating sources	35	42
Structuring	19	54
Topic sentences	35	36
ASA format	85	3

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rather technical nature and its peripherality to the more challenging work of writing a literature review, students indicated that implementing the ASA citation style was the easiest or most straightforward task in writing a literature review. (Students were able to select multiple categories, so totals in both columns exceed 100).[2]

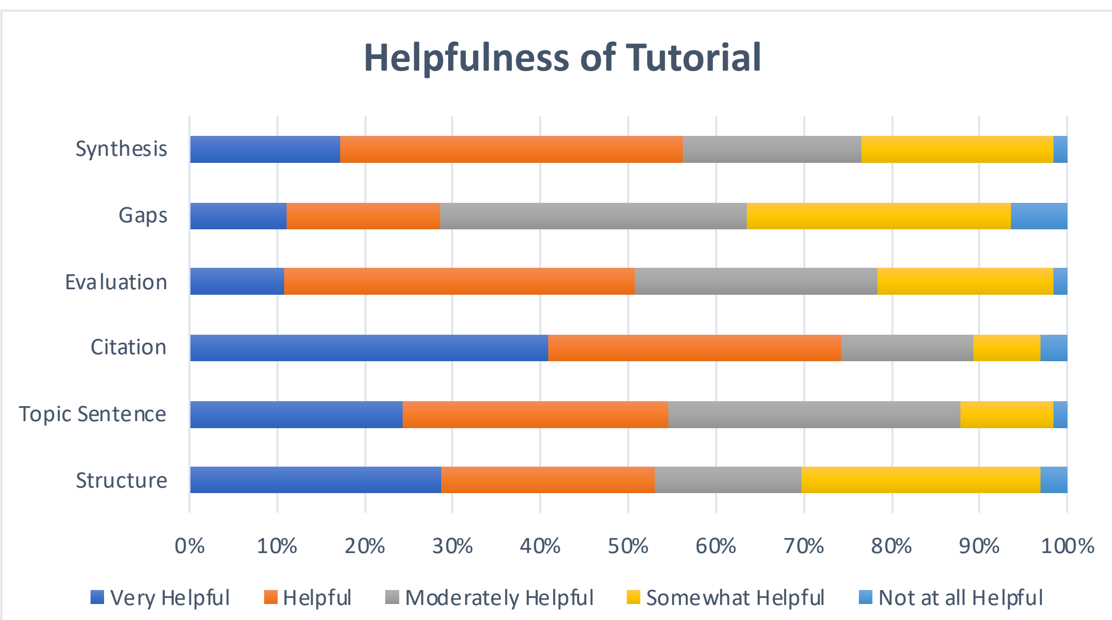
More than half of the students indicated that synthesizing sources and structuring coherent paragraphs were the most challenging or complex tasks. As we noted earlier, these skills are intertwined such that improvements in one area connect to improvements in others; the inverse of this is that some students may find that difficulty in one area is connected to difficulty in others. Notably, however, students were likely to rank the components they do reasonably well as challenging/complex. Indeed, there is no statistically significant relationship between students' perception of a component being challenging or complex and how they perform on the task, as per the textual analysis. This includes the structuring component of the genre which, as we noted earlier, is most impactful for how the student does overall. Here we see that roughly half (55%) of students indicated that structuring their literature review was the most challenging or complex task, and yet the structuring component of the textual analysis was an average score (not the lowest) on the textual analysis, at 2.5 out of 4. Students were more likely to select multiple answers for the "most challenging or complex" question than they were for the "easiest or most straightforward" question, indicating that students perceived that the literature review was a difficult genre to learn and exceeded their perceived writing ability and confidence.

Students' Perceptions of the Tutorial Intervention

As shown in Figure 6, students were generally positive about the helpfulness of tutorials in developing their ability to address the various components of the genre. For all components of writing a literature review—with one exception—over half of all sampled students indicated that they found tutorials to be "very helpful" or "helpful." As was the case with the ease or complexity of a tutorial component, students' perceptions of the helpfulness of tutorials for these components of writing a literature review were not correlated with their actual performance as assessed in the textual analysis. This echoes Darowski et al.'s (2016) finding that students report helpfulness of an intervention though their writing indicates no statistically significant difference

Figure 6

Students' Perceptions of Helpfulness of Tutorials in Relation to LO



when compared to a control group that did not receive the intervention.

The student survey provides insights into how we can improve our teaching of the literature review genre. The most common topics raised by students were the core writing conventions for literature reviews: synthesizing sources into themes, evaluating how sources connect to the research question, and identifying gaps in the literature. Synthesis was particularly troublesome for students, with one student noting "I think there should be more focus on learning how to synthesize and evaluate rather than understanding journal articles and using scholarly sources because it is a skill that needs more interaction to know if you are on the right track." Another common response identified a need for more instruction on basic skills like paragraph structure and organization. This feedback indicates that, despite having received tutorial instruction on these very topics, students continued to struggle with them.

A substantial number of students referred to challenges with "identifying the gap" in their open-ended response. (We note, too, that only 27% of students reported tutorials were helpful or very helpful for developing their ability to identify gaps; see Table 4). For example, one student commented that "One aspect that I believe should have been covered more in depth in tutorials is finding gaps in existing literature. This was a new concept for me and I think I would have benefited from learning more about specific kinds of gaps with examples." The following comment may help explain why so many students offered unprompted commentary on the instruction they received on identifying and discussing a gap in the research: "I think there should be more emphasis placed on identifying gaps in research because that is the whole premise of the research proposal in the first place." While this statement points to a need to improve or extend our instruction on this aspect of the literature review, it also suggests that the student recognizes conceptually that one of the most important goals of the genre is to communicate about gaps in knowledge.

Perhaps the most strikingly consistent pattern was the desire for models of the genre. During the term, many students requested to view a sample literature review prior to starting the assignment, contending this would improve their understanding of the structure of a literature review and help them write their own. This suggests that students recognized the literature review as a unique genre of writing with its own logic, conventions, and patterns; it also suggests that other forms of academic writing they had done previously had not adequately prepared them for writing a literature review. Given the statistical significance from the regression analysis of the relationship between structure and synthesis and the fact that students overwhelmingly indicated that they required further instruction on synthesis, there is an important lesson here: teaching the literature review requires that we make a more explicit connection between the structure of writing and the synthesis of existing sources. The models we currently use in tutorials are sections of published literature reviews used as learning objects for instruction on how to structure transitions and connections between and among ideas. This feedback suggests that we need to use additional models that showcase the overall structure of a literature review and how synthesis operates within it. Additionally, students may benefit from the inclusion of a new module focused on structure to better see how the various parts of the literature review are integrated into a larger whole.

Conclusion

Students in SOC200 indicated no prior instruction in the literature review genre and little to no confidence in their ability to write one. Had the course featured no tutorial-based, scaffolded writing instruction, it would have been difficult for students to enhance their understanding of the genre or increase their confidence in working in it. Instead, our tutorial interventions appeared to be successful in improving the different skills students need to write literature reviews. A more definitive conclusion could be drawn using a classic experimental design featuring a control group. In this project, we employed a one-group pre- and post-test quasi-experimental design where all students were in the experimental group. That said, our pre- and post-test data show improvement across all six LOs. While we cannot be certain that there were no extraneous factors that improved these scores, our strong sense is that the tutorials themselves were impactful. These tutorials were redesigned so that they were based both on theoretical knowledge derived from the writing research literature and on our site- and course-specific experiences with

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hundreds of students in this course. Amassing these observations anecdotally over many years gave us a strong sense of what content was needed, and when and how to integrate it. We also know from the survey data that almost no students were receiving concurrent instruction on the literature review genre.

Our three sources of data also tell us that the skills required for the literature review must be worked on simultaneously, as change in one skill produces change in other skills required for writing a literature review. Because improvements and challenges move together in this way, teaching the literature review requires a comprehensive approach. Our strategy of teaching the writing process as several separate but connected skills and stages likely also taught them transferable writing skills. Students will need to evaluate and synthesize sources, write paragraphs with topic sentences, structure their ideas, and cite sources throughout their academic career; they will also be required to write literature reviews (or assignments that include literature reviews) in other courses. Their heightened awareness of the literature review genre and the process and skills used to create one may improve the likelihood that they transfer and apply the skills and knowledge acquired in the SOC200 tutorials to other contexts (Yancey et al., 2014). Herein lies an opportunity for further research.

The student survey indicates that the interventions were received positively by students. That said, the survey and textual analysis results indicate areas that are particularly challenging for students. Additionally, though students were generally positive about the helpfulness of tutorials focused on skill-building, their responses indicate that they felt challenged when they needed to implement those skills in their writing. They were likely to believe that they did not learn about a particular skill even when they did, suggesting that the instruction was not sufficient to give them confidence. This points to students desiring additional “just in time” supports to help with the final stages of writing a literature review, including models. Of course, not all higher education courses feature additional class or tutorial time that could be used to instruct on the skills required for a literature review or provide these additional supports. In these teaching contexts, lecture-based courses could create an asynchronous module that tries to simulate the tutorial-based intervention (our ASA module worked well). Writing Centers could collaborate with content-area instructors to develop and deliver instructional modules modelled on SOC200’s tutorials, which can be very effective and are likely to result in comprehensive areas of instruction. Finally, course instructors and Writing Center staff can collaborate on providing tailored “just in time” support that builds upon these interventions; doing so would provide students with writing supports to help ensure students absorb and retain what they have been taught.

In addition to the methodological limitation of having no control group against which we can compare pre-test and post-test scores, there are other aspects of this study that could be strengthened through future research—for instance, examining questions of reflective and metacognitive abilities by looking at the relationship between students’ perception of their skills and how they perform on the writing task. Finally, as noted above, because stronger students gave consent for their work to be used in this research, our sample was skewed in the direction of students who performed well in the course. Future research should focus on effective strategies for recruiting a more diverse set of students to participate in this kind of pedagogical research. Having a sample that is more representative of the entire group of students would provide additional insights on how to best teach the literature review to all students.

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Footnotes

[1] We have adjusted the course code and name to ensure the confidentiality of its students.

[2] Unfortunately, there was an error in our data collection instrument and student responses related to their perceptions of the "gap" cannot be reported. This is an area for further study.

Appendix

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which of the following is the most important characteristic of an effective topic sentence?

A) It introduces the main idea of a sentence.

B) It presents the main idea of a paragraph.

C) It includes specific examples or evidence to support its claim.

D) It is placed at the end of a paragraph to introduce the topic of the next paragraph.

2. The author begins their first paragraph with the following topic sentence: "Most stress studies in a school context focus on academic or school-related stress (i.e., Hoferichter, Hirvonen, and Kiuru 2020; Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan 2005; Scrimin, Mason, and Moscardino 2014)." What makes it an effective introduction to the rest of the passage?

A) It sets up the rest of the paragraph by introducing the researchers' focus on stress amongst students.

B) It provides evidence as to why this topic needs to be further researched.

C) It is placed in the first part of the paragraph, as any introduction should be.

D) It indicates to the reader that there is ample evidence indicating that this is really a serious issue in scholarship on the topic.

3. Which of the following statements best explains how the content of paragraph one differs from the content of paragraph two?

A) The paragraphs discuss different thematic aspects of the existing literature.

B) The paragraphs highlight different methodological approaches used to study the topic in question.

C) The second paragraph evaluates the literature discussed in the first paragraph.

D) The first paragraph is more strongly related to the research question than the second paragraph.

4.Which of the following features of the passage you've just read most clearly identifies it as a literature review and not an annotated bibliography?

A) It synthesizes and groups multiple sources around themes.

B) It examines each source individually based on its relationship to the topic.

C) It synthesizes each theme individually and includes one author per paragraph.

D) It includes multiple authors per paragraph.

5. The author notes that "Several large-scale international surveys demonstrate that general stress among youth is increasing, endangering students' psychosocial and academic development (Eagan et al. 2016; McGinty et al. 2020; Menasce and Graf 2019; Neves and Hillman 2019)". Why are Eagan et al. 2016, McGinty et al. 2020, Menasce and Graf 2019, and Neves and Hillman 2019 all included in the in-text citation at the end of the sentence?

A) The authors of these four studies have collaborated on a previous publication about general stress among youth.

B) The authors of these four studies have been cited in a foundational study about general stress among youth.

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C) To avoid problems of academic integrity, like plagiarism.

D) These are the authors of studies that have indicated that general stress among youth is increasing.

6. One aspect of a literature review is to synthesize existing research. Which of the following sentences provides the best example of a 'synthesis' in a literature review?

A) "Most stress studies in a school context focus on academic or school-related stress (i.e., Hoferichter, Hirvonen, and Kiuru 2020; Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan 2005; Scrimin, Mason, and Moscardino 2014)."

B) "Research with adolescent students has indicated that high levels of stress are negatively associated with academic performance and school drop-out (Dupéré et al. 2015), but positively associated with increased mental health problems (Snyder, Young, and Hankin 2017) and lower levels of well-being (Chappel, Suldo, and Ogg 2014)."

C) "These alarming trends regarding students experiencing frequent general stress oblige researchers to identify the stress mechanisms among youth, and to identify the potential protective factors that can prevent rising stress levels."

D) "More specifically, research that investigated American youth found that 70% of about 1000 teenagers aged from 13 to 17 reported that 70% of their peers were suffering from anxiety and depression (Menasce and Graf 2019)."

7. Which of the following is the reason why the in-text citation in the following sentence is formatted in the way it is?

"Research with adolescent students has indicated that high levels of stress are negatively associated with academic performance and school drop-out (Dupéré et al. 2015)."

A) Dupéré wrote a very important foundational study.

B) Any time existing research is used, one must indicate the authorship, year of publication, and page number.

C) The sentence involves a direct quotation, and therefore a page number is required.

D) The author of the passage is using Dupéré's ideas in this sentence.

8. ASA style includes in-text citations and a References page that includes the bibliographic information for all sources included in the article. Which of the following is the error in ASA style in this literature review passage?

A) (Camara, Bacigalupe, and Padilla 2017).

B) (Chappel, Suldo, and Ogg 2014).

C) (Menasce and Graf 2019).

D) (Dupéré, Leventhal, Dion, Crosnoe, Archambault, and Janosz et al. 2015).

9. Which of the following statements points to a gap in the existing literature, as highlighted by the author of this literature review?

A) "However, it remains unclear whether perceived school-related pressure and/or support from parents is associated with the general stress development of adolescents."

B) "Most stress studies in a school context focus on academic or school-related stress (i.e., Hoferichter, Hirvonen, and Kiuru 2020; Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan 2005; Scrimin, Mason, and Moscardino 2014)."

C) "More specifically, research that investigated American youth found that 70% of about 1000 teenagers aged from 13 to 17 reported that 70% of their peers were suffering from anxiety and depression (Menasce and Graf 2019)."

D) "Similarly, a large survey of 14,956 high school students demonstrated that around 32% of all the students surveyed had experienced hopelessness and sadness almost every day for at least two weeks, and that this had inhibited them from engaging in some routine activity (Kann et al. 2018)."

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10. Which of the following most accurately captures the type of gap identified by the author of this literature review?

A) Methodological gap.

B) Thematic gap.

C) Tension gap.

D) Population gap.

11. One characteristic of an effective literature review is that it applies evaluative criteria to the existing research on a given topic. Which of the following best represents what is meant by applying evaluative criteria?

A) Including a statement that identifies the strengths or weaknesses of the literature on your topic.

B) Including a statement that summarizes all research findings related to your research topic.

C) Including a statement that includes a criticism of the available literature on your topic.

D) Including a statement that indicates how up-to-date the existing literature is on your topic.

12. Which of the following sentences from the literature review offers the clearest example of the author evaluating their sources?

A) "Although the results vary regarding the impact of distinct stressors on general student stress, several studies effectively highlight the relevance of interpersonal problems, such as problems with parents (Van Oortet al. 2010), particularly during adolescence (see Camara, Bacigalupe, and Padilla 2017; Hankin, Mermelstein, and Roesch 2007; Mezulis et al. 2010; Pettit et al. 2010)."

B) "While research indicates that general stress is a predictor of students' school-related stress (Lin and Huang 2013), studies focusing on general stress have mostly been conducted in the field of psychopathology, with few studies investigating healthy students."

C) "Research that investigated American youth found that 70% of about 1000 teenagers aged from 13 to 17 reported that 70% of their peers were suffering from anxiety and depression (Menasce and Graf 2019)."

D) "Similarly, a large survey of 14,956 high school students demonstrated that around 32% of all the students surveyed had experienced hopelessness and sadness almost every day for at least two weeks, and that this had inhibited them from engaging in some routine activity (Kann et al. 2018)."

ESSAY

Comparing Grade Outcomes of Online and In-Person Tests in the College Classroom: Does the Testing Modality Matter?

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Abstract

This study examined whether test modality (online versus in-person) affects grade outcome for students in a post-secondary diploma program. Part of the rationale for this investigation is rooted in the principles of Universal Design for Learning and examining the practices which might support the diverse needs of learners in any classroom. Two independent cohorts of first-year students enrolled in a two-year applied college diploma program in Ontario, Canada participated: one completing the test online and the other completing it in the classroom on paper. Results demonstrated a marked difference in grade outcome with the cohort who wrote their test online earning a significantly higher grade, even after controlling for final grade in the course. Future research should investigate the impact of varied factors such as affective state (test-anxiety) and demographic characteristics on performance in both modalities and whether student preference or choice interacts with these variables.

Keywords:

test modality, student performance, online, in-person, student success

The science of learning has become increasingly important in recent years (Hung et al., 2024; Nugent et al., 2023) and for good reason. Those who work in educational settings recognize that classrooms, from elementary age through post-secondary, include a variety of diverse learners (Campano et al., 2020) and that technological advances are having an undeniable and continued impact on teaching and learning practices (Mkrttchian et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). To address this and as a way to support all learners, educators have been called to integrate flexible ways of engaging diverse learners and offer multiple ways for learners to convey their understanding of concepts. For learners to be able to convey this understanding, educators should first create ways for students to meaningfully engage with the course content. This will then lead to more authentic demonstrations of knowledge that reflect the industry that graduates will eventually be working in (Nugent et al., 2023). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a commonly used framework to aid educators in thinking about some of these important considerations and attempt to remove barriers to learning (CAST, 2018, 2024a). UDL concepts were brought into practice over 30 years ago and updated in 2024. Consideration 4.1 of these updated guidelines speaks to the importance of educators embedding flexibility in the ways that students can demonstrate their learning, such as allowing an alternative to using a pencil and paper during assessments and supporting varied interactions with the course materials, including the ways that learners interact with their physical space.

More than two decades ago, Boud (2000) critiqued the traditional forms of assessment and emphasized the importance of "preparing students for an increasingly

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unknowable future" (p. 4) which he believed could be done through creating sustainable assessments. Boud (2000) defines a sustainable assessment as one which "encompasses the knowledge, skills and predispositions required to underpin lifelong learning activities" (p. 1). This aligns nicely with the soft skills, also known as durable or transferable skills, that instructors develop in students because they are recognized as important to their ultimate success; these skills include critical thinking, creativity, and communication (America Succeeds, n.d.; Government of Canada, 2023; Government of Ontario, n.d.).

The creation of UDL guidelines may have aided in a shift in teaching and learning toward more student-centered and/or individualized curriculum, but traditional forms of assessment (e.g., closed book paper and pencil tests/exam) remain common, particularly in higher education. Recently, Hanesworth et al. (2017) highlighted a similar concern when evaluating a UK sample, noting that assessments in higher education are socially constructed and rooted in the Western value of individualism and therefore fail to advance social justice causes which they defined as the "…inhibiting effects of current systemic inequities in assessment outcomes, especially as experienced among minoritized groups" (p. 100). Assessment methods, such as tests, exams, and assignments, fit within the UDL principle of Action and Expression (CAST, 2018, 2024a). Aligning pedagogy with the principles of UDL means that educators not only vary their methods of instruction, but also their methods of assessment. The remainder of this introduction will focus on a review of the literature looking at the traditional paper and pencil assessment format and the more modern computer-based or online methods for administering tests/exams while also integrating concepts from UDL which help to validate the importance of adapting teaching and learning practices to meet the varied learning needs of students.

Literature Review

A few years prior to the global pandemic, Hensley et al. (2017) explored differences between elementary-aged students engaging with the paper and pencil versus computer-based test format to demonstrate their math fact fluency. The results revealed statistically significant differences with students performing better when assessed via the paper and pencil method (Hensley et al., 2017). Similarly, Maravić-Čisar et al. (2012) sought to investigate paper-based versus computer-based assessment methods but with college-level students who were enrolled in a computer programming course. While their research revealed no statistically significant difference on scores between students who completed the assessment in the paper and pencil format compared to those who wrote it on the computer, a follow-up survey revealed that students preferred the computer-based modality. But there were some conditions specified for their computer-based preference, which included preferring the computer format only when they could see all of the questions at once, as opposed to when only one question was released at a time (Maravić-Čisar et al., 2012).

One more study that sought to compare paper and pencil to computer-based/online assessment methods was conducted by Frein (2011), who was among the first to explore outcomes from remote, non-proctored computer-based/online tests compared to the proctored paper and pencil tests. To investigate this, Frein (2011) conducted three separate experiments with cohorts of an introductory psychology course in a small post-secondary institution in the United States. Overall, results showed that computer-based/online tests did not affect overall scores on tests and exams. These findings further suggest that giving students the flexibility to write their test online in a remote environment did not lead to widespread cheating (Frein, 2011), at least not with the military school student sample used in their studies. However, it may be relevant to note that as a military school, the honor code is a central focus of students' academics and they can be dismissed from the school if they violate this code. Frein (2011) acknowledged that the honor code would not mean that no cheating occurred, but it may have helped facilitate the integrity of an unproctored closed-book assessment despite the freedom that students enjoyed by completing the assessment in their choice of location. Nonetheless, the non-significant difference in grade outcomes, despite the differing modality of testing, point to the potential value of online unproctored tests which could improve efficiencies for academic institutions while also aligning with the principles of UDL by allowing students agency and choice in how they demonstrate their knowledge (CAST, 2018, 2024a).

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Equity and inclusion are also important considerations related to the modality of the assessment. Campano et al. (2020), through a lens of community-based research, examined educational equity by critically evaluating the dominant educational policies and practices that tended to homogenize learning. The authors emphasize the importance of supporting learners' agency and self-determination and moving away from quantifying individual performance (Campano et al., 2020), which is difficult to do given the often-rigid policies of academia. For example, ungrading is infrequently used because, without quantifying learning, it is difficult for large educational systems to evaluate individual learners to determine merit, such as for graduate school program acceptance or scholarships. Equity in education means, among other things, that we must consider that each student has their own unique cultural identity which might include language, race, gender, and socioeconomic status. For example, students who have enjoyed lifelong computer access might have an advantage during an assessment compared to students who have less experience with this technology. The intersectionality of these multiple identities (Crenshaw, 2005) might have an impact on student performance, especially on high-stakes testing (Campano et al. 2020). Furthermore, as post-secondary institutions in Canada and the U.S. continue to accept many international students, consideration must be given to the diverse learning environments and teaching practices that students may have experienced prior to their post-secondary journey in our classrooms, rather than relying solely on a Western-centric lens. In this way, equity and inclusion practices continue to be important considerations. UDL is a viable approach to aid in achieving more equitable and diversified teaching and learning approaches (CAST, 2018, 2024a; Hanesworth et al., 2019).

In addition to the student's culture interacting with the modality of the assessment impacting grades, consideration should also be given to the varying levels of psychological stress and anxiety that the testing modality can evoke. Jamaludin and Hung (2019) describe the importance of recognizing educational outcomes as influenced by broader ecological factors, beyond one's own cognitive ability. Linden and Ecclestone (2022) conducted research exploring post-secondary students' stressors and discovered that test-anxiety was related to the weight (percentage) of the test/exam and learning environment (i.e., communication from professors, comparisons to peers, etc.). Writing a test in a classroom setting also means that they can see their peers who finish the test quickly, or hear the sound of others flipping pages and writing their answers down faster than they are, which may increase anxiety and interrupt performance, thereby affecting grade outcomes. Thomas et al. (2017) looked at variables of emotional intelligence, coping with academic stressors, and test anxiety as predictors of academic achievement. Their research found that students with high test anxiety have a greater tendency to use avoidant coping strategies (e.g., procrastination) thereby leading to lower grade achievement (Thomas et al., 2017). These researchers describe test-anxious learners as likely to struggle with encoding, storing, or retrieving information both during the test and when studying for a test (Thomas et al., 2017). Nugent et al. (2023) also wrote about the valence of one's emotional state either promoting or impeding learning as well as a students' belief in their own ability (e.g., self-efficacy). They highlight the value of educators designing a learning environment, which includes assessment practices, that create a level of emotional discomfort that is sufficient to motivate learning, but not so much that the students experience strong, negative emotions. The authors acknowledge that strong, negative emotions can disrupt students' cognitive processes and impair their belief in their own ability to succeed, thus affecting performance (Nugent et al., 2023). Ideally, educators would be able to consider these psychological stressors impacting grade outcome and draw on UDL principles to diversify the modality of assessment available to students, and ultimately achieve greater equity for all learners.

Altogether, the research on testing modality in academic settings demonstrates that there are many complexities to consider based on pedagogical goals and the unique characteristics of each learner. It is also noteworthy that there has been minimal published literature on this topic within the last decade, particularly with technical or community college students, which are generally of less interest to researchers compared to university students (Kennette & Cappon, 2024). The current study will examine whether there are differences in student test performance between computer-based online and paper and pencil in-class administration modalities, comparing two independent cohorts of first-year students enrolled in a two-year applied college diploma program in Ontario,

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Canada. The research question of primary interest is whether, when students are tasked with writing their test online instead of in the traditional paper and pencil format, the difference in test modality affects student performance.

Methods

Participants

Four sections from two consecutive cohorts (n = 26 and n = 21, respectively) of students enrolled in a first-year introductory psychology course of the Social Service Worker (2-year) diploma program were recruited to participate in this study. A t-test showed that the performance of the two cohorts of students was not significantly different on the first test, indicating no a priori differences in the two samples ($t(45) = 0.38$, $p = .70$).

Materials

Students completed a 45-question multiple choice and true-false test. The test was the second of 3 tests administered in the course, all of which had the same format and equal weight (15% of final grade in the course). Because we were intending to make a direct comparison between two cohorts of students, the test questions remained the same for both groups. For the Fall 2022 cohort, the test was administered in the paper and pencil format using a scantron card to record responses. For the Fall 2023 cohort, the test was administered online through the college's Learning Management System (LMS).

Procedure

All research ethics protocols were followed, and the research ethics board at the institution approved this project (Research Ethics Board file # 286-2324). Two consecutive cohorts of students were recruited for this study in the Winter 2024 semester. Those who had been enrolled in the Fall 2022 section of an introductory psychology course were asked to consent to the use of their completed test scores (written in paper and pencil format) and the students enrolled in this same course in the Fall 2023 semester were asked to consent to the use of their previously completed test scores (written online, in computer-based format). Unlike previous cohorts, students who were enrolled in the Fall 2023 cohort completed their test in an online format due to a date conflict that had arisen in the course sequencing. Neither cohort was deceived and all students who agreed to participate in the study signed a consent form allowing their instructor to use their scores for this purpose.

Results

The primary question of interest was whether test scores differed between those who wrote the test online and those who wrote it on paper during class time. Because the data collected violated the assumption of normality in its raw form, test scores were transformed to normalize them using a square root transformation. On these transformed data, satisfactory normality was confirmed through Q-Q norm plots and visual inspection of the descriptive statistics, indicating no significant skew or kurtosis (-.893 and 2.046, respectively; Kim, 2013).

An independent t-test revealed that students who wrote their test online had significantly higher grade achievement on the assessment ($M = 83.19$, $SD = 9.82$) compared to students who wrote the same assessment in-person on paper ($M = 73.81$, $SD = 17.16$; $t(45) = 2.44$, $p < .05$). Cohen's *d* (0.716) suggests this is a medium effect (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Because students' typical academic performance (i.e., GPA) could affect their test scores independently of this manipulation, particularly if not equally distributed across sections (online, in-person), an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with the covariate of students' final grade in the course (as an estimate of their GPA) was conducted and showed a significant effect ($F(1, 44) = 21.84$, $p < .001$). Because there were only two groups, post-hoc tests were unnecessary. Table 1 shows the descriptives. The ANCOVA revealed that, even controlling for their final grade in the course, there was still a significant difference in performance between the groups, with the online test performance being significantly higher than the in-person paper performance. The partial eta-squared ($\eta_p 2 = .332$) showed that approximately 33% of the variance (Richardson, 2011) in test scores can be attributed to the evaluation format (online vs. in-person).

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Table 1
Descriptive statistics for test (%) and final grades (%) by testing modality.

		Grade			
Test Modality		**Test**		**Final**	
	N	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
In-Person	21	73.81	17.16	81.61	11.05
Online	26	83.19	9.82	80.29	10.38

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore whether student performance differed based on the test modality: an in-person, paper and pencil test versus an online, computer-based test. The results showed that there is a significant difference between grade outcomes across the two groups, with the average for the online computer-based test being higher than the in-person paper and pencil test, even when controlling for students' final grade in the course.

One possible explanation for this increase is that students were cheating (e.g., using their notes, the internet, or peers) during the online assessment because it was unproctored, but some past research has reported no differences in cheating behaviors between online and in-person testing (Grijalva et al., 2006; Watson & Sottile, 2010). Previous studies have suggested that cheating on tests and exams was the most frequent type of cheating (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2020). Students also appear to value academic integrity and generally view violations of this as a serious matter (Bozok, 2023; Hasri et al., 2022). Further, self-reported rates of cheating have been declining since the 1990s (McCabe et al., 2012), though this is possibly because students are not aware of what consists of dishonest behavior (Beasly, 2014; Lepp, 2017), but this concern is beyond the scope of this paper. Also, in the present study, the online test was designed to minimize ability for students to cheat in that the questions were randomized between students (selected from a large pool of questions), only one question was released on the screen at a time, and there was a strict time limit (i.e., if students chose to treat it as an open book test and use their notes/the internet, they would risk running out of time). The professor also discussed with students the expectations and consequences of academic dishonesty, which Carpenter et al. (2006) reported resulted in less cheating behaviors and a decrease in the positive attitudes related to cheating. Thus, cheating seems an unlikely explanation for the differences in grade outcome demonstrated in this study, though future studies could use a design which would be able to rule out this possible explanation. Another explanation, and one that is potentially more likely, is that students felt less test-related anxiety or stress, which resulted in improved performance (Thomas et al., 2017). As previously cited in the literature review, requiring students to demonstrate learning through traditional approaches (closed book, paper and pencil) is rooted in Western culture (Hanesworth et al., 2017) and neglects considering the broader ecological influences and the interrelation between the cognitive factors and affective states of students (Hung et al., 2024; Jamaludin &

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Hung, 2019). Linden and Ecclestone (2024) showed that test anxiety is a major academic stressor for post-secondary students. They suggest a paradigmatic shift in the post-secondary system, particularly regarding how student learning is assessed (Linden & Ecclestone, 2024). Undoubtedly, there will be certain programs or courses that do require a traditional paper and pencil assessment format as an authentic form of evaluating student learning (e.g., to help prepare students for an eventual paper and pencil licensing exam) and this study is not meant to suggest prescriptive practices for educators. Rather, as the UDL guidelines state: "It is important to provide multiple modalities for expression to reduce communication barriers and support learners to express knowledge, ideas, and concepts in the learning environment" (CAST, 2024b, para. 1). Although the present study did not provide students with a choice for the testing modality, UDL would encourage having that choice available to students. Another practice to support UDL would be to provide alternate formats for students to demonstrate their learning in an assessment output such as an oral presentation, podcast, essay, or other written project. Providing students with choice gives them some control over their own learning which can provide a sense of agency (Campano et al., 2020) and contributes to increased equity and access within education settings; for example if the student is offered choices, they can make the choices that align with their own strengths/abilities. This might be one way to help reduce barriers, such as test anxiety, and could also provide a more authentic way of preparing students for continued learning in post-secondary educational settings and in the workplace (Boud, 2000; Nugent et al., 2023).

Additional learner characteristics should also be considered in this context. For example, Wallace and Clariana (2005) explored the important area of gender equity in computer-based versus paper and pencil tests. Nearly 20 years ago, they identified gender differences in performance whereby male students outperformed female students on computer-based tests, at least early in the course, before both groups had gained experience and familiarity with the test modality. However, over the span of the course, which integrated computer literacy into students' learning, female students outperformed male students on the final exam, which was also computer-based (Wallace & Clariana, 2005). In a more recent study, Garas and Hassan (2018) conducted research on a sample of post-secondary students in an introductory financial accounting course. Their results also confirmed that there are gender differences: female students performed better on paper and pencil tests compared to male students who performed better on computer-based tests (Garas & Hassan, 2018). More research is needed to explore these variables and how they might intersect with the principles of UDL, particularly as it relates to student choice.

Implications for Practice

Prior research has laid the foundation for the value of UDL for all learners, not only those with documented accommodations. Although the findings from this study demonstrate that there was a significant difference in grade outcome between the two different modalities, this difference could have occurred because students were experiencing less test anxiety, thus improving their performance. Given that this is a possibility, educators can apply this information to their teaching practices or philosophy of student learning. As noted above, this study is not intended to be prescriptive nor a one-shoe-fits-all approach. Rather, the implications for practice are to emphasize the value of designing learning that is universally accessible to all and inclusive of varied learning preferences. This might include providing online assessments or choice to learners. There are limits in implementing this; the reality is that some programs have accreditation standards or large student enrollment numbers wherein eliminating tests or exams as a type of assessment is not a viable option. In cases like this, varying the assessment modality—especially if students can choose based on their individual preferences—may at least aid in reducing the psychological variables which might negatively affect performance (e.g., test-anxiety; peer comparisons). It may also provide more consistent and equal access to education by breaking down some of the competing barriers faced by different groups, particularly those related to the exclusive use of traditional Western-culture education practices.

Limitations and Future Research

The results presented here are interesting and may lead to some reconsiderations of current practice. There are some methodological limitations in the present study due to the nature of the design (i.e., the scheduling

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anomaly which permitted this comparison). Ideally, replications investigating student performance in online compared to in-person delivery would be able to experimentally manipulate the independent variable to randomly assign students in the same semester to one of the two conditions. Although a priori performance differences were not found between the two samples, the two samples might have still differed in ways that could result in a performance difference later in the semester when taking the online vs. in-person test reported here (e.g., grit, resilience, work or family obligations, etc.). Random assignment would allow for causal inferences to be made and help to better understand the root cause(s) of the differences reported. It is possible that the results reported here are simply due to chance (Type 1 error), but it is also possible that they point to an under-reported phenomenon that warrants further investigation to complete the understanding of the effect of test modality on student performance.

The small sample size is another limitation, particularly for the generalizability of results to other contexts. Although finding a significant effect points to having sufficient statistical power, the applicability of the findings to a more diverse group of students may not be appropriate, particularly given the small sample, which did not allow for disaggregating the results to examine whether different patterns existed for different subgroups. Additionally, the sample was homogeneous in that it reflects only the data from students in a single course in one program at one institution. Future research should expand the present study to include larger samples from various programs and at various institutions and different types of institutions globally. In an attempt to further promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging in research, future studies could include a qualitative component to provide each student with a voice while also exploring the role of participants' various demographic characteristics (gender, age, and other identities) on their perception of their own motivations, psychological distress, and the impact that could have on their performance. This may allow for a more granular investigation and an opportunity to further explore the gender differences previously reported by Wallace and Clariana (2005).

A third limitation is that of our between-subjects design which limits us from concluding that our variable of interest (modality of the test: paper vs. online) affected the outcome (test score). Future research should consider a within-subjects design in a true experiment where the manipulation occurs with the same students across multiple tests throughout the semester in order to be able to identify causal relationships and tease apart some of the explanations proposed here, particularly as it relates to the cause of the higher scores online (e.g., less stress vs. increased academic dishonesty). Because we cannot eliminate the possibility that the unproctored online test allowed students to access unauthorized materials, it is possible the students who wrote their test online treated it as an open book test even though the instructions did not present it that way, which could inflate the grades. Future research should explore this possibility and consider structuring this investigation as a 2x2 design to compare grades by test modality (online or in-person) and resource availability (closed book vs. open book). Experimentally controlling these variables may allow for stronger conclusions about the relative effect of each and clarify the role of test-anxiety in the difference reported here.

Finally, future research should examine sustainable assessments (Boud, 2000) as part of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Hanesworth et al., 2019) by examining the implications of having students complete authentic assessments that reflect industry practices. Once students graduate and begin working in the field, they are likely to always have access to the internet where they can access the information they need, resulting in a limited practical use for the "skills" they have developed taking closed-book tests. Further research exploring authentic and sustainable assessment practices (e.g., open book assessments, both online and in-person) would be of great value and augment the findings reported here.

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ESSAY

Insights into Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy: A Case Study of Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Institutions

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Abstract

Media Literacy Education (MLE) is vital for critical competencies in the 21st century. While previous studies focus on MLE for students across educational levels, little attention is given to teacher educators within undergraduate teacher preparation institutions (TPIs) who play a crucial role in equipping preservice teachers with the necessary skills to teach media literacy effectively. This qualitative case study investigated the presence of MLE programs in undergraduate TPIs in the United States. Employing an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of course syllabi, this study examines the current state of MLE in undergraduate TPIs, detailing aspects such as curriculum integration, faculty training, and challenges. Findings reveal the extent to which MLE is integrated into undergraduate teacher preparation curricula, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. By addressing the gap in research on MLE, this study emphasizes the importance of MLE in undergraduate teacher preparation.

Keywords:

media literacy, 21st-century skills, undergraduate teacher preparation institutions, teacher educators

In an ever-changing educational landscape, media literacy (ML) has emerged as a crucial skill for the 21st century. Redmond (2012) defines ML as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in all forms" (p. 106). Heins and Cho (2006) assert that to become media literate is to possess the critical thinking skills needed to "read" mass media communications. Hoechsmann and Poyntz (2011) also describe ML as "a set of competencies that enable us to interpret media texts and institutions, to make media of our own, and to recognize and engage with the social and political influence of media in everyday life" (p. 1). Although there are diverse ML definitions, those often cited usually evolve from the definition developed at the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy as "the ability to decode, evaluate, analyze, and produce both print and electronic media" (Aufderheide & Firestone, l993, p. 1) with the fundamental objective of developing critical autonomy concerning all media (Davies, 1996; Schwarz & Brown, 2005).

The significance of ML has been acknowledged in mainstream educational discourse such as the Partnership for 21st Century Skills Framework (Gretter & Yadav, 2018; Mirra & Garcia, 2021; BattelleforKids, 2019), which emphasizes the importance of ML in helping learners develop critical thinking in an information-saturated world. Whether explicitly stated or subtly woven into educational standards, ML permeates curricula at various levels (Hobbs, 2011; Klosterman et al., 2012; Schmidt, 2013). Kubey (2003) highlights that ML finds a place in the core curriculum standards of nearly all 50 states, which underscores its widespread recognition and integration within educational systems in the United States.

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) recognizes the importance of media literacy and advocates for its integration into English Language Arts (ELA) practices. This integration aims to cultivate skills in analysis, digital creation, and the utilization of non-print texts, aligning with the principles outlined in the Common Core State Standards (Moore & Bonilla, 2014). Numerous organizations, including NAMLE, the Center for Media Literacy, Media Education Foundation, the Action Coalition for Media Education, and others, are actively involved in promoting media literacy education (MLE) across the U.S. (Lee, 2010). These organizations play a vital role in advancing the development of MLE by offering resources, research, and initiatives that support educators and foster critical media literacy competencies among students.

ML has been incorporated into different levels of educational standards, explicitly or implicitly. Take the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skill Standards (TEKS) as an example. As the official standard to guide educators from kindergarten to 12th grade in Texas to make and implement their lesson plans, TEKS includes ML skills as part of the ELA and Reading curriculum. For example, in the standards for kindergarten, kindergarteners are expected to be aided by adults to grasp the knowledge and skills to listen, speak, read, write, and think about the author's purpose and craft, including using "critical inquiry to analyze the author's choices and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts" and doing so to "develop his or her own products and performances" (Texas Education Agency, 2022, p. 5).

ML holds immense importance in educational standards because it equips students with the skills to "communicate competently in all media forms as well as access, understand, analyze, evaluate and participate with powerful images, words and sounds that make up our contemporary mass media culture" (Center for Media Literacy, 2023). Moreover, the inquiry nature of ML (Center for Media Literacy, 2023; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009) suggests that ML can serve as a vital life skill in the contemporary era not only due to the widespread utilization of technology in students' daily lives (Tiede et al., 2015) and educational environments (Cherner & Curry, 2019), but also because ML aids in preparing individuals for the development of a globalized economy (Schmidt, 2012). More importantly, within a culture that values critical thinking and active citizenship, media-literate students should possess the ability to critically analyze and evaluate texts in multiple forms, considering their credibility, underlying perspectives, values, as well as the historical, political, social, and economic contexts of their production and dissemination (Butler, 2019; Deal et al., 2013; Flores-Koulish, 2020; Hobbs, 2011; Schmidt, 2012). This fosters not only active engagement of young individuals in civic life, but also empowers students to become catalysts for positive change, strengthening their role as responsible citizens domestically and globally (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Hobbs, 2011). Recognizing the "transformative" nature of media literacy (Hobbs, 2011, p. 30), it becomes particularly crucial to combat the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation disseminated through social media platforms (Gretter & Yadav, 2018; Trust et al., 2022). NAMLE and similar organizations have developed the Core Principle of Media Literacy Education, which highlights the purpose of MLE to help develop critical thinking in a democratic society and the role of media as both a cultural influencer and a force for socialization (Tiede et al., 2015).

MLE in the K-12 and College Classrooms

MLE has been gradually integrated into K-12 classrooms since the 1990s (Hobbs, 2004). While its presence remains relatively modest, there is a growing presence of school-based initiatives in elementary, middle, and high schools (Hobbs, 2004). In recent decades, extensive scholarly research on ML has emerged across educational levels such as primary, secondary, and higher education, including teacher education programs (Schmidt, 2012; Share et al., 2019; Tiede et al., 2015).

However, MLE in the U.S. is still a relatively new academic discipline, especially at the college level (Schmidt, 2012). Regardless of the general lack of attention given to college-level MLE, three attempts have been made to locate ML's presence across U.S. colleges and universities (Yildiz & Keengwe, 2015). According to Mihailidis (2008), the first attempt occurred in winter of 2002. It was led by Silverblatt, together with a team of media educators and scholars, who used e-surveys to first identify the existence of ML and then analyze the patterns and 30 trends about MLE at the postsecondary level. The surveys were sent through emails to the department chair, specialist, or someone close to journalism, media, communication, education, and other departments in higher education institutions and had a 2.31% response rate (N=3200). Results indicated that 34 colleges/universities offered MLE as a separate course while 27 institutions integrated MLE into course offerings (Redmond, 2016).

The second attempt to investigate the existence of ML in higher education occurred in the spring of 2004 when a team specifically researched the ML presence in 48 journalism and mass communication programs across the U.S. (Mihailidis, 2008). The study was conducted through an open-ended survey and follow-up phone conversations with randomly selected participants who opted for such an intention in the survey. The results of the study were discouraging, and the respondents' negativity to ML was indicated by three general criticisms (Mihailidis, 2008). First, the respondents were critical of a survey asking about ML in journalism and mass communication education. One respondent went so far as to call the survey and ML "irrelevant." Second, many respondents balked at the survey, saying their programs already taught ML. Third, most respondents were negatively disposed to adopt what one director of studies deemed "a fifty-cent term with no place in professional education" (p. 4). Although Mihailidis's (2008) study had a special focus on ML's presence in journalism and mass communication programs in the U.S., it helped shed light on general ML practices in higher education.

The third attempt at locating the presence of ML in higher education was conducted in 2007 by Laura Stuhlman from Webster University's School of Communication (Stuhlman & Silverblatt, 2007). The same survey conducted in 2002 was reissued to participants. Although the results were not rigorous, it did indicate a general increase in reports of the existence of ML in higher education compared to the first attempt in 2002. The findings revealed that out of 1400 colleges and universities, 158 universities reported offering an ML course while 135 offered ML as a component of other courses (Mihailidis, 2008). The three attempts of surveying the presence of ML in higher education provide a basis for understanding the general situation of ML across colleges and universities. The results of these attempts show that MLE may have a foothold within higher education in the U.S., but its growth remains slow (Schmidt, 2012). All three attempts mentioned earlier provided very little information about MLE in teacher preparation institutions (TPIs), especially at the undergraduate level.

Literature Review

Teachers' Perceptions of Media Literacy

Various studies have explored different aspects of practicing teachers' beliefs about ML. For instance, Allen et al. (2022) surveyed in-service teachers across the U.S., revealing that while the participants recognized the importance of critical media literacy (CML), they placed varying degrees of importance on different aspects within CML. The ability to differentiate between facts and opinions and to evaluate the credibility of media messages was mostly valued, whereas recognizing affiliated entities or organizations behind media content and evaluating the impact of the format and its intended audience were considered less significant by these teachers (Allen et al., 2022).

Stoddard et al. (2021) present a contrasting viewpoint, asserting that legacy news sources, often perceived as unbiased and reliable (Butler, 2020), have played a substantial role in "producing and reinforcing stereotypes and media injustice toward marginalized groups" (p. 55). Their lack of awareness regarding issues of racism, oppression, and injustice contributes to the perpetual misrepresentation of minority groups. Stoddard et al. (2021) emphasize that being "factually accurate does not stop the perpetuation of stereotypes (e.g., race, gender) or harmful narratives in these sources (e.g., xenophobia)" (p. 55). These two studies have provided valuable insights into the current educational landscape, highlighting the diverse understanding of ML and the corresponding variation in instructional approaches. Moreover, they suggest the pressing need for teacher education programs that are expected to equip future teachers with a comprehensive understanding of ML and its effective application in classroom instruction.

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

Challenges of Teaching Media Literacy

Researchers have also investigated the challenges that practicing teachers encountered when incorporating media literacy-related elements into their lessons. The study conducted by Sperry (2012) examined the difficulties experienced by secondary science teachers during their transition from traditional information delivery to an inquiry-based approach. In one specific case, a teacher missed a valuable opportunity to foster deeper learning and critical thinking in a student by not further exploring his astute interpretation of an inaccurate media portrayal of a scientific concept. Rather than delving into the student's evidence or reasoning, the teacher simply confirmed the interpretation without further inquiry.

Furthermore, research on practicing teachers has revealed that teachers need both ML content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to effectively integrate ML into their classrooms (Deal et al., 2010; McNelly & Harvey, 2021; Tiede et al., 2015). For instance, a study conducted by Deal et al. (2010) examined the ML understanding and instruction of ten practicing teachers from Pre-K to grade 8. The findings revealed that while some participants had rudimentary interpretations of ML and media texts, all of them demonstrated varying levels of comprehension regarding ML concepts. The findings of their study also highlighted the significant influence of different understandings of ML on the instructional methods employed by these teachers. Out of ten volunteer participants in their study, who had previously completed a media literacy course as part of a literacy masters' program, four understood ML as integrating media and technology into the classroom. Consequently, their use of media was primarily for entertainment, aiming to captivate and motivate students. Additionally, there is no evidence showing that they tailored their instructional practices to their students' developmental stages or incorporated critical analysis and construction of various texts in their classrooms.

The Importance of Incorporating MLE in Teacher Education Programs

In line with the studies on practicing teachers, there has been a wealth of research exploring various facets of ML among preservice teachers. These studies have encompassed areas such as preservice teachers' attitudes toward ML (Gretter & Yadav, 2018), their comprehension of ML principles, their confidence in their ML skills, and their ability to implement MLE (Cherner & Curry, 2019; Deal et al., 2013). Additionally, research has delved into preservice teachers' expectations of teacher educators and teacher education programs (Gretter & Yadav, 2018; Kovalik et al., 2011), among other topics.

These studies highlight the critical importance of incorporating MLE into teacher education programs. It is imperative to expand preservice teachers' understanding of ML and encourage them to embark on a continuous progression of developing both ML content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. In light of the widespread prevalence of misinformation and disinformation in today's media-saturated world, there is growing recognition in the United States regarding the necessity of making critical ML an integral component in cultivating media-literate citizens. Multiple studies have emphasized that incorporating critical ML in teacher education programs can empower preservice teachers. It not only helps them to learn to apply critical thinking to their understanding of the role of media and its use. It also equips them to guide their future students to do the same and, accordingly, to foster democratic values and social justice (Butler, 2019, 2020; Murray-Everett & Harrison, 2021; Share et al., 2019; Trust et al., 2022). In essence, by actively engaging in continuous critical inquiry, preservice teachers can carry this mindset into their future teaching roles and effectively equip their students with the essential skills to navigate the complexities of the present media landscape (Butler, 2019; Sperry, 2012). Given the importance of MLE and its direct alignment with national educational standards, it becomes paramount for teacher education programs to assume the responsibility of training future teachers in MLE and offering comprehensive programs that adequately prepare preservice teachers for their professional journeys.

Based on their comparative study on teacher training between Germany and the United States, Tiede et al. (2015) highlight the absence of comprehensive and widespread integration of media pedagogical content in the teacher training programs of both countries. According to Tiede et al. (2015), in the United States there is a recognition within the education community that current teacher training programs fall short of equipping preservice teachers with the essential competencies necessary for effectively integrating technology in their classrooms.

Given the limited research on the perceptions and pedagogical practices of teacher educators concerning ML, our study seeks to fill this gap by investigating this often-overlooked aspect of MLE. The purpose of our research is to address the following four questions: 1. What is the current state of MLE across undergraduate TPIs in the U.S.? 2. How do teacher educators in undergraduate TPIs understand ML? 3. How do undergraduate TPIs incorporate ML into their instructional approaches? 4. What are the opportunities and challenges teacher educators in undergraduate TPIs encounter in relation to MLE? This article will focus on presenting the findings related to the first two research questions, providing insights into the current state of MLE and the perspectives of teacher educators within undergraduate TPIs. The remaining research questions on the pedagogical practices will be addressed in subsequent publications.

Methods

Theoretical Frameworks

This study employed two theoretical frameworks to guide and strengthen the research process. One is the Teaching for Understanding (TfU) framework, and the other is the Curriculum Renewal framework. Both frameworks highlight the four crucial components of the teaching and learning process: the content ("what"), the purpose ("why"), the instructional strategies ("how"), and the assessment of learning outcomes ("how well").

The TfU framework, collaboratively developed by faculty at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and experienced educators and researchers (Fusaro, 2008), consists of four key elements applicable to any discipline. These elements include Generative Topics (the "what"), Understanding Goals (the "why"), Performances of Understanding (the "how"), and Ongoing Assessment (the "how well"). By promoting inquiry-based learning and employing a constructive approach (Graffam, 2003), this framework proves valuable across all education levels.

Similarly, the Curriculum Renewal framework, developed by Zhou (n.d.), proposes four interconnected concepts: Subject Matter Content (the "what"), Rationale Goals/Objective Philosophy (the "why"), Teaching Approaches (the "how"), and Learning Outcomes (the "how well"). According to Zhou (n.d.), promoting curriculum change and renewal requires incorporating interdisciplinary and interconnected subject matter content, integrating lifelong education principles into rational goals and objective philosophy, emphasizing holistic and interdisciplinary approaches, and incorporating the four pillars of learning into the learning outcomes. The four pillars of learning consist of learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be as the foundations for structuring the curriculum (Zhou, n.d.).

This study was informed by the four components of the teaching and learning process—namely, "what", "why", "how", and "how well"—derived from these two frameworks because they aligned with the purpose of the study, which was to investigate and describe the presence and practice of MLE in undergraduate TPIs. More explicitly, the four aspects were (1) What is ML?, (2) Why is MLE important?, (3) How to conduct MLE?, and (4) How to assess the outcomes of MLE? These four questions were used respectively to address the definition of ML, the forms of media, the need for and importance of MLE, and the approaches for implementation and assessment. These four questions were used to establish the parameter and the focus of this study. They were also used to form the questions designed for the online survey and semi-structured interviews. This article primarily focuses on the "what" and "why," while the "how" and "how well" will be addressed in a separate article.

This study employs the case study method by focusing on a specific and bounded context—the integration and practice of MLE within undergraduate TPIs in the U.S. According to Yin (2017), case studies are particularly useful when examining complex phenomena in real-life settings, where the researcher seeks to understand not just the "what," but the "how" and "why" of a particular occurrence. In this case, the researchers aimed to understand how MLE was integrated and practiced within a particular subset of higher education institutions—those offering undergraduate teacher preparation programs. By focusing on a specific, bounded group—464 U.S. undergraduate TPIs offering teacher education programs—the study narrows its scope to achieve the depth required for case study research. This design aligns with Stake's (2006) definition of a case study as an in-depth, holistic investigation of a bounded system. By narrowing the focus to undergraduate TPIs, the study examines the unique challenges and practices that characterize MLE within this specific context, offering insights that might not be apparent in broader, generalized studies.

The methodology incorporates multiple data sources—an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and course syllabi analysis—which is a common strategy in case study research to enhance the depth and validity of findings through triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Moreover, the case study method allows for inductive analysis, which is consistent with the approach advocated by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), who emphasize the importance of drawing themes directly from the data. This inductive approach enables the researcher to generate insights grounded in the participants' lived experiences, providing a nuanced understanding of how MLE is operationalized across different undergraduate TPIs.

Research Context and Participants

Inspired by Mihailidis' (2008) procedure of data collection, the researcher took a similar process of conducting an online survey and semi-structured interview, with a different focus of MLE's presence and practice in undergraduate TPIs in the U.S. The researcher was later joined by a faculty advisor and a fellow graduate classmate to complete this article. The researcher had more than 15 years of both teaching and administration experience in K-12 schools while the faculty advisor, who was working at the school of education, had credentials with multiple recognized research projects and publications. The fellow graduate classmate also had immense teaching experience at the higher education level. By examining the perspectives of faculty members and department administrators in undergraduate TPIs concerning ML, this study sought to provide insights into understanding of the presence and significance of MLE in undergraduate TPIs across the U.S.

Data Collection

Before data collection, the researcher followed the T-05 Exempt IRB protocol template and submitted the F-15 Exempt Application to the Baylor University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Baylor University IRB committee then approved this study. The study utilized a systematic sampling process to collect data. Initially, a list of 464 undergraduate schools offering teacher education majors was compiled by searching www.petersons.com with specific filters. These institutions' websites were then explored, focusing on teacher education programs and then contacting program directors. An email was sent to 480 potential participants, inviting them to complete an online Qualtrics survey. Follow-up interviews were conducted with survey respondents who agreed to participate. Additionally, the available ML course syllabi were analyzed to gain further insights.

A Qualtrics online survey entitled "Perspectives on Media Literacy Education Programming in Undergraduate Teacher Education" was distributed to 480 teaching faculty and program administrators from the identified 464 undergraduate TPIs in the U.S. The survey included twenty questions of different types. The respondents were not required to answer each question as the force response feature was disabled. Furthermore, the survey implemented display logic, ensuring that only relevant questions were presented based on participants' previous responses. As a result, the total number of responses varied for each question, aligning with participants' choices and the logical flow of the survey. The specific response rates per question have been documented in the comprehensive findings, providing valuable insights into participants' engagement and response patterns.

The survey respondents who willingly participated in a follow-up interview were sent individual confirmation emails. There were nine interview questions. Those questions provided the interviewees opportunities to share their insights regarding the materials they used to teach ML, the assessment methods they employed to gauge the students' ML skills and abilities, challenges and opportunities to implement ML in their institutions, and their vision of MLE in the next 3-5 years at their undergraduate teacher programs. A total of nine Zoom interviews and two in-person interviews were conducted based on each participant's preference. ML course syllabi were collected either through the links shared by survey participants or via email sent by interviewees. In total, Teacher Educators’ Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

seven syllabi were obtained for analysis, and six were deemed applicable for analysis.

Data Analysis

This study conducted content analysis to systematically code and categorize the recurring patterns and themes within the collected data (Weber, 1990). The analysis aimed to describe the characteristics of ML teacher educators’ perceptions and provide insights into the research questions. The analysis process involved generating and downloading a report of the survey for further analysis. Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and a calculator were utilized for tasks such as frequency counting, percentage distribution, and creating tables and figures. Audio or video recordings from interviews were transcribed to Microsoft Word documents and categorized based on the research questions. An inductive approach was adopted to identify common patterns and themes within the data collected from the three sources. These patterns and themes were then organized to develop a comprehensive understanding of the current state of MLE in U.S. undergraduate TPIs.

Validity

Triangulation is a valuable strategy employed to enhance the rigor of a research study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017). Within the four modes of triangulation posed by Denzin (2009)—namely triangulation of data, investigator, theory, and methodology—this study specifically employed data triangulation. To achieve this, data were collected from multiple sources, including an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and course syllabi. The interviewees consisted of experienced MLE educators and program directors from various undergraduate TPIs, whose diverse perspectives on MLE contributed to the comprehensive data triangulation.

Methodology triangulation was also utilized in this study, incorporating content analysis of the textual information. This approach allowed a descriptive coding of the data while enabling the interpretation of the quantitative counts of the codes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Through this combined methodology approach, the study aimed to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the research subjects.

Findings and Discussion

Among the 480 contacts who received email invites as well as first and second email reminders, a total of 99 respondents (20.63%) initiated the online survey, while 84 respondents (17.5%) successfully completed it. Out of these 84 completed surveys, 15 individuals (approximately 17.86%) opted for the choice of a follow-up interview. There were nine Zoom interviews and two in-person interviews conducted based on each participant’s preference.

As stated in the method section, the online survey, interview questions, and syllabi were used as instruments to address each research question. The research questions were designed as a study guide for investigating the presence and practice of MLE and the challenges and opportunities to implement it in TPIs in the U.S. The findings below include the participants’ basic demographic information, their teaching experiences, and institution types. The findings also revealed the participants’ familiarity with ML evidenced by their definitions of it and how they included ML elements in their teaching as gauged by ML indicators. The findings further illustrated the participants’ perceived importance of ML. The findings of the aforementioned aspects provide insights into the understanding of MLE in U.S. undergraduate TPIs.

Participants’ Demographics, Teaching Experiences, Regions, and Institution Types

The majority of the survey respondents (79.8%) self-identified as “Caucasian/European/White.” A small percentage of the participants (9.5%) identified themselves as “African American/Black,” while a few (3.6%) indicated their racial identities as either “Asian-American/Pacific Islander,” “Hispanic/Latino(a),” or “Native American.” Regarding their teaching experience, a significant portion of the respondents (90.5%) reported having “more than 10 years” of experience as an educator, while a smaller group (4.8%) had “5-10 years” experience of being an educator. In terms of geographic distributions, over two-thirds of the participants came from states in either “Central Time Zone” states (46.4%) or “Eastern Time Zone” (35.7%). Furthermore, a majority of the participants (64.3%) were affiliated with private institutions, while slightly over one-third (35.7%) belonged to public institutions. Figure 1 shows

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

the geographic locations of the respondents' states.

The Participants' Involvement in MLE

Years of Teaching MLE

To gain deeper insights into the participants' teaching experience in MLE with preservice teachers, a single-choice survey question was posed regarding the duration of their teaching. Out of the 84 respondents, 71 of them responded (84.5%). Among these respondents, more than one third of them claimed to have "5-10 years" (13.1%) of experience while another significant portion reported having "more than 10 years" (23.81%) of experience. Approximately one fifth of the participants either had "1-3 years" (10.71%) or "3-5 years" (9.52%) of experience in teaching MLE to their preservice-teacher students. Only four respondents (4.76%) indicated having "less than a year" of experience in teaching MLE. Notably, nearly a quarter of the respondents (22.62%) selected "not applicable" as their answer, suggesting that a considerable number of participants may lack experience in teaching MLE. Furthermore, 13 of the respondents (15.4%) did not provide an answer to this question.

Familiarity with MLE

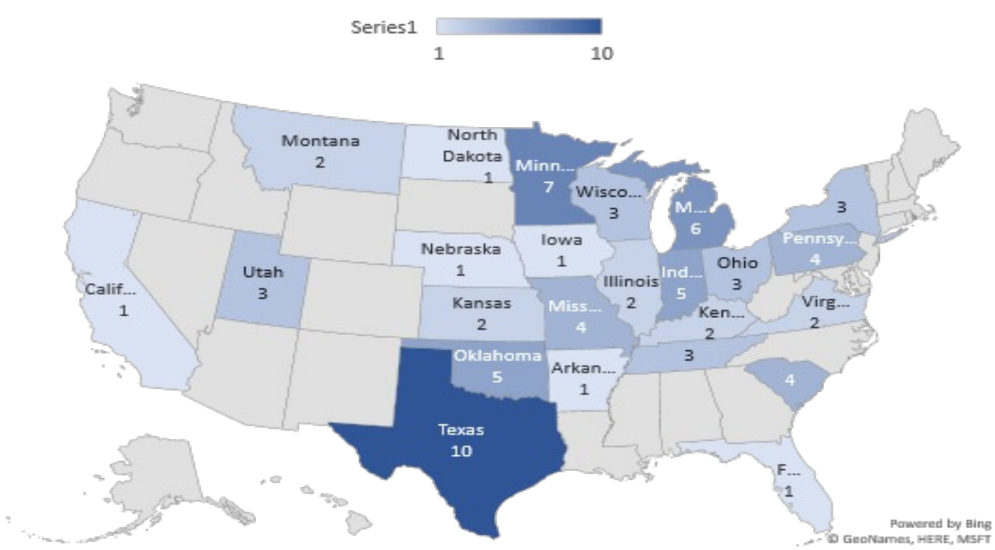
During the survey and the interviews, the participants were asked about their familiarity with the term "Media Literacy Education" to evaluate their level of understanding in this field. As demonstrated by Figure 2, a majority of the survey respondents (63%) expressed being either "extremely familiar" (29%) or "very familiar" (34%) with the term. The same is true with the interview participants. Six out of eleven interview participants (54.5%) claimed to be "very familiar" and four interview participants (36.4%) said they were "extremely familiar" with the term. These findings suggest that a significant portion of the participants have some level of knowledge or understanding about MLE.

Conceptualization of Media Literacy

For the survey respondents who reported being "extremely familiar" or "very familiar," an additional question was posed to gather their conceptualizations of ML. Among the 51 participants (63%) who were asked to define ML due to their high level of familiarity with the term (please see Table 1), 46 participants (90.1%) provided their responses in the open-ended text box. Generally speaking, their responses encompassed two main aspects: the various forms of media and the purposes of ML.

Figure 1
Geographic Locations of the Respondents' States

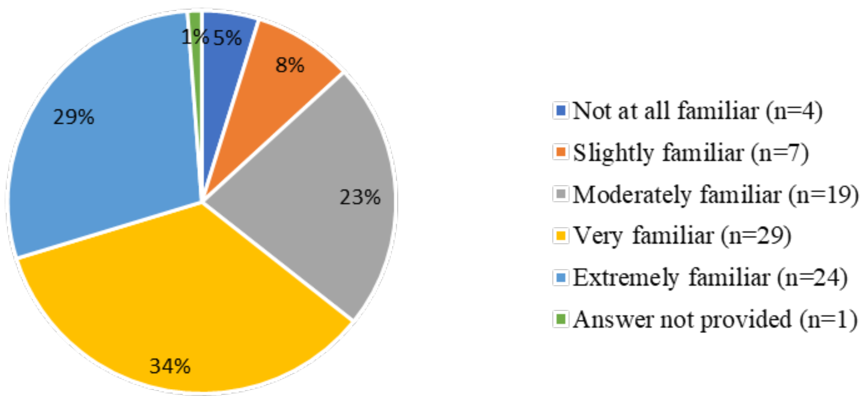
Note: *The location map was generated by Microsoft Excel with support from Bing.*



Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

Figure 2

Survey on Familiarity with the Term "Media Literacy Education" (N=84)



Among the definitions given by respondents, a notable portion explicitly mentioned the form of media (30.4%). For example, participants defined ML as "the ability to critically assess all forms of media for content and form," "being able to critical[ly] consume and produce written and spoken material through a variety of mediums," or "being able to read and comprehend all forms of media—print, electronic, visual." A small proportion (10.9%) included connotations related to media forms. For example, ML was described as "the ability to access, create, evaluate, and utilize a variety of media in all forms across multiple platforms. It involves the passive intake of information and the active creation and sharing of information and products as well." Additionally, ML was defined as "the ability to critically interrogate visual and audio productions," or as "one's ability to navigate various media (advertisements, TV, news, etc.) as a critical consumer identifying the viability of information rather than accepting it at face value."

The Forms of Media

In terms of the forms of media mentioned by the respondents, which can be seen in Table 1, it was evident that they recognized the distinction between traditional and non-traditional media forms. Some respondents classified written, text-based media forms, such as books and other written materials, as traditional media. One respondent mentioned that "Media literacy is literacy based on multiple forms of information. It includes literacy based on books and other written material, online, spoken, and other types of communications."

Some respondents acknowledged that media forms encompassed non-traditional mediums, such as digital texts, electronic media, and online platforms. They emphasized the importance of understanding and engaging with these new digital forms. For instance, one respondent expressed that "Media literacy is the knowledge and skills in consuming and producing content from non-traditional texts (online text, video, advertisement, apps, etc.)." Another respondent stated, "Media literacy is the ability to comprehend, evaluate, and critique the messages that originate in various forms of media including websites, broadcast news, advertising, blogs, podcasts, memes, and social media."

In addition to discussing media forms, the respondents also highlighted various approaches to engaging with media. According to the data presented in Table 2, the most commonly mentioned approach was "to create/creating/creation," accounting for 39.1% of the respondents (n=46). In general, these words describe specific actions or processes related to media, highlight a distinct aspect of engagement with media, and suggest the survey respondents' understanding of the purpose of MLE. For example, one respondent defined ML as the acquisition of "skills and practices that lead to the creation of digital texts that interrogate the world." Another respondent emphasized the importance of ML in "using media wisely and understanding the credibility and reliability of the sources used." According to another viewpoint, ML involves "studying, critically consuming, and creating media (of many forms) to represent points of view, facts, and arguments." Additionally,

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

Table 1
Media Forms Mentioned in the Respondents' Definition of Media Literacy (N = 46)

Note: *Percent=(n/N) which means the percentage of respondents who mentioned a particular media approach.*

Media Forms Mentioned	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Media Forms Explicitly Mentioned		
Forms	14	30.4
Media Forms Implicitly Mentioned (n=8)		17.4
Platforms	4	
Varieties of Media	2	
Formats	1	
Type	1	
Connotation of Media Forms	5	10.9
Total	**27**	**58.7**

Table 2
Keywords in the Respondents' Definition of Media Literacy (N = 46)

Note: *Percent=(n/N) which means the percentage of respondents who mentioned a particular media approach.*

Key Words	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
To create [media] /creating/creation	18	39.1
To access [media]	14	30.4
To evaluate [media] /evaluation	13	28.3
To analyze [media]	10	21.7
To use [media]	9	19.15
To consume [media] /consuming/consumer	5	10.9
To produce [media] /producing/production	5	10.9
To interrogate [media] /interrogation/question	4	8.7
To critique [media] /critic	4	8.7
To find [media] /locate	2	4.3

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

ML encompasses "the synthesis and creation of media for the purpose of conveying information and ideas." Lastly, a respondent highlighted the purpose of ML as to "facilitate the learning of students" through accessing and analyzing media, and gathering news and other forms of media.

Similarly to the majority of survey respondents, the interviewees commonly defined ML as an ability to access, locate, analyze, evaluate, produce, and communicate messages in various media platforms and formats. The interviews also shed light on the diverse perspectives among the interview participants regarding ML. For example, some interviewees stressed the importance of credibility and reliability of media sources, individual identity formation, and embedded viewpoints in media. On the other hand, there were those who underscored the significance of critical thinking in media consumption. As one interviewee aptly stated, "With millions of networks available right now and media taking an increasingly larger percentage of people's time, it's more costly to take for granted and not to think critically of the media sources, [and] it's problematic to just believe [without critical thinking]."

There were also varying opinions among the interviewees regarding the relationship between educational technology and ML. While some interviewees may have perceived instructional technology as a component of ML, this viewpoint was met with disagreement from the others. For instance, an interviewee stated, "To me, maybe they're not different. It would be where media [are] something you produce… [while] where the information technology may be a little bit behind the things…[as the producing tool such as] the backend of it." In contrast, another interviewee held a firm belief in the distinctions between ML and instructional technology. He asserted that it is a misconception to consider the two as interchangeable. Explaining his rationale, he stated:

> No, I don't think it's the same thing at all. … I think the confusion is that…the role of educational technology is to provide opportunities for students to learn in ways [that] are engaging and, as of [a] result, they gain ownership of their learning. But it doesn't matter whether I am using technology or not if I am consuming media, which I am, the minute I take up the newspaper, the minute I read a magazine. I don't even have to go to a mobile, I don't even have to go to an electronic device to do it. If I am not a critical thinker about that, I am just swapping up in the wave, you know.

This interviewee provided additional insights into why people often confuse ML with technology, highlighting that individuals tend to assess their own technological skills, and some may lack a thorough understanding of technology. However, in his opinion, while acknowledging that "media is produced by technology," ML is primarily centered around the critical consumption of media.

Perceived Importance of MLE in Undergraduate TPIs

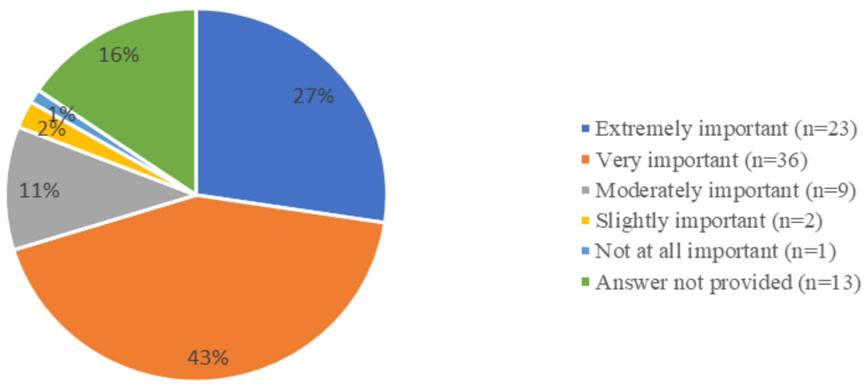
The survey participants were presented with a five-point Likert scale question to gauge their perception of the importance of MLE in undergraduate TPIs. Out of the 84 respondents, 71 provided answers. This suggests that the topic is of interest to a significant portion of the respondents. Figure 3 shows that a substantial number of participants perceived ML in undergraduate TPIs as important. The combined percentage of respondents who considered it "extremely important" (27%) and "very important" (43%) indicates a significant majority acknowledging the significance of MLE in undergraduate TPIs. A smaller percentage of the participants regarded ML as "moderately important" (11%) or "slightly important" (2%). While not as high as the "extremely" or "very important" categories, these respondents still demonstrate recognition of its importance to some extent. Notably, one participant expressed the view that MLE in undergraduate TPIs was "not at all important" (1%). This dissenting opinion provides a contrasting viewpoint within the surveyed group.

When asked about the significance of MLE, an overwhelming majority of the interviewees (90.9%) voiced that ML is either "very important" (54.5%) or "extremely important" (36.4%). These figures seem to suggest a strong consensus among the interview participants regarding the high value they place on MLE. However, the picture becomes more nuanced when the interviewees were asked whether they have incorporated MLE into their classrooms. Seven of the interviewees (63.6%) responded affirmatively, indicating that they

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

Figure 3

Survey on Perception of the Importance of Media Literacy Education (N=84)



have indeed taught MLE. Meanwhile, two interviewees (18.2%) expressed openness to the idea, stating "maybe," thereby not ruling out the possibility of teaching MLE in their future classrooms. Notably, two interviewees (18.2%) firmly conveyed their unwillingness to include MLE in their instructional practices. Schmidt's (2013) study finds that educators at all levels of the educational system in a county, including the primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools, confirmed the importance of ML. However, based on these figures, our study suggests that there is still a small number of educators in the teacher education programs who do not see the value of ML at all.

Our study also finds that while the significance of MLE is widely recognized by the interviewees, there is a discrepancy in how MLE is incorporated into teacher education classrooms. The positive responses from a majority of the interviewees indicate a favorable attitude toward the inclusion of MLE. However, the presence of the interviewees who firmly stated their reluctance suggests potential barriers or challenges that hinder the integration of MLE in some teacher education programs.

Presence of MLE in Undergraduate TPIs

To examine the presence of MLE in undergraduate TPIs, two sets of survey questions were posed. Out of the total of 84 respondents, 71 participants provided answers regarding the inclusion of MLE in their institutions. The majority of the respondents (54.76%) expressed agreement with the presence of MLE in their institutions. Similar findings emerged from the interviews conducted with 11 participants who willingly engaged in further discussion. When questioned about the presence of MLE in their institutions, more than half of the interview participants (63.6%) confirmed its presence. This suggests that a significant proportion of the participants believe that MLE is indeed taught within their undergraduate TPIs. At the same time, a smaller portion of the survey participants (20.24%) and the interview participants (18.2%) expressed their uncertainty by responding "maybe." This indicates that some participants may not have a clear understanding or knowledge about the inclusion of MLE in their institutions.

Notably, a slightly lower percentage of survey participants (9.52%) and interview participants (18.2%) responded negatively to the question on the inclusion of MLE in their institutions, implying that they believe that MLE is not taught in their institutions. This finding underscores a potential lack of MLE in some undergraduate TPIs. It is worth noting that 13 survey respondents (15%) chose not to provide an answer to this specific question. This could suggest various reasons, such as lack of awareness, indifference, or uncertainty regarding the presence of MLE in their institutions.

Regarding the media literacy curriculum in undergraduate TPIs in the U.S., a survey question was designed with eight multiple-choice questions, as shown in Table 3. These choices (ML indicators) were derived from a previous study led by Stuhlman and Silverblatt (2007) on ML in U.S. higher education institutions.

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

Table 3
Media Literacy Indicators (N=56)

Media Literacy Indicators	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
The study of multiple literacies such as media, digital, print, graphics, movie images, etc.	46	17.7
Critical analysis of media content and messages	45	17.3
Exploration of the impact of media content on individuals and society	39	15
Investigation of the function of media messages	33	12.7
Media production which enables students to develop a critical understanding of media content	32	12.3
The study of the form and design of media productions	26	10
The study of the economic, historical, social, and cultural contexts for media messages	24	9.2
The study of media audiences	15	5.8
Total	**260**	**100**

Out of the 84 respondents, 56 participants provided their choices. The respondents had the flexibility to select anywhere from 0 to 8 options from the provided choices. A total of 260 responses were recorded for this question (see Table 3). In general, the percentage of these indicators provides insight into various perspectives and priorities regarding the level of ML in undergraduate TPIs. These findings also shed light on the areas of focus within MLE in undergraduate TPIs and the potential areas for development within MLE. During the subsequent individual interviews conducted with the 11 participants, the responses regarding the eight ML indicators and the corresponding teaching practices revealed certain patterns. Three indicators emerged as the most frequently mentioned responses by the interviewees, with a majority of them expressing support for these indicators (n=9, 90% respectively). These indicators are: "Critical analysis of media content and messages," "The study of multiple literacies such as media, digital, print, graphics, movie images, etc.," and "Exploration of the impact of media content on individuals and society."

Additionally, other responses also received notable attention from the participants, with a majority of them highlighting their importance (n=7, 70% respectively). These indicators include "Investigation of the function of media messages" and "Media production which enables students to develop a critical understanding of media content." However, there were indicators that received less emphasis from the interviewees. These indicators include "The study of the economic, historical, social, and cultural contexts for media messages" (n=6, 60%), "The study of the form and design of media productions" (n=4, 40%), and "The study of media audiences" (n=4, 40%).

The interviewees' diverse interpretations of ML led to varied approaches in their MLE teaching practices. One interviewee put significant importance on the curation of media resources. According to him, when instructing preservice teachers on designing units and lessons for their future students, he encouraged the preservice students to begin by researching the existing materials and examples available online. Moreover, he urged them to develop their own teaching resources whenever possible. Notably, the interviewee highlighted that the preservice teachers were expected to be responsible users of the resources, providing proper acknowledgment and citations. Furthermore, they were encouraged to approach these resources with critical thinking and discernment. Media users particularly educators need to be thoughtful and critical consumers and curators. According to the interviewee:

> Watching the resources to make sure that it's appropriate for the age level of the analysts. Is the information accurate? Can the source be trusted? [Are] there other kinds of agendas going on that we should be careful about? So, it's really what my overall goal [here] is to train them to be just not simply mindless consumers of information but really thoughtful consumers and curators.

From his teaching practices and his interpretation of critical thinking, we can infer that he is dedicated to training preservice teachers who possess a mindful and critical approach to media consumption, ensuring that they are equipped to make informed decisions and effectively curate resources for their future students.

The examination of the course syllabi further validated the teacher educators' different perspectives regarding ML. Table 4 reveals that out of the seven syllabi analyzed, four primarily focused on technology with certain components of ML incorporated. Two syllabi incorporated ML elements within specific courses, while only one syllabus directly addressed MLE. The diversity in the syllabi suggests potential divergences in the definition and understanding of ML among teacher educators. As a result, the learning outcomes and corresponding assignments differ across the seven syllabi, each with its distinct areas of focus.

Table 4
Course Syllabi and the Media Literacy Elements

Course Syllabi in Relation to Media Literacy		Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Standalone Media Literacy Course	Digital Literacy, Learning, and Citizenship in Education	1	14.3
Integrated Media Literacy Elements in	PowerPoint Presentation Assignments	1	14.3
Other Courses	Critical Thinking and Media Analysis Assignments	1	14.3
Integrated Media Literacy Elements within Technology Courses	Introduction to Education Technology	1	14.3
	Computers and Multimedia for Teachers Education	1	14.3
	Technology Integration in Education	2	28.6

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

Limitations of the Study

Sampling

The sample of the study was based on 464 colleges and universities that offer undergraduate teacher education degrees or majors in the U.S. However, due to time constraints and limited resources, an exhaustive and thorough investigation of all the TPIs was not feasible. The researchers intentionally selected the 464 schools to form the initial email contacts based on the information from their official school websites. Emails with a brief explanation of the study and a link to an online survey were sent to the teaching faculty and program coordinators of those TPIs. The researchers had 11 interviewees from these 464 institutions who opted for follow-up interviews for more detailed perspectives on their ML practice. The number of interviews collected with the cases was also limited. Thus, the findings and conclusions might only apply to TPIs under the specific search designations.

Direct Classroom Observations

Another limitation was due to the lack of direct classroom observations. The participants described how they conducted a typical ML class or classes with integral ML elements. However, it might have been more direct and authentic to the researcher in terms of the participants' ML teaching practice if classroom observations were used as one of the data collection methods. It is limiting to provide an in-depth description of the participant's ML teaching practice based on face-to-face and online interviews and surveys. For instance, if classroom observations were conducted, the researcher would have been able to describe more about the pre-service teachers' reactions and interactions with the professors who teach ML.

Generalizability of the Findings

It also needs to be noted that the findings largely represent the participants who expressed favor and saw the importance of MLE in the TPIs. Additionally, it should be pointed out that most participants hold leadership positions and very few of them indicated "lack of administrative support" as one of the challenge factors to implement ML. It might have been because they are in the administrative leadership and it might be unnatural to acknowledge their own lack of support.

Conclusion

ML involves the essential skills of critically engaging with various forms of media, serving not only as a communicative tool but also as a life tool and as practice for active citizenship in democratic and globalized societies. Its significance has been widely recognized across various educational contexts, from K-12 schools to higher education institutions. Although research on preservice teachers has highlighted the urgent need for undergraduate teacher preparation programs to provide them with the necessary tools and understanding of ML, there exists a dearth of studies examining the landscape in these programs or institutions.

This qualitative case study examined the perspectives of teacher educators and department administrators in undergraduate TPIs through an online Qualtrics survey and individual interviews. The purpose is to provide insights into understanding the current landscape of MLE across undergraduate TPIs in the U.S. Previous studies argued that few TPIs were catering to the needs of educating pre-service teachers with ML (Schmidt, 2012). The study conducted in 2007 had surveyed the presence of ML in higher education (Stuhlman & Silverblatt, 2007). Nevertheless, the findings of our study show that there was an increased ML presence and its various forms of pedagogical practices in U.S. undergraduate TPIs. While the extent of implementation and specific methods varied among teacher educators and institutions, it was largely acknowledged that ML is an essential component of the curriculum, positively impacting teaching and learning in these institutions.

The survey and interviews conducted in this study provided valuable insights into the diverse definitions and interpretations of ML among teacher educators and department administrators. Most participants defined ML as the ability to access, locate, analyze, evaluate, produce, and communicate messages in various media platforms and formats. The interviewees had different emphases on the term ML. Some stressed critical ML where they focused on the credibility and reliability of the media sources, the individual identity formation and the systematic structures, and the viewpoints embedded in the media. Others might regard instructional technology as ML. However, there seemed to be a discrepancy amongst the interviewees about the term ML probably due to their different emphases on the multiple facets of media. This discovery confirmed the conclusions by the previous study on the relationship between educators' understanding of the meaning and value of ML and their practices (Deal et al., 2010), underscoring that varied ML teaching practices of TPI leaders may have been influenced by their different understandings of what ML means and its importance. As a result, the teaching practices related to ML varied among participants, although there were instances of shared practices stemming from a common understanding of ML. Despite these differences, the majority of participants expressed optimism about the integration of MLE in their respective undergraduate TPIs.

Teacher Educators' Understanding of Media Literacy *continued*

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ESSAY

Interdisciplinary Co-Teaching and Community-Engaged Learning: Integrating Community Case Studies to Teach Ethics, Justice, and Grassroots Leadership

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Abstract

This paper serves as a teaching report examining an interdisciplinary, co-taught course at a rural, regional state university designed to promote ethics, justice, and grassroots leadership through community-engaged learning (CEL). Faculty from criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies co-developed and taught the course using Socratic dialogue and reflective journaling to help students analyze community challenges from multiple disciplinary angles. Students also engaged in training on positionality, power dynamics, and cultural humility, incorporating their reflections into final reports to deepen ethical engagement. Regular faculty collaboration aligned teaching strategies across disciplines, while a case study presentation and analysis allowed community partners to provide constructive feedback. This approach highlighted the value of academic-community partnerships in addressing real-world social justice issues and preparing students for ethical leadership. Our study presents an adaptable framework for co-teaching and CEL that bridges theory and practice to foster critical thinking and socially responsible leadership.

Keywords:

interdisciplinary, community-engaged learning, collaborative teaching

This paper serves as a teaching report with empirical elements grounded in community-engaged learning (CEL) theories, practical teaching examples, and structured learning reflections. It highlights our experience co-designing and co-teaching an interdisciplinary community-engaged course: Ethics, Grassroots Leadership, and Justice. The course was offered within a rural, state, and comprehensive teaching university specifically targeting majors in criminal justice, leadership, and philosophy—catalyzed by the desire for more innovative curricula expressed by our College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Designed as an upper-division elective, this course features a reading-intensive curriculum with a focus on project-based activities. Although incentivized by our administration, as educators, we acknowledge the significance of transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries to offer students enriched and comprehensive learning opportunities. We also value the opportunity to work with faculty outside our disciplines.

Research has demonstrated that co-teaching offers numerous benefits, such as increased student engagement and instruction from multiple perspectives, especially in inclusive educational settings (Mofield, 2019). Faculty experience professional growth and personal empowerment through meaningful collaboration, which also helps reduce isolation (Napoles, 2024). Nevertheless, challenges such as managing diverse teaching styles and balancing workloads are commonly cited in co-teaching literature (Napoles, 2024), which could serve as barriers to deciding whether to adopt the co-teaching model. Although co-teaching holds promise for fostering collaboration and improving educational outcomes, there is a lack of detailed operational guidelines for instructors, particularly when collaborating across disciplines in higher education settings.

We also value crossing campus and community boundaries to generate reciprocal learning with the local community. Therefore, we integrated active case studies with community partner organizations during the course. This paper is structured to provide a comprehensive exploration of interdisciplinary co-teaching and CEL as a pedagogical model for fostering ethics, justice, and grassroots leadership. We begin with a review of relevant literature, which situates our work within existing research on co-teaching and CEL, discussing their benefits, challenges, and theoretical underpinnings, such as complexity theory, cross-sector leadership, and ethical engagement. We then detail our teaching practices, including course structure, faculty collaboration, and student learning activities. Next, we analyze feedback from students, faculty, and community partners to assess the course's impact and identify areas for improvement. The paper concludes with key lessons learned, implications for interdisciplinary teaching, and recommendations for future CEL initiatives.

Literature Review

This section presents the pedagogical theories that inform our approach and illustrates their application in our teaching. Integrating co-teaching and CEL creates a framework that fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, ethical engagement, and leadership development. Co-teaching allows faculty from across disciplines—in our example, criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies—to bring diverse analytical frameworks into the classroom, exposing students to multiple perspectives on complex social issues. CEL reinforces ethical engagement as students critically examine power dynamics, positionality, and cultural humility when working with communities. Grounded in complexity theory, this approach highlights the non-linear, dynamic interactions shaping social systems and emphasizes adaptability in both faculty collaboration and student learning.

Co-Teaching as an Interdisciplinary Approach

Co-teaching has emerged as a collaborative model in higher education that provides students with access to diverse disciplinary perspectives, enriching their understanding of complex social issues and fostering innovative solutions to high-stakes problems. Research supports that co-teaching enhances engagement, as students benefit from learning multiple ways of approaching course material (Cook & Friend, 1995; Mofield, 2020). As an example from the current article, faculty from criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies collaborated to develop and deliver content, enriching students' exposure to diverse analytical frameworks and ethical viewpoints.

However, interdisciplinary co-teaching presents challenges, especially regarding the alignment of teaching styles, course responsibilities, and content integration. As Jortveit and Kovač (2022) noted, these challenges require reflective adjustments and adaptability from instructors. Through actively demonstrating these practices, we aimed to model for students the importance of teamwork, flexibility, and the ability to navigate challenges collaboratively. This approach not only enhanced faculty development through cross-disciplinary insights, but also established a dynamic learning environment where students learned from multiple perspectives on ethics, justice, and leadership.

To deepen this interdisciplinary and community-engaged approach, we grounded our pedagogy in complexity theory, rooted in ecological and social systems, which highlights the unpredictable, non-linear interactions that shape dynamic community environments (Bradshaw & Bekoff, 2001). In this context, the theory emphasizes dynamic and non-linear interactions within social systems, especially when it comes to how small changes can generate significant, cascading effects on outcomes. To a certain extent, the goal of this theoretical perspective informs both student learning and faculty engagement, fostering adaptability in response to evolving community needs and challenges in various contexts.

Interdisciplinary Co-Teaching *continued*

Community-Engaged Learning as a Framework for Ethical Engagement

Ethical engagement in CEL requires a conscious approach to power dynamics and positionality, as these factors critically shape how students interact with community partners and understand community-based issues. CEL places students in real-world contexts where they engage with communities often facing systemic challenges and, without careful preparation, students might unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or impose academic perspectives misaligned with the realities or priorities of these communities (Mitchell, 2008). Cultural humility and self-reflection are essential components of ethical engagement in CEL as they encourage individuals to critically examine their biases, assumptions, and social positioning (Foronda et al., 2016).

Cultural humility, as a lifelong process, emphasizes self-awareness and responsiveness to power imbalances in collaborative relationships, particularly in university-community partnerships. Research indicates that power dynamics in CEL can influence engagement outcomes, as universities are often perceived as authoritative institutions that may inadvertently exert influence over community partners (Ercan & Dzur, 2016). These imbalances can shape decision-making processes and potentially hinder reciprocity in partnerships or reinforce hierarchical structures rather than fostering equitable collaboration. Moreover, structured reflection on positionality allows students and educators to critically examine their assumptions, biases, and the inherent power imbalances between academic institutions and community partners (Foronda et al., 2016). This approach promotes ethical and reciprocal relationships, aligning CEL efforts more authentically with community-driven objectives (Mitchell, 2008; Butin, 2010).

CEL is grounded in bridging theory with practice, emphasizing reciprocity and community-driven outcomes (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). Students engage in community projects that involve training on positionality, power dynamics, and cultural humility to support ethical engagement. Through this approach, students not only gain insights into social responsibility but also learn to navigate ethical risks, such as avoiding stereotype reinforcement and managing power imbalances in community interactions (Butin, 2010; Mitchell, 2008). CEL requires students to critically reflect on their positionality and engage with communities in ways that respect local autonomy and knowledge, aligning academic and community interests. CEL encourages ethical awareness, strengthening higher education's role in driving social change and preparing students to take on leadership with a sense of responsibility. When paired with co-teaching, CEL becomes a dynamic approach that balances reflection and action, emphasizing the need for thoughtful, ethical involvement across boundaries as students work to solve pressing community issues.

CEL and Co-Teaching: Bridging Disciplines to Foster Ethical Leadership and Social Justice

Our course blended co-teaching with CEL, drawing on the strengths of criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies to promote ethical leadership and deepen students' dedication to social justice. Cross-sector leadership emphasizes collaborative problem-solving across diverse professional and community boundaries (Bryson et al., 2006). This approach emphasizes the importance of critical reflection, adaptive learning, and ethical CEL practices. Our teaching approach combined ideas from experiential learning and collaborative learning, which both emphasize active, hands-on engagement and building knowledge through real-world applications (Mahoney et al., 2023). For example, students participated in guided discussions where they used insights from different disciplines to tackle community issues. Research shows that Socratic dialogue supports critical thinking by encouraging students to reflect, ask questions, and examine different perspectives (Mahoney et al., 2023). We encouraged students to engage in active dialogue with each other through practical tasks and self-reflection. Experiential learning, which emphasizes these practices, has been shown to boost motivation and classroom engagement, leading to deeper understanding and retention of knowledge (Kong, 2021).

In leadership education, ethical leadership can be cultivated through real-world scenarios, encouraging critical thinking and moral reasoning (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). Through community projects, students confront ethical dilemmas, developing a new understanding of leadership and professional development. Such learning experiences bridge the gap between leadership theory

Interdisciplinary Co-Teaching *continued*

and practice, equipping students with the skills needed to navigate complex ethical landscapes.

In philosophy, CEL serves as a platform for moral inquiry and ethical reflection. The use of case studies in teaching can be found in a number of ancient philosophers in both the Western and Eastern traditions, such as Plato, Socrates, and Mengzi (Plato, 375 B.C.E/1997; Mengzi, 300 B.C.E./2008). Even today, philosophers still use cases and thought experiments to explore deep-seated moral intuitions. For example, Peter Singer's drowning child case has spurred much discussion in contemporary ethics (Singer, 1972).[1] By integrating philosophical theories with practical engagement, students engage in meaningful dialogue and action, deepening their understanding of ethical principles (McCormack & Titchen, 2006). In addition to using specific case studies in philosophy that align with CEL frameworks, there has been growing interest in how philosophy contributes to community engagement. This includes not only academic philosophy more broadly, but also the philosophy of education as it informs both teaching and learning (Franklin, 2022; Fulford et al., 2021; Ruitenberg, 2014).

Within criminal justice, CEL plays a pivotal role in advancing justice (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). Through engagement with communities, students gain firsthand insight into the effects of systemic inequalities, inspiring a deeper commitment to social justice advocacy (Lee et al., 2023). An innovative aspect of CEL lies in its integration of community engagement and case study methods. Guthrie and Jenkins (2018) exemplify this approach, merging theoretical knowledge with practical application. Through interdisciplinary collaboration and innovative pedagogical approaches, CEL emerges as a transformative force in higher education, nurturing ethical leaders and advocates for social justice.

Building on the theoretical foundations of co-teaching and CEL, this study examines how interdisciplinary collaboration enriches student learning and fosters ethical engagement. Prior research highlights the benefits and challenges of integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives, particularly in addressing complex social issues (Cook & Friend, 1995; Jortveit & Kovač, 2022). While interdisciplinary approaches offer a broader and more holistic understanding of societal challenges, they also require intentional alignment of pedagogical methods, theoretical frameworks, and faculty collaboration. In the following discussion, we explore how the integration of criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies shaped our course design, influenced student engagement, and informed both the opportunities and tensions within our interdisciplinary teaching model.

Description of the Teaching Practice

The interdisciplinary approach in this course leverages the overlapping yet distinct contributions of criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies. While these fields share an ethical focus and a commitment to addressing social issues, each discipline brings unique perspectives and methods to bear on the learning experience. Criminal justice provides a framework for understanding systemic and structural aspects of justice, particularly in real-world applications related to law, policy, and community safety. Philosophy contributes a foundation in ethical reasoning and critical thinking, allowing students to explore the moral dimensions of justice, decision-making, and community engagement. Meanwhile, leadership studies emphasize practical strategies for ethical leadership, collaboration, and impact within organizations and communities, encouraging students to develop skills in guiding and supporting social change. The integration of these fields proved mutually reinforcing but also highlighted areas of divergence that informed the course design.

In designing and implementing this course, we found that the processes of co-teaching, interdisciplinary co-design, collaborative learning, and CEL are deeply interconnected. Rather than viewing them as distinct elements, we approached them as fluid, overlapping aspects that informed and enriched one another. The act of co-teaching required continuous collaboration and mutual adjustment, which, in turn, enhanced our ability to co-create the curriculum. This collaborative process was not merely a logistical exercise but a learning experience that deepened our understanding of interdisciplinary work and expanded our perspectives on effective teaching strategies.

In practice, co-teaching became a means of actively modeling collaborative learning, both for ourselves

Interdisciplinary Co-Teaching *continued*

as instructors and for the students. As we worked together to integrate criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies into a cohesive curriculum, our interactions with each other mirrored the collaborative engagement we sought to foster among our students. Community-engaged learning further extended this approach, allowing us and our students to apply these interdisciplinary insights in real-world contexts, blurring the lines between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Thus, rather than treating co-teaching, co-design, collaborative learning, and community engagement as separate features, we embraced their natural overlaps, recognizing that each component influenced and supported the others.

Co-teaching can take various forms, including simultaneous and alternate teaching (Napoles, 2024). Simultaneous teaching, exemplified by team teaching or interactive styles, entails intensive collaboration that effectively engages students. In contrast, alternate models provide autonomy but still necessitate active coordination among instructors who are present simultaneously but not necessarily teaching at the same time, hence the term alternate teaching. In our current practice, we have adopted Cook and Friend's taxonomy (1995), which outlines team teaching. This approach involves instructors collaboratively designing the course and taking turns leading class sessions. It is particularly effective for building inclusive classrooms, as it allows students to benefit from multiple teaching styles and perspectives.

This course was designed to be accessible to upper-division undergraduates across all majors, with a particular emphasis on students from the social sciences and humanities.[2] The faculty team included a tenured and promoted faculty in criminal justice, a tenured faculty in philosophy, and an early-career, tenure-track faculty in leadership studies. Community partners, identified for their alignment with the course's themes of social justice and ethical engagement, represented diverse sectors, including social services, victim advocacy organizations, legal practices, and faith-based institutions. These partners were invited not only for the relevance of their work to the course's learning objectives but also due to their long-standing relationships with the university. Partnering with organizations familiar with CEL allowed us to streamline collaboration, dedicating more time to exploring substantive issues rather than orientation.

From the very beginning, we all agreed that this course would be truly co-designed and co-taught rather than each taking one-third of the course to design and deliver. This approach required us to create the course description, syllabus, schedule, content, and assignments together. To do this, we met frequently in the spring semester prior to our fall course to create these elements through conversation and collaborative tools such as Google Docs. We prioritized a skeleton syllabus including the course title, description, and high-level outline so that we could receive approval from each of our program chairs and begin marketing the course to students. We ultimately designed the course into two major parts: 1) foundations of knowledge and 2) a CEL experience: the Community Case Study (CCS).

Each of us took two weeks to teach basic foundational concepts from our disciplines that we believed students could use in their CCS (e.g., theories of justice, approaches to dialogue on ethical issues, and how to explore multiple interpretations). As instructors, if it was not our week to teach the foundational concepts, we took on the role of a student: doing the readings, sitting physically alongside the students, and engaging in class discussion. The students wrote short critical reflections for each of the three areas of foundational concepts using a simple three-step framework: What? (describe the concepts), So What? (make meaning of the concepts), and Now What? (identify how the concepts can be used).

With the foundational concepts in mind, we challenged the students to apply them through CCS. We drew on our community connections to recruit four representatives from local organizations. Before they committed to the project, we held individual conversations with each of them. These discussions helped surface key issues and insights that would later shape the case study (see Table 1). The conversations about the case study helped us confirm our community partners and also helped shape the experience itself with community partner collaboration. Ultimately, each partner was paired with a group of three students. The CCS was organized into three phases: 1) The community partner met with the small group and at least one instructor to discuss their organization and a challenge they faced. 2) Students collaborated with their partners

Interdisciplinary Co-Teaching *continued*

to gather more information and presented the case study to the class with the partner present. 3) Students analyzed the case using foundational concepts and shared their written findings with their partners. In hindsight, using the term "case study" caused some discomfort among both partners and students, as it often implies a formal, decontextualized academic exercise. What we intended, however, was quite different: a grounded and collaborative exploration of real-world, complex challenges involving ethics, justice, and leadership. Rather than analyzing a pre-written scenario, students engaged with community-identified issues in real time, navigating uncertainty and relational dynamics that do not fit neatly into traditional case study models.

Learn from Each Other Through Dialogue, Positionality, and Ethical Engagement

Intentional reflection is integral to examining how leadership, ethics, and positionality converge within co-teaching and CEL. Through structured reflection, both students and faculty gain deeper insight into the ways these theoretical perspectives shape collaboration, power dynamics, and ethical decision-making. Leadership demands adaptability and responsiveness, ethics provides the framework for navigating moral dilemmas, and positionality grounds engagement in self-awareness and respect for diverse viewpoints. Our class focused on creating a dynamic learning environment centered on reflection, active participation, and engagement. Through dialogue, discussion, observation, and reflection, students, faculty, and community partners co-created knowledge. This collaborative approach encouraged critical thinking, deepened connections between theory and practice, and empowered participants to apply their learning in meaningful ways. Below, we discuss ways to achieve these goals.

One way we accomplished this was by designing collaborative problem-solving and learning from diverse interdisciplinary perspectives to help students grapple with and master the material and its real-life applications in the community. Student groups were intentionally interdisciplinary and the case studies incorporated elements from all three disciplines. Students were asked to draw from all disciplines to analyze the case, which allowed students to be experts and learners throughout the project. We used a variety of learning activities, including small group open discussions, small group discussions based on specific prompts, small group discussions that required walking around the classroom and dipping into and out of different groups, large group discussions based on specific prompts, large group open discussions, Socratic circle activities, individual student reports based on individual written work at the beginning of a class session, and small group work sessions. The students greatly appreciated that our work was infused with real-life examples, both from our own experiences and those of others not in the class.

Throughout the course, three instructors integrated structured reflective practices that allowed students to continually revisit these ethical considerations. For instance, students were encouraged to reflect on and document their positionalities in relation to community work using guided prompts on power and reciprocity after each interaction with community partners (Brower et al., 2022). These reflections were subsequently incorporated into each student's final report, allowing them to evaluate how their perspectives evolved

Table 1
Community Case Studies

Community Partner	Case Study Issue
A Local Domestic Violence Shelter	Issue of confidentiality for the client vs. safety of another person
County District Attorney's Office	Tensions between two legal guidelines involving a past case and low resources for rural attorneys
Local Methodist Church	Issues of oppression within the Hispanic community
Drug Court/Treatment Court Program	Addressing recidivism for program alumni

Interdisciplinary Co-Teaching *continued*

throughout the course and to document any biases or assumptions that may have influenced their interactions. This process encouraged students to critically assess their positionality and to develop a nuanced understanding of the importance of respectful, reciprocal engagement.

Moreover, as part of our CEL framework, we emphasized the importance of community autonomy and reciprocity in all interactions (Mitchell & Latta, 2024). Students were taught to approach community partners as equal contributors in the learning process, respecting the agency and expertise that partners bring. This emphasis on reciprocity encouraged students to view their contributions not simply as academic exercises, but as part of a mutually beneficial exchange where both students and community members gain insights. Our goal was to foster a classroom environment that deeply respects the knowledge and lived experiences of community partners, recognizing their vital role in shaping the learning journey.

These practices are collectively aligned with ethical CEL principles focused on inclusivity, respect, and humility, helping students engage with community work in ways that honor the voices, priorities, and autonomy of the communities they serve. Centering positionality, power dynamics, and ethical reflection in our CEL approach, we aimed to equip students for community engagement that is educational, socially responsible, and rooted in justice and equity. This emphasis on ethical engagement fosters the growth of socially conscious professionals prepared to navigate complex community challenges with sensitivity and a commitment to reciprocal partnerships.

Instructor Feedback

From an instructional perspective, we noted considerable growth in our teaching practices including an enhanced ability to adapt our methods in response to both disciplinary diversity and the unique demands of CEL. The co-teaching model, while challenging, proved valuable for interdisciplinary learning, fostering an environment where students could integrate criminal justice, philosophy, and leadership studies into their analysis of real-world issues. As an instructor team, we engaged in intentional reflection during our instructor meetings—before jumping into logistics—to encourage interdisciplinary peer learning and sharing of experiences. We explored our experiences pertaining to co-teaching an interdisciplinary community-engaged course. Our particular focus lied in uncovering the advantages, challenges, and innovative approaches associated with teaching across various disciplines. Our reflective inquiry (Appendix A) was characterized by an informal yet insightful atmosphere during which we convened to discuss our teaching endeavors and brainstorm novel pedagogical strategies. Our teaching styles differ: some of us are better at small group work and activities, others are better at lectures and open discussions, some of us lecture with minimal presentation materials, and others develop careful and detailed lecture supplements such as PowerPoints. Through these collaborative exchanges, we observed ourselves refining our teaching methodologies, addressing complex issues directly, and gaining a deeper appreciation for the benefits of cross-boundary teaching. For us, recognizing the intersections of each discipline allowed us to foster a learning environment where students developed the skills necessary to approach community challenges with critical inquiry, ethical reasoning, and a commitment to social justice.

Student Feedback

In addition, we ensured that there were many opportunities for students to develop interdisciplinary teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills through innovative experiential learning activities (Appendix B). For instance, students were allocated time to collaborate as teams both inside and outside the classroom. As faculty, we offered incremental feedback to individuals and groups on their work. Moreover, students were encouraged to directly engage with community partners, with several groups participating in facilitated tours, job shadowing, and interviews with agency representatives.

To explore how students perceived the entire process, we gathered qualitative feedback from them regarding their experiences with the course structure and the team-teaching model. Although participation in providing comments was voluntary, those who contributed offered insights into their learning experiences. Specifically, students commented on their experiences with the team-teaching model and the course administered by three faculty members:

"All the instructors in this course did a good job facilitating

discussions, navigating differing opinions, and did their best to ensure a safe environment for all students."

"This course was taught by Professor X, Professor Y, and Professor Z.[3] This course was a great way to get all of us students involved with our own communities. The hands on as well as taught learning was great. All of the teachers were approachable and very helpful. Our class was the first to experience this course, and I know the teachers have learned from us as well. I hope this course is continued at [the current institution], because it was an amazing course."

"This evaluation would be incomplete if I did not mention how the three instructors worked together. From their interactions in class I could tell how much intentionality and work Dr. X had put into creating this course and ensuring that the students were learning the concepts. Dr. X truly cares about her students and works to provide the necessary resources for students to succeed in her class."

"...very real life scenarios..."

We as instructors were consistently noted as approachable and helpful and actively fostered an open and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. Importantly, the students recognized that the course was a pioneering effort, being the first of its kind at our institution, and expressed optimism for its continuation. In addition, students appreciated the collaborative effort of all instructors and enjoyed the interdisciplinary experience shared among three faculty members. These comments on the positive influence of the co-teaching approach and collaborative learning between students and instructors reflected the overall success of the co-teaching model and its potential for future iterations.

Community Partner Feedback

Additionally, we collaborated with our partners to lift their community expertise and support them as they considered the kind of case that would be relevant for unpacking issues of ethics, justice, and leadership. Unlike pre-written case studies we have used in class before, these live case studies allowed the opportunity to seek context, ask questions, and brainstorm with partners—making the application of the theoretical concepts more complex. Our partners noted that they learned from the theoretical concepts shared by the students and through the questions the students asked.

Through designing and implementing this interdisciplinary, community-engaged course, we gained insights into both the complexities and the opportunities that come with integrating multiple disciplines and community partnerships in a higher education setting. These reflections reveal strategies and considerations that may guide future courses striving to bridge academic and community interests in ethical, impactful ways.

Community partners also provided feedback, which offered unique insights into how our course was perceived beyond the academic setting. Given that community partners often prioritize their daily operational work, their level of engagement varied throughout the semester. However, they participated actively during a case presentation where students presented their case study findings directly to the community partners, instructors, and peers. This session was structured as a collaborative critique, allowing partners to offer verbal feedback on students' analysis and recommendations, highlighting what was particularly helpful to their work and suggesting areas for further exploration. This interactive format provided students with an opportunity to ask questions and gain insight into the practical challenges that community organizations face. The partners' feedback, while generally positive, emphasized the importance of focusing on actionable insights that could be directly applied to real-world contexts.

During the case presentations, community partners commented on the usefulness of theoretical concepts that students applied to the case studies, noting how these academic frameworks had revealed new perspectives or potential solutions for their community challenges. However, they also pointed out areas where students' recommendations could be refined, particularly in aligning academic insights with the practical constraints of limited resources and organizational priorities. This critique not only helped students understand the importance of contextualizing their work, but also highlighted areas for potential improvement from the partners' perspectives. The case presentations reinforced the collaborative nature of the course, creating an inclusive and respectful space where academic learning intersects with practical, community-driven feedback.

Through this process, students gained a more nuanced

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understanding of how theoretical frameworks can be translated into actionable insights while also learning the importance of considering the lived realities and priorities of community organizations. For community partners, this engagement deepened their connection with the university and underscored the reciprocal benefits of CEL. This feedback emphasized the potential of co-teaching and CEL to enhance real-world engagement for both students and faculty, while also providing meaningful insights to community partners.

Key Lessons from Interdisciplinary Community-Engaged Teaching

One significant lesson was the importance of adaptability and collaborative reflection within interdisciplinary co-teaching. Each faculty member brought unique teaching styles and disciplinary perspectives, which required frequent adjustments to ensure a cohesive classroom experience. Open communication and flexible approaches to pedagogy, reinforced through regular debriefs, allowed us to better align our teaching methods and, ultimately, enhance student engagement. Building structured reflection periods into interdisciplinary courses can help instructors respond dynamically to both pedagogical challenges and evolving student needs, improving outcomes in future iterations of similar courses.

Engaging students in community-based learning experiences emphasized the necessity of preparing them ethically and culturally for complex social issues. We found that when students engaged with sensitive topics—such as substance use and cultural oppression—structured preparation was essential to prevent reinforcing stereotypes and to foster respect for the communities involved. We prioritized discussions on positionality, power dynamics, and ethical sensitivity, encouraging students to practice cultural humility. Based on this experience, dedicating time early in the semester to address these ethical considerations is essential for equipping students to work sensitively with diverse community partners—a practice we aim to expand in future courses.

Balancing optimism with realism proved beneficial as we managed expectations for both student and community outcomes. Students were enthusiastic about applying classroom knowledge to real-world settings, yet some initially struggled with the unpredictability and logistical challenges that inherently accompany community work. Embracing these challenges as learning opportunities became a critical component of our teaching, reinforcing that adaptability and resilience are necessary skills for professional and community settings alike. Moving forward, we plan to incorporate more structured reflection exercises, helping students critically evaluate the complexities of community work and appreciate the nuanced realities of community engagement.

Our experience also emphasized the importance of faculty diversity within co-teaching. Integrating three disciplines provided varied and complementary insights into the course's core themes of ethics, justice, and community engagement. However, blending disciplinary languages and methodologies presented challenges that required intentional planning. Pre-semester planning sessions to align language, expectations, and shared objectives allowed us to harmonize our approaches, ensuring that students experienced a clear and consistent learning environment. For interdisciplinary co-teaching teams, establishing these foundational alignments early in the course is recommended to create a more seamless and effective educational experience. However, despite our pre-semester planning sessions, at times during the semester, we had to make some changes in assessment methods based on the specific needs of our class. We also found ourselves creating entirely new and different assessments at certain points in the class or developing additional materials for instruction even after meeting regularly and deliberately building the course from the ground up. This gap in our full work product—as well as alterations we had to make based on contextual, specific issues and the needs of disparate individuals in our class—was a challenge we had not anticipated, and responding to these challenges took no small amount of effort. We continually had to adapt to the changing conditions of the course itself.

As a team, we also faced broader theoretical challenges at the outset of, and throughout, the course. This challenge had to do with disagreements in metaethics (for more on metaethics, see McPherson & Plunkett, 2019). From the perspective of the philosopher, moral realism as a theory of moral ontology (i.e., the part of the

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field of metaethics concerned with what makes a given moral pronouncement true or false) was important for allowing for discussion. As a theory, moral realism holds that at least some moral facts or truths are objective or mind-independent, even if it is difficult to determine which claims correspond to these objective moral facts or truths (FitzPatrick, 2022; Miller, 2009; Shafer-Landau, 2005). On the other hand, various forms of anti-realism hold that moral facts or truths, if they exist at all, are not mind-independent (Suikkanen, 2023). They either depend on an individual's mind and associated mental states, such as attitudes and beliefs, or the mental states, including attitudes and beliefs, of entire societies or cultures, or some combination of the two (Schafer, 2014). In the philosopher's experience, adopting anti-realist views such as subjectivist views (moral truths depend entirely and only on an individual's given views) or relativist views (moral truths depend entirely and only on culture or society's given views) of moral ontology can end up stifling the exploration of different arguments and perspectives related to ethical matters. After all, if the only thing a person needs to do to determine whether or not a given action is morally permissible, obligatory, or forbidden is to gauge their own occurrent opinion (à la subjectivism) or look to the dominant values of the broader culture of which they are a part (à la relativism), then it seems a waste of time to evaluate different arguments or critiques of various moral positions, or to spend time talking with others about competing views and intuitions.

The justice theorist and leadership theorist had opposing views. In their experiences, adopting a moral realist perspective often resulted in a kind of certainty or arrogance about ethical matters. After all, if a person has an objectively, mind-independent correct answer about an ethical matter (à la moral realism), then listening to other arguments or critiques of theories also seems a waste of time. Additionally, this split in moral ontology is related to broad disciplinary assumptions. While many philosophers work on various kinds of anti-realist accounts of morality, the majority of English-speaking philosophers hold moral realism to be true (Bourget & Chalmers, 2023). However, the fields of leadership and social justice often hold that moral truths are relative to times and places, or are socially constructed and frequently need to be altered over time for various reasons, especially to better fit with the experience of people with specific identities and account for the oft-ignored voices of marginalized peoples (Clayton & Opotow, 2003; Dugan, 2017). As a final theoretical challenge, in the philosopher's judgment, impartiality and universality are real strengths of any ethical approach (Narveson, 2015). On the other hand, both the leadership theorist and the justice theorist argued that considerations of partiality, positionality, and the specific perspective from which judgments are made are necessary for thorough, careful ethical work (Clayton & Opotow, 2003; Lange, 2022).

These are complicated matters that are not settled easily or without controversy, especially when engaging across disciplines. Outside of the class, we continued to explore these disagreements and understand one another through respectful and lengthy dialogues—and active interest in learning about each other's differing views, the arguments for them, and the advantages and disadvantages of each. We also spent considerable time discussing how to present these competing views of moral ontology and metaethics in the class without thereby invalidating any of our experiences, theoretical commitments, or the baseline views of these matters in different disciplines. Within the classroom, we modeled charitable and respectful disagreement while also openly recognizing limitations in our views and strengths in the views of others, along with suitable and appropriate displays of intellectual humility and considered deference to the varied expertise of one another. As colleagues, we continue to discuss these different disciplinary and metaethical views and the various arguments, theories, critiques, and controversies attendant to them.

Additionally, our work with community partners reinforced the significance of reciprocity in CEL. While students benefitted from the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to practical challenges, community partners expressed appreciation for the fresh perspectives and insights students provided. However, we recognized the need to carefully manage these relationships, ensuring mutual understanding of expectations and roles. In future CEL courses, establishing clear communication with partners about the goals, potential challenges, and mutual benefits of collaboration will be essential for maintaining reciprocal relationships and maximizing the positive impact for all involved.

Finally, our experience revealed the value of structured

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feedback mechanisms to capture a broader range of student experiences. Although students provided positive reflections, we identified an opportunity to gather more nuanced insights, particularly around the challenges and ethical complexities they faced. For future courses, integrating mid-semester evaluations and reflective journaling assignments will provide a more comprehensive view of students' experiences, helping to inform course adjustments and enhance responsiveness to student feedback.

Final Reflection

The paper presents an interdisciplinary educational initiative integrating ethics, justice, and leadership. It showcased its commitment to reflective learning and community engagement, with a focus on nurturing teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities among students. As a unique example for other educators to consider, the project incorporated a community-engaged project where students collaborated with local civic organizations to address pressing community needs while applying theoretical concepts from their disciplines. This hands-on approach provided students with opportunities to deepen their understanding of course material and fostered a sense of social responsibility and civic engagement, while also fostering appreciation for collaborative effort among faculty members.

This interdisciplinary model provides a foundation adaptable for co-teaching across a broader spectrum of disciplines. For example, when applied to fields that are less traditionally aligned, such as the natural sciences or the arts, this approach could involve identifying core thematic overlaps—such as ethics, community impact, or social responsibility—and integrating each discipline's methodologies to create a rich, collaborative learning environment. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge both the shared values and unique contributions of each discipline. The current model fosters a flexible framework that supports diverse academic partnerships, expanding its relevance and applicability beyond the social sciences and humanities. This adaptability makes it especially valuable for institutions aiming to implement interdisciplinary CEL across a wide range of academic domains.

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Footnotes

[1] In this essay, Singer argues that we should accept the following principle: "If it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it" (Singer, 1972, p. 231). He then uses a thought experiment or case study to reinforce this principle. Imagine that you are walking by a shallow pond and see a child drowning. Even though you will be made late to where you are going, and even though your clothes are likely to get dirty and perhaps be ruined, he believes that most of us think we ought to save the child. The broader application of this principle, and when it does and does not apply, is a matter of continuing debate, but it derives some plausibility from the case under consideration.

[2] This project includes student responses collected as part of the university's standard course evaluation process. As such, these data are considered part of institutional assessment and are not subject to IRB oversight. No identifying information was collected or used, and participation in course activities was part of routine educational practice.

[3] All instructors' names are pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

Appendix A

Instructor Reflection Session Guide

Conceptual Framework

- Boundary crossing/cross-sector leadership
- Complexity theory, which helps us understand that community challenges are rarely linear or predictable. Instead of having clear causes and straightforward solutions, these issues are often shaped by multiple, interdependent factors—such as social, economic, historical, and political dynamics—that interact in unexpected ways. In community engagement work, this means that interventions or educational efforts can't be one-size-fits-all or based solely on technical expertise
- Trends in higher education teaching and learning

Research Focus

- Faculty experiences co-teaching an interdisciplinary community-engaged course

Research Questions

- In what ways do the faculty describe their experiences co-teaching and co-learning?
- How do the faculty describe the value of cross-boundary teaching, including interdisciplinary teaching and teaching with the community?
- What are the innovations at the intersection of co-teaching, interdisciplinary teaching, and community-engaged teaching?
- Are there any unique approaches to curriculum design, assessment methods, or community partnerships that have evolved during this experience?
- What challenges exist for co-teaching, interdisciplinary teaching, and/or community-engaged teaching?
- How do faculty members adapt their teaching styles and strategies when co-teaching with colleagues from different disciplines?
- Are there any unexpected or unintended benefits or drawbacks of cross-boundary teaching that faculty members have observed?
- Have there been any notable student experiences or outcomes that have emerged from this teaching approach?

Description of the Teaching and Learning Experience

- Cross-listed course with enrollment by discipline
- Approach as three equal co-instructors who fully participate in all class periods
- Course structure: Foundations (ethics, justice, leadership) and Community Case Study
- Meet weekly and communicate via email

Methodology

- Collaborative, narrative, qualitative inquiry

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- Borrow some principles from collaborative autoethnography and narrative interview

Method

- Weekly faculty team discussion to capture current thinking throughout the experience
- Recorded via Zoom

Appendix B

Community Case Study Assignment Overview

Part I - Develop the case

Meet with your community partner to learn about a community-based case in which the community organization has dealt with a complex challenge. Explore issues of ethics, leadership, and justice with the partner related to the issue.

Part II - Present the case

In class, you will present the case study to the class. The presentation should describe the following:

- The community organization and the community representative
- The mission and core activities of the community organization
- A thorough description of the case study as shared with you by the partner
- Key issues of ethics, leadership, and justice rooted in our course content

Additionally, you should prepare discussion questions for the class so that they may engage with the community partner and the case study to better unpack the issues of ethics, leadership, and justice.

Part III - Analyze the case

Drawing from at least three items of course content, analyze the case study to apply frameworks of ethics, leadership, and justice. Your analysis should aim to help bring new understanding and ways of thinking about the case. Findings should be presented in a portfolio to the instructors and community partner.

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