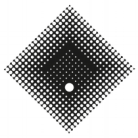
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This is the Accepted version of the following publication

Luguetti, Carla, Aranda, R, Nuñez Enriquez, O and Oliver, KL (2018) Developing teachers' pedagogical identities through a community of practice: learning to sustain the use of a student-centered inquiry as curriculum approach. Sport, Education and Society. ISSN 1357-3322

The publisher's official version can be found at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13573322.2018.1476336
Note that access to this version may require subscription.

Downloaded from VU Research Repository https://vuir.vu.edu.au/38136/

Developing teachers' pedagogical identities through a community of practice: Learning to sustain the use of a Student-Centered Inquiry *as* Curriculum approach

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Abstract

This collaborative self-study explores how educators' pedagogical identities developed in the process of learning to use a Student-Centered Inquiry *as* Curriculum (SCIC) approach in activity settings within a community of practice (CoP). Participants included a university professor, college instructor, postdoctoral student and doctoral student. Data included 16 weekly field notes and debriefings following observations, teacher artifacts, 16 weekly collaborative group meetings, and 3 90-minute interviews per teacher. Culture, values, beliefs and professional background were critical for the development of the teachers' pedagogical identities in the process of learning to use a SCIC approach within a community of practice. These experiences created for some, places to further develop their ideas about teaching, whereas for others they caused great discomfort and a sense of personal loss. The CoP facilitated the development of the teachers' pedagogical identities, changing positionalities, and negotiating culture, values, beliefs and professional backgrounds.

Keywords: *Community of practice; Student centered pedagogy; Inquiry based learning; Student engagement; Teacher change; Participatory action research; Collaboration; Critical pedagogy.*

Maxine Greene (1988) suggests learning to teach "is a process of identity development… it is about choosing yourself, making deeply personal choices about who you are and who you will become as a teacher" (p. 12). As such, learning is an identity process in which people construct and negotiate identities in order to become members of particular communities (Wenger, 1998). When a person "changes" they can be understood as taking on a new identity. Through this process of construction, the person gains a better understanding of who they are (Lave & Wenger, 1991). If teacher change is ultimately an identity process, more research needs to examine this process by studying how teachers position themselves and are positioned by others over time within communities (Vetter, 2012).

Building on teacher education research, we advocate for educators to engage in communities of practice (CoP) to foster teacher change and identity work by developing groups that discuss experiences and tensions about teaching and learning (Cordingley, 2008, 2015; Vetter, 2012). Such projects lead to change in professional confidence, awareness of classroom events, dispositions towards reflection, broadened views of teaching, teacher beliefs about themselves, their roles as teachers, and attitudes towards students. Conversations between professional learners and those who support them also need to explore beliefs – or practical theories as sometimes called. It is beliefs and practical theories about why things do or don't work that shape whether or not teachers have the confidence to "tinker" with teaching approaches and adapt them to the needs of their students (Cordingley, 2008). This change in professional development practice focuses on collaboration as a form of teacher development through communities of practice that works to solve problems and improve pedagogies (Lave & Wenger 1991).

In physical education (PE), researchers have called for teachers to work together in CoP (Armour & Yelling, 2007; Armour, Quesnnerstedt, Chambers, & Makopoulou, 2017; Deglau & O'Sullivan, 2006; Oliver et al., 2017; O'Sullivan, 2007; Parker, Patton, Madden, &

Sinclair, 2010; Patton, Parker, & Pratt, 2013; Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2015). CoPs in educational settings create opportunities for meaningful and frequent discussions between teachers, which in turn facilitate the development of their own and others' pedagogy. In PE, studies have been developed in relation to how CoP emerge and develop (Goodyear & Casey, 2015; MacPhail, Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2014; Parker et al., 2010; Patton et al., 2013), how teachers participation in CoP supported their own professional development (Parker, Patton, & Tannehill, 2012; Patton & Parker, 2017; Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017), and how CoP improve teachers' pedagogy (Goodyear & Casey, 2015; Oliver et al., 2017; Yoon & Armour, 2017), teachers' content knowledge (Hunuk, Ince, & Tannehill, 2013) and impact on pupil learning (Yoon & Armour, 2017).

Although the body of research in PE focuses on CoPs, few studies analyze how teachers' pedagogical identities change within these communities. MacPhail (2014) conducted a self-study aimed at exploring her learning trajectories as a PE teacher educator. Self-study enabled her to take her place with some confidence and authority in a scholarly community, allowing her to explore the interplay of practice and scholarship in the PETE profession. Deglau and Sullivan (2006) examined how a 15-month CoP program influenced urban teachers' beliefs about teaching and their sense of themselves as professionals. In conclusion, teachers developed a sense of responsibility toward their community, and teachers experienced a shift in their capacity to think differently about their identity as physical educators and their responsibility to contribute to the profession; they shifted in their beliefs about both the role of students in their class and their motivation to participate. It is also important to highlight that there are a lack of studies that describe how teachers negotiate their culture within CoP and how their culture can be intimately connected with their beliefs. Despite the reported effectiveness of CoP in PE (Patton & Parker, 2017; Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017; Yoon & Armour, 2017), they are underdeveloped in terms of teachers'

identity development, and specifically regarding the complex relationship between culture and beliefs.

This paper explores how educators' identities developed in the process of learning to use a Student-Centered Inquiry *as* Curriculum (SCIC) approach in activity settings within a CoP. We argue that a CoP can support teachers taking on new positions and negotiating old and emerging identities.

Developing identities within a community of practice as a means for teacher professional learning

Professional learning constitutes the learning undertaken on a daily basis, is embedded within the remit of fulfilling the role as a teacher, is underpinned by research and practice-based evidence, and is more powerful when done within a CoP (Cordingley, 2008, 2015; Parker et al., 2010). Several studies provide evidence which indicated teachers benefit from using CoP as a framework for professional development in PE (Deglau & O'Sullivan, 2006; Goodyear, Casey, & Kirk, 2014; MacPhail, 2014; Oliver et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2010, Patton et al., 2013, 2015; Patton & Parker, 2017; Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017) and general education (Menter & McLaughlin, 2015; Vetter, 2012). For them, CoPs are a specialized form of professional learning, creating spaces where teachers have the opportunity to engage in worthwhile conversations and actions about the nature and direction of their work. Scholars writing about teacher professional learning suggest several things that should be a part of any CoP designed to facilitate teacher change including: (Deglau & O'Sullivan, 2006; Oliver et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2010, Patton & Parker, 2017; Vetter, 2012): a) teacher learning is most relevant when it focuses on teachers' work in schools with young people and is specific to the context where the teaching occurs; b) teacher inquiry communities foster a collaborative setting whereby teachers can examine and transform what happens in their

classrooms; c) teachers are more willing to take risks, reflect on their failures, and share successful programs and practice when they are involved in a CoP; and d) student-centered goals should underpin all forms of teacher learning.

Situated learning theory underpins the concept of CoPs and has as a key premise that learning is a social practice in social settings (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger (1998) identifies three elements distinguishing CoPs from other groups and communities: the domain, the community, and the practice. First, they share a domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain and a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. Second, community members collectively pursue that interest. In pursuing their interest, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn with and from each other. Finally, a shared practice evolves through sustained interaction as CoPs develop a unique and somewhat personal set of resources, experiences, and ways of addressing recurring issues.

Professional identity development is a complex process that consists not only of what others think or say about us, but also of how we see ourselves and our capacity to reflect on our experience. Wenger (1998) characterized identity as: a) Lived, identity is an experience that involves both participation and reification – more complex than categories, traits, roles or labels would suggest; b) Negotiated, identity is a becoming (ongoing and pervasive process); c) Social, identity as fundamentally social character; d) A learning process, identity is a trajectory that incorporates both past and future into the meaning of the present; e) A nexus, identity combines multiple forms of membership through a process of reconciliation across boundaries of practice; f) A local-global interplay, identity is an interplay of local and global. Although identity as a focus of overt concern it may become more salient at certain times

than others, identity is something constantly negotiated and renegotiated during the course of lives (Wenger, 1998).

Scholars recognize that CoPs can provide support for taking on new positions and negotiating identities (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998; Vetter, 2012; Wenger, 1998). Holland et al. (1998) used the stories of alcoholics anonymous to illustrate how discursive practices reflect positionings of people and the process of constructing new identities. They suggested that telling stories objectifies beliefs about a new positional identity, provides a storyline for what it means to take on a new position, and becomes a cultural vehicle for identity formation or for understanding life in a new world. Vetter (2012) analyzed the identity change process of one teacher researcher as she engaged in a year-long practitioner researcher group. Findings illustrated not only how she transformed but also how members of the group positioned her in ways that helped her imagine, prepare, and enact new positions in other environments.

Methods

This is collaborative self-study (Fletcher & Bullock, 2012; LaBoskey, 2004). A key aspect of collaborative self-study is that helps teachers describe and analyze their practice, allowing them to draw conclusions about the nature of specific pedagogical situations while developing deeper awareness of future pedagogical possibilities. Even though the term self-study may imply working in isolation, many self-studies are collaborative. We used LaBoskey's (2004) five characteristics of self-studies to guide our study: a) they are self-initiated and self-focused; b) they are improvement aimed; c) they are interactive in terms of the process and potential product; d) they use multiple, primarily qualitative methods, and; e) they provide exemplar-based validation couched in trustworthiness. When conducting a collaborative self-study it is also essential to have access to a critical friend or friends, a

trusted person who can ask provocative questions, be asked questions, provide support and encouragement and offer helpful critique (Oven & Fletcher 2014).

Context and Participants

There were four participants in this study who came together with a common interest in learning to use a SCIC approach. This study emerged as a result of a graduate course on student voice in general and physical education, including the little research on SCIC. Simultaneously to the course, one of the four members was teaching a field-based secondary physical education methods course where she modeled for the other three participants a SCIC approach with her pre-service teachers in a high school PE class. What became evident during the semester prior to the study was that three of the four participants who were learning about this approach wanted to do more than read and watch someone else teach. Participants included a university professor (critical friend), a college instructor, a postdoctoral student and a doctoral student all in PE. Given what we learned the semester prior to the study about challenges of doing student-centered pedagogy, we created an intentional community of practice through which participants with varying degrees of expertise would work collaboratively to implement a SCIC approach into our various educational contexts in order to better facilitate youth engagement in physical activity. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) argue that we need to cultivate communities of practice actively and systematically for the benefit of the members and communities themselves.

IRB approval was obtained and participants signed consent forms. All four participants were at the same university in a southwest border community and had varying degrees of expertise in teaching, conducting activist research, and in using a SCIC approach. Kim, the critical friend, was a 48-year-old White upper middle class full professor with 20

years of experience in activist research with youth and teacher education. She developed the SCIC approach. Given her expertise, Kim was not a teaching participant.

Raquel, was a 32-year-old middle class Hispanic college instructor with four years of experience teaching content courses for pre-service PE teachers and two years teaching PE to K-8 students at a local Charter School. She was also working on her PhD in the area of physical education teacher education. While in her Master's program, she was part of the research project where the SCIC approach was developed (see Oliver et al., 2015) and had used the approach twice in her Student-Designed After School Activity Club course that was a requirement for all PE majors. She came to the group with some experience in how to use a SCIC approach with both youth and pre-service teachers who work with youth.

Carla, was a 33-year-old middle class Brazilian post-doctoral student who had come to the university to gain more expertise in using a SCIC approach. Her PhD research was an activist study using this approach with boys from socially vulnerable backgrounds in a sport context (see Luguetti, Oliver, Dantas, & Kirk, 2016). She taught K-8 PE and school sport for five years in Brazil whereby the education philosophy was teacher centered. She also had experience in teacher-centered teacher education programs in Brazil. Carla came to the group with some experience using the SCIC approach in her research with boys.

Oscar was a 33-year-old upper middle class 1st year PhD student from Mexico who came to the US to study a SCIC approach within a teacher education program. Prior to beginning his PhD, he taught K-8 PE for nine years in low income schools and seven years as an instructor in PE at a university in Mexico. Like Carla, the culture with which he taught was teacher centered and highly gendered with privilege given to males. Oscar had no experience in using a SCIC approach in either his teaching or research.

Three of the four participants each taught in a school context as part of this study. Raquel used her Student Designed After-School Activity Club physical education content

course as the class she would implement the SCIC approach because she taught this course in a local Charter School. Oscar and Carla also worked at the same Charter School to implement a SCIC approach in an after school sports club. This club was created to offer middle school students an opportunity to engage in sports and games as their school did not have an after-school sports program like the other middle schools.

Data Collection/Sources/ and Analysis

Each teacher used a SCIC approach in their teaching. This activist approach, inspired by years of research with youth (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2012; Fisette, 2011; Oliver, 2001, Oliver & Oesterreich, 2013; Oliver & Kirk, 2014); was designed as a means of listening and responding to students in order to better facilitate their interest, motivation and learning in physical activity settings. The approach includes *Building the Foundation* followed by a four-phase cyclical process of *Planning*, *Responding to Students*, *Listening to Respond*, and *Analyzing Responses* as the basis of all pedagogical decisions. Data collection was weekly from January-May 2016 with 3 teaching participants working with their specific classes and one 90-minute interview that was conducted one year after the weekly data collection and built in structural support was no longer in place (May 2017).

Data sources for each of the teacher participants included: a) *Weekly observations with field notes.* Each member of the group participated in observing other teacher participants weekly. After each session, the participant observers would fill in their field notes and circulate them to members of the group to read prior to group meetings. These data became part of the weekly group meeting discussions; b) *Weekly debriefing sessions following each observation.* After each class session, the teacher participant would debrief with the observers for approximately 20-30 minutes. The transcripts from these debriefing sessions were part of the data discussed in weekly group meetings; c) *Teacher Artifacts.* All

lesson plans were collected and circulated to each group member weekly and were part of the data for the group meetings; d) *Weekly collaborative 90-minute group meetings*. In order to gain in-depth understanding in how each teacher participant was using the SCIC approach, we met weekly for 90 minutes from Jan-May. The structure of the meetings created an environment for participants to engage in conversations about their experiences using the SCIC approach and seek advice from others on how to proceed or negotiate challenges that emerged. To prepare for the weekly meetings each participant read all data for all participants noting challenges and enablers they experienced. Kim facilitated the meetings, setting the tone for participants to engage in critical dialogue. Each meeting was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis; e) *Individual Interviews.* We conducted three 90-minute interviews with each of the 3 teaching participants. The first interview was 8 weeks into the 16-week semester, the second was at the end of the semester and the last interview was one year after the project. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved three steps and was approached through an inductive lens (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, one year after the project, Kim, Carla, Raquel and Oscar read all data separately and engaged in the process of coding noting how teachers' pedagogical identities shifted within the CoP. We also looked for places where identities did not shift. After the data were coded, Kim, Carla, Raquel and Oscar discussed the codes they had identified in relation to the research question. Examples of codes by each participant were shared, and then questioned and critiqued by the others. This enabled us to share commonalities and differences. The third process of analysis involved constant comparison. Data were grouped and placed into categories and moved backwards and forwards until an agreement was reached. We found that culture, values, beliefs and professional background

were critical for the development of the teachers' pedagogical identities and the CoP facilitated the negotiation this development. We represent our findings through vignettes because each person's journey is different and by using a vignette as an analytical tool we are able to show the similarities and the differences between the three teachers. Additionally, the vignettes show how the role of culture played out in each teacher's identity development.

Findings

This collaborative self-study explored how educators' pedagogical identities developed in the process of learning to use a SCIC approach in activity settings within a community of practice. For these three teachers, culture, values, beliefs and professional background were critical for the development of their pedagogical identities in the process of learning to use a SCIC approach within a CoP. These experiences created for some, places to further develop their ideas about teaching whereas for others they caused great discomfort and a sense of personal loss. Regardless, each teacher participant gained valuable insights through the CoP that facilitated the negotiation of development of their pedagogical identities.

"I was thinking I was losing part of myself": Oscar's Vignette

I never thought about how much of an influence my Mexican culture would have over my abilities to teach. Growing up in Chihuahua City I lived with my parents and one sister. Here I was taught that as a Mexican male I would be strong, become the head of household, take care of my older sister, and financially provide for my parents when I started working. I never questioned these beliefs and as such went about my life trying to achieve what was expected of me. That is, I would study and get good grades, I would get a good job so that I was able to be the sole provider for my family, and I would show no signs of weakness or

vulnerability in the process. I wanted to be a well-respected member of my community and I was clear in how I would go about achieving this status.

My professional development during my first 10 years of teaching was exclusively teacher-centered and male dominant within the Mexican culture. I was taught to believe that it was my job to make all educational decisions in my class and that asking for help was sign of weakness. During my senior year as an undergraduate I studied abroad in the US and got a glimpse of what student-centered pedagogy entailed. Despite this, when I started teaching I remained teacher centered. I made all decisions about the content I would teach and how I would go about teaching this content. Over time I started to notice my students' resistance to my teaching. The kids were no longer interested in some of the things I was having them do and were often asking for different games. My students' resistance led me to pursue a PhD in a program focused on student-centered pedagogy. Never could I imagine what a struggle I would experience as this new approach conflicted with my male cultural beliefs and expectations for teaching and learning. I did not understand why I was being asked to give up some of my power as the teacher to my students, yet this was an expectation of the SCIC approach.

Sharing power with my students, felt far too chaotic and I worried I would lose control of my class, students wouldn't learn, and I would be viewed as a weak teacher—something that is not acceptable in my Mexican culture. Despite my discomfort I preserved. Carla and I started our after school sports club using a SCIC approach as part of this research project. Here we co-created the club with our students. This co-creation was tough for me because I was never taught to listen to students' voices. I was taught the teacher is the one who gives and teaches everything and the student has to follow.

My discomfort didn't stop with the students I was working with however. I was also very uncomfortable in our weekly professional learning meetings. Here we got together as a

group and discussed the previous weeks' work with the kids. We were all supposed to bring our interpretations of each person's data to this meeting so we could discuss what happened and where we would go the following week. During these meetings my participation was null. I didn't participate because I was submerged in fear and I wasn't going to show weakness, but I didn't share this information with the group. Further, I viewed Carla and Raquel as much more competent in implementing this approach and my perception of this made me feel like the "weak one". It was hard to negotiate it because I was thinking I was losing part of myself.

Despite my anxiety it was really helpful to observe Raquel and Carla and listen to Kim. Raquel had a really clear idea of what she wanted to say and how she wanted to say it to her students. Seeing Carla, that energy, that enthusiasm all helped me stay committed to learning this approach despite my feelings. I was still struggling to understand what my role as a teacher was in this approach. As I continued working with Carla, my reconstruction of knowledge made me feel like I was losing my essence as a person and teacher.

As the study continued I started to notice a difference in student engagement. Seeing the students being more engaged in physical activity helped me to pursue and change my perspective about being teacher centered, seeing the successes of student centeredness is pulling and keeping me in a student-centered perspective. Student engagement wasn't the only thing however that helped me stay focused on using this approach. Having the community of practice, someone with more experience that can guide you in the approach, that sees the gaps in your teaching personality all helped move me more toward a student centered way of teaching.

After the year ended, I continued this club on my own as it was going to be the site for my dissertation study. Having witnessed my students' enjoyment during the sports club facilitated my willingness to continue to live in what felt like chaos to me. I had started using

parts of the approach in my college soccer course. One of things I noticed after my interview a year following the study was that I was starting to slip back into my teacher-centered ways without even knowing I was doing so. I understood the value of building a foundation but then I stopped inquiring into what was facilitating my students' interest, motivation and learning. I thought once the foundation was set I could go back to teaching.

"I can't think any other way": Raquel's Vignette

The experience of learning to use a SCIC approach and having a community of practice to support my efforts has allowed me to reflect back on what kind of teacher I am and what has shaped my professional identity. Having worked with Oscar, I started to realize how much culture can influence a person, and how it can help you or hinder you in many aspects of your life. I identify as a Hispanic female, even though my father is Anglo American and my mother is from Mexico. Like Oscar, many aspects of the Mexican culture were embedded in my childhood household. But unlike Oscar, females are expected to be selfless and always put others' needs first. Females are the heart of the family. If times were happy, there were always gatherings with food and music. If times were difficult, my mom and all her sisters would sit around with "cafesito" and talk about their problems.

While Oscar and I share parts of Mexican culture, the first 10 years of my professional development were very different from his. I came through a student-centered teacher education program. Here I was taught to listen and respond to student voice, always seeking what could better facilitate students' interest, motivation and learning. I was always seeking new ways to better connect with my students, find ways that facilitated their learning in more meaningful ways, and continually brought new ideas to my practice that I thought would benefit my students, even though sometimes it made me uncomfortable. While I am now teaching at a university, my courses are designed to reflect my student-centered

philosophy. I worked with Kim for three years before we started this research project. In one of my courses I had started using portions of SCIC, but had not fully implemented the approach. When the research project began, while I encountered difficulties, I did not struggle philosophically about being student centered like Oscar and Carla, because I couldn't think any other way.

When our weekly meetings started, we each discussed what we were doing and where we were going with our classes in relation to using a SCIC approach. It was through these meetings I was able to negotiate the challenges I encountered. At the time, I struggled in the explanation of how I was using this approach, not with using the approach itself. The debriefings following each class, Carla would ask me questions about what I did in my lessons and how that related to aspects of SCIC. It was about half way through the semester when I started having the language to more clearly articulate my practice. I believe this was due to our weekly meetings and debriefings where I was asked to continually justify what I was doing and how I was doing it.

This last year I have implemented the approach with my university After School Activity Club class that I teach at the local Charter School. What has been different however is that I lacked the CoP and our weekly meetings. I felt isolated and frustrated many times throughout this semester. There was no one with whom to talk through frustrations, discuss ideas, or hear of others' struggles and I was having difficulties with the students I was working with. I had forgotten how long it takes to build a foundation with youth. I remembered the frustrations that existed even when the CoP was available to me and I realized it wasn't my students' fault that I was frustrated, I was frustrated because I didn't feel that I had a CoP to support me. I started to realize I needed this community if I were to persevere, so I looked in other places. I started talking to my teacher candidates in the ways with which we use to talk in our weekly meetings. Despite their having very little knowledge

of the approach, it was still helpful to me because talking through my frustrations enables my learning. Had I not had our weekly meetings and CoP I would have never realized this about myself as a teacher.

Similarly, had I not worked with Oscar, I would have never realized how an embodied sense of community that came from being a female raised in a Mexican culture was critical in good times and in bad. I feel the importance of community has not only helped me become the teacher I am today, but has facilitated my ability to continue to use a SCIC approach in my teaching. Always putting my students' needs at the forefront of everything that I do, and not being afraid to seek help from my professional family has allowed me to have the courage to try new things, persevere in times of struggle, and grow as an educator. I have gained confidence in what I do, have developed the language to articulate a SCIC approach to my teacher candidates, and have realized that I will always need others in my teaching.

"I am embedding the approach in all things I am doing": Carla's vignette

This experience has allowed me to better align my beliefs with my actions. I believe the experience of learning to use a SCIC approach and having a community of practice gave me the tools to put my beliefs in practice, in action! My sport experience and my culture were critical to the development of my beliefs. I played football/futsal for more than 8 years in my teens, always trained by the same coach. My coach was the most upstanding person I have met in my life and values such as justice, honesty and caring were always present in our training sessions and games.

My experience in sports was fundamentally critical to my personal life and continues to this day. Starting in my PhD I sought to understand how a sport program could create spaces to empower young people. My coach and the environment he created in my adolescence inspired me to seek answers to fight against social injustice. I wanted to work

with young people in sport settings so that they could experience the type of empowering possibilities that I experienced through sport as a teen.

Like Raquel, I believe my culture was also critical in developing my commitment to creating spaces to empower young people. In Brazilian culture we learn to share things from an early age. I remember in my family celebrations we sang, danced and shared food together. In my working class family I have always been taught to share and also to accept help from my relatives whom had more money (e.g. my uncles and grandparents paid for my education). I believe that in cultures who have large income disparities, people learn to help themselves; creating communities to support each other and fight against social injustice.

Although my beliefs were related to social change and empowerment, my professional identify, like Oscar, developed within a teacher-centered pedagogy. I too was taught that the coach/teacher should be the only one in power. I started to understand the importance of student-centered pedagogy during my PhD, when I started working with youth in these ways (see Luguetti et al., 2016). I saw the value in using student centered pedagogy to help create empowering places for the youth I was working with. I started to understand that a teacher-centered approach could not create the kinds of results related to empowering kids from socially vulnerable areas that I desired.

This research experience made me feel more comfortable with a student-centered approach despite my feeling of lack of control. When I could observe other people using the approach and talk about it with others, I began to understand that was ok to feel uncomfortable. Watching Oscar struggle through his discomfort made me realize that I was not alone. Through our community of practice, I also learned how to negotiate my assumptions. For example, I believed that variety doesn't teach anything; and our group meetings helped me to negotiate that assumption and created spaces to see the result of variety in student’s learning. Finally, I got more confident in sharing power by negotiating

teacher and student voice. I learned based on observing other people and talking in our weekly meetings. I learned that we have to talk to people in order to apply learn this approach. It is important to create groups of teachers to discuss, or at least find someone who knows more about this approach to stay close.

After one year following this research, I continue to use the SCIC approach. I am still working with youth from socially vulnerable backgrounds and creating sporting opportunities to empower youth. I am also taking the approach and embedding it on top of other models. For example, I am teaching artistic in gymnastics and using the Sport Education model while simultaneously using part of the SCIC approach. I pretty much believe I am embedding the approach in all things I am doing. Further, I have come to realize that my thinking is much stronger when I have a community to talk with and thus I'm continually striving to create these types of experiences with my students. I am trying to talk and work with them in the same ways that I did in my CoP. The struggle however, is that these types of communities are very difficult to create when people do not share the same values and beliefs about teaching, learning and youth.

Discussion and conclusion

> The primary focus of this theory is on learning as social participation. Participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation of these communities… is both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do (Wenger, 1998, p.4)

In this study we explored how educators' pedagogical identities developed in the process of learning to use a SCIC approach in activity settings within a community of practice. For the three teachers, learning involved the whole person and implied not only a relation to specific activities, but becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person – changing positionalities. Wenger et al. (2002) describe three main levels of community participation. First is a small *core group* of people, considering "the heart" of the community, who actively participate in discussion, even debates, in public community forum. At the next level outside this core is the *active group*. These members attend meetings regularly, but without the regularity or intensity of the *core group*. A large portion of community members are *peripheral* and rarely participate, the third group. They keep to the sidelines, watching the interaction of the core and active members.

Carla and Raquel changed their positionality during the study, becoming much more confident with the SCIC approach. They started in a position of *active group* with some experience in the SCIC approach. After one year without weekly meetings, Carla and Raquel sustained the use of a SCIC approach and moved to a *core group* position where they sought to build communities with students and keep talking to one another, creating spaces for dialog and reflection. Oscar faced a lot of challenges in order to change his positionality in the CoP. In the beginning of the project, he sat silent in the weekly meetings, positioning himself as *peripheral* to the rest of the group. He moved from a *peripheral* to an *active participant* where he started to attend the weekly meetings and participate regularly. However, after one year without weekly meetings, Oscar isolated himself and went back to a more teacher-centered orientation. It is important to describe that Oscar learned a lot throughout this process of learning a SCIC approach. According to Wenger et al. (2002), the people on the sidelines often are not as passive as they seem; they gain their own insights from the discussion and put them to good use. Rather than force participation, successful

communities “build benches” for those on the sidelines. They make opportunities for semiprivate interaction, whether through private discussion rooms on the community’s Web site, at a community event, or in one-on-one conversation (Wenger et al., 2002). This keeps the peripheral members connected.

For the three teachers, culture, values, beliefs and professional background were critical for the development of their pedagogical identities in the process of learning to use a SCIC approach within a community of practice. Their pedagogical identities within the community of practice either connected or clashed with their cultural values and beliefs. In that sense, teachers do not only teach in the way they do because of skills or lack of skills; their teaching is also rooted in their backgrounds, biographies, and in the kinds of teachers they have become (their careers, their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations). According to Wenger (1998), our identities are rich and complex because they are produced within the rich and complex set of relations of practice. For Oscar, our membership in any CoP is only a part of our identity. As we engage our whole person in practice, our identities dynamically encompass multiple perspectives in the negotiation of new meanings. In these new meanings we negotiate our own activities and identities, and at the same time the histories of relations among our community of practice.

We see cultural barriers for some that don’t exist for others. For Oscar and Raquel, learning to use a student-centered approach in a border community to Mexico mattered. On the one hand, Oscar felt that his Mexican culture did not allow him to show signs of weakness or vulnerability. One the other hand, Raquel who was immersed in the same culture, considered herself “the heart” of the family, the one responsible for bringing people together for support in good times and in bad. Anzaldúa (2007) explores the intermeshing of her personal experiences growing up along the border between the US and Mexico with the history of the land (Chicana culture). She describes that the culture expects Chicana women

to show greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the value system than men. The culture insists that women are subservient to males. If a woman doesn't renounce herself in favor of the male, she is considered selfish. Differently, the Chicana male professes to protect women and have no tolerance for deviance. Deviance, weakness or vulnerability is condemned by the community, thus males must always present themselves as strong (Anzaldúa, 2007). This certainly played out for Oscar and Raquel within our CoP.

People from different cultural backgrounds can have very different ways of relating to one another and to the community. According to Wenger et al. (2002), people's willingness to ask questions that reveal their "ignorance", disagree with others in public, contradict known experts, discuss their problems, follow others in the thread of conversation – all these behaviors vary across cultures. In any hierarchical culture (e.g. weakness and vulnerability aren't acceptable), it is expected that the culture is going to clash with the expectations of student-centered approaches. For Carla and Oscar the struggle to move from teacher centered to student centered played out in their various experiences. For Raquel, her student centered background made it easy to understand the approach.

For Raquel and Carla, their beliefs were aligned with the conception of the SCIC approach - the "commitment to kids". This project helped them to better align their beliefs with their action. The SCIC approach gave them the tools to put their beliefs into practice, in action. Differently, Oscar struggled because the approach did not align with his beliefs, thus he faced more challenges in learning and continuing to use the approach. Oscar stopped using the approach as it was intended without the support of the CoP.

CoPs facilitated the development of these teachers' pedagogical identities – negotiating culture, values, beliefs and professional backgrounds - because our community of practice always focused on the kids. We were continually critiquing what we were doing in relation to what we wanted to do to better support our students. We took up the commitment

to students in every conversation that we had; it was about the kids and it was not about us with individual identities. The CoP took the focus off of ourselves and placed that attention on the child. We did this over and over again. Initially these experiences created for some, places to further develop their ideas about teaching, were as for others it caused great discomfort and a sense of personal loss.

Moving toward full participation in practice involves an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner, providing newcomers with continuity-based futures. Identity manifests as a tendency to "come up with certain interpretation, to engage in certain actions, to make certain choices, to value certain experiences – all by virtue of participation in certain enterprises" (Wenger, 1998, p.153). We advocate, as some authors previously indicate (e.g. Green, 1988; Vetter, 2012; Wenger, 1998), for more opportunities for teachers to tell and retell their stories within collaborative groups to foster the construction of pedagogical identities and learn new pedagogies.

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