International Journal of Doctoral Studies

An Official Publication of the Informing Science Institute InformingScience.org

IJDS.org

Volume 14, 2020

MIND THE GAP: TRANSITIONING FROM DOCTORAL GRADUATES TO EARLY CAREER FACULTY

Kate I. McCormick* SUNY Cortland, Cortland, NY, USA Kate.mccormick@cortland.edu

Libba Willcox Valdosta State University, Valdosta, GA, USA sewillcox@valdosta.edu

* Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose Graduate programs aim to prepare students for future professional roles, yet doctoral graduates often earn faculty positions at institutions that differ from those in which they were socialized. Navigating this "preparation gap" can produce feelings of uncertainty, tension, and, ultimately, dissonance. This collaborative autoethnographic study explores the gap as it was experienced by two early career faculty in a U.S. context.

Background The landscape of academia is rapidly changing, meaning graduate programs cannot prepare each graduate student for every potential professional role offered to them. Therefore, as doctoral graduates emerge from their respective graduate programs, an inevitable gap in preparation exists. This gap in preparation mirrors a gap in the graduate socialization literature, which is limited in describing how early career faculty are socialized into their first positions.

Methodology The paper discusses a year-long collaborative autoethnographic study conducted by two tenure-track early career faculty in Education & Arts fields at universities in the U.S. The study employs Clancy's (2010) theory of Perpetual Identity Constructing as a theoretical framework to examine the perceived dissonance produced during the transition from doctoral graduates to early career faculty.

Contribution This collaborative autoethnographic account of two early career, tenure-track faculty members' transition from doctoral graduate to assistant professors expands the literature on doctoral socialization, academic identities, and the potential of qualitative modes of inquiry. Specifically, it recognizes that doctoral graduates experience dissonance and undergo identity construction during the first year.

Findings Our findings revealed three categories repeated in our collaborative autoethnographic data that potentially serve as a window to illuminate the complexity of

Accepting Editor Rosemary A Van Der Meer | Received: April 9, 2019 | Revised: June 14, July 12, 2019 | Accepted: July 27, 2019.

Cite as: McCormick, K. I., & Willcox, L. (2019). Mind the gap: Transitioning from doctoral graduates to early career faculty. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 14,* 543-566. https://doi.org/10.28945/4409

(CC BY-NC 4.0) This article is licensed to you under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. When you copy and redistribute this paper in full or in part, you need to provide proper attribution to it to ensure that others can later locate this work (and to ensure that others do not accuse you of plagiarism). You may (and we encourage you to) adapt, remix, transform, and build upon the material for any non-commercial purposes. This license does not permit you to use this material for commercial purposes.

	the dissonance across the gap: support, connection, and control. Each category includes varying levels of dissonance with the self, department, institution, and fields of which we were part. Using Perpetual Identity Constructing theory, each category was examined through the three-stages of academic identity construction.
Recommendations for Practitioners	The study has implications for practitioners, specifically those who help to prepare doctoral students for positions at teaching-intensive universities. We recommend doctoral granting institutions expand formal and informal socialization programming to enhance students' awareness and preparation for the contexts and tensions they may encounter.
Recommendation for Researchers	Additional fine-grained studies, like ours, are warranted to further illuminate the complex interaction between the gap in socialization and the academic identity construction process as early career faculty.
Impact on Society	Awareness that deconstruction and reconstruction of identity continues beyond doctoral socialization could better prepare future faculty for the perpetual identity work across a career; it has the potential to produce better adjusted early career faculty who improve student outcomes and conduct research that impacts society.
Future Research	Based on the findings of this study, future areas of research should further investigate the experiences of early career faculty, in particular their socialization experiences during the transition from candidacy to first career positions.

Keywords	early career faculty, doctoral socialization, collaborative autoethnography

INTRODUCTION

Doctoral education is traditionally structured to socialize and prepare students for future professional roles (Austin, 2002). However, as many have identified (Helm, Campa III, & Moretto, 2012; Jaschik, 2016), the landscape of academia is rapidly changing (i.e., oversupply of PhDs, reduction in tenure track positions, imposing neoliberal reforms), meaning graduate programs cannot prepare each graduate student for every potential professional role offered to them. Therefore, as doctoral graduates emerge from their respective graduate programs, an inevitable gap in preparation exists. In this paper, we explore the dissonance produced from this inevitable "preparation gap" that we experienced in our first years as assistant professors at teaching-intensive universities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

We received doctorates from a research-intensive university located in the midwestern United States (pseudonym Midwestern University, or MWU, henceforth) and were offered tenure-track positions at our first-choice, teaching-intensive universities (also called comprehensive or teaching-oriented universities). According to the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research (2015), only seven percent of U.S. universities are designated as research-intensive. Furthermore, only two and a half percent have the status "highest research activity" (some refer to this as an R1 institution), which MWU was designated. In comparison to research-intensive universities, teaching-intensive universities tend to prioritize undergraduate education and service more so than research and scholarship, meaning professors dedicate significant time to honing their teaching, building relationships with students, and contributing to pedagogy and practitioner-related scholarship (Henderson & Buchanan, 2006). This emphasis on teaching is demonstrated through an increased faculty teaching load; we were contracted to teach three (Kate) or four (Libba) courses per semester for our universities.

Teaching-intensive universities often are embedded in local and regional community development and growth, and, particularly in our cases as teacher educators, educators and community members in our Pk-12 schools are proud alumni. While tenure expectations vary at each tenure-granting institution across the U.S., in teaching-intensive universities, teaching effectiveness and innovation is typically prioritized over research. In our experience this was the case, our teaching, and for one of us our service commitments as well, were expected to be exemplary. Our research expectations varied, as they do in all faculty governed institutions, yet it was still understood we would contribute scholarly work (i.e., presentations and/or publications) on an annual basis. In summary, research- and teaching-intensive universities differ in mission and priorities, often resulting in an institutional and preparation gap that scholars must bridge when they accept positions in new academic contexts.

While our experience moving from a research-intensive context to a teaching-intensive context is not unique for many graduates of U.S. doctorate programs, it is part of a systemic gap that many scholars face as they transition to first year faculty. As others have noted, and as we experienced, navigating this gap can produce feelings of uncertainty, tension, and ultimately, dissonance (Austin, 2002; Trower, Austin, & Sorcinelli, 2001; Reybold, 2005). Clancy (2010) proposed faculty respond to such feelings of uncertainty and conflict by perpetually deconstructing and reconstructing their academic identities. She stated the construction process "requires not only a personal commitment from each academic but also a reshuffling of institutional priorities; more is involved than simply deciding to change" (Clancy, 2010, p. 41). The process of constructing a new academic identity – as early career faculty, no longer students – is laborious, often deeply personal, and potentially transformative, while at the same time isolating. Below, we explore a metaphor adopted for the paper, an explication of dissonance, literature related to the transition from doctoral graduate to early career faculty (pre-tenure), and the theoretical framework that connects these aspects.

"Mind the Gap" Metaphor and Research Question

In recognizing that road maps, lists, or other one-size-fits-all solutions for preparing early career faculty, do not guarantee success, we adopted the metaphor of "mind the gap" as a cautionary message to others transitioning from graduates to early career faculty in teaching-intensive universities. Commonly seen in the London subway system, the warning "mind the gap" is illustrated and announced to travelers who are about to cross a threshold that could be dangerous or risky. Embracing this metaphor, we sought to understand how a collaborative autoethnographic approach contributed to, complicated, and documented the transition from doctoral graduate to assistant professor. Specifically, our research question asks: *how can reflection about perceived dissonance help us understand the transition from doctoral graduate to early career faculty at teaching universities?*

Literature Review

In the first month of our first appointments as tenure-track assistant professors, we noticed moments of dissonance, or friction and inconsistency with our previously held beliefs and expectations. Our new contexts, in teaching-intensive universities, contained conflicting norms from those in which we were socialized. Kate began a position in a School of Education at a state university campus with approximately 7,000 students; the major she primarily works with is the second largest in the university. Libba began a position in the College of the Arts at a regional comprehensive university with around 12,000 students; she is the program coordinator of a small teacher education program. While conflicting norms were expected, the contradictory nature of these to our own experiences at MWU required us to reassess our doctoral education and training. In order to better understand the dissonance, we explored the literature about perceived dissonance, doctoral training, and the transition to early career faculty in relation to our own experience to better understand what was occurring.

Perceived Dissonance

According to social psychologist Festinger (1957), dissonance is produced when one's ideas, beliefs, or values are contradicted by one's actions, or when new, incongruous information is presented. Aronson (1992) furthers this to say cognitive dissonance is "essentially a theory about sense making - how people try to make sense out of their environment and their behavior -- and thus, try to lead lives that are (at least in their own minds) sensible and meaningful" (p. 304). Festinger's original theory contends that when individuals experience dissonance we strive to move away from those feelings of discomfort towards harmony through the removal of the dissonance, acquisition of new information, or accommodation of the stressor through changed mindsets. We experienced dissonance between graduating from MWU and starting our careers as tenure-track faculty and recognized that the dissonance occurred because our new contexts were vastly different from how we were socialized in our doctoral program.

Doctoral Socialization

The doctoral experience is unlike other educational experiences and has been the subject of continual research. Because of this, as Austin (2009, p. xi) notes, the scholarship on the doctoral experience has grown dramatically over the past few decades. Mendoza and Gardner (2010) articulate the vast literature available on this subject in their edited text *On Becoming a Scholar: Socialization and Development in Doctoral Education*. Within the literature pertaining to the doctoral experience, the process of socialization has become the most popular topic among current research (Mendoza & Gardner, 2010).

Doctoral socialization is a broad topic that covers ideas about the process associated with education and the expected product of the education. Gardner (2010a) defined socialization as "the process through which an individual learns to adopt the values, skills, attitudes, norms, and knowledge needed for membership in a given society, group, or organization" (p. 63). Through doctoral education, students are introduced to "values, skills, attitudes, norms, and knowledge" of academia explicitly and implicitly. Given Gardner's definition of socialization as a process, many scholars have theorized it in stages (Gardner, 2008a, 2008b; Lovitts, 2001; Tinto, 1993; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). For example, Gardner (2008b) theorized that doctoral socialization occurs in three phases: 1) admission, which includes application until early coursework, 2) integration, which entails coursework until candidacy, and 3) candidacy, which comprises of independent research until graduation. Due to the individualized nature of the process, recent literature has connected it to attrition (Gardner, 2007, 2010b; Golde, 1998, 2000, 2005; Lovitts, 2001), problems of representation (Blockett, Felder, Parrish, & Collier, 2016; Gardner, 2008a; Ramirez, 2017; Turner & Thompson, 1993; Uqdah, Tyler, & Deloach, 2009), and the role of mentoring (Austin, 2002; Hall & Burns, 2009). Recognizing that the "socialization of graduate students is an unusual double socialization. New students are simultaneously directly socialized into the role of graduate student and are given preparatory socialization into a profession" (Golde, 1998, p. 56), we narrowed the scope of this research to introduce the ways doctoral students are socialized as students *and* as future faculty in research, teaching, and service. These three areas of socialization prepare graduates for future academic success at the individual, departmental, institutional, and professional levels.

Research socialization. A primary objective of doctoral education is to train scholars who are able "produce and consume" research (Weidman, 2010, p. 46). Considering these skills are necessary to earn promotion and tenure, research socialization is imperative in graduate school and it takes many forms. Graduate students often take coursework pertaining to research, many are required to pass exams that demonstrate the ability to gather research, and candidates write a dissertation that illustrates the forms of research they will produce as independent scholars. Research socialization extends beyond coursework, but often depends on the degree to which students are mentored or supported by supervising faculty (Nettles & Millett, 2006; Weidman, 2010). Additionally, students are encouraged to engage in scholarly activities, such as presenting at conferences hosted by professional associations, publishing in research journals, and writing grants (Weidman & Stein, 2003). Hence, research socialization includes more than the explicit doctoral curriculum and encompasses activities outside of coursework.

Teaching socialization. Doctoral socialization in teaching has grown since the mid-1980s when the use of teaching assistants became more prevalent (McDaniels, 2010). McDaniels (2010) summarizes three desired outcomes for teaching socialization: conceptual understandings (e.g., development of professional identities, understanding institution); interpersonal skills (e.g., communication, ability to integrate feedback), and professional attitudes and habits (e.g., work/life balance, ethical and educational habits). McDaniels emphasizes that doctoral students can and should have direct teaching experience, collect resources about curriculum and pedagogy at the college level, observe others, create curriculum and plan with a mentor, reflect upon teaching development and experience, and provide feedback to their mentor about preparation as future faculty (pp. 38-39). McDaniels is not alone in the push to emphasize socialization in teaching during the doctoral experience; others have articulated its importance as well (Maher, Gilmore, Feldon, & Davis, 2014; Napper-Owen, 2012). While many institutions offer opportunities for doctoral students to teach at the college level, more support is needed to understand the complex and nuanced praxis and pedagogical decision-making required at teaching-intensive universities.

Service socialization. Doctoral students are often least prepared for their service role when they become early career faculty (Golde & Dore, 2001; Ward, 2010). This is partly due to the ambiguity of what role service plays in faculty members academic lives and partly because there is not a direct connection of service to doctoral coursework. For most, there is an understanding in academia that service includes committee work, but there is little agreement of what service entails beyond that. Socialization in service is less of a focus in doctoral programs and often becomes a difficult part of the transition to early career faculty.

Ultimately, doctoral socialization is an essential part of the doctoral experience. It is when students learn about the requirements of research, teaching, and service. While research and teaching socialization is privileged in most doctoral studies and service is backgrounded (or not addressed at all), these roles become essential in the transition from doctoral graduate to assistant professor. Napper-Owen (2012) suggested that doctoral students "too often fail to receive preparation that is well-balanced for the numerous roles faculty have" (p. 136). This led us to ask: how might doctoral socialization contribute to and reduce dissonance felt in the transition from doctoral graduate and early career faculty?

Transition from Doctoral Graduate to Assistant Professor

While there is a significant amount of literature about the socialization process of doctoral students, numerous scholars call for more research about the transition between candidacy and the first years as early career faculty (Anderson & Anderson, 2012; Austin, 2002; Golde & Dore, 2001; Helm, Campa III, & Moretto, 2012; Nyquist et al., 1999). In order to prepare the next generation of faculty, researchers argue graduate programs must demystify the academy (Napper-Owen, 2012; Nyquist et al, 1999), socialize graduate students for varied academic contexts beyond research-intensive universities (Anderson & Anderson, 2012; Golde & Dore, 2001), and provide exposure and support for job opportunities outside of academia (Helm, Campa III, & Moretto, 2012). Nonetheless, graduate programs have been slow to respond to such scholarly recommendations and have left many doctoral graduates under-prepared for their transition to the professoriate.

Within the literature, what can be found on navigating the transition are only a few discipline-specific articles and books. For example, Good (2013) discussed how to efficiently move from landing a job to the first day of class in a book written for early career psychologists in academia. Similarly, general how-to guides are available (see Clement, 2010). To an even lesser degree, explorations into the lived experience of early career faculty exist within the research. Coke, Benson, and Hayes (2015) explored the disorientation of the transition and proposed a process of transformation occurs in ten phases. In Kemp's (2018) edited book, well-known and emerging curriculum scholars shared personal narratives about their experiences as early career faculty in curriculum studies fields. Finally, Guyotte, Hofsess, Wilson, and Shields (2018) discussed an arts-based collaborative autoethnographic study of four women exploring the transition into tenure track positions. Recognizing that the dissonance we felt in our first year were not

individual cases of tension, we sought to further understand the transition so that we might provide to help to others.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Clancy's (2010) work regarding preferred academic identity construction was used to frame our study and to better understand the dissonance we felt in our transition from doctoral graduates to early career faculty at teaching-intensive universities. Clancy's theory of "Perceptual Identity Construction" articulates that academics require space and time to develop as professionals, yet the complex nature of higher education rarely affords these essential ingredients. Clancy stated,

> When academics are socialized into the world of higher education, there is often an explicit understanding that they are proficient in all areas of academic life. More often than not, this proves not to be the case and the process of change can be difficult particularly when it is not in concert with disciplinary and organizational demands. (p. 47)

Motivated to better understand the mechanism of change, she developed a three-stage process that describes what academics go through when they are forced to construct new academic identities. Clancy arrived at this theory through a grounded theory approach in which 27 interviews were conducted with academics in higher education settings in the Republic of Ireland.

Clancy's (2010) three-stage process includes 1) managing pre-existing academic identities, 2) deconstructing academic identities, and 3) reconstructing academic identities. First, academics must manage their pre-existing identities, which requires reflection on and examination of deeply held beliefs that are often taken for granted. Determining how essential beliefs merge or diverge from discipline-specific and institutional norms, one must consciously identify and question beliefs before they choose whether or not to conform to new norms. In the second stage, academics must unpack, or "deconstruct previous knowledge and understanding of what it means to be an academic" (Clancy, 2010, p. 45). This is necessary when previous academic identities are in conflict with the new norms. Academics must find ways to survive the new requirements, which often requires a relinquishing of personal ideals and control. Recognizing that high expectations in research, teaching, and service often require academics to modify their self-expectations, Clancy states that academics need to relinquish expected success in teaching or research in order to survive during the reconstruction stage. By relinquishing their past and ideal academic identities, the academic begins to break down, or deconstruct, previous identities and expectations and choose what is essential and what can be eliminated. In the third stage, academics reconstruct their academic identities. Highlighting the dissonance that academics feel during academic identity reconstruction, Clancy argues that institutions need to provide space and time for academics to engage in this laborious reconstruction to develop professionally. Because this process is laborious, vulnerable, and uncertain, many academics revert to the status quo rather than engaging in the identity work of reconstruction.

Clancy's (2010) "Perpetual Identity Constructing" was a particularly useful theory for this study as it provided a lens for exploring our experiences of dissonance in the first year of transition. Yet, the theory is not without its limits. First, Clancy theorized identity construction applies only to academics, therefore it can only be extended to individuals in higher education settings, excluding those in industry or other research-oriented fields. Further, while Clancy specifically states that it is not a linear theory, the cyclical nature of a stage theory implies sequential progression. Finally, this theory provides three stages, which potentially simplifies the complex nature of the phenomena. Nonetheless, given the limits, the theory was applicable and provided insight to our experiences around the phenomena of transition.

METHODS

PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION

The study's research framework is grounded in a feminist, social constructionist philosophical orientation. Ontologically, we adopted a social constructionist perspective, which argues ways of understanding

and subsequent knowledge constructions are historically, relationally, and culturally-bounded (Burr, 2003). This framing of knowledge construction aligns with our feminist epistemic beliefs in that we embrace and prioritize the validity of multiple perspectives, the importance of subjectivities, the significance of collaboration and community, the relevance of relational knowledge and the potential transformative nature of critical research (Hesse-Biber, 2014). As feminist researchers, we recognize and utilize women's life stories as valuable forms of knowledge" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 6).

Considering the research question, *how can reflection about perceived dissonance help us understand the transition from doctoral graduate to early career faculty at teaching universities*, we sought a methodology that honored multiple perspectives, privileged subjectivities, and embraced the ability to make meaning together. Therefore, we engaged in a qualitative study that utilized methods from collaborative autoethnography (CAE) (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013). CAE "involve[s] two or more writers and provide[s] a means to explore culturally significant experiences from multiple perspectives" (Guyotte & Sochacka, 2016, p. 2). Chang et al. (2013) highlight CAE's connection to autoethnography in that it is "self-focused, researcher-visible, context-conscious, and critically dialogic" (p. 22). However, it is also important to note its collaborative nature. In this study, we utilize CAE's ability to explore personal connections to broader cultural phenomena (Guyotte & Sochacka, 2016), but also focus on the importance of collaborative research. Specifically, we were drawn to CAE's focus on collaboration to make meaning; the egalitarian dynamic between researcher/participants; the use of empathetic witnessing of *other* to appreciate and utilize our own situated knowledge; and the potential transformative nature for self and others (Adamson & Muller, 2018; Chang et al., 2013; Guyotte & Sochacka, 2016; Lapadat, 2017). Additionally, these qualities were congruent with hallmarks of feminist inquiry and epistemology.

Encouraged by feminist calls for transparency in the reporting of data (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 400), it is important to provide our positionalities as middle-class, white scholars who use she/her/hers pronouns, and who both moved to their new academic contexts alone. Both of us were trained and educated at the same institution (MWU), but have experienced academic socialization in unique ways. One of us is a third-generation professor, who grew up in an academic culture in several college towns and was socialized into academia from a very young age. The other was mentored by several professors who spent time detailing the systems of academia in her undergraduate and master's experience; they played a significant role in her development as a graduate student. We recognize our narratives are embedded with invisible and visible forms privilege. We both have also experienced challenges in being young, female scholars. Thus, this research shares our own imperfect and vulnerable stories, through the lens of goodness, of transitioning from doctoral graduates to early career faculty at teaching-intensive universities.

Socialization Stories

To better understand the dissonance we felt, it is relevant for us to share our doctoral socialization experiences at MWU and how we were both explicitly and implicitly socialized into research, teaching, and service. While we studied in the same department, though in different concentrations (Kate in Early Childhood Education and Libba in Art Education), our program of studies required multiple courses in research and teaching; service was implicitly addressed in our experience. The coursework and examinations within our program required us to explicitly learn about research and teaching. We both were required to take a first-year, cohort seminar to introduce us to doctoral studies, the profession, and informally, served to build community within our cohorts. This year-long course previewed the doctoral process, introduced us to faculty in the department, taught us about academic writing, and provided mentorship and advice on how to transition into academic careers. We were also required to take an inquiry core of at least 9 credits, as well as courses about literature reviews and research proposals. Coursework ended with a portfolio-based qualifying examination that evaluated our progress in the program. Then, we were required to write dissertations that demonstrated our ability to be independent scholars.

Further, since we both earned PhDs in Curriculum and Instruction, our coursework also explicitly examined teaching in theory and in practice. Experiences in this doctoral program socialized us as teacher-educators (educators who prepare teachers) and required us to reflect upon our experiences as teachers in

higher education in relation to research. Not only were we socialized explicitly, but we also experienced implicit socialization through mentorship with faculty, staff, and more advanced candidates or recent graduates. Working with faculty mentors, we had multiple opportunities to learn about academia through extracurricular projects, meetings, and opportunities. Kate researched and wrote a number of studies with her faculty mentor, while Libba attended a weekly meeting to weave research and teaching together. We both engaged in service to our department and university, but this was not explicitly required. Rather, our mentors advised we take part in service as it could increase our success in the job market.

Because we were socialized implicitly and explicitly in our doctoral program, we felt highly prepared for our faculty positions. We taught multiple courses each semester, we engaged in numerous research projects, we published articles and book chapters, and engaged in service to our department throughout our doctoral experience. However, the dissonance we felt once we moved to our new positions inspired multiple conversations with each other that lead to this study.

Data Sources

Multiple data forms (i.e., self-reflective data, conversational data, personal memory data, and archival data) were selected to illustrate our experiences in the transition from doctoral graduates to early career faculty. According to Chang et al. (2013), in self-reflective data:

> You not only construct stories of what happened, who was involved, and where it took place, but also think about the meaning of the event, person, and location and assess their values to you. Since interpreted meanings are shaped by your present experiences, self-reflective data mix the past and present and can adapt to the present moment of data collection. (pp. 78-79)

In this research, we primarily utilized interactive Google Docs to document our self-reflective data. In 2017-2018, we committed to writing once a week in a shared space during our transition in the first year as assistant professors at teaching-intensive universities. In the initial document, we generated potential topics as headers to prompt our writing (e.g., Typical Day, Who has Time for writing…); topics were added as we continued to experience dissonance through the transition. We also reflected on ideas beyond the prompts, such as current events, tragedies, and celebrations.

Additional forms of data included in this study were conversational and interactive data, which Chang et al. (2013) described as when two or more researchers engage in dialogue to create relational meaning of experience. This occurred in several ways; first, we found that Google Docs provided a unique opportunity to merge self-reflective data and interactive/conversational data. Within the first month of writing, we started using the commenting function to respond, support, and pose questions to explore the other's experience. Eventually, we began to write back and forth (one author's entries, responses, and questions in purple text and the other's in green) (see Figure 1).

Second, we had two face-to-face meetings and several video conference conversations to understand our experiences generating and analyzing data. These conversations were documented as personal memory data (jottings, memos) and were complemented by archival data (texts, emails, and journal entries) (Chang et al., 2013, p.74).

I just came back from a teaching circle. *That's so cool that you have opportunities to engage in talks about practice. We don't have anything formal like that here (yet...). Right now, my problems of practice feel like my own. I take them home with me and wrestle with them on my drive, or while I'm walking on the treadmill. Flipping them over and over around in my mind like an otter with a pebble. It feels fruitless sometimes. Although, like you say, the other side of a teaching circle is the vulnerability it brings. Acknowledging a 'problem' in your practice requires you to be vulnerable.* **I feel oddly vulnerable, but appreciative. We spent the first hour talking about foundations classes and how to help students get started on projects faster. I, then, presented changes to my course to the group. First, I think I overwhelmed them by talking about the structure of my course. I started with course structure then I spoke of weekly structure (Mondays: individual exploration of the topic, Wednesdays: group exploration of the topic, Fridays: application of course topic to personal research). I lost them there. Good feedback, but hard to hear that my students would feel too overwhelmed to conduct personal research throughout the entire semester**. *Yes, that must be hard to hear. Sounds like you feel your students can achieve a higher goal than your colleagues believe they can. What does that say about the belief about student achievement in your program/institution? What evidence did they use to make support their feedback? Maybe there's a learning moment in their sources of evidence (unclear expectations, not enough time/support from instructor)?* **The research starts in the beginning of the semester and a little over half way the course transitions from coursework to a focus on their individual projects. I was told it would work with grad school more than our students. I appreciate the idea of streamlining this course. I also feel a little hesitant to cut these students off of individual study**. *Does a self-directed (strongly scaffolded) project set them up to succeed in other courses? Maybe this is the only time in their program that they'll get an experience like that. It sounds too valuable to cut off completely.*

Figure 1. Interactive data representing back-and-forth conversation in Google Doc journal [Green responses are in bold font; purple responses are in italic.]

Data Analysis

CAE research benefits from macro- and micro-reviews of data during the analysis phase before beginning the coding process. Chang et al. (2013) described macro-review as an uninterrupted analysis in which researchers capture "thoughts regarding recurring topics, unique details, emerging patterns, relationships among data, methodological insights, critiques, and ideas for further work" (p. 103). It is necessary to do a macro-review first to identify large picture ideas before doing the micro-review. The macro-review involves writing memos of "what you see and what you do not see in your data" (p. 103) and provides multiple opportunities to capitalize on emergent data. Then, researchers must do a micro-review of the data; this asks researchers to review data grouped "by data types, collection periods, data sources, and researcher cases" (p. 103) to better understand the data. After the macro-and micro-reviews, the researcher fragments (or codes) the data into groups of interest in order to interpret recurring theme or topics in the data. Researchers often utilize memos from the macro-review and fragments noted in the micro-review to help sort fragments into categories in which the researcher can interpret the data. Below, we share our process completing the macro-review and micro-reviews of the data and fragmenting the data into categories and fragmenting the data into categories.

During the macro-review, we independently reviewed the entirety of the data noting interesting elements, recurring themes, questions, and elements to explore in greater detail. Then, immediately after our initial

macro-review, we collaboratively discussed our initial memos, topics, and insights in a face-to-face meeting. During this discussion, we created a list of topics and refrains to attend to in our micro-review (see Appendix A). During our micro-review, we separately examined the Google Doc and other data sources, line-by-line for examples and counterexamples of topics and refrains that emerged from the macro-review. Then, we began the coding process of sorting fragments into larger categories to make meaning of the recurring patterns of the data. After coding the data, we met digitally to discuss, create memos, and identify passages of initial significance.

These passages were examined using Carspecken's (1996) meaning field (MF) analysis method. Since the project is autoethnographic in nature, we held insight into the experiences of the person reflecting in each moment or interaction. However, each interaction, or communicative act, may also involve others (i.e., colleagues, mentors, institutions), whose motivations to act are unknown. Since they are unknown to us, we utilized a meaning field analysis to make all possibilities of these acts explicit. Carspecken said, "You cannot know for certain what an actor intended with her act, you cannot know for certain what impressions of meaning were received by those witnessing the actor directly addressed by the act, but you can specify possibilities" (p. 96); thus, by creating a meaning field, we sought to articulate possibilities of a communicative act to better understand multiple perspectives and interpretations of it. We provide a communicative act below to illustrate the process of generating a meaning field (MF):

> *I had colleagues around me telling me to slow down. People popping into my office saying, "go home" or "you know you don't have to be here every day." I won't speculate at their motivations for why they told me these things, but it caused me to think that I was working 'too hard.'*
>
> [MF: Please don't outwork me AND/OR you will change the culture here if you continue OR I am concerned for your well-being OR if you continue to work like this you won't fit in here OR if you continue at this pace, you will burnout OR get a life outside of school/work OR life is more than just school/work AND You are expected to have something else to go home to as a young woman]

Thus, after exploring our bounded range of meanings in this moment, we did not interpret it as just a plea to slow down, an offering of support, advice to help fit in, or a judgement of a lifestyle. Instead, each communicative act had multiple possible interpretations.

Following meaning field analysis, we entered into the final stage of data analysis in which we grouped the data fragments into micro-review categories. In this paper, we limit the scope of our discussion to examine three major categories that emerged when coding the data. Recognizing that the data presented multiple categories, we chose to focus on three prominent categories that revealed the complex nature of the transition in connection to academic identities: connection, support, control. We noticed across the categories there were overlapping loci of dissonance (self, department, institution, and field). These loci are used to help frame the locations, entities, or bodies where dissonance occurred across the three prominent categories.

Through the data analysis process, we noticed that these three categories were experienced on continuums. Continuums, opposed to binaries (i.e., unsupported versus supported) provide openings for nuanced and complex experience across the experience of feeling connected, supported, and in control. Across the year of reflections in our collaborative journal, we chose four loci of dissonance to exemplify the ways in which we navigated the continuums at a variety of levels: self, department, institution, and field. While each category does not have every loci of dissonance, the data illustrates that dissonance was felt as we were perpetually constructing academic identities.

FINDINGS

This study sought to examine the perceived dissonance across our transition as doctoral graduates to early career faculty at teaching-intensive universities using a CAE approach. The data revealed moments of tension and struggle, which we believe may illuminate similar experiences others might encounter in their

own transitions from graduation to early career faculty. Recognizing that academics are consistently constructing their academic identities to better fit departmental and institutional norms, we share three specific categories that were repeated in our data and potentially serve as a window to this transition; they include connection, support, and control. Following CAE guidance (Chang et al., 2013), the data is shared in a collaborative voice with anonymized excerpts to protect those implicated in our stories.

Connection

The first category within the data explores the continuum between connection and disconnection. It includes loci of dissonance at the level of self, department, and field. Our data illustrated a range of congruence with the former and forming academic self, harmonious relationships in the department, and connections with colleagues.

Self. Connection with the self speaks to navigating self-expectations and changes in daily life, including both personal and academic. Multiple entries spoke to the challenge of navigating change in moving from doctoral graduate to assistant professor. In the change in academic status and location, we expressed tension between constant change and the role of familiarity. Below are two entries that demonstrate this strangeness and illustrate tension between feeling connected and disconnected.

> Right now, I'm having a harder time finding those moments of stability or familiarity. I find that the only thing familiar is work. Is that sad? I feel like I'm supposed to think that it is sad. I'm supposed to have meaning outside of work - but what if my work is my meaning/purpose?
>
> It's time for me to find my familiar instead of being paralyzed by all of this change.

These segments, written within the same month, illustrate how we felt disconnected from our doctoral education and experience. In our first semester as assistant professors, we wrote about new service requirements, changing research expectations, and conflicting teaching philosophies and norms. At the same time, using CAE to understand the phenomenon of transition illustrated how we connected with each other and our teacher-researcher selves. In the first segment above, work was presented as a source of stability in a moment of intense unfamiliarity and strangeness. Articulating the disconnect enabled us to support each other and find connections across our understandings, hopes, and expectations of being teacher-researchers.

Department. The departmental connections and disconnections included relationships with departmental habits, colleagues, and students. While our passion for teaching helped us connect to our department, our patterns and forms of scholarship did not match the departmental norms. This disconnection to our departments became apparent when faculty members continued to give advice about workload, pace, and balance during our first year.

While faculty in the department often reached out to support our understanding of the norms and to aid our navigation of the new system, these moments often produced feelings of vulnerability. For example, we were often celebrated for our critical perspectives, but in reflection we questioned whether this was the best way to develop positive relationships with faculty. Throughout our journals we asked: 1) Were we fitting into the department? and 2) Is this where we belong? Because we were new, and our knowledge and experience were unknown to other faculty, we had to advocate for ourselves, our program, and our years of undergraduate teaching experience.

At the same time, we were navigating our relationships with faculty, we were also building relationships with our new students, who were often different than those we had taught for the past six years. While students were appreciative of our dedication, they had differing expectations of us (i.e., flexible due dates and reduced workload). Considering the new context, relations, and norms, navigating relationships within the department resulted in feeling variations of connection.

Field. Connections to our fields were reinforced through conferences and meetings, and they were sustained through continued conversations with colleagues and mentors outside of our institutions. Yet feelings of disconnection were reflected in the data as we attempted to navigate how to prioritize teaching responsibilities over scholarship, specifically, how to balance the immediate relationship building duties of being a teaching-focused faculty member, while maintaining field-based connections elsewhere. One of these moments of connection is presented below:

> By attending the conference, I feel connected to other scholars. Something clicked. During the academic year, I lost that feeling. I was so embedded in my tiny world of teach-grade-teach-grade that I lost my connection to the big picture; I felt irrelevant and disconnected from my community.

Prior to becoming an assistant professor, the doctoral socialization process at MWU was heavily guided by exploring and interrogating the historical and contemporary perspectives of our fields in seminar style courses. As we transitioned from doctoral graduates to early career faculty, we moved into positions where we became the lone subject-matter experts of our disciplines. In the quote above, the true sense of disconnection from one's scholarly community manifests in a feeling of isolation and irrelevancy. We spoke of "los[ing] connection to the big picture" as becoming entrenched in the monotony with everyday tasks of being a teacher and a loss of our purpose for becoming teacher-educators in our respective fields. While disconnection is foregrounded in this quote, connection was found through engagement with scholars and research at conferences.

Perpetual identity constructing and connection. Clancy's (2010) first stage of Perpetual Identity Constructing requires academics to manage their pre-existing identities. Clancy articulates dissonance academics may feel when their pre-existing values do not match the values of the institution. In the findings above, we searched for connection in our new academic contexts. Recognizing that our previous academic identities were out-of-sync with our new contexts, we reflected on our own socialization, we reached out to each other, and we connected to other scholars in the field to better understand the dissonance we felt. The data revealed our reflection upon what needed to change to sustain our new positions. For example, we needed to manage our previous academic identities because we articulated the comfort we found in research, yet we recognized that research was less important in our new contexts.

In managing and deconstructing our previous academic identities, we began to ask ourselves questions: Did we need to modify our working pace in order to survive? Were we asking too much of our students? In a study conducted by Eddy and Gaston-Gayles (2008) with new faculty in higher education positions, they found their participants faced similar stressors including balancing work-life integration, teaching roles in a new context, and ambiguous expectations surrounding tenure. In relation to Clancy's (2010) theory, each time we felt dissonance in our new positions, we needed to reflect on our previous academic identities and engage in the deconstruction process. Deconstructing involved considering what was essential in our academic identities and what needed to change in order to conform. Ultimately, in this data we engaged in the first two stages of Perpetual Identity Constructing, but did not demonstrate elements of identity reconstruction related to connection.

Support

The second category within our findings is along the continuum of support and includes perceptions of self, department, institution, and field. The first category focused on connections and aspects of relationship building, community, and affinity with self and others. This category, support, also includes an exploration of relationships, however, it encompasses the conflicts encountered around resources, professional barriers, introspection, and mentorship.

Self. Personal reflection on the ways in which we were socialized in our doctoral program became a site of self-support. For example, many entries in our collaborative journal questioned our current academic contexts, the varying expectations for research, or the drastic change in teaching load, advising, and service demands. Our journals reflected a balance of questioning the self and questioning the new context.

In one instance of such self-questioning, one of us noted, "It was a really tough spring. I questioned whether or not this is what I wanted. I felt overworked - but overworked by choice." In analyzing this quote, there are two examples of feeling unsupported. First, "I question whether or not this what I wanted" shows self-examination. Questioning can be fruitful, yet questioning too often can undermine self-efficacy and productivity. Second, "I felt overworked-but overworked by choice" is an example of feeling both unsupported and supported simultaneously. Being overworked implies working more than necessary and suggests a need for support. But "overworked by choice" suggests the worker has agency over the work pace and load. Simultaneously advocating for self and undermining the support given to self illustrates the complexity of feelings and experiences from the first year.

Throughout the year of transition, we questioned our fit in the new academic context (e.g., "Is this what I want?"). During the job search process, we were advised to find institutions whose needs we would fit and where we could work toward our professional assets, goals, and desires. When we implicitly and explicitly asked "Is this what I want," we reflected upon more than just our choices to work in higher education. This query highlighted a need for self-support, but also support from others.

Department. The most immediate relationships in our new academic contexts were with our colleagues and our departments. We were supported in our departments in a variety of ways (e.g., first year funding for research and travel and mentorship programs). However, we felt tension in navigating new expectations as untenured early career faculty in our departments. One example of navigating perceptions of support was illustrated in a conversation with a colleague about teaching.

> After the meeting, I was struck by my colleagues' comment: "*I feel like you are a university professor and I am just a teacher.*" I think it was supposed to be a compliment, but it resonated. It honestly was the sentence to bring everything I am feeling to the foreground - am I in the right place?

This reflection illustrated how it was possible to feel simultaneously supported by a colleague for attention to curricula and pedagogy, but at the same time feel different from the other faculty. Sharing this moment, and witnessing it in the interactive Google Doc, led to conversations about feeling different from our faculties and contributed to a sense of otherness. This simple statement, offered to celebrate and recognize hard work, highlighted otherness. Strongly identifying as teachers who prepare teachers, the comment "*just a teacher*" illustrated the separation. This comment simultaneously separated us from the teaching profession and marginalized teachers; it separated us from our teacher identities and marginalized the role of teachers. Combating the feeling of being too abstract and out of touch with students during the first year, this comment solidified the feeling of not belonging in my department. The excerpt illustrated a moment when support was offered, yet the resulting feeling was one of isolation.

Institution. Our institutions provided several forms of structured support including funding for research and travel, mentoring programs, new faculty orientations, advising trainings, and writing, teaching, and research workshops. While the resources and supports were beneficial to our initial year as assistant professors, our data revealed numerous instances of unexpected institutional barriers (e.g., accessing allocated funding, work space constraints), which created tension. One unexpected institutional barrier is described below.

> I wrote an Institutional Review Board [IRB] protocol and prepared the paperwork to submit to the committee, but discovered I needed my department's signature to submit any study to my institution's IRB. Before obtaining the department's signature, all of the materials had to be reviewed by the department first. I felt frustrated that my degree in research was discredited; I was frustrated that my competency in designing a logical, ethical study was questioned.

The final phase of our doctoral candidacy included designing, writing, and conducting an IRB-approved human subjects research project; and, in both of our experiences, our dissertations represented one of several IRB-approved projects conducted within our doctoral education. Therefore, the departmental

level of review that was offered as a source of potential support to catch any errors or faults in the design was perceived as a source of dissonance. While support was the intention, feeling unsupported was backgrounded in the level of oversight. The questioning of our research abilities and competence in research resulted in feelings of frustration; this was unexpected because of our rigorous doctoral research training.

Field. In exploring the areas of support in connection with our field of expertise, we recognized a wide range of occurrences in our first-year reflections. Support ranged from having a formal mentor assigned by the department to informal conversations with faculty, staff, and scholars in our disciplines. In the data, we both wrote about the generous support we received from like-minded scholars outside of the institutions in which we were working. Whether it was from leaders, mentors in our graduate program, or our colleagues at other institutions, conversations with other educators became our way of staying connected to our scholarly identities and academic commitments.

In the reflective and interactive data, we used the metaphor of an "academic anchor" to speak to our connection to academia. We define an academic anchor as anything that keeps us tethered to our core beliefs and commitment to our disciplines. One excerpt illustrates the dissonance felt in navigating a new institution with different priorities and honoring commitments to scholarship and teaching in our field. Below is a reflection about seeing each other at a recent conference.

> Talking to you and to our colleague during the February conference was so wonderful, but it also put me in a funk for about a week. It forced me to stop-- to think-- to reflect-- and question what am I doing here. I am haunted by her words-- "So, you don't need a PhD to do what you're doing?" She again, *made me pause*. What is going on here?

This excerpt illustrated the conflicts we felt in grappling with a new academic context, teaching outside one's area of expertise, and the need to use new knowledge (and a freshly earned PhD) in higher education. Our mutual colleague asked the question "So you don't need a PhD to do what you're doing?" and it brought current struggles to the foreground. Her motivation was to offer support by abstracting the most essential aspects of the first-year struggle in question form. However, her question was interpreted as "You don't need *your* PhD to do what you're doing." This statement served as support, yet created tension; it resulted in questioning belonging in the new context and the ability to stay connected to the discipline.

Perpetual identity constructing and support. In recognizing the dissonance we felt between our previous institutional expectations, our self-expectations, and our new contexts at teaching-intensive universities, we needed to deconstruct our pre-existing academic identities in order to understand our new roles and to fit into our new departments. Clancy (2010) discussed that deconstructing academic identities is laborious and necessary. This requires academics to recognize, analyze, and understand deeply held beliefs before making changes. In Coke et al.'s (2015) examination of their trajectories through the early professoriate, they wrote of similar struggles with discontentment and isolation and found their new positions required a reassessment of their knowledge bases.

In the findings above, we have pinpointed several examples of our struggles to manage our pre-existing identities in new academic contexts and the need to deconstruct our previous identities. Previously, we came from an institution in which working every day in the office was typical and we were socialized into understanding this was part of academia. Further, having high expectations for ourselves and our students was essential to the academics we became during our doctoral socialization. Moving from managing our pre-existing academic identities to deconstructing them, we used reflection and self-questioning to better understand the dissonance we felt. Recognizing that these elements made up our pre-existing identities, and that working at this pace was not sustainable for a career and were therefore not departmental or institutional norms, we needed to consider conforming to feel belonging and wellness. Clancy (2010) stated "The perceived need for conforming provides further evidence of the constant conflict that academics may experience as they try and assert themselves against constraining boundaries and their at-

tempts to conform and/or confront such barriers" (p. 44). These moments of constant conflict, or dissonance, occurred in our next category as well.

Control

When looking across the data, instances of control, and lack thereof, were prevalent. While control sometimes emerged as oversight from our colleagues and administrators to support our navigation of the new academic contexts, it sometimes felt as if we lost the autonomy we gained during our doctoral program. Doctoral socialization pushed us to become independent scholars, yet, surprisingly, transitioning to our first year as assistant professors came with more oversight and less autonomy.

The loci of dissonance in this category spans from self, department, and institution. Of interest, our data did not include aspects of control related to the field. This may be due to our doctoral socialization and the expectation to develop relationships with our disciplines early in the doctoral program. Or it may be due to the fact that our attention was intensely focused on understanding our new departments and institutions during the first year as assistant professors.

Self. One refrain from our journal entries was a constant attempt to gain control in our lives. While this sometimes emerged with the struggle to find work-life balance, it also manifested in our desire to connect to literature and our academic inspirations. Similar to our doctoral experiences, we were balancing multiple research projects and teaching several classes. Simultaneously juggling new service requirements, systems, norms, and expectations, we were also reminiscing on our past.

> I yearn to read John Dewey, Patricia Hill Collins, and bell hooks. I strive to be able to have an academic conversation again. I am afraid that I will lose everything I learned in my PhD program.
>
> I'm afraid that if I become too entrenched in teaching and 'best practices', I'll lose the ability to think through different lens. Our acceptance to the [research] conference means I get to keep having these conversations!

We struggled to find ways to regain control and remember the identities we spent all of graduate school developing. In the quotes above, we explore the need to connect to inspirational literature and continue to have intellectual conversations that remind us of who we once were. Fear played an explicit role in our reflections of the transition. Would we lose our attachment to the critical theorists that moved us and shaped our identities? Would we lose sight of the aims of education and the necessity of research in the academy? The data illustrated moments of reminiscing about feeling competent and confident as independent teacher-researchers and how we used scholarship and research to exert control over our newly chaotic academic lives.

Department. The department level illustrated domains in which we were afforded complete freedom as well as when we felt constrained; there were also instances that blurred the two areas of the continuum. For example, we felt control over our research more so than our teaching or service responsibilities. This included freedom to choose the conferences we attended and where we published our scholarship. However, we perceived less control over the committees we served on and the courses we taught. Courses were assigned to us before arriving at our institutions and sometimes came with required key assessments and texts. Similarly, we felt a lack of control around how we assessed our students.

> I feel like I have little control over how I assess my students. It is as if to say 'just look at how much data we have!'... I have to implement these gigantic projects in this single course and it makes it so there's no space for me to do anything else. I don't blame the students for complaining about the workload. It's a lot.

As doctoral students, we were socialized to consider assessment data as an indicator of individual student growth and progress. However, in our current positions at teaching-intensive institutions, data plays an additional role. The data we gather on our students is important to our accreditation body and is used for

long-term strategic planning. In our new positions we are required to understand that this data has multiple purposes. Reflecting upon these additional uses of data and our requirement to collect data for multiple purposes, we have less control on how we assess students, what we do with this data, and ultimately how the data informs individual student growth and progress.

We also wrote about experiences that blurred control and lack thereof. In this example of interactive data, one of us sought to understand how the other became a part of a teaching circle.

> *Did you choose to be part of it [the teaching circle], strongly encouraged, or completely voluntary?*
>
> Encouraged and invited, but it was like I shouldn't/couldn't say no. I also was encouraged by others (outside my department) to join a teaching circle with people not in my department. They explained that a variety of perspectives would be helpful at my institution.

This example demonstrates how the option to participate was offered, yet there was only one choice that was appropriate and acceptable. To earn tenure at this institution, it was imperative that fellow professors understand your pedagogical decisions; a teaching circle makes these decisions transparent. While participation was not required, it was strongly encouraged by administrators and faculty with tenure.

Institution. Within the institution, the category of control surfaced through ideas of fear. In our journals we wrote about being fearful of our teaching evaluations and their impact upon tenure, about low numbers in our programs and what that meant for our jobs, and with the level of oversight and reduced academic freedom with our teaching and research. Balancing between feeling as if we were in control of our careers and having no control of our futures, we explored these moments of dissonance with questions.

> I feel that the emphasis on these evaluations keeps me up at night. What if I try out something new and it bombs? I'm trying to ignore this power my students hold because if I give into it, I'll make alterations to the class that aren't in the best interest of their learning or growth towards being an educator.

Navigating between what we knew to be educative for our students and how to receive positive teaching evaluations, we highlighted the difference between teaching as doctoral graduates and as assistant professors. Recognizing the impact evaluations have upon our careers, we simultaneously felt in and out of control.

Perpetual identity constructing and control. The category of control connects to Clancy's (2010) theory of Perpetual Identity Constructing in multiple ways. Recognizing that we felt we had less autonomy than we did at our previous institution, we needed to not only manage our pre-existing identities, but spent time deconstructing them. We asked ourselves, and each other, how evaluations and assessment impacted our academic lives at MWU. In doing this, we began to determine what was important to us and decide in what ways we would conform to the new norms. We needed to make some changes to survive and relinquish some control. However, in this category, we also began to reconstruct our academic identities. We fought for academic freedom and for time to engage with scholarship. We used our collaborative Google Doc as space to examine our personal reflections and to support each other in perpetually constructing identity. We reminded each other of the essential aspects of our academic identities and asked questions that would help us understand how to survive and engage in the hard work of identity construction. Struggling to navigate who we once were, who we needed to become to be in-sync with our institution, and who we wanted to be, we spent the first year managing and deconstructing our identities and barely touched on identity reconstruction. We are not the only scholars who struggle with these feelings on the tenure track; Savage (2015) articulated feelings of nostalgia and desires to work like she did in graduate school and how she felt stuck in her new position. She discusses how the path to tenure is full of self-doubt and secret stories. Because of the perpetual deconstruction and reconstruction of identities during our first year, we (like Savage), lingered in moments of dissonance, vulnerability, and uncertainty. This resulted in feelings of chaos, inefficacy, and powerlessness.

DISCUSSION

Through this collaborative autoethnographic project, we asked how reflection about perceived dissonance could help us understand the transition from doctoral graduate to early career faculty at teaching universities. We share our own stories from this transition to benefit others, yet we recognize that our experiences do not provide one "woman's experience" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 7); we do not seek to essentialize these experiences, rather we offer them as ways to understand the transition gap that exists. Using multiple sources of data, we explored moments or events that prompted experiences of dissonance or tension felt in the transition between our own doctoral socialization and our new positions as tenure-track faculty at teaching institutions.

As discussed in the literature review, doctoral socialization aims to simultaneously prepare students both to be graduate students and to become professors (e.g., Golde, 1998), our experiences revealed a gap between our socialization as doctoral students at research-intensive universities and our socialization as first-year assistant professors. During our first year, the dissonance we felt around the categories of connection, support, and control became catalysts for managing and deconstructing our previously held academic identities. Rather than positioning the dissonance we experienced as a product of incomplete doctoral socialization, we propose the dissonance may be a normalized aspect of the transition.

Autoethnographic methods purposefully interrogate personal narratives (Denshire, 2014; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), and perhaps unsurprisingly, our own self-examination, self-empowerment, and self-critiques were woven across our collaborative autoethnography. A key finding through from this critical introspection and collaborative dialogue was the nature of how our academic identities were formed, deconstructed, and reconstructed across the year of transition. After graduation, we understood the contexts around us would change in the transition, yet we did not expect our academic identities would also need to change to reflect the new spaces. Like many doctoral students, our graduate program at MWU socialized us with a specific set of values and norms and that greatly impacted the construction of our academic identities as emerging independent scholars (Weidman & Stein, 2003). However, in these new contexts, we found *we* needed to adapt to new policies, norms, and cultures.

Through the lens of Clancy's (2010) Perpetual Identity Constructing theory, an academic must continuously "re-develop and re-learn" (p. 43) across an academic career to fit new geographic, social, educational, and political spaces. The three-stage process is not "a straight-forward, linear process executed within a specific time period. Instead, it is a cyclical process that is never quite completed" (p. 43). While Clancy contends the process may not be linear, any theory positing a cyclical form will convey linear progression in two directions (forward or backward through the cycle). Given our findings in relation to the nature of academic identity construction as early career faculty, we propose a modification to Clancy's theory, which is that Perpetual Identity Constructing could be conceptualized as an entangled process.

Entanglement adds complexity to the process and mirrors our experiences in experiencing dissonance while navigating the gap in transition from doctoral graduate and first year assistant professors. Barnett (2000) proposes that academic work be conceptualized through a lens of supercomplexity and that the construct of 'academic' "is by no means given but is a matter of dynamic relationships between social and epistemological interests and structures" (p. 256). Considering the supercomplexity of experiences within the academy and the fluidity of identity, our experiences of identity constructing centered on modification and deconstruction, yet we did not elaborate on the reconstructive identity work completed as it was not present in our first-year data. Not only is this is a point of interest and an area for further analysis, but it highlights the entangled process of identity construction.

While Clancy discusses Perpetual Identity Constructing as a process that each academic goes through, our study offers thoughtful engagement in this process with a co-mentor. Using CAE methods, we were able to document our perceived dissonance to be able to analyze it over a period of time. CAE enabled us to find connection to our previous academic identities, support each other in examining these identities, and maintain control over the deconstruction process; they allowed us to simultaneously examine our

documented perceived dissonance as intimate encounters and as distanced observers. Clancy (2010) states "academics are often steered down a particular road that is not of their choosing. Thus, the ability to find a voice, to stand out against current organizational and disciplinary structures is not easy to achieve" (p. 42). In using CAE methods to aid in academic identity construction, we were able to hold each other accountable to our previous academic ideas, question changes that did not align with our philosophical beliefs, and to support academic identity reconstruction that honors us as individuals in our new contexts. Similar to Guyotte et al. (2018), we used CAE to navigate the experience of women working to earn tenure. Providing support in the Perpetual Identity Constructing process was essential in maintaining integrity as academics and learning how to fit into our new contexts.

Our experiences of connection, support, and control required us to examine our previously held academic identities. We needed to deconstruct our strongly held beliefs, some that we understood as essential to our identities, and question their origin, their purposes, and the role in our new contexts. Culminating thoughts lead us to consider how our own doctoral socialization prepared us for the multiple roles we take on in our institutions. We were prepared to engage in research, to teach with intentionality, and to serve our universities. However, it is unreasonable to expect that any institution could prepare doctoral students to seamlessly transition into a new academic context; academic identities will always be in transition. This paper provides insight into the dissonance early career academics may feel when doing this important identity work.

Strengths and Limitations of Study

A primary strength of collaborative autoethnography (CAE) as a method is the element of collaboration and the inclusion of more than one "voice" or account of an experience of a phenomenon (Lapadat, 2017). By presenting layered perspectives, the complexity of phenomena are further illuminated. In relation to our study, the data we collected describes dissonance as it was lived through our experiences as recent doctoral graduates transitioning into our first faculty positions. Opposed to autobiographical or autoethnographic research, the data produced and subsequent analyses were open for collaborative, co-constructive dialogue, which led to a deeper understanding of what it means to traverse the gap between doctoral graduation and the first years in the professoriate.

While CAE provided multiple opportunities for collaborative meaning-making, the choice to explore the research question through this qualitative method is not without its limitations. Being geographically-distanced, we were constrained in the types of collaborative data we could gather, which meant technology mediated several of our data sources (i.e., Zoom conferencing or phone calls in place of face-to-face meetings). Additionally, given that CAE works with the autoethnographic, it privileges the subjective (self) and intersubjective (collaborative sense-making) experience of the individual(s) encountering the phenomenon of interest (Lapadat, 2017). Therefore, it was out-of-scope for us to seek out and include the perspectives of the individuals or entities we mention in our reflections; their experiences of dissonance, perhaps in response to encountering us in their established spaces, is absent from this piece. This also leads to an important distinction in CAE writing, which is the nature of reflective, or memory work. Memories can be fluid, therefore, our ethical priority in presenting the reflective writing is to convey our trustworthiness by providing our positionality, detailed rich descriptions of the data, transparency of the data process, and an extended time in the field (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Implications and Conclusion

When one enters the London subway system, "mind the gap" is provided as a cautionary warning to travelers approaching a risky or dangerous threshold. We employ the "mind the gap" metaphor to frame the transition into our first year as assistant professors. In our circumstances, we emerged from a research-intensive institution with newly minted PhDs and confidence in our education and experience. Somewhat naively, we believed we would step onto a secure platform ready and able to navigate our new surroundings. However, in reflection, the transition was transformative and produced feelings of uncer-

tainty, tension, and dissonance – the gap between doctoral graduate and early career faculty was larger than we initially expected.

While our experiences are connected to our individual contexts and may not necessarily resemble every academic's transition, the phenomenon of transition itself is universal. We discovered the threshold for which we were not prepared was the need to do intensive identity work during our first year. Clancy's (2010) theory of Perpetual Identity Constructing recognizes the laborious nature of identity work. Specifically, we recognized that the three categories revealed through analysis were catalysts for identity work. When confronted with dissonance in terms of support, connection and control, we needed to examine our deeply held beliefs, deconstruct our preexisting identities, and engage in deliberate decision making about who we wanted to be as academics at teaching-intensive universities.

The implications of this research are threefold. First, we share experiences of transition to help others consider how academic identities might shift during the first year as assistant professors. As feminist researchers, we understand identity to be fluid, relational, and always under construction. Therefore, when scholars move to new contexts and obtain new positions, aspects of their academic identities will inevitably change. Second, this has implications for research-intensive higher education faculty preparing doctoral students to transition to teaching-intensive universities. Recognizing that academic identity construction will continue throughout one's career, we recommend these doctoral granting institutions expand formal and informal socialization programming to enhance students' awareness of the contexts and tensions they may encounter. Third, this paper models a method in which academics collaboratively reflect on their own experiences. As a methodological tool, CAE has the potential to explore phenomena (i.e., transition), reinforce self-reflexivity, and provide insight into another's experience.

Based on the findings of this study, the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity continues beyond doctoral socialization and is an essential part of the first-year faculty experience. Those preparing future faculty should consider the perpetual identity work across a career, as it has the potential to produce better adjusted early career faculty who subsequently improve student outcomes and conduct research that impacts society. While we explored aspects of dissonance, more research is needed to truly understand the complex transition between doctoral graduate and early career faculty. The literature speaks to preparation for early career faculty to occur during doctoral socialization. Indeed, doctoral socialization prepares students to understand the many aspects and roles of professors, yet, there is still much to be learned about the socialization process of early career faculty in teaching-intensive universities. We advocate for more research about the interaction between early career faculty identity construction and socialization to be pursued to help others "mind the gap."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to acknowledge our mentors, colleagues, and institutions who have provided us the freedom and support to carry out this work. This article benefited from the review of our colleague and friend Dr. Crystal Howell, for which we are ever grateful.

REFERENCES

Adamson, J., & Muller, T. (2018). Joint autoethnography of teacher experience in the academy: Exploring methods for collaborative inquiry. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education, 41*(2), 207-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2017.1279139

Anderson, S., & Anderson, B. (2012). Preparation and socialization of the educational professoriate: Narratives of doctoral student-instructors. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 24*(2), 239-251. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ996269.pdf

Aronson, E. (1992). The return of the repressed: Dissonance theory makes a comeback. *Psychological Inquiry, 3*(4), 303–311. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0304_1

Austin, A. E. (2002). Preparing the next generation of faculty. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *73*(1), 94–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2002.11777132

Austin, A. E. (2009). Foreword. In P. Mendoza, & S. K. Gardner (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. xi-xvii). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Barnett, R. (2000). Supercomplexity and the Curriculum. *Studies in Higher Education*, *25*(3), 255–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/713696156

Blockett, R. A., Felder, P. P., Parrish, W., & Collier, J. (2016). Pathways to the professoriate: Exploring Black doctoral student socialization and the pipeline to the academic profession. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, *40*(2), 95-110.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203694992

Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York, NY: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315021263

Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F. W., & Hernandez, K. C. (2013). *Collaborative autoethnography*. New York, NY: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315432137

Clancy, A. (2010). Perpetual identity construction. *The Grounded Theory Review, 9*(2), 39-53.

Clement, M. C. (2010). *First time in the college classroom: A guide for teaching assistants, instructors, and new professors at all colleges and universities*. Maryland, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Education Publishing Group.

Coke, P. K., Benson, S., & Hayes, M. (2015). Making meaning of experience: Navigating the transformation from graduate student to tenure-track professor. *Journal of Transformative Education, 13*(2), 110-126. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614562216

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

Denshire, S. (2014). On auto-ethnography. *Current Sociology Review, 62*(6), 831-850. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392114533339

Eddy, P. L., & Gaston-Gayles, J. L. (2008). New faculty on the block: Issues of stress and support. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 17*(1-2), 89-106. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911350802168878

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *12*(1), Article 10. Retrieved from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Gardner, S. K. (2007). "I heard it through the grapevine": Doctoral student socialization in chemistry and history. *Higher Education, 54*(5), 723-740. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-006-9020-x

Gardner, S. K. (2008a). Fitting the mold of graduate school: A qualitative study of socialization in doctoral education. *Innovative Higher Education, 33*(2), 125-138. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-008-9068-x

Gardner, S. K. (2008b). "What's too much and what's too little?": The process of becoming an independent researcher in doctoral education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 79*(3), 326-350. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2008.11772101

Gardner, S. K. (2010a). Contrasting the socialization experiences of doctoral students in high- and low-completing departments: A qualitative analysis of disciplinary contexts at one institution, *The Journal of Higher Education, 81*(1), 61-81. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2010.11778970

Gardner, S. K. (2010b). Faculty perspectives on doctoral student socialization in five disciplines. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 5,* 39-53. https://doi.org/10.28945/1310

Golde, C. M. (1998). Beginning graduate school: Explaining first-year doctoral attrition. *New Directions for Higher Education, 1998*(101), 55-64. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.10105

Golde, C. M. (2000). Should I stay or should I go? Students' experiences of the doctoral attrition process. *The Review of Higher Education*, *23*(2), 199-227. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2000.0004

Golde, C. M. (2005). The role of the department and discipline in doctoral student attrition: Lessons from four departments. *Journal of Higher Education, 76*(6), 669-700. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2005.11772304

Golde, C. M., & Dore, T. M. (2001). *At cross purposes: What experiences of doctoral students reveal about doctoral education*. Philadelphia, PA: The Pew Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from http://phd-survey.org/report%20final.pdf

Good, J. J. (2013). Preparing for the first year as an assistant professor. In J. Keeley, S. E. Afful, J. J. Stegler-Balfour, J. J. Good, & S. Leder (Eds.). *So you landed a job- what's next? Advice for early career psychologists from early career psychologists* (pp. 5-13). Society for the Teaching of Psychology. Retrieved from http://teachpsych.org/ebooks/ecp2013/index.php

Guyotte, K. W., Hofsess, B. A., Wilson, G. J., & Shields, S. S. (2018). Tumbling from embodiment to enfleshment: Art as intervention in collective autoethnography. *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, *3*(2), 101-132. https://doi.org/10.18432/ari29334

Guyotte, K. W., & Sochacka, N. (2016). Is this research? Productive tensions in living the (collaborative) autoethnographic process. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 15(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916631758

Hall, L, & Burns, L. (2009). Identity development and mentoring in doctoral education. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(1), 49-70. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.1.wr25486891279345

Helm, M., Campa III, H., & Moretto, K. (2012). Professional socialization for the Ph.D.: An exploration of career and professional development preparedness and readiness for Ph.D. candidates. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, *26*(2), 5-23. New Forums Press.

Henderson, B. B., & Buchanan, H. E. (2006). The scholarship of teaching and learning: A special niche for faculty at comprehensive universities? *Research in Higher Education*, *48*(5), 523. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-006-9035-2

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (Ed.) (2014). *Feminist research practice: A primer* (2nd edition). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research (2015). 2015 facts & figures report. *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/downloads/CCIHE2015-FactsFigures.pdf

Jaschik, S. (2016, April 04). The shrinking Ph.D. job market. *Inside Higher Education.* Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/04/04/new-data-show-tightening-phd-job-market-across-disciplines

Kemp, A. T. (Ed.) (2018). *Dignity of the calling: Educators share the beginnings of their journeys*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Lapadat, J. C. (2017). Ethics in autoethnography and collaborative autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry, 23*(8), 589-603. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417704462

Lovitts, B. E. (2001). *Leaving the ivory tower: The causes and consequences of departure from doctoral study*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Maher, M. A., Gilmore, J. A., Feldon, D. F., & Davis, T. E. (2014). Connected or conflicted? Doctoral students' evolving perceptions of the teaching-research relationship. *Journal of School Public Relations, 35,* 402-425.

McDaniels, M. (2010). Doctoral student socialization for teaching roles. In S. K. Gardner, & P. Mendoza (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. 29-44). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Mendoza, P., & Gardner, S. K. (2010). The PhD in the United States. In S. K. Gardner, & P. Mendoza (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. 11-27). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Napper-Owen, G. (2012). Raising the next generation. *Quest, 64*(3), 131-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2012.704777

Nettles, M. T., & Millett, C. M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to Ph.D*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Nyquist, J. D., Manning, L., Wulff, D. H., Austin, A. E., Sprague, J., Fraser, P. K., Calcagno, C., & Woodford, B. (1999). On the road to becoming a professor: The graduate school experience. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 31*(3), 18-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091389909602686

Ramirez, E. (2017). Unequal socialization: Interrogating the Chicano/Latino(a) doctoral education experience. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 10*(1), 25-38. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000028

Reybold, L. E. (2005). Surrendering the Dream. *Journal of Career Development*, *32*(2), 107-121. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845305279163

Savage, S. L. (2015). Mapping tenureland: A researcher stalled. *Studies in Art Education, 57*(1), 76-87. https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2015.11666284

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd edition). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922461.001.0001

Trower, C. A., Austin, A. E., & Sorcinelli, M. D. (2001). Paradise lost: How the academy converts enthusiastic recruits into early-career doubters. *American Association for Higher Education Bulletin, 53*(9), 3-6.

Turner, C. S., & Thompson, J. R. (1993). Socializing women doctoral students: Minority and majority experiences. *The Review of Higher Education 16*(3), 355-370. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.1993.0017

Uqdah, A. L., Tyler, K. M., & DeLoach, C. (2009). Academic attitudes and psychological well-being of African-American psychology graduate students. *Negro Educational Review, 60*(1-4), 23-38.

Ward, K. (2010). Doctoral student socialization for service. In S. K. Gardner, & P. Mendoza (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. 57-77). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Weidman, J. C. (2010). Doctoral student socialization for research. In S. K. Gardner, & P. Mendoza (Eds.). *On becoming a scholar: Socialization and development in doctoral education* (pp. 45-56). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Weidman, J. C. & Stein, E. L. (2003). Socialization of doctoral students to academic norms. *Research in Higher Education, 44*(6), 641-656. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026123508335

Weidman, J. C., Twale, D. J., & Stein, E. L. (2001). Socialization of graduate and professional students in higher education: A perilous passage? *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, *28*(3). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED457710.pdf

APPENDIX

List of Topics & Refrains Examined in our Micro-Review

- Community
  - Students, colleagues, location
- Personal value
  - Imposter symptom vs. self-efficacy
  - Feeling undervalued
  - Friction when skills, experience, and knowledge are questioned
- Identities & identity claims
  - Academic identities in question
- Discovery of institutional norms
  - Spoken & unspoken
  - Institutional barriers
- Questions posed
- Bold, underlined, italics (i.e., emphasized text)
- Compressed conflicts
  - Disconnect & connect
  - Control/autonomy/freedom & lack of control
  - Supported & non-supported
    - Inclusion & exclusion
    - Competence & incompetence
  - Harmony & disharmony
- Stranger

BIOGRAPHIES

Kate McCormick, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Childhood/Early Childhood Education at SUNY Cortland. She holds over ten years of experience in the field of teaching, initially as a preschool teacher and now as a teacher educator working with teacher candidates seeking early childhood and elementary education certification. Her research interests include early childhood teacher well-being and participatory research methods with young children.

Libba Willcox, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art & Design at Valdosta State University. She taught high school art in a suburban community before beginning her career in higher education; she has taught preservice teachers for ten years. She engages in collaborative autoethnographic and arts based research endeavors to better understand teacher education and professional development. Her research interests include professional development, vulnerability, feminist pedagogy, and qualitative reasoning.