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THE PROCESSES OF COLLECTIVE BUY-IN, ACTUATION, AND DEEP
SOCIAL LEARNING IN SEMINARY CLASSES

by

Donald B. Anderson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education
(Curriculum and Instruction)

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2019

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ABSTRACT

The Processes of Collective Buy-In, Actuation, and Deep Social Learning in
Seminary Classes

by

Donald Bruce Anderson, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2019

Major Professor: Suzanne H. Jones, Ph.D.

Department: School of Teacher Education and Leadership

To facilitate the transformation and development of their seminary students, seminary teachers seek a deep, collective learning experience for their classes. To facilitate this, seminary teachers seek to actuate their classes for learning as a group. This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to derive a common essence of collective class actuation (CCA) as experienced by seminary teachers in a Western state. Literature relating classroom cohesion and collective learning processes was reviewed. Sociopedagogical theory and collective classroom efficacy (CCE) are the proximal theoretical foundations that yield the construct of CCA. These proximal foundations rest on the more distal basis of sociocultural theory and social cognitive theory.

Six actuation-minded participants were selected from three sites based on purposive criteria. Research questions focused on the essence of the phenomenon of CCA, the indicators teachers rely on throughout the processes of actuation, and the role

of teachers and students in these processes. Data were gathered through preliminary interviews, later observations and interviews, and a focus group. Data analysis yielded four major themes, individual textural essences, an overall textural description, structural description, essence, and a model explaining the processes of actuation in seminary classes.

Findings indicate that seminary teachers seek to actuate their classes by leading them toward agentic, collective buy-in. This leadership requires management of two social environments: the internal social environment (the heart) and the external social environment. The internal social environment is comprised of a sense of collective relevancy and a sense of collective trust. If both collective beliefs (relevancy and trust) are present, students may be more likely to buy into the purpose and actions of the class collective. The external social environment relates to classroom sociality, which can be too high (hypersocial) for learning, or too low (hyposocial) for learning. These teachers therefore describe seeking to keep their classes in the sweet zone of learning by simultaneously maintaining high engagement and high focus. Both social environments (internal and external) affect one another and influence buy-in and actuation. Participants manage the complexities of both environments by maintaining a splendid mix of learning and enjoyment, thereby generating an optimal learning experience.

(260 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The Processes of Collective Buy-In, Actuation, and Deep Social Learning in Seminary Classes

Donald Bruce Anderson

This phenomenological study explored a common essence of collective class actuation (CCA) among six seminary teachers in a Western state. CCA is an optimal learning state of a class collective. Data were gathered through interviews, observations, and a focus group. Data analysis yielded themes, textural and structural descriptions, an overall essence, and a model explaining the processes of buy-in and actuation.

Findings indicate that seminary teachers seek to actuate their classes by leading them toward agentic, collective buy-in. This requires management of two social environments: the internal social environment (the heart) and the external social environment. The internal social environment is comprised of a sense of collective relevancy and a sense of collective trust. If both of these collective beliefs are present, students may be more likely to buy into the purpose and activity of the class collective. The external social environment relates to classroom sociality, which can be too high (hypersocial) for learning, or too low (hyposocial) for learning. These teachers therefore describe seeking to keep their classes in the sweet zone of learning by simultaneously maintaining high engagement and high focus. Both social environments (internal and external) affect one another and influence buy-in and actuation for deep learning. Participants manage the complexities of both environments by maintaining a splendid mix of learning and enjoyment, thereby generating an optimal learning experience.

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Donald Bruce Anderson

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I begin heuristically (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), by sharing an experience that spawned my interest in this study. My first year of teaching was at a one-teacher seminary program (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) in Canada. That year, one of my six classes was an extraordinarily challenging class (a mixed class combining grades 9-12). I had a good relationship with many students in that class as individuals, but as a group, the class was awful. Halfway through the year, four of the 18 students—four students who had been just as challenging as the other 14 students—transferred out of the class and into much better classes. Those four students quickly became great students in those better classes. From that experience, I learned early in my career something of the power that class group influence can have on the educational experience of both students and teachers.

I am fascinated with the culture, or personality, that each class forms. But my interest relates to more than culture. I am intrigued with the workings of the group from the opening moments of the first day of class to the final moments of the term. What makes some classes so enjoyable and teachable as a group, and what makes teaching other groups seem like a nightmare? Why are some class groups so quiet that teaching them feels like pulling teeth, whereas other classes may be so hyper-interactive that teaching them collectively feels like taming a wild stallion every day? That early career experience led me to wonder how much influence I as a teacher have on these group qualities and outcomes. Am I a victim of poor classes and the beneficiary of great classes,

or am I—as a teacher—responsible for some or all of the collective development and resulting quality of these classes? What elements or outcomes of classroom group dynamics can I influence?

Also, is my experience unique to me as a teacher, or is there something commonly experienced by other seminary teachers or even teachers of other domains of education? Do seminary teachers value classes similarly? If so, what is a “good” class, and what do teachers do to get their classes as groups to where they want them to be? Is the experience of a class being “there”—or not “there”—similar from the perspective of different teachers, or perhaps even common or universal?

This experience, and the ensuing curiosities, prompted me to become a student of classroom group processes—seeking to learn what I as a teacher can influence and what I cannot. In pursuing this study, I search for the essence of what teachers (beginning with the domain of seminary instructors in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) may commonly seek and experience with their classes as groups.

Research Problem

Group dynamics in classrooms can deepen or derail learning processes (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). Consequently, teachers may seek to “actuate” their classes as groups to maximize collective learning and enjoyment (Anderson, Jones, & Longhurst, 2019). This process of actuation entails efforts of teachers to help their classes bond into a cohesive community (Senior, 1999). But not all cohesion is good. Some class bonding can be detrimental to learning processes if that cohesion is not based on class group

purposes (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Senior, 2006). Many teachers, therefore, strive for their classes to become unified in purposeful ways that facilitate social and academic learning processes (Putney & Broughton, 2011; Putney, Jones, & Campbell, 2017).

Anderson et al. (2019) posit that academic literature lacks theoretical models that synthesize these classroom group processes and capture this sense of positive, productive cohesion. We also assert that researchers need to texturally identify what teachers commonly seek and experience as they work to meld their classes into bonded, purposeful, learning communities. We name this phenomenon *Collective Class Actuation (CCA)*, and define CCA as an affectively driven phenomenon “that results when teachers or students perceive their class collective as being in an optimal performing state of dynamic equilibrium. A class in dynamic equilibrium tends to meld into a socially cohesive, purposeful, and collectively efficacious classroom community.” In Anderson et al. (2019), we refer to teachers for whom CCA is a primary goal as being actuation-minded.

Although some of the structural aspects of CCA have rich threads in academic literature, very few studies inspect the proposed rich, global, classroom dynamics of CCA—either texturally (what is experienced) or structurally (how it is experienced). Although CCA has been introduced by Anderson et al. (2019) and explored in a phenomenological case study involving one teacher (the pilot study for this study), no studies to date have explored a potential common experience across multiple teachers of establishing and maintaining what would be characterized by the proposed CCA.

Significance of the Problem

The isolation of a common essence of CCA could provide preservice and in-service leaders with valuable insights into the classroom group processes that could enhance student learning and improve teacher satisfaction and longevity. Further, isolation of a common essence of CCA could verify its reality and refine theoretical conceptualizations of the construct, thus providing rich research opportunities. Considering these opportunities, this dissertation expands the exploration initiated by a pilot study (Anderson et al., 2019) through exploration of the possible textural essence, structural essence, and overall essence of the phenomenon of CCA as commonly experienced by multiple teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the essence of the phenomenon of CCA as experienced in common by seminary teachers in Northern Utah. At this stage in the research, CCA will be generally defined as a unified, optimally-performing state of dynamic equilibrium in a class collective that is primed for deep social learning. Deep social learning will be generally defined as the levels of learning affected by a group that go beyond what individuals would have learned without the instrumentality of the collective. This phenomenology will first pursue a textural description (what is experienced), then a structural description (how it is experienced), and finally, the determination of the overall essence of CCA within a seminary domain.

Research Questions

This study proceeds with four research questions.

1. What is the essence of identified CCA as experienced in common among seminary teachers in a Western state?
2. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what are the indicators of CCA in seminary classes?
3. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of students in manifesting CCA?
4. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of the teacher in manifesting CCA?

Assumptions

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the assumption of the existence of a common essence is the beginning and foundation of a phenomenological study. As I embarked on this exploration of CCA, I stood on the assumption that some version of what is termed as CCA exists and that there is a common essence of CCA that researchers can derive through phenomenological study. I also assume that many teachers who experience CCA can articulate it well enough that the essence of it can be constructed through valid data. Put another way, I believe that teachers in many domains of education (including elementary and secondary education, adult language classes, and even many higher education and elementary teachers) tend to focus on their classes as groups, seeking to meld their classes into cohesive collectives that are primed for deeper learning as a group. Based on my experience, I also believe that this tendency, or actuation-mindedness, is likely a predominant attribute among a high proportion of

seminary teachers employed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I proceed with the assumption that many teachers tend to judge their classes as groups based on how well they actuate as a learning community, and that this process affects levels of teacher enjoyment and satisfaction. I also assume that these processes likely affect student enjoyment and learning in group environments. These assumptions and beliefs explain much of my interest in understanding actuation.

Context of the Study

Legislative and judicial processes in the U.S. have established provisions for religious and private organizations to instruct students adjacent to public schools during a normal school day (Ashcroft, 2011). Because schools agree to release students for the designated period, such programs are referred to as released-time programs. Though other religions and private groups proffer released-time requests, the most extensive released-time programs in the U.S. occur in seminaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The bulk of these programs reside in the Western U.S. Seminaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operate within the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion (S&I) of The Church.

This study occurred among the seminaries adjacent to three public schools in a Western state. These seminaries employ 20 full-time instructors and approximately six part-time instructors. One instructor in each seminary serves as the principal of the seminary. Seminary principals at these programs generally teach a half-load (two classes) and dedicate the remainder of their time to administrative duties. One principal

designated himself as a participant in this study. All three of these seminaries operate on a trimester system (three terms per year), in accordance with adjacent public schools. Each trimester occurs over a 12-week term. For seminary students, each trimester provides half of the necessary credit required of students each year to progress toward a four-year seminary diploma. Hence, to complete seminary, students take seminary for two of the three trimesters each school year.

Seminary teachers in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teach students in grades 9-12, and often teach classes where all four grades are combined. Most classes at these programs have between 20 and 35 students. All seminary teachers teach the same course to their students regardless of the grade of the students. The course of study for such seminaries therefore cycles through four different yearly curricula. Currently, students must “complete” 4 years of seminary to graduate with a seminary diploma. To earn the diploma, students must attend for at least 75% of the classes each term they attend, pass a learning assessment at the end of each course (two assessments per year of completion), and read the text for the current course (rotating through *The Old Testament*, *The New Testament*, *The Book of Mormon*, and *The Doctrine and Covenants* over the 4 years they are enrolled in seminary). In-class lessons are comprised of text-based instruction. In other words, teachers teach “blocks” of scripture chapters each lesson and move sequentially through the books of scripture as each course proceeds. A very dominant and recurrent factor among seminary classes is likely the presence of a highly affective learning environment due to the ubiquitous effort of seminary instructors to “teach by the Spirit.”

The seminary program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operates under the direction of ecclesiastical leaders and is administered by professionals hired by The Church. This pattern applies both to the General Board of Education and to local boards of education at each seminary. Though policy changes in recent years are leading to more women teaching seminary, the majority of current seminary instructors are male. Though seminary teachers enjoy vast autonomy (designing lessons, pacing lessons, methods of instruction, grading strategies, etc.) faculties often derive faculty-wide unity in administrative policies and approaches to teaching. Also, notwithstanding the high levels of autonomy, worldwide and local training generates a strong sense of commonality and uniformity in seminaries throughout the Western U.S. These consistent factors likely contribute to relatively high homogeneity among seminary teachers and classes across different seminary programs.

Definition of Terms

When not cited, these definitions are my own.

Class: A group of students who regularly meet to learn together over the course of a scholastic term.

Collective class actuation (CCA): The melding process of a class group into a unified, productive collective that is primed for deep learning.

Actuation-mindedness: The tendency of some teachers to hold as a primary motive the melding (actuation) of each class into a productively cohesive group that is primed for deep learning as a collective.

Socioemotional needs: The combination of social needs and emotional needs of students.

Pedagogical needs: The learning needs of students.

Sociopedagogical needs: The combination and of social, emotional, and learning needs of students (Senior, 2006).

Sociopedagogical balance: The state of equilibrium that occurs when students' learning needs are in balance with students' social and emotional needs (Senior, 2006).

Teacher-role balance: The state of equilibrium that occurs when teachers balance their dual roles as class-group leader and class-group member (Senior, 2006).

Collective classroom efficacy (CCE): Emergent beliefs among a classroom collective in the ability of the class as a group to achieve goals and attainments through collective effort (Putney & Broughton, 2011).

Delimitations

Though the perspective of students is paramount to the ongoing exploration of CCA, I delimited this study to the perspective of teachers. Also, I conducted this study—both the review of literature and the study itself—as a phenomenology. I used this approach to take initial steps at understanding what I assume to be a common and meaningful experience for teachers in multiple domains of classroom teaching. However, this approach posed certain delimitations on the scope and use of the results of this study. Most importantly, although this qualitative approach sought a common essence among multiple participants and yielded results that may be useful to teachers in wide-ranging

classroom circumstances, the results are ultimately bound to those teachers who participated in the study and the results therefore lack any final claims of generalizability.

Further, to secure a homogenous group from which to derive a common essence of CCA, I explored the experience of actuation among seminary teachers for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who teach at sites proximal to the researcher, and thereby excluded distal seminary teachers, all public-school teachers, elementary school teachers, prekindergarten instructors, post-secondary instructors, and adult education teachers. Also, though the gender demographics of seminary are shifting as more women enter the ranks of seminary instruction and gain experience, most seminary teachers are male, thereby restricting the findings of this study to a male perspective. This delimitation also restricted this study to a tightly homogenous group of seminary teachers, thereby eliminating any other subject. I assume that age, subject, and realm of education have bearing on the incidence of actuation-mindedness among teachers in respective educational spheres, and this delimitation in this study precludes me from discerning any disparities with the experience of CCA for teachers in different domains.

Limitations

Though other limitations become apparent as studies proceed, the very nature of this study included certain confines. As discussed in more detail in the following section, foremost among these limitations was the generalizability of qualitative results. Also, the nature of having me, the researcher, as the primary instrument in the study introduced risk of bias from effects of my own subjectivity. Also, I performed this study as a single

researcher, which prevented the benefit of multiple eyes and perspectives that a research team could have provided. If I did not see, hear, or understand anything vital to discerning the perspectives of the participants, the results of this study may be compromised. Although studying this phenomenon within my own domain of teaching and with instructors with whom I already have a personal relationship offered strengths (e.g., familiarity, rapport, interest, etc.), studying within one's own employment or organization also presents multiple challenges that can threaten the validity of the data or accuracy of interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Finally, I am exploring a construct that may hypothetically describe what teachers perceive as an ideal in their classes. This study is highly theoretical and ethereal in nature, and its features entail levels of complexity that may limit the capacity of one researcher and team of participants to dutifully derive and describe a common essence of the experience of CCA.

Summary of Introduction

Despite the ubiquitous impact of group dynamics on classroom teaching and learning, and the tendency for many teachers to direct much of their focus to collective development of their classes as groups, few academic studies have explored what teachers experience in this process of actuating their classes into learning communities and how they appropriate such efforts (Wink & Putney, 2002). I purport that the motive for teachers to actuate their classes for learning as collectives is sufficiently strong to warrant deep exploration of CCA as a phenomenon. Knowledge of the essence of CCA

could enable teachers, administrators, and researchers to better understand and target teacher capacities to lead their class groups in progressions that are more conducive to learning and elevate levels of teacher and student satisfaction and enjoyment in collective classroom processes.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Because classroom teachers generally teach multiple students simultaneously, group dynamics play a vital role in teaching and learning processes. Classroom group dynamics are complex and challenging to interpret with regard to whether (when and how) they deepen or derail learning. Fortunately, classroom interactions among a teacher and students can be analyzed from several perspectives, including correlation with learning outcomes, student or teacher perceptions, even classroom discourse analysis that seeks to determine roles, patterns, or predominant messages.

Many teachers value their classes based on how cohesive and productive the class is as a group (Senior, 2006). However, not all cohesion is beneficial for a learning collective, and classes can bond in ways that negatively affect learning processes. Understandably, teachers desire productive cohesion—unity that potentially facilitates and deepens collective learning. Despite group influence on classroom learning, few scholars have studied classroom collective processes or the developmental nature of productive classroom cohesion. Although immense research addresses classroom learning and discourse, and much classroom research distally relates to collective aspects in classrooms, relatively little research maintains a focus on group aspects of classrooms and how classroom collectives (teacher and students combined) develop and maintain productive cohesion or optimal learning states as a group.

Creswell and Poth (2017) advise that qualitative exploration can be a good fit for studying complex phenomenon. Because this review explores a theoretically grounded,

complex classroom phenomenon, my review approach will also be qualitative and phenomenological. Denney and Tewksbury (2013) recommend that

A qualitative study should involve an all-inclusive search relating to the topic of study and that a qualitative literature review should borrow from several different themes or arguments to construct one all-inclusive theme. (p. 223)

To facilitate exploration of the theme at hand (establishing and maintaining productive classroom cohesion), I conducted this literature review in the phenomenological literature review style suggested by Randolph (2009). This process entails the researcher (a) exploring her or his own experience with the phenomenon (see introduction in Chapter I), (b) reading related research, (c) identifying theoretical and empirical claims germane to the phenomenon, (d) collecting those claims in verbatim statements, (e) categorizing those statements into themes, and (f) describing the essence of the phenomenon through the lens of the literature. I contend that this method matches the needs of this review of literature as well as the general approach of the study.

Because many theoretical perspectives explain related or contributing aspects of classroom collective processes, my initial search of relevant research covered a broad spectrum with liberal inclusion criteria regarding year of publication, domain of education, and type of study (theoretical, empirical, review, etc.). I included theoretical or empirical scholarly books and peer-reviewed articles. I favored more recent articles but did not exclude pertinent older sources that illuminated the essence of classroom group development, cohesion, or relevant collective processes.

I performed the search for this review in an iterative, developing manner. Initial searches began in Google Scholar, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC),

PsychINFO, and Education Source search engines. To cast a wide net, searches began with the term “classroom culture,” and quickly expanded—based on literature—to include terms such as collective OR group AND development, class* culture OR climate OR community OR development OR dynamics OR equilibrium, group dynamics OR cohesion AND classroom, teacher leader* OR roles, and teacher efficacy (relating to multiple constructs).

Consultation with scholars and cited sources in quality articles and books led to further veins for exploration. This process ultimately yielded about 150 scholarly works, mostly peer-reviewed articles that bore meaningful insights into various aspects of the phenomenon of the development of productive cohesion in class collectives.

Vital to this review is scholarship that provides a perspective on the development of classroom group research. Schmuck and Schmuck (2001) offer a seminal, concise, 100-year history of classroom group processes. They emphasize (a) the philosophical influence of John Dewey and early empirical work of Kurt Lewin, Mary Parker Follett and Jacob Moreno to launch applied group dynamics; (b) Post- World War II work by Ron Lippitt and others in development of group dynamics as a legitimate subdiscipline of social psychology, along with emergence of classroom climate and the hidden curriculum of teacher-student interaction; (c) concern in the second half of the 20th century about race, ethnicity, gender, and special needs leading to increased awareness of diverse needs within heterogeneous classrooms; (d) emergence of collaborative learning research and the effective school movement (driven by world markets and international comparisons) adding understanding of educational effectiveness but generally neglecting affective

aspects of classroom group processes; and (e) the accountability movement of the early 21st century narrowly focusing on academics but not sufficiently advancing principles of classroom group processes in education, especially relating to affective, social, and emotional student needs. This historical overview of classroom group processes reveals a lack of attention to affective elements of classroom group dynamics.

Cronin, Weingart, and Todorova (2011) lament that the study of groups tends to be the study of “group statics” (p. 603). They claim that chain-like, unidirectional, cause-effect relationships have dominated the literature and that dynamics are still missing from the study of groups. According to Schmuck and Schmuck (2001), both theoretical work and empirical research continue to ignore vital aspects of collective dynamics, especially socioemotional aspects of group development. Classroom research encompasses a wide array of theories and constructs, but very little research targets class cohesion and collective classroom development as a primary focus. Though the term *class* may refer to a group, a time period, or instructional settings, I use the term in this review to refer to a group—a collective comprised of teacher and students—and I use the term interchangeably with the following terms: group, collective, class group, and class collective.

In pursuit of understanding an overall essence to an experience, phenomenologists first seek a textural description (what is experienced) and then a structural description (how it is experienced) of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I therefore organize this phenomenological literature review into the following three parts.

1. **Textural review of the literature.** A textural description strikes at the core of what is experienced in a phenomenon. This section reports theoretical

exploration of productive cohesion in classroom groups and is essentially a theoretical review.

2. **Structural review of the literature.** This section reports exploration of research relating to structures that support the development of productive classroom cohesion. Whereas I am highly selective of literature explored in the textural review, the structural review casts a broad net because the structures of group cohesion in classrooms is ecological in that so many smaller elements from sundry partially-related lines of research contribute to a more-focused whole.
3. **Recent advances and research gaps.** The recent advances and research gaps section identifies opportunities for research after highlighting recent, emergent literature germane to the development of productively cohesive class groups.

Though I cover some theoretical perspectives in-depth, I excluded from this review extensive discussion of constructs that do not sustain primary concentration on productive classroom group cohesion and the dynamics that drive pertinent collective development. I list some of these relevant-but-excluded lines of research—and parenthetically note the number of related articles I reviewed—respectively as follows: classroom culture (8), classroom climate (29), classroom ecology (4), classroom environment (45), classroom management (43), cooperative learning (14), classroom interaction (15), classroom motivation (3), situational interest (6), mindfulness (9), social and emotional learning, or SEL (12), process-product research (5), effective teachers (10), and complex adaptive systems (2). Though I determined that none of these topics comprehensively explain the development of productive cohesion sufficiently to receive elaboration in the textural review (below), they do illuminate various aspects germane to the phenomenon and do merit review pertaining to structural aspects of the establishment and maintenance of productive cohesion. I therefore consider many of these works (more than 80) and their ideas in the structural review that follows the textural review later in

this chapter. Also, though processes of cohesion in classrooms no doubt play out differently in various age levels and classroom settings, I include insights from live, group contexts of all educational levels and domains if the findings or claims contribute to the understanding of productive, collective cohesion in educational settings.

Textural (Theoretical) Review of the Literature

In a phenomenology, a textural description relates to the essence of *what* people experience in a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Because a textural description constitutes an explanation of the phenomenon at hand, this textural review pursues existing theory relating to classroom dynamics that contribute to productive cohesion in class groups. According to Randolph, a theoretical review can establish existing theories, the relationship between those theories, and identify gaps where new theory or synthesis of theories may be helpful (Randolph, 2009). This portion—or textural review—of this review of literature explores theoretical explanations from academic works relating to classroom dynamics, cohesion, and collective development.

A search of the literature ultimately yielded two grounded theories that provide explanatory power for classroom group dynamics, cohesion, and collective development. The first of these grounded theories (Senior 1999, 2006) resulted from a series of five studies involving interviews of nearly 100 teachers, student interviews, and survey data that culminated in a grounded theory described by Senior (2006) as a “sociopedagogical theory of classroom practice” (p. 282). Senior’s theory emphasizes establishing dynamic equilibrium in classrooms through not only balancing student socioemotional needs with

student pedagogical needs but also by balancing the teacher's dual roles as leader and member of the class group. Although sociopedagogical theory ties into other theoretical lines of research, it is not founded directly on other theories and is a true grounded theory—grounded in teacher perspectives, practice, and classroom dynamics (Senior, 1999).

The other grounded theory informing my focus emerged initially from an ethnographic study (Putney & Broughton, 2011) and is a focused exploration of larger synthesized theories (social cognitive theory and sociocultural theory) applied to the classroom domain. More specifically, Putney and Broughton explored collective efficacy (an element of social cognitive theory) at the classroom level among a highly diverse sample of fifth-grade students, through the developmental lens of sociocultural theory, and termed the resulting construct *collective classroom efficacy* (CCE).

When combined, these two grounded theories provide a strong basis for understanding the development of productive cohesion in class collectives. This theoretical synthesis of CCE and sociopedagogical theory affords a textural description from the literature and provides a basis for returning to the literature to seek a structural description of the phenomenon of interest. I will further describe and synthesize both grounded theories after first exploring the larger theoretical foundations of CCE: social cognitive theory and sociocultural theory.

Social Cognitive Theory

The fundamental principle of social cognitive theory is human agency. Bandura (1997) confronted the lack of agency afforded in behaviorism and other dominant

theoretical perspectives, believing that people were more than automatons and were not simply responding to stimuli. Bandura also emphasized within cognitive perspectives the awareness of social influence on the individual, and hence the nomenclature of his social-learning and later renamed social cognitive theory. In Bandura's perspective, "people are producers as well as products of social environments" (Bandura, 1997, p. viii). In social cognitive theory, reciprocal causation refers to the important-but-limited interconnected influence of personal factors, behavior, and environment. According to Bandura (1997), none of these three factors operates fully independent of the other two. Social cognitive theory also explains much of human behavior through the lens of individual beliefs.

Beliefs about our abilities (self-efficacy) and beliefs about how responsive our environments will be (locus of control) combine to explain most choices people make (Bandura, 1997). For example, I may believe that I have the ability to successfully run a business (efficacy), but my doubts in the likelihood of the current market to support my business (control) could affect my willingness to proceed.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs are vital to human agency. According to Bandura, "among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). Self-efficacy beliefs are "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Efficacy beliefs influence nearly all human actions, thought patterns, emotional reactions, and how people motivate themselves (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2002).

Bandura (1997) identified the four sources of self-efficacy to be (a) mastery

experiences (successful performance of a task), (b) vicarious experiences (if they can do it, I can too), (c) verbal persuasion (encouragement from others), and (d) physiological and affective states (emotional and physiological responses to choices and experiences). Bandura claims that mastery experiences offer the greatest impetus for efficacy development and observes that “development is best achieved by organizing mastery experiences in ways that are especially conducive to the acquisition of generative skills” (p. 80). Efficacy affects development most when people “regard ability as an *acquirable skill* that can be increased by gaining knowledge and perfecting competencies,” whereas “viewing ability as an inherent capacity lowers perceived self-efficacy, retards skill development, and diminishes interest in the activity” (Bandura, 1997, pp. 118-119).

Collective efficacy. Theorists contend that collective efficacy beliefs are also integral to both individual and collective learning (Stahl, Law, Cress, & Ludvigsen, 2014; Van den Bossche, Gijsemaers, Segers, & Kirscher, 2006). According to Bandura (1997), collective efficacy is emergent and dynamic, fluctuating based on internal relationships and external pressures. He defines collective efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (pp. 475-476), and claims that for researchers, “the greatest progress can be made in explaining the development, decline, and restoration of collective efficacy, and how it affects group functioning” (p. 478).

Theoretically, collective efficacy influences group agency, performance, and outcomes (Spreitzer, Goddard, & Salloum, 2012). It follows that efficacy beliefs regulate human agency, and collective efficacy beliefs regulate collective agency. For Bandura

(1997), collective efficacy “is not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individuals. Rather, it is an emergent, group-level attribute that is the product of coordinative and interactive dynamics” (p. 7). As the unifying force of collective action is common goals (Bandura, 1997, 2001), collective goals are essential to collective efficacy.

Sociocultural Theory

A foundational principle of sociocultural approaches is the view of education and cognitive development as cultural processes, and that “we cannot understand the nature of thinking, learning and development without taking account of the intrinsically social and communicative nature of human life” (Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2003, p. 100). According to Wink and Putney (2002), Vygotsky argued that “everything that can be considered individual was primarily social,” (p. xvi) and that even reasoning is socially constructed through interaction with adults and peers, with the use of language being a mediating cultural tool. One of the greatest contributions of Vygotsky is his insights into development.

Learning and development. For Vygotsky, learning and development have a special relationship, occur in culturally shaped contexts (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996), and are dynamically reciprocal in a transformational process that involves both teacher and student (Wink & Putney, 2002). This transformation involves socially shared activities becoming internalized mental processes (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Learning begins on an interpersonal plane and moves to an intrapersonal plane, and results in learning and development (Wink & Putney, 2002). Thus, development of the mind is described as both individual and social (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). In contrast

to Piaget, who viewed development and maturation as a precondition for learning, Vygotsky saw learning as the driver of development (Wink & Putney, 2002). Wink and Putney identify individual agency as integral to this process of individual, sociocultural development, thereby distinguishing Vygotskian social constructivism from behaviorism. Further, Wertsch, Tulviste, and Hagstrom (1993) advocate that Vygotsky's work reveals a complex interplay between individual agency and social and cultural influence in developmental processes.

Cultural tools. Sociocultural theory posits that human activity (social and mental) is organized through cultural tools (Gutierrez & Stone, 2000). Because humans pass these tools or artifacts on through interactive processes, a study of highly developed mental abilities is, therefore, a historical analysis (Lantolf, 2000). Symbolic tools, like language, are developed through cultural influence and passed on socially. According to Donato and Donato (2004),

Sociocultural theory maintains that learning and development emerge and are shaped by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which individuals engage in meaningful and purposeful joint activity. (p. 295)

Adoption of cultural tools by an individual is known as appropriation (Vygotsky, 1986; Wink & Putney, 2002). According to John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), to understand this process is to tap into the very essence of human development.

Language. Sociocultural theory intertwines thought and language. Language can initiate and inhibit mental processes and behavior (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky (1986) taught that "thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form" (p. 219). As paraphrased by Wink

and Putney (2002), Vygotsky further surmised that language informs thought and thought comes to life through language. Both thought and language are influenced by our sociocultural experience. Accordingly, the entire process is “active and situated in the interactions and human connections of the sociocultural context.” (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 30). In this way, sociocultural theory explains that “as we think and discuss through our experiences with others, our learning expands and deepens our knowing and our development” (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 30). Language use, therefore, transforms mental functioning and is both a cultural and a psychological tool (Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2003). This process entails interpersonal speech changing into private speech and thought, resulting in a “culturally mediated mind” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 15). Nevertheless, Rook (1984) warns that for development to occur, interactions must be fit for development, as negative interactions may be detrimental to development.

Individual development within collectives. Sociocultural theory illuminates the impact of collectives on individual development. As quoted by Lantolf (2000, p. 5), Luria (1976) noted that collective participation can qualitatively alter thinking when he found that

Uzbeks who had been schooled, even for a short period of time, were able to shift from their earlier practical situationally-based thinking strategies to logical and taxonomic patterns of thinking.

Rojas-Drummond and Mercer (2003) suggest that there is a link between social activity and individual development, and “collective thinking is a shaping influence on individual cognition” (p. 106). Souza-Lima (1995) suggests that the learning process for individuals can be understood only by considering the influence of the milieu, the total environment,

on the individual.

Zone of proximal development within collectives. In U.S.-based literature, Vygotsky's metaphor of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) may be the most widely recognized aspect of sociocultural theory. The essence of a zone of proximal development is the efficacy of social transactions (Vygotsky, 1978). ZPD is the difference between what a person can accomplish alone and what the same person can achieve with support from a more knowledgeable other or from cultural tools. (Vygotsky, 1978). Although much literature focuses on the ZPD generated between individuals, germane to this review is a focus on zones of proximal development that may occur in and through collectives.

Wink and Putney (2002) assert that individual internalization of collective activity is integral to the concept of the ZPD. According to Souza-Lima (1995), the ZPD is an intricate component of the milieu. The effect of the milieu can be emergent group expertise that influences individual learning (Lantolf, 2000). Donato and Donato (2004) link the ZPD to joint activity in groups and the learning and development of group members. Lantolf expresses the ZPD as being a "collaborative construction of opportunities" (p. 17). Kilgore (1999) linked ZPD to collectives in a major claim by suggesting that a

ZPD is an attribute of interaction among participants jointly engaged in learning activity. Most importantly, wholly 'more capable peers' are not necessary for collective ZPD. Each participant has different socioculturally developed understandings to contribute to the collective learning process. Thus, the potential for collective development is only limited when the diversity of individuals and interaction with other groups is limited. (p. 198)

Classroom community. The concept of classroom community stems from

sociocultural theory and has bearing on classroom group processes and collective development (Rogoff, 1994). For Rogoff, the idea of a community of learners assumes that learning is a transforming process based on participation in shared sociocultural endeavors. Rather than the standard model of one adult controlling 30 students at once, a community of learners functions ideally with all members of the collective serving each other with varying roles and responsibilities within the system of the community (Rogoff, 1994). Palincsar, Brown, and Campione (1993) assert that

Divergent classrooms can become learning communities—communities in which each participant makes significant contributions to the emergent understandings of all members despite having unequal knowledge concerning the topic under study. (p. 43)

Klockow (2008) asserts that a classroom community can become a collaborative, shared morality between teacher and students where students acquire a sense of ownership in the community as they engage in daily, dialogic interactions.

Sociocultural theory and collective development. Though scholars generally apply the principles of sociocultural development to the development of individuals, researchers have also related sociocultural principles to the development of collectives. Putney, Green, Dixon, Duran, and Yeager (2000) warn that researchers who focus exclusively on individual student learning overlook the relationship between individual and collective development. Putney et al. cite Vygotsky as arguing that “development of the individual is tied integrally to development of the collective itself” (p. 104).

Souza-Lima (1995) explains that individual and collective development constitute two dimensions of development that are interdependent and generate one another.

Kilgore (1999) recommends that scholars should consider the group as a unit of

developmental analysis and then use that perspective to further understand individual contributions to group learning processes. Kilgore further draws on sociocultural theory to explain that

As an individual is a learning system, so is a group. Vygotsky (1978: 85) writes, 'learning should be matched in some manner with the child's developmental level.' Similarly, a group with a limited developmental level is restricted in its capacity to learn and act. (p. 197)

The individual and the group are symbiotically linked in development. Putney et al. (2000) theorize that

The individual and the collective are in a reflexive relationship, one that is recursive, transformational, and socially produced. The individual does not merely acquire cultural knowledge but also contributes to the shape and resources of the collective.... These interpretations suggest that a focus on individuals, or on small strips of social interactions alone, is not sufficient for understanding learning as a social construction in which an individual shapes and is shaped by the actions of the collective. (p. 89)

Within a collective, patterns of practice become cultural resources for the development of individuals and the collective (Putney et al., 2000).

Dialogic interactions are the basis of classroom community development.

Collaboration founded upon sociocultural theory contributes to new knowledge and growth of a group (Donato & Donato, 2004). Citing Melucci (1995), Kilgore (1999) suggests that collective identity is changeable and that collective identity change results from continuous negotiation among individuals and between the individual and collective in a classroom community. Because they contribute substantially to group progression, such collaborations are termed consequential progressions (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Consequential progressions build on the past and develop classroom community (Klockow, 2008, p. 24). Donato and Donato (2004) conceive of a process where these

consequential progressions expand the collective ZPD. These progressions generate cycles of progress as individuals participate together in a collective.

Synthesis of Social Cognitive Theory and Sociocultural Theory

Both social cognitive theory and sociocultural theory highlight interrelatedness among cognition, behavior, and the environment, and view the individual and the environment in a reciprocal and transformative relationship (Bandura, 1997; John-Steiner, and Mahn 1996). Both theories also include the role of agency in individual learning and development (Bandura, 1997; Wink & Putney, 2002). Perhaps the greatest benefit from synthesizing social cognitive theory with sociocultural theory is the concept of development. Bandura advocates viewing self- and collective efficacy as developmental (Bandura 1997). Aspects of development of individuals and development of community within collectives establishes sociocultural theory as a useful lens through which to analyze growth and outcomes of self- and collective efficacy.

Collective Classroom Efficacy

Putney and Broughton (2011) integrated social cognitive theory and sociocultural theory to explore CCE. Bandura (1997) and other scholars developed the literature on self-efficacy and collective efficacy, but the domain-specific construct of efficacy in classroom collectives (teacher and students) remained unexplored until Putney and Broughton studied CCE through an interactional ethnography and cross-case analysis in a process that resulted in their grounded theory (Putney et al., 2017). CCE synthesizes sociocultural theory with social cognitive theory to explain the development of collective

beliefs, cohesion, and community in classroom collectives. As theorized, CCE beliefs relate to academic and social confidence developed through responsibilities and relationships generated between and among teachers and students in a class collective (Putney & Broughton, 2011). Via their 4-year ethnography among diverse fifth-grade students, Putney and Broughton found that teachers can act as actuators of efficacy-building collective processes and function as organizers of classroom communities (Bandura, 1997). Moreover, they observed that classroom collectives can develop efficacy and coalesce around common goals and student leadership roles that revolve around student academic and social needs (Putney & Broughton, 2011, Jones & Putney, 2016). However, explorations of CCE, although rich, are limited, necessitating further research in various locations and domains.

Sociopedagogical Theory

Senior (1999, 2006) was not satisfied with existing theories of classroom dynamics, so she sought her own explanation of why language teachers make the in-situ decisions they do. She began with a very general question for eight language teachers: What makes a “good” language class in the perspective of teachers and students (Senior, 1999)? Through the process of open and axial coding, Senior identified a pattern among many language teachers: They value as “good” those classes that meld into productively cohesive groups.

Senior (2006) pursued further exploration by involving nearly 100 teachers and hundreds of students (collecting surveys and interview data). She subsequently identified a common effort of language teachers to seek cohesion by maintaining dynamic

balances—primarily balancing learning needs with socioemotional needs and by balancing the teacher’s dual roles as class group leader and class group member. Senior’s findings suggest that teacher efforts toward class group cohesion and harmony, or dynamic equilibrium, explain many decisions (pedagogical and non-pedagogical) teachers make. Senior cites Tsui (2003) in positing that dynamics like those involved in classroom group leadership are complex and may be too challenging for many novice teachers to cognitively manage. Though robust, Senior’s grounded theory work arose in the relatively tight domain of language learning classrooms, mostly in Australia, but with some teachers in the United Kingdom. Senior (2006) calls for further exploration of the usefulness of sociopedagogical theory in explaining teacher choices and the development of productive cohesion in other regions and classroom domains.

Integration of CCE and Sociopedagogical Theory

By integrating CCE with sociopedagogical theory, I identify a textural description from the literature that offers a theoretical starting point from which to proceed with a study of classroom collective development and dynamics. This integrated view hypothesizes class collectives moving toward productive cohesion through the development of CCE. Theoretically, this development of CCE and progress toward cohesion involves teachers nurturing social and academic needs of students (Putney & Broughton, 2011), or in other words, sociopedagogical balance (Senior, 2006). As identified by Senior, teacher expertise may be foundational for teachers’ competency to cognitively manage leadership of classroom collectives amidst immense complexity. The positioning of teachers within their class groups (as community leader or as community

member) may also affect the development of CCE and the level of cohesiveness in class communities (Putney et al., 2017; Senior, 2006). Worth consideration is the effect such collective class development could have on student learning and teacher satisfaction and longevity. This integration of CCE and sociopedagogical theory satisfies a textural, theoretical foundation from which to explore productive cohesion and collective dynamics in classrooms. I now turn to the structural elements in the literature that help explain how these processes may occur.

Structural Review of Classroom Dynamics, Cohesion, and Collective Development

Continuing with the phenomenological literature review approach (Randolph, 2009), I now turn from the theoretical, textural explanation of the phenomenon at hand to the structural elements that the related theories—CCE (Putney & Broughton, 2011) and sociopedagogical theory (Senior 2006)—suggest must be in place to support the development of productive cohesion. After having found and synthesized CCE and sociopedagogical theory, and after then identifying possible structural elements of the phenomenon, I returned to the literature to explore how these structures affect the phenomenon at hand and how they relate to each other. I searched the same data bases, this time casting a wide net, and using key words that would ferret out research that analyzes such relationships between and among these structural elements. Pertinent structures that emerge from the integrated theories include

- sociopedagogical equilibrium (balancing academic needs with socioemotional needs),

- teacher role equilibrium (balancing dual teacher roles as both leader and member of the class group),
- CCE development in conjunction with collective goals and student roles,
- teacher expertise (including pedagogical skills, content knowledge, discernibility, emotional intelligence, humor, and democratic leadership), and
- teacher efficacy.

Balancing Socioemotional and Pedagogical Needs

In classrooms, some subjects, domains, or circumstances call for a greater emphasis either on pedagogical or socioemotional needs. According to researchers, many teachers alternate between the two needs (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Putney & Jones, 2011; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001; Seiz, Voss, & Kunter, 2015; Senior, 2002, 2006; Van den Bossche et al., 2006). Teachers may intentionally tailor lessons to intertwine both purposes and meet social and pedagogical needs simultaneously (Bandura, 1997; Bonura & Bonura, 2013; Senior, 2002, 2006). As Senior (2006) asserts, teachers “engage in pedagogically oriented behavior one moment and socially oriented behavior the next... to keep their class in a state of dynamic equilibrium” (pp. 281-282). Some researchers refer to this balance as alternating between student-centeredness and content-centeredness (Tsui, 2003, p. 36; see also Borko & Livingston, 1989). Multiple scholars—including researchers expounding both CCE and sociopedagogical theory—claim that socioemotional and pedagogical needs are reciprocal, are developed in harmony, and enhance both unity and learning when maintained in balance (Putney & Broughton, 2011; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001; Senior, 2006).

Though few scholars have studied the relationship between social and academic

needs exclusively in the context of collective development in classrooms to the extent that Putney and Broughton (2011) and Senior (2006) have, both elements (social and academic) are ubiquitous throughout the literature in larger discussions of various educational constructs. For instance, one of the most widely used teacher observational instruments, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) advanced by Pianta, Paro, and Hamre (2008), assesses three domains: emotional support, instructional support, and classroom organization. This model suggests that, along with classroom organization, effective teachers attend to both academic and socioemotional needs of students.

Pedagogical–learning needs. Classes are—first and foremost—purpose groups, and that purpose is learning. In very cohesive classes, if learning needs are not kept in balance with social needs, the class becomes primarily a social group (Senior, 2006). According to Patrick, Anderman, Ryan, Edelin, and Midgley (2001, as cited by Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), to promote mastery-goal orientation, teachers should not only care about student well-being and comfort but should also care about student learning. Though socioemotional needs help groups to bond, it is task goals—not social ties—that form the unifying basis of groups that perform at high levels (Van den Bossche et al., 2006). Students may be entertained by teachers and peers, but if learning needs are neglected, the felicity of students is superficial and may ultimately be unsatisfying. Emotional needs enable—but do not replace—pedagogical needs (Patrick & Mantzicopoulos, 2016; Senior, 2006).

Van den Bossche et al. (2006) studied mutually shared cognition and increased

performance in collaborative learning environments. Using the Team Learning Beliefs & Behaviors Questionnaire and conducting regression and path analysis, they tested a theoretical framework and found that task cohesion is the most important aspect of cohesion in predicting productive collective behavior. In other words, uniting behind purposeful group goals leads to improved productivity in collectives—more so than socially-based cohesion. Moreover, Strong, Gargani, and Hacifazlioglu (2011) studied how well teachers and administrators could identify more-effective teachers versus less-effective teachers as determined by value-added measurement. They concluded that strong socioemotional support from teachers without strong instructional support does not contribute to student achievement. They proffer as an explanation the possibility that emotional support is a necessary foundation to instructional support, and would be present where strong instruction was found, but that emotional support without instructional support was insufficient to yield strong learning outcomes (Strong et al, 2011).

Socioemotional needs. Meeting socioemotional needs can serve a vital purpose. When class collectives meet students' socioemotional needs, students show more on-task behavior and are more likely to feel respected, cared for, happy, and ultimately tend to engage more and learn more (Bonura & Bonura, 2013; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012). Studying the effect of varied amounts of ongoing social introductions in multiple undergraduate military classes across several semesters, Bonura and Bonura found that increased social interactions led to consistent increases in measured participation, higher academic performance, and increased feelings

of affect for the instructor and sense of unity with the class group.

Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, and Abry (2013) used the Responsive Classroom (RC) approach—which embeds efforts early in the year to establish classroom emotional support—to test the common notion that providing socioemotional support facilitates academic instruction. Using randomized controlled trials of third- and fourth-grade teachers, Curby et al. relate not only that emotional support did contribute to stronger instructional support, but also that emotional support and instructional support have a reciprocal relationship, with both driving increases in the other. In discussing these results, Curby et al. state that “rather than simply focusing on instructional supports, the present study suggests that efforts to improve the social and emotional climates of classrooms will not only result in better classroom climates, but also may set the stage for better instruction” (p. 568).

Balancing the Roles of Teacher as Group Member and Group Leader

As leaders, teachers provide direction, cultivate classroom climate, model acceptance, and help manage conflict (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). In this sense, they become a “community organizer” (Putney & Broughton, 2011, p. 2). For Dewey (1938), experience-based education is a social process. He suggests that in a learning community, “the teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities” (pp. 65-66). A teacher’s role as class group leader is vital to CCE theory (Putney & Broughton, 2011). Nevertheless, teachers are also members of their class collectives. The initial phase of Senior’s (2006) research that

generated sociopedagogical theory found consistency among language teachers in that they deemed a “good” language class as one that melds together into a cohesive, high-functioning group. Further exploration into the workings of teachers’ efforts to bond their classes into cohesive groups revealed a key dynamic: Teachers alternate and balance between their role as class group leader and class group member. Figure 1 illustrates this dynamic.

This dynamic relates to the closeness or distance teachers maintain with their class collectives. Senior (2006) observes that language teachers in her study could

...sense when it is appropriate to switch from a more distant to a closer role—and when to switch back again. Their built-in sense of balance alerts [teachers] to the danger of overstepping the mark in either direction—remaining too distant and unapproachable on the one hand, or becoming too friendly and familiar on the other. (p. 273)

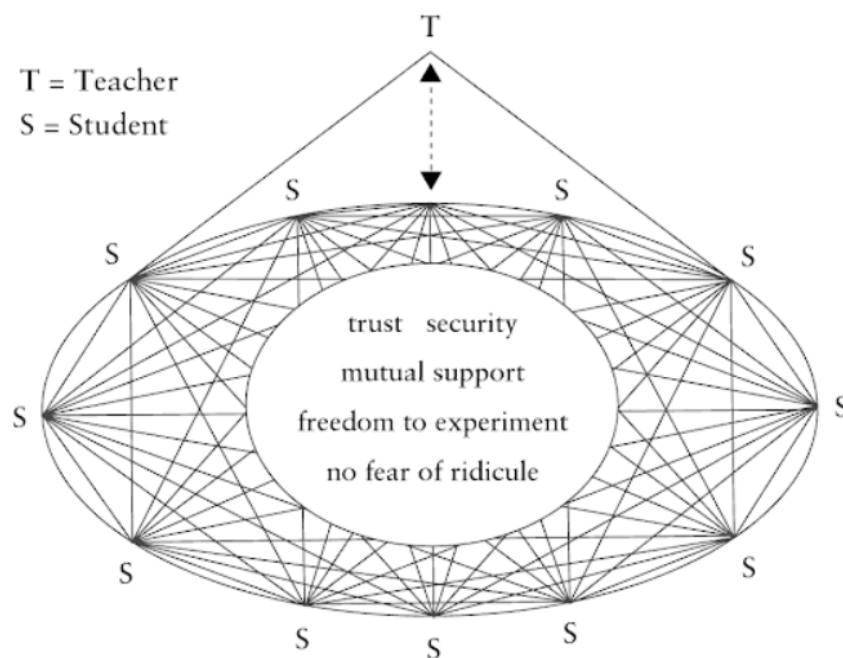


Figure 1. Teacher as group member and group leader (Senior, 2006, p. 29), showing the dual roles of teacher as group member and group leader. Used with permission.

Senior (2006) also maintains that “by alternating readily between ‘distant’ and ‘close’ roles, experienced language teachers set in motion the kinds of social processes that facilitate the development of a sense of community within their classes” (p. 100).

In conducting a cross-case analysis that further explores CCE, Putney et al. (2017) note that a commonality in efficacious classroom collectives is that “teachers saw themselves, and were perceived by the students, as members of the classroom community” and that “this sense of membership contributed to CCE” (p. 13).

Importantly, teachers are an integral part of the class collective and only identify a class as cohesive if they see themselves as a part of it (Senior, 2006). Perception that the teacher is absent from class group membership can undermine cohesion (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Thus, it is recognized that teachers who shirk their role as a member of their class group may have students unite in unproductive ways that oppose the teacher and cause the class collective to fail in maintaining sociopedagogical balance (Senior, 2006).

Teacher Expertise

Senior (2006) posits that only with sufficient experience can teachers perform the complexities of teaching and still have sufficient mental capacity to attend to the dynamic balances that foster productive, classroom cohesion. For most, the process of developing expertise requires time and experience. However, expertise is more than mere experience, and many teachers become experienced non-experts (Tsui, 2003). Some teachers may use the benefits of experience to lighten their load as teachers but not to move toward expertise. Expert teachers are willing to exert themselves beyond the ease that comes

with experience (Roos, 2015; Tsui, 2003).

Cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1994) illuminates why expertise may be fundamental to teachers' capacity to lead their classes in developing productive cohesion. According to cognitive load theory and the dual processing model of cognition, working memory is very limited, and this limit restricts what activities humans can cognitively manage at any given time (Miller, 1956). We know very little about teachers' cognitive processes (Dessus, Tanguy, & Tricot, 2015), but we know that teaching requires enormous mental functioning (Berliner, 1994). Because novices have yet to develop schemata, routines, and automaticity in teaching, they experience many cognitive constraints that experts may no longer deal with (Berliner, 1994; Burns & Knox, 2011; Feldon, 2007; Moos & Pitton, 2014). Novices are often hyper-concerned with classroom management and fearful of losing control of their class (Berliner, 1994; Leinhardt, 1983; Roos, 2015; Tsui, 2003). With experience, teachers learn what to ignore and what demand attention (Berliner, 1994; Borko & Livingston, 1989; Feldon, 2007; Moos & Pitton, 2014; Peterson & Comeaux, 1987; Tsui, 2003). The freed-up working memory of experts enables them to better observe their classes, identify cues, and make the important in-situ decisions that can support collective development (Baumert & Kunter, 2013; Berliner, 1994; Blömeke, et al., 2015; Chesnut & Cullen, 2014; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Leinhardt, 1983; Peterson & Comeaux, 1987). As teachers develop expertise, formerly difficult tasks cease to be so analytic and instead become more automatic, intuitive, effortless, and fluid (Berliner, 1994; Moos & Pitton, 2014; Roos, 2015).

I will now explore five specific areas of teacher expertise that the literature—

especially CCE and sociopedagogical theory—relates to productive cohesion in class groups: pedagogical expertise, content knowledge, emotional intelligence, humor, and democratic leadership.

Pedagogical expertise. The most important teacher expertise of classroom teaching may be pedagogical expertise. Levels of pedagogical expertise may have a dominant bearing on teachers' abilities to manage complex classroom dynamics. In an influential review and ethnographic study, Borko and Livingston (1989) compared teaching to improvisational performance and report that teachers with pedagogical expertise were better than novices at (a) being flexible and spontaneous, (b) intuitively balancing content-centered and student-centered instruction, (c) managing the complexity of interactive teaching, (d) maintaining the direction of the lesson while responding to student questions, (e) assessing the relevance of classroom information and events, and (f) efficiently planning.

Van den Bogert, van Bruggen, Kostons, and Jochems (2014) approached classroom management by using eye-tracking technology to detect differences between expert and novice teachers in how they see and process classroom events. The authors interpret the results to show that experienced teachers tend to process information faster and “read” a classroom situation more quickly. They conclude that “student-teachers’ processing capabilities are strained when classroom events take place, resulting in longer processing time” (p. 7). Experts see their classroom more holistically and globally during a significant classroom event, viewing their classes as a group even while addressing individual aberrations. In other words, “They keep their eye on the ball while keeping

track of the game” (p. 8). Student teachers often fail to recognize an event as being significant, but when they do sense an event as being important, they are more disposed than experts to fixate on the source of the problem and ignore the rest of the classroom.

Content knowledge. A seminal scholarly work for content knowledge is Shulman’s (1986) AERA address and accompanying article in which he distinguishes between general content knowledge and other forms of knowledge, including general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Since then, his distinctions have become widely used by scholars and educators (Boumert & Kunter, 2013). Teacher content knowledge affects teachers’ ability to manage the complex, interactive demands of instruction. Teachers low in content knowledge tend to worry about content rather than the complex dynamics of collective development and cohesion. Teachers low in content knowledge spend precious preparation time learning content rather than planning higher-level aspects of collective learning, cohesion, and development (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Roos, 2015; Tsui, 2003).

Emotional intelligence. It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of emotional intelligence (EQ) as a vital expertise in the development of productively cohesive class collectives—especially in meeting the socioemotional needs of students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). According to McQueen (2004), EQ is more important than IQ and technical skills combined. Freshman and Rubino (2002) define EQ as “proficiencies in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in the areas of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness and social skills” (p. 1). Chesnut and Cullen (2014), desiring to understand teacher attrition, used multiple instruments to learn that

teachers' emotional intelligence is positively and significantly correlated with teacher commitment. Teachers high in commitment exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence, with emotional intelligence explaining 10.43 % of variance in level of teacher commitment.

In a literature review of emotional aspects of teaching, Chang (2009) claims that teachers who seek to suppress negative emotions while teaching are likely to experience cognitive overload, whereas teachers who reappraise situations in ways that improve emotions experience increases in teacher resilience and career satisfaction. When teachers experience negative emotions, their working memory becomes burdened and their cognition and decisions suffer (McQueen, 2004; Seiz et al., 2015). When teachers improve EQ, their cognitive performance during teaching improves (Chang, 2009; McQueen, 2004; Seiz et al., 2015). Few studies have analyzed the relationship between instructional behavior and teacher emotions, and when researchers study teacher cognition and teacher emotion separately, they miss critical insights that come when we study emotions and cognition jointly (Seiz et al., 2015).

Seiz et al. (2015) report that emotional exhaustion can neutralize the benefits of acquired professional knowledge and that better classroom management follows high professional knowledge only when low emotional exhaustion accompanies that knowledge. As cognitive impairment may neutralize teachers' capacity to lead collectives in the development of productive cohesion, Seiz et al. assert that "emotional exhaustion leads to cognitive impairment, rather than the other way around." (p. 58). Emotionally intelligent teachers are more likely to organize thoughts and emotions and stay positive

during times of stress (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), and they can affect a calmness and evenness in their groups, which paradoxically fosters more dynamic interaction and can induce greater performance from those they lead (Huy, 1999).

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) provide an influential review of literature and advance social and emotional learning (SEL) as a classroom model that covers a wide range of such issues in the classroom. As they define the construct, “SEL is the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, and handle challenging situations effectively” (p. 504). They identify earlier work on EQ (Goleman, 2006) as the inspiration of SEL and seek to emphasize “the importance of enhancing social and emotional competencies” (p. 504). Though they acknowledge a shortage of empirical support, in their review of SEL and social and emotional competence (SEC), Jennings and Greenberg (2009) assert that (a) positive student affect relates with positive academic outcomes, (b) poor emotional management contributes to higher teacher burnout, higher teacher attrition, and poorer classroom climate, (c) emotional competence affects teacher enjoyment and efficacy, though emotional training for teachers is rare, and (d) students have a basic need to belong to a cohesive, caring community.

Humor. Humor may be a common tool used to meet the socioemotional needs of students and foster greater learning. Garner (2006) used asynchronous videotaped lectures to assess how humor may affect learning. The humor groups in the quasi experiment saw the same lecture as the non-humor groups, but their lecture had humor interspersed in the lecture at intervals through seamless editing. An ANOVA revealed a

statistically significant difference in levels of learning, and post hoc tests showed the difference was in favor of the students receiving the lectures sprinkled with humor. However, not all humor is the same, and humor has varying effects on learning. Wanzer, Frymier, and Irwin (2010) compared related, unrelated, offensive, appropriate, self-disparaging, and other-disparaging humor and found that learning correlates with appropriate and related humor, whereas unrelated humor does not correlate with learning, and offensive humor negatively correlates with learning.

Expert teachers tend to use humor, and often shift from moments of humor into purposive tasks or business (Berliner, 1994). Used well, humor can (a) lighten the sting of necessary discipline, (b) cultivate a relaxed feel, (c) increase spontaneity, interaction, camaraderie, affect, and unity, (d) empower teachers in their role as class group member, and (e) indicate—through bursts of collective laughter—establishment of collective unity (Senior, 2006). Though humor can enhance learning, Senior (1999) determined from grounded theory research that the language teachers in her study use humor primarily as a social bonding tool to establish greater cohesion in the class group. Nevertheless, teachers reported seeking this cohesion to ultimately enhance learning.

Democratic leadership. Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) enacted a series of now-classic studies designed to elicit patterns of group behavior based on various leadership styles. They initially enacted two leadership styles (democratic and authoritarian), and later added a third (*laissez-faire*). Leaders identified as democratic enabled group members to participate in the decision-making process, whereas leaders labeled as authoritarian tended to hoard group decisions. *Laissez-faire* leadership was

described as essentially “group life without adult participation” (Lewin et al, 1939, p. 271). Groups led by authoritarian leaders were the most productive, but the democratically-led groups yielded higher quality products, and—unlike their authoritarian-led counterparts—continued working in the absence of the leader. In addition, hostility was 30 times higher in the authoritarian-led groups compared with democratic-led groups, and aggression was eight times higher (Lewin et al., 1939). The laissez-faire leaders produced the least-desirable effects. As expressed by Dörnyei (2007) in analysis of the findings of Lewin et al.,

The psychological absence of the leader retarded the process of forming a group structure, and consequently the children under this condition were disorganized and frustrated, experienced the most stress, and produced very little work. (p. 725)

Scholars have extended the findings of Lewin and colleagues (1939) into group leadership within various domains of education, including the classroom. Schmuck and Schmuck (2001) claim that, among teachers, democratic leaders create more group cohesiveness, member satisfaction, student empowerment, intrinsic motivation, communication, autonomy, and foster more favorable attitudes within their classes. However, democratic leadership can be challenging for novice teachers who have limited automaticity and more easily experience cognitive load. When cognitive load is overwhelmed, democratic leadership becomes less likely as teachers tend toward more authoritarian and less mature leadership methods for their own survival (Feldon, 2007; Moos & Pitton, 2014; Senior, 2006).

By definition, democratic leaders share decision-making power with group members, possibly resulting in fewer power struggles and the emergence of a shared,

non-authoritarian collective influence (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001; Senior, 2006).

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) asserts that an autocratic style fosters dependency, extrinsic motivation, isolation, and often unnecessarily ignites hostility and rebellion. Although authoritarian leadership can propel students in academic learning and establish a harsh and strict classroom order, such gains may be at the expense of socioemotional needs and cohesion. Authoritarian teachers' classes can become united, but it may well be unity against the teacher as a common enemy (Senior, 2006).

Emergence of Collective Classroom Efficacy and Collective Development

Van den Bossche et al. (2006) argue that few researchers have investigated how group beliefs affect collective learning and team cognitive development. Nevertheless, in a study that may shed light on the powerful, social effect of efficacy beliefs, Dunlop, Beatty, and Beauchamp (2011) measured self- and other-efficacy in 160 female college students who were partnered in a video game dance contest and—though the deception was later explained in a debriefing—were told they were competing collectively with their partner in pursuit of a grand prize. Each participant performed in a different room than their partner and was given predetermined, bogus information about their own performance and their partner's performance. The bogus information set participants in one of four equally sized samples (40 participants) that depicted (a) both partners as high performers, (b) high partner performance and low self-performance, (c) high self and low partner performance, or (d) low performance for both.

Researchers measured performance and assessed efficacy before, between, and

after the two performances. Those who believed their partner to be exceptional performers (other-efficacy) performed significantly better than those who believed their partners were poor performers. The difference in performance between those who believed their own performance was superior and those who believed their own performance was inferior (self-efficacy difference) was not statistically significant. The authors conclude that “other-efficacy may supersede the effects of self-efficacy in supporting personal performance within cooperative relational contexts” (Dunlop et al., 2011, p. 586). Individuals are not likely to exert agentic effort in a collective venture if they believe the collective capability is lacking. On the other hand, when individuals possess other-efficacy and collective efficacy, they may act according to collective agentic motivation with greater self-performance than could be had with their own personal efficacy. Also, perhaps the sense of “I had better do my part because we can do this” is a key element of collective efficacy (Jones & Putney, 2016) and may be more motivating than “I can do well” alone. Research shows very little exploration of the factors related to the effects of collective efficacy.

In their ethnographic case studies, Putney and Jones (Jones & Putney, 2016; Putney & Broughton, 2011; Putney et al., 2017) associate CCE with collective unity. They posit that CCE may drive the uniting of a class behind group goals and roles, as well as the maintenance of academic and social needs (sociopedagogical balance). For Bandura (1997), the connection between collective efficacy and group cohesion is vital as cohesion is a fruit of shared efficacy. Bandura (1997) identified the relationship between group cohesion, collective efficacy, and sociopedagogical balance by noting that

Group cohesion includes both an interpersonal element, such as mutual likening and affiliation, and an aspirational element encompassing a collective sense of efficacy and shared purpose.... It is difficult for team members to remain socially cohesive if they have no shared vision to strive for and they approach contests handicapped by doubts in their abilities to succeed. (p. 404)

Zaccaro, Blair, Peterson, and Zazanis (1995) suggest that leadership involves helping disparate individuals to meld into a team that shares a combined belief in the collective abilities of the group. Chen and Bliese (2002) used surveys to collect data on self-efficacy, leadership climate, experience, role clarity, and psychological strain among 2,585 combat soldiers. They conducted random coefficient modeling to analyze the influence of personal and leadership factors on self- and collective efficacy. They approached the study with the hypothesis that leaders affect collective efficacy more than self-efficacy because of leadership focus on group performance. The study findings support their hypothesis. Chen and Bliese report that self-efficacy influence from leaders is amplified by role clarification and socio-emotional support. They also found that the leadership effect on collective efficacy far surpasses leadership effect on self-efficacy.

Burns and Knox (2011) theorize that in complex adaptive systems, such as classes, higher-level phenomena result from the basic but complex interactions of class members. Such interactions may mold initially distinct beliefs and attitudes into shared beliefs and attitudes (Burns & Knox, 2011; Cronin et al., 2011). The emergent norms of a group influence academic work and interpersonal relationships within the class collective (Jones & Putney, 2016; Putney & Broughton, 2011; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). Both grounded theories in the textural review (Putney & Broughton, 2011; Senior, 2006) suggest that as class collectives develop productive cohesion, two key elements emerge

and play a key bonding role: collective goals and group roles. These two elements emerge as CCE forms, and Putney and Broughton identify collective goals and group roles as telltale manifestations of collective efficacy.

Collective goals. Ubiquitous throughout the literature about cohesive and collectively efficacious groups is the presence of common goals. Without a common purpose, collectives have no cause to unite their beliefs and choices. Skillful participation in a community of learners follows one's willingness to align oneself with the direction of the class collective (Rogoff, 1994). This convergence of values constitutes the development of norms. According to Meeussen, Delvaux, and Phalet (2014), group values are in flux, and group development hinges largely upon convergence of values within the group. They further claim that for cohesion, group value convergence is more powerful than group similarity. Meeussen et al. studied group-value convergence in the process of group identity formation using achievement values in real-life work groups comprised of college students. They used multilevel polynomial regression to analyze the work groups in a fully cross-lagged multilevel design. They report that group identity and performance depend on value convergence that occurs after group formation and that group members' identification in a work group "does not depend on how similar their personal values are at the outset. What matters is the process of becoming a group as group members come to share similar values through ongoing social interactions" (p. 245).

In a seminal work on collective efficacy, Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2004) assert that norm emergence can spawn agentic acceptance of a common goal—a collective

“buy-in.” When students buy into collective goals, they often become willing to sacrifice some personal advantages and may even put forth immense effort for the benefit of the group (Goddard et al., 2004; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). Participative decision-making has greater power than prescriptive decision-making to unite a collective behind a common goal (Bandura 1997; Meeussen, Delvaux, & Phalet, 2014). As with group roles, collective goals generally build around dichotomous pedagogical and socioemotional needs (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001). In studying undergraduate groups in a Midwest U.S. university, Goldstone and Roberts (2011) find that if common goals are productive or aligned with the group’s purpose, cohesive groups become highly productive, whereas if a group coheres behind counterproductive goals, the group will be unified but unproductive (Roberts & Goldstone, 2011).

The emergence of a common goal can satiate emotional needs, prime a group for cooperation, increase collective acceptance, and act as the bonding agent in group cohesion (Mitkidis, Sørensen, Nielbo, Andersen, and Lienard, 2013). Mitkidis et al. used undergraduate students to study the impact that participation in collective activity with clear common goals has on cooperation in later activities. They find that when goals are clear, cooperation among individuals in a group increases considerably, even in future, unrelated collective efforts. This discovery led them to conclude that clear ascription of a common goal “can have a tremendous impact on the reinforcement of lasting cooperative units” (p. 5). They also discovered from questionnaires that positive affect is dramatically higher in groups with clear goals compared to groups that work with opaque goals. Further, clear goals relate strongly to perceived collective efficacy (Mitkidis et al., 2013).

Student roles. Rogoff (1994) suggests that the whole of a learning community is greater than the sum of its parts, largely resulting from the combined effect of various individual roles. Many roles within groups may stem from individuals intrinsically adjusting their behavior to better align with a collective goal (Roberts & Goldstone, 2011). These roles influence the collective and determine much of a class's personality. Roberts and Goldstone (2011) presented various levels of complexity to small, medium, and large (non-classroom) groups participating in various games. They observe that individuals in collective activity adjusted their behavior to differentiate into separate roles to better achieve the common goal. Emergent group roles provide stability, facilitate goal achievement, and support sociopedagogical balance (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001, Senior, 1997). In fact, Senior (2006) suggests that most roles specifically support either learning needs or socioemotional needs. Productive cohesion is most likely to occur when leadership roles of task and group maintenance are distributed across the members of the class collective (Berliner, 1994; Putney & Broughton, 2011; Putney et al., 2016; Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001; Senior, 2006).

Teacher Efficacy and Agentic Motivation

Pajares (1992) asserts that teacher beliefs may be the single most important construct in educational research. Teacher efficacy is a “little idea with big impact” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007, p. 24). A study involving CCE should also consider teacher efficacy because self- and collective efficacy influence one another, creating a dynamic reciprocality (Bandura, 1997; Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007; Zakeri, Rahmany, & Labone, 2016). Difficult class groups may leave teachers feeling

less successful, whereas success with class groups can provide mastery experience that boosts teacher efficacy (Hoy, 2000). Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2012) explored the relationship between teacher SEL perceptions and their levels of stress, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction through online questionnaires of 664 students. The results of structural equation modeling showed a positive relationship among teacher efficacy and both SEL implementation and job satisfaction.

Efficacy beliefs affect the full range of teacher performance (Hoy, 2000), including quality of teaching, willingness to deal with troubled students and use new methods to meet students' needs (Collie et al., 2012), enthusiasm and commitment to teaching (Salanova, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2011), psychological well-being (Chen & Bliese, 2002), student achievement as well as student motivation and efficacy (Faez & Valeo, 2012), and classroom management (Collie et al., 2012). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) found that a jump in teacher efficacy data after the 3-year mark indicates that—by the fourth year—teachers efficacy beliefs improved or teachers had left the field, and that those who quit teaching had lower self-efficacy beliefs than those who continued to teach.

Sandholtz and Ringstaff (2014, p. 745) used a longitudinal, mixed-methods study that measured self-efficacy and used surveys, observations, and interviews to assess the relationship between teacher efficacy and student participation. They report significant increases in self-efficacy in teachers during the first three years of teaching, and those gains correlated with increased levels of student participation. Khoury-Kassabri (2012) studied 382 teachers in Arab schools across Israel using self-report surveys and self-

efficacy instruments to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and violence. Results show a negative relationship between teacher efficacy beliefs and use of violence—the higher the teacher efficacy, the less violent teachers tended to be.

Development of teacher efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), efficacy beliefs are developmental, and teacher development should target all four sources of efficacy (Sandholtz & Ringstaff, 2014). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) teach that during first years of teaching when mastery experiences are low, other sources of efficacy are more salient, and as teachers gain experience, the basis of their efficacy shifts more and more to mastery experiences. Teacher efficacy beliefs tend to rise during student teaching, fall the first year in the profession, then rise to a more permanent level (Hoy, 2000; Putney & Broughton, 2010; Roos, 2015). Although self-efficacy beliefs change (Sandholtz & Ringstaff, 2014), they become more rigid once they are established (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Hence, the early years of teaching, when efficacy beliefs are most malleable, are critical for teacher efficacy development (Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Important elements of efficacy development include reflection (Wyatt, 2013, Putney & Broughton, 2010) and collaboration (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

The influence of teacher efficacy on relevant structural elements. Empirical findings demonstrate a relationship between teacher efficacy and many of the structural elements discussed earlier in this review. First, the ability of teachers to maintain complex and dynamic sociopedagogical balances that establish cohesion and foster collective development relies on teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Tran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Second, teacher expertise and teacher efficacy are

reciprocal. As teachers increase their teaching expertise, their efficacy beliefs tend to rise. Moreover, increases in expertise and teacher efficacy beliefs lead to higher teacher performance (Bandura, 1997; Chen & Chen, 2014; Sandholtz & Ringstaff, 2014). New teachers with high teaching efficacy are better than low-efficacy teachers at presenting lessons, managing classrooms, leading discussions, and experience more satisfaction and less stress (Hoy, 2000). Because of these links, strengthening efficacy beliefs may be the first step to improving instructional practices (Sandholtz & Ringstaff, 2014).

Third, teacher efficacy influences the development of EQ (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and EQ and teacher efficacy are reciprocal (Barari & Barari, 2015; Collie, et al., 2012; Goddard, et al., 2004; Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Goccia, & Greenberg, 2013). Fourth, increased content knowledge contributes to greater teacher efficacy (Sandholtz & Ringstaff, 2014), and content knowledge and teacher efficacy relate in both directions (Hiver, 2013). Fifth, teachers with a strong sense of teacher efficacy tend toward more democratic leadership, whereas teachers low in efficacy tend toward heightened control, a pessimistic view of students' motivation, extrinsic enticements, and punishment (Bandura, 1997; Hoy, 2000).

Initial Exploration of Collective Class Actuation

The textural (theoretical explanation of productive, collective dynamics) and structural elements (that support the performance of high-functioning classes) discussed in this review provide a strong foundation to explore what teachers seek and experience with their class groups. However, no scholars have theoretically or empirically explored

classroom collectives with these synthesized lenses (CCE and sociopedagogical theory) until the pilot study for this larger study.

In preparation for this study, the pilot study I conducted in conjunction with other researchers synthesized CCE and sociopedagogical theory to form an integrated construct that captures the essence of productive cohesion in highly efficacious class collectives (Anderson et al., 2019). Because groups do not automatically learn well or function highly together, teachers seek to actuate their classes for learning as a group. Hence, we label the phenomenon *collective class actuation* (CCA) and refer to teachers who actively seek CCA in their class collectives as being *actuation-minded*. We hypothesized that CCA occurs when a class is cohesive, collectively efficacious, and primed for learning as a group.

As Edmondson and McManus (2007) argue that when little is known about a phenomenon, qualitative research is an excellent avenue of exploration. To comprehend CCA, Anderson et al. (2019) conducted an initial phenomenological case study to explore proposed CCA as experienced by an LDS seminary instructor in a Western U.S. state. The domain of study included high-school-aged students, grades 9-12 who combine to take a religious course during the school day on private property adjacent to the public school in a released-time seminary program (the public school “releases” the student for one period during the day). The proposed construct of CCA (Anderson et al., 2019) informed this review and constitutes a synthesis of theories germane to the development of productive cohesion in class groups. Also, this current study is largely a response to our call (Anderson et al., 2019) for further phenomenological exploration to identify the

essence of CCA from a full phenomenological sample of participants. I therefore include a detailed account of our study and findings.

Early Effort to Identify the Essence of Collective Class Actuation

To verify the existence and explore the experience of CCA, we (Anderson et al., 2019) used a criterion-based selection process to identify a teacher likely to be actuation-minded—or a teacher who holds as a primary motive the melding (actuation) of his classes into cohesive, productive groups that learn deeply together. We conducted a preliminary, in-depth interview with their participant prior to the beginning of a 12-week term. Vital in the preliminary interview were efforts toward epoche—or bracketing my experience as the lead researcher in a way that my views did not manipulate or direct the views and perspective of the participant (Moustakas, 1994). Common terms relating to CCA did emerge in the study but were grounded in the philosophies and beliefs of the participant.

Three additional interviews and an observation during the 12-week course explored the participant's efforts toward fostering and maintaining productive cohesion, or actuation. The lead researcher transcribed the in-depth interviews verbatim, identified horizons—or statements of meaning (Moustakas, 1994)—and coded horizons into themes. The themes were then used to derive a textural description and a structural description that were combined to form the essence of the participant's experience with CCA. Extensive member checking was performed iteratively throughout the interview and writing process to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

After deriving a textural description (what is experienced) and a structural description (how it is experienced, or the structures that must be in place for the experience) from the data, Anderson et al. (2019) derived the following as the overall essence of CCA as experienced by our single participant:

As an ideal, this teacher appears to operate from a foundation of strong teacher efficacy, teacher leadership skills, and collective classroom efficacy (CCE) to seek to establish dynamic equilibrium in the classroom by creating a “splendid mix” of learning and enjoyment. This teacher seeks this splendid mix by teaching (meeting pedagogical needs) and by reaching (meeting socioemotional needs). For this teacher, classes that maintain this splendid mix, or dynamic equilibrium, tend to meld into cohesive learning communities. As he nurtures this splendid mix, this teacher looks for evidence of actuation. Specifically, he looks for the presence of certain indicators, including a sense of flow, unified engagement and focus, social connectivity, evidence of learning, evidence of positive experience, and shared group emotion.

For this teacher, collective class actuation (CCA) cannot result from forcing these outcomes. Rather, these indicators emerge from a class in dynamic equilibrium, and signify to him that a class is actuated for learning as a collective. These indicators also signify the presence of CCE and suggest agentic buy-in from the class collective. This teacher experiences frustration when indicators of CCA are lacking. When these indicators are arrayed in sufficient strength and balance, he perceives a sense of harmony in the collective, believes the collective shows readiness to learn, and perceives teaching as immensely rewarding and enjoyable. As one might say when the bubble on a level is in place, when this teacher perceives his class to be actuated for learning, he might say that the class is “there.” For this actuation-minded teacher, teaching is the perpetual journey for the elusive “there.”

The Collective Class Actuation Model

Cronin et al. (2011) advise that “once constructs are conceptualized, researchers should then consider how they fit together in a model. One can then make sure dynamics are represented” (p. 598). Therefore, Anderson et al. (2019) discuss our findings and generate from the data and related literature a proposed CCA model. The proposed CCA model uses a ball in potential fluctuation to illustrate the dynamic and elusive nature of

CCA. Black shading in the proposed model (shown in Figure 2) signifies influence of the teacher; whereas, grey shading signifies influence of the class collective. Each element in the model influences all elements above it.

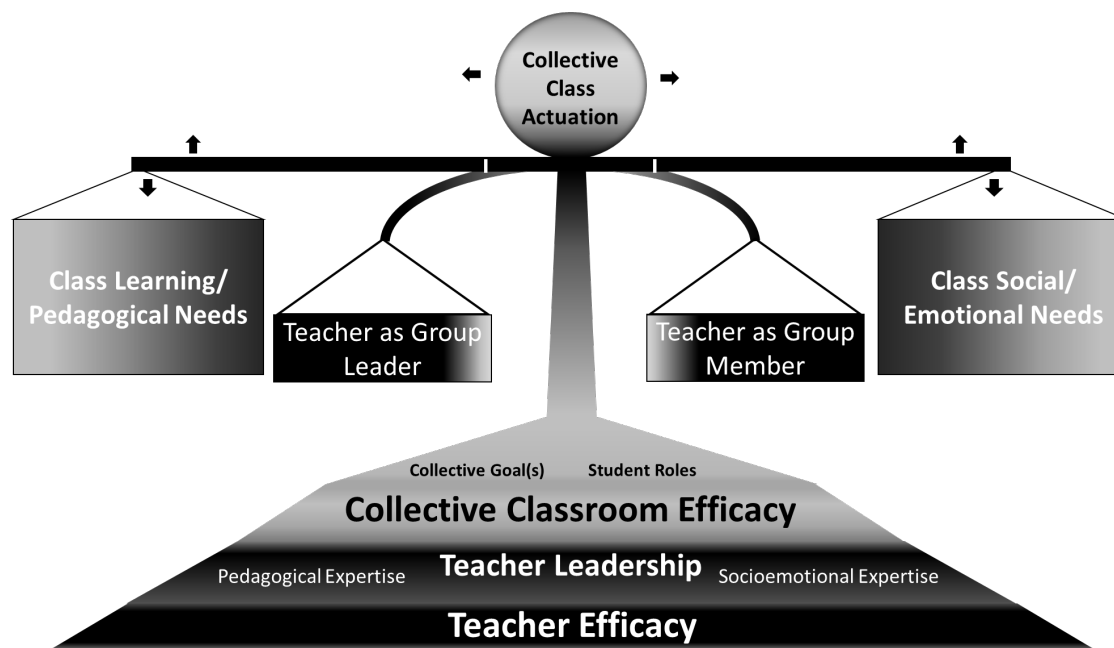


Figure 2. Collective class actuation model (Anderson et al., 2019). Teacher factors of efficacy and leadership, together with the group factor of CCE, provide foundations for the dynamic balances that foster CCA.

The Current Study and its Place in the Literature

Though a sample of one precludes any derivation of common or universal essence of the phenomenon of CCA, the findings of Anderson et al. (2019) suggest potential usefulness of the CCA model in explaining classroom group processes and provide vital guidance for subsequent studies with larger samples to verify the existence and discover the common essence of CCA in various domains. The purpose of the current study is to extend the work of Anderson et al. (2019) and seek a common essence of CCA among multiple teachers in a full phenomenological study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Overall Approach

The purpose of this study was to explore the proposed phenomenon of CCA from the perspective of seminary teachers in a Western State. The following research questions drove this study.

1. What is the essence of identified CCA as experienced in common among seminary teachers in a Western state?
2. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what are the indicators of CCA in seminary classes?
3. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of students in manifesting CCA?
4. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of the teacher in manifesting CCA?

Philosophical Assumptions

To begin a qualitative research project, the researcher should examine his or her own orientation to the basic tenets of nature and reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). My philosophical assumptions drive not only my research interest and questions, but also how I view knowledge and how I used this study to seek it. Therefore, intellectual honesty requires that I first make clear my philosophical assumptions.

A constructivist framework focuses on how people construct knowledge or make meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Creswell and Poth (2017), constructivists see the world as being comprised of multiple realities based on individual

experiences, whereas a realist believes in a reality that exists independent of constructions or beliefs of individuals. An approach proffered by Maxwell (2012, as cited by Creswell and Poth, 2016, p. 63) is a “realist perspective that combines a realist ontology (the belief that a real world exists independently of our beliefs and constructions) and a constructivist epistemology (knowledge of the world is inevitably our own construction.” This view describes my philosophical perspective. Where a strict constructivist would see a world of multiple realities, I see a world of one reality but multiple perspectives—various points of view that seek to construct a knowledge of that reality. Hence, ontologically, I am a realist, and epistemologically, I am a constructivist. Stated simply, I see a world of one reality at which each person gazes with her or his unique perspective through which they construct knowledge.

Further, a phenomenological epistemological framework focusses on how people experience a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This view is interested in the intentionality of consciousness, which is the idea that the reality is inextricably connected to one’s awareness, or consciousness of the thing in consideration, and that reality is found in the person’s experience (Creswell & Poth, 2017). To this end, the things people experience, including emotions, exist, and the experience is more ample evidence than outward objects in the physical world (Moustakas, 1994). To discern meaning, then, in an epistemological view, entails tapping into the individual experiences of a phenomenon. Combining these perspectives and relating them to this study, I therefore entered this study assuming that the proposed phenomenon of CCA exists, that it is experienced in common by many seminary teachers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,

and that a rigorous study can accurately derive from multiple perspectives that common essence.

Qualitative Approach

Though CCA occurs in collectives and is considered a group phenomenon, ultimately it would be an individually perceived experience. Hence, the pathway for discovery of CCA lies in learning, from individuals, their experiences relating to it. Also, the structural elements of CCA are complex, and we know very little about the textural essence of the phenomenon, or what exactly it is. All these factors invite qualitative exploration of CCA.

Qualitative research returns to the Greek meaning of philosophy as a search for wisdom (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Qualitative researchers seek understanding from what individuals experience, how they view the world, and the meaning of their experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My need to understand individual experiences with CCA points me not only to qualitative research in general, but also to phenomenology in particular as my qualitative approach.

Phenomenology

The term “phenomenon” is constructed from *phaino*, and means “to bring to light, to place in brightness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). In brief, a phenomenological study is one in which the researcher sets aside suppositions, looks at a topic anew and naively, and seeks answers to guiding questions that direct current exploration and further research (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). Husserl referred to this approach as *transcendental*

phenomenology because it seeks understanding through reflection on individual, subjective experiences and their objective correlates. A transcendental phenomenology is a scientific study of phenomena, or the experience of things as they are seen and experienced in consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). The basic idea of a phenomenology is to grasp the essential meaning, or the essence, of a lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Phenomenology follows a logical system in pursuit of the essence of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). A phenomenology is fundamentally an effort to describe the meaning of an experience for a small number of people who have experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon and then isolate—within that common experience—a universal essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). But what, then, is the “essence” of a lived experience?

Ultimately, an essence is an intersubjective description of an experience had in common (Moustakas, 1994). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) assert that a phenomenology starts with the assumption that a common essence for the experience exists and that it can be mutually understood by those who have experienced the phenomenon. This assumption of essence becomes “the defining characteristic of a purely phenomenological study” (p. 25). Once understood, essences of phenomena clarify knowledge of human situations, events, and relationships (Moustakas, 1994). My assumption of the existence of CCA and that there exists a common essence in the experience of it is therefore the defining characteristic of this phenomenological study.

Based on initial research (Anderson et al., 2019), CCA is an individually-experienced phenomenon that occurs in collectives. It can be emotionally intense. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that “a phenomenological approach is well suited to studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences” (p. 28). With CCA, I desired to know better what CCA is and how it is experienced. In phenomenology, when we seek to know what is experienced in the phenomenon, we are seeking its textural dimensions. When we seek to know how it is experienced, or the factors that support the occurrence of the phenomenon, we are seeking its structural dimensions (Moustakas, 1994).

To summarize the performance of a phenomenological study, Moustakas (1994) recommends isolating a topic and question involving social meaning and significance, conducting a comprehensive review of the professional research literature, locating appropriate co-researchers (participants), establishing instructions and agreements on the responsibilities and roles of co-researchers, developing questions and topics to guide the interview process, conducting lengthy person-to-person interviews, and developing individual textural and structural descriptions, a composite textural and structural description, and finally a synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences.

Role of the Researcher

While studying the experience of six other teachers with CCA, I myself was concurrently studying my personal experience with CCA in my own classes. Hence, I have sought to understand my own experience as well as discover the common essence of the experience of the entire group. This reality presented excellent opportunity and great

challenge for me as the researcher. I was a part of the common essence that I as researcher have been seeking, and have come to understand CCA in a rich, concurrent way with my participants. As the researcher, I am the primary instrument of data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and my own experiences have yielded meaningful data. However, I had to manage the tendency to paint others' experiences with my own perspective—especially considering my personal interest with this phenomenon. My challenge has been leveraging my own experience of the phenomenon without clouding or diluting the real essence of the shared experience.

To succeed, I have sought to be aware of my biases. Researchers can project their own beliefs and life experiences onto the data they collect. However, the role of the researcher in qualitative and phenomenological inquiry is not to eliminate biases and subjectivities, but rather to identify and monitor them in relation to the theoretical framework and researcher interest, with openness about how biases may be shaping data collection and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For example, Merriam and Tisdell recommend that, before interviewing, researchers explore their own experiences to become better aware of the phenomenon and their own personal viewpoints and assumptions (see the introduction in Chapter I).

Husserl (1990, as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 45) declares that researchers must satisfy the principle of “freedom from suppositions.” This can be done, but it requires intensive work to bracket and put out of action the predispositions that can cloud or block one's understanding of truth and reality (Moustakas, 1994). This involves the suspension of judgments about what is real until empirical data support such judgements (Creswell &

Poth, 2017). Researchers have termed this bracketing out of one's own biases and personal views as *epoche*.

Epoche is a Greek word that suggests refraining from judgement and ordinary ways of perceiving things (Moustakas, 1994). In epoche, the researcher sets aside everyday understandings and revisits phenomena freshly and purely, as if looking at it for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). As such, epoche does not seek to deny or doubt reality or personal experience. Rather, it seeks to isolate and set aside the natural attitude and biases of everyday knowledge and beliefs about truth and reality. The pilot study I conducted in preparation for this study provided excellent practice with epoche. This setting aside allowed me to perceive the experience through my participants and to be surprised at the familiar and recognizable.

According to Moustakas (1994), being transparent to ourselves is hard, but it allows us to open our understanding to a new vision and set aside anything that might distort a clear inspection of the phenomenon. This process makes the phenomenologist a "perpetual beginner" (p. 86). The researcher does not take a position, but rather seeks to understand the essence of something. In executing this study, the process of epoche was vital with each separate participant. The preliminary interview was especially poignant for epoche as I sought the perspectives and philosophies of each participant without manipulating or tainting their philosophies with my hopes, expectations, or personal views.

As the study developed, and as need arose, I did offer terminology to establish a common vocabulary for ideas that were common among participants and already clearly

articulated on their part. For example, by the second interview, participants were using the words “it” and “there” to label the phenomenon of actuation and had already richly described their experience with and philosophy of it. I determined that a common term had become necessary for these participants, so I introduced the term of actuation. Nevertheless, the experience, philosophy, and perspective of actuation emerged through the phenomenological interview process prior to establishing actuation as a label for their experience. In other words, though the terms and constructs of CCA became shared vocabulary with participants later in the study, I did not introduce or establish such terms or constructs without first understanding the beliefs and perspectives of participants relating to these ideas. Further, common terms built on the participants’ perspectives and were only introduced based on need.

Procedures

Sample

After obtaining IRB approval to conduct this study, I sought to identify and gather a homogenous sample of actuation-minded seminary teachers. Sampling was vital to the success of this phenomenology. This section considers sampling criteria, sample size, site selection, and procedures for gaining access and building rapport.

Sampling criteria. In quantitative studies, randomness and diversity can be necessary features of a study sample. However, for a phenomenology, a diverse group of participants is not necessarily ideal. In fact, greater diversity, relating to the phenomenon, makes phenomenology challenging because the purpose of phenomenology is to discover

common themes and common essence among all participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Hence, to explore CCA, I sought homogeneity in the sample regarding experience with the phenomenon. This need of homogeneity guided selection of sites and participants for this study.

To obtain a homogenous, interested group of participants, I based sampling on specific criteria, or criterion sampling. Careful criteria ensured best chances at having a homogenous, willing group from which to extract a common essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In addition to experience and willingness to participate, the nature of the verbal data in a phenomenology made articulation skills of participants an important ability I considered as a criterion for selection (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

According to Moustakas (1994), participants in a phenomenology should meet certain criteria. At a minimum, participants should all (a) have experienced the phenomenon, (b) be intensely interested in understanding the nature and meaning of the phenomenon, (c) be willing to participate in a lengthy interview or two, (d) grant the researcher the right to record and transcribe interviews, and (e) allow for publication of the data. Ultimately, “the participants in the study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end, can forge a common understanding” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 134). I counseled with supervisors of participants and with potential participants about these criteria.

As a seminary teacher, my own experience with CCA is primarily in seminary classrooms. In the Western state where I conducted this study, high schools generally

have seminary buildings adjacent to the high school campus. These buildings are owned and operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Public schools release students for one class period each day to go to the nearby seminary and participate in religious education. Hence, any such program is referred to as *released-time*. Seminary teachers have a unified purpose, teach the same curriculum to all four high school grades, receive uniform training, and have a united objective and similar goals. Seminary students—due to the geographical, structural, and religious nature of the seminary program—also share relatively high homogeneity. This mix created an extraordinarily homogenous population that provided an exceptional sample and environment in which to explore the experience of CCA.

Beyond being a seminary teacher, a vital criterion for this study was that the participating teachers should be actuation-minded. Is the melding of their classes into cohesive, productive groups a primary intent of the teacher's classroom decisions and behavior? Supervisors (seminary principals) identified teachers they deemed as being actuation-minded. Appendix A contains a protocol that assisted supervisors in determining actuation-mindedness. Also, the complexities of teaching may preclude many novices from focusing on higher-order dynamics (Berliner, 1994), such as the dynamics of CCA. Therefore, to increase the chance of identifying the essence of CCA, I looked for participants with at least 4 years of teaching experience.

In summary, basic criteria for this study included seminary teachers who were teaching at appropriate sites, had more than four years of teaching experience at the time of the study, were deemed actuation-minded, articulate, interested in the development of

productive cohesion, and were identified and recommended by supervisors.

Before agreements were made, I visited designated sites, communicated with principals the burden, responsibility, and benefits of this study, and assessed levels of interest and fit. Much of this preliminary work was accomplished through interaction with seminary principals. Upon clearance from principals (see the statement of supervisorial support form in Appendix B), I approached recommended teachers and assessed their ability and willingness to participate in the study as participants. All six nominated teachers agreed to participate and consented to a rigorous, 3-month study that involved more than seven hours of their professional time, including accommodation of two observations of one of their classes. The Invitation to Participate letter and the Informed Consent Form are found in Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively. The Parental Information letter is Appendix E.

Sample size and site selection. As this exploration involved multiple interviews with each participant, an unduly large sample size was not feasible or necessary. Creswell and Poth (2017) recommend that a phenomenology include from 3 to 25 students. However, most phenomenological studies only conduct one or two interviews per participant. This study involved three interviews and two observations per participant. Due to the vast data gathered in this process, I deemed a smaller sample to be more reasonable. Morse (1994) recommends a sample size of six to discern a common essence of an experience. I followed that recommendation and involved six participants in this phenomenological exploration.

Pragmatically, some convenience factors were necessary for this study. Due to

constraints relating to time, distance, and concurrent professional employment, appropriate seminaries for this study needed to be proximal to me as the researcher (within 20 miles). Also, so that all participants could experience the phenomenon concurrently, basic course timing needed to be parallel. For this purpose, I selected seminaries that are on a unified trimester schedule. Three seminaries in northern Utah match these site criteria, and the six participants were chosen from among the 20 teachers at these programs. My hypothetical assumptions based on personal experience as a seminary teacher led me to believe that seminary teachers tend to be highly actuation-minded. If this were true, selecting six actuation-minded teachers from a pool of 20 teachers would likely yield a rich sample of participants.

Access and Rapport

Gaining access to the sites and people necessary for this study first involved supervisorial relationships. After obtaining permission from the Education Research Committee for Seminaries and Institutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see Appendix F), the gateway relationship necessary for this study was the administrator who oversees the seminary principals and programs in the region. This administrator granted me full access to the seminary programs within his stewardship. While continuing to work with him, relationships with each seminary principal were essential. I already had a basic relationship with the seminary principals involved, but establishing a relationship process specific to this study was necessary. This in-place relationship facilitated the progression of the study but did present some ethical challenges that I will address later in this chapter.

Data Collection

To capture the potential common essence of CCA, I explored the phenomenon with all six teachers while they experienced it. To accomplish this, I conducted one interview prior to the start of the trimester (preliminary interview), two interviews during the trimester, two observations during the trimester, and a focus group involving all participants in the latter portion of the trimester. I also employed an online discussion throughout the study as a means of capturing written thoughts from and collaboration among participants. Table 1 summarizes the data collection events for each participant in this study.

Table 1

Participant Data Events

Event	Timing	Purpose
Preliminary interview	Prior to the start of the trimester	To understand the participant's prior experience, current philosophy, and assumptions regarding what makes a "good" seminary class and the processes that develop productive cohesion in class collectives. Epoche was vital in this interview to establish the participant's perspective as the basis for common terminology about CCA.
Observation 1 and interview 1	First three weeks of the trimester	To understand the experience of establishing CCA in new class groups.
Focus group	Week 8 of the trimester	To harness the collective power of multiple participants who have all studied the experience of CCA concurrently.
Observation 2 and interview 2	Week 10 of the trimester	To gain any final insights, member-check descriptions of the common essence, and conduct debriefing.
Online discussion	Throughout the 12-week course	To allow participant collaboration to clarify experience with the phenomenon.

Interviews. According to Moustakas (1994), the process of data collection in a phenomenology involves primarily in-depth interviews. Interviews are useful because

participant perception is the primary source of understanding of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, interviews were the primary tool for gathering valid perceptions. The observations did support the study and added new insights, but the primary function of the observations was to enhance the interviews that immediately followed each observation.

Following the recommendation of Moustakas (1994) the phenomenological interviews in this study were long interviews that gathered rich data about the lived experience in question. Such interviews were informal, used open-ended questions, and were highly interactive. Following the recommendation of Moustakas (1994), I also used an interview protocol that elicited a comprehensive account of the participant's experience, but I also took freedom to vary and alter questions in situ in pursuit of an understanding of the phenomenon. The preliminary interview protocol is Appendix G and the protocol for later interviews is Appendix H. I used the interviews, beginning with the preliminary interview, to elicit a rich description of each participant's personal philosophies relating to leading classes as groups.

In first eliciting the participant's experience with CCA, the preliminary interview served two dichotomous needs that directed the process of the interview. The first of these was the need for me to bracket out my own experience and correctly undergo epoche. Epoche required that I be aware to not pervert the perceptions and experiences of my participants with my own views. Fulfillment of this need enabled exploration of a common essence that reflected the perceptions of my participants. The second need satisfied by the preliminary interview was the establishment each teacher's view of ideal

seminary classes so that I could conduct later observations and interviews in a way that was tailored to each teacher's personal teaching philosophy—and not my teaching philosophy or an imposed expectation. The preliminary interview, then, entailed a form of scaffolded bracketing. Over time in the study, CCA and its terminology did become necessary as a common language, but these ideas were first articulated by the participants in each participant's own language, experience, and perspective—untainted by my personal views or the CCA construct, language, or academic model.

I recorded interviews redundantly on two, high-quality devices: a Sony digital recorder and a smartphone (using Hi-Q recording application). All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were uploaded to an online research site (Dedoose) and stored in encryption. I used pseudo names for participants and for site names in stored transcripts.

Observations. Each observation in this study lasted approximately one hour and occurred on the same day as—and prior to—an interview (interviews two and three). Considering recommendations from Creswell and Poth (2017), my observations followed the observation protocol in Appendix I, and I made notes focused on a rich description of the classroom processes that related to the phenomenon of CCA as articulated by participants in interviews. Appendix J is an example of one field notes taken during an observation. Through this observation-interview pattern, observations provided a structure of teachers' experiences with their classes, and the interviews following those observations provided the texture of teacher's experiences. This enabled me to use the observations to help teachers identify during interviews their reasons for—and

perspectives of—choices and events that occurred during observed class sessions. In this manner, I partially based interviews not only on their individual textural descriptions and philosophies that resulted from the preliminary interview, but also on elements I saw and heard during the observations immediately prior to the later interviews.

I captured an audio recording of some of the observed class sessions to enable accuracy of any verbal data used in the data analysis process. Curby, Johnson, Mashburn, and Carlis (2016) suggest that live observations tend to identify richer data than video-recorded observations relating to social and emotional aspects of group interaction. As I was analyzing a theoretical construct that posits the meeting of socioemotional needs to actuate a class collective for learning, I determined that live observation would likely be a stronger approach than video observation for my research needs.

Focus group. A focus group, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), is a group interview on a topic in which all participants have knowledge or experience. As such, the focus group provided an outstanding opportunity to gather data in a dynamic, social gathering of participants who were culminating a study of their own experiences with CCA. Hennink (2014, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 116) suggests that “the most unique characteristic of focus group research is the interactive discussion through which data are generated, which leads to a different type of data not accessible through individual interviews” and that “during the group discussion participants share their views, hear the views of others, and perhaps refine their own views in light of what they have heard.” A similar boon for a focus group in this study is reflected in the assertion by Creswell and Poth (2017) that focus groups “are advantageous when the interaction

among interviewees will likely yield the best information, when interviewees are similar or cooperative with each other” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 235). The focus group provided a high level of collaborated understanding of the phenomenon of actuation in seminary classes.

I invited all six participants—as well as the participant from the pilot study—to the focus group. We convened the focus group at a time conducive to the schedule of all seven teachers and worked with the Area Director to facilitate a room where all could gather and see each other in close proximity. I provided food to help generate a relaxed environment where teachers were at ease enough to communicate in an open manner. As facilitator of the focus group, I held my participation to that of moderator, and limited my participation primarily to the asking of questions so that I would not taint the collective perspective of the participants with my own views. This focus group experience enabled a powerful collective member check of the developing common essence that had already been emerging in the study.

Online Discussion. Because some participants may better explore their experience with CCA by having a way to record ongoing thoughts, insights, and experiences, I provided for all participants a format for online discussion that they could use as a collaborative, digital journal. I did not compel digital interaction, but I invited participation. I supposed that this collaboration could cultivate socially constructed views of the experience, and this could be a very powerful part of the study. Nevertheless, only two participants posted on the digital format and it never generated any level of collaborative discussion. Whether due to the digital format provided or my administration

of it, participants used it very little. Instead, participants collaborated through my efforts at member-checking and then richly in the focus group, but not in the online digital format.

Data Collection Challenges

Although most challenges in data collection were reasonably easy to manage in this study, a few factors did pose challenges. First, coordinating schedules of busy, full-time teachers was difficult. Second, obtaining information from participants without overly intruding on their professional time and efforts always required adjustment and awareness.

However, in this study, the greatest data collection challenge was the risk of data perversion through epoche failure. To speak personally, my assumptions and passion for CCA and my personal views and experiences with the proposed constructs run deep. I tend to speak of CCA in absolute terms. Though this passion motivates deep exploration, it also continually makes epoche more challenging and imperative. I knew that without caution there could be a tendency to manipulate participants into seeing what I wanted them to see and experiencing what I wished for them to experience. My mission became to understand the individual experience of each teacher, to extract an accurate essence, and then identify the common, or universal, essence among the entire group, regardless of my own assumptions. Table 2 summarizes the timeframe and products of my investigation procedure.

Table 2

Investigation Procedure

Timeframe	Investigation phase	Description	Products
November 2018	Selection process	Purposeful Criterion sampling based on actuation-mindedness protocol	Principal recommendations (six participants)
November 2018	Invitation to participate	Communicated purpose of study, risks, burden, and extended invitation	Consent, all six participants
November 2018	Preliminary interview	Explored individual participant views, beliefs, and assumptions relating to all four research questions in (six) hour-long interviews.	Verbatim Transcripts
December 2018	Analysis of individual teacher preliminary interviews	Identified statements relating to each teacher's approach and experience relating to high-functioning, "good," seminary classes (as groups) forming a summary of each teacher's "ideal" seminary class.	Redacted Interviews (individual teacher textual and structural description)
Mid Dec 2018-Early Jan 2019	Member check of redacted interviews	Redacted interviews given to teachers and asked if the summaries capture their views.	Affirmation from all six participants on accuracy of redacted interviews
December 2018	Aggregate analysis of preliminary interviews	Conducted phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings and essences with preliminary interview data.	Data coded to 25 a priori codes and 19 emergent codes. Textural and structural description, and overall essence of CCA
Mid Dec 2018-Early Jan 2019	Member check of developing overall essence	Presented themes, emergent model of Processes of Actuation, and developing essence of CCA to participants, assessing how well the emerging essence and model matched their own experience.	Affirmation from all six participants on fit of overall essence and model.
Mid Dec 2018-Early Jan 2019	Observation 1/interview 2	Observed class and conducted interview informed by preliminary interview data and individual textual descriptions.	All new data matched existing codes (suggesting nearing saturation)
Early Feb 2019	Focus group	Collaboration between seven participants (included Gordon from the pilot study). Participants discussed commonalities and disparities in their experience with CCA	One new code. Existing codes matched all other new data.
End of Feb 2019	Observation 2/interview 3	Observed class and conducted interview informed by previous interviews and observation. Final member check.	Two new codes (total of 22 emergent). Existing codes matched all other new data.
Ongoing	Digital collaboration	Online discussion through employer digital resources (Microsoft SharePoint).	Two posts, very little data.

Data Analysis

The phenomenological data analysis process for this study included transcribing, editing, coding, organizing themes, and forming descriptions and a common essence (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Researchers must operate with an awareness that the development of the essence is more important than explanation or analysis of it (Creswell & Poth, 2017). I found the pursuit of the essence of CCA to be invigorating, and a common essence among the participants began to emerge early in the study (as early as the preliminary interview).

I conducted the analysis for this phenomenological study iteratively. According to Creswell and Poth, data collection, data analysis, and report writing “are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project” and move in “analytic circles” (p. 265). After conducting the preliminary interview with all six participants, I conducted phenomenological analysis of the preliminary interview data. This process yielded both individualized textural descriptions and the early development of a common essence that emerged from aggregate analysis. I used the individualized textural descriptions/essences to guide the two observations and interviews that occurred during the course with all six teachers. The aggregate essence that emerged from the preliminary interview continued to develop through iterative processes through the remaining observations, interviews, and the focus group.

This analysis process included remaining aware of my own views, learning from participants what they perceive, and continually checking my interpretation of their views with theirs—commonly known as member-checking. This process enabled me to “revisit

the phenomenon and discover something new that alter[ed] [my] knowledge” of the phenomenon, adjust my understanding, and move “toward more accurate and more complete layers of meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 94-95). Perpetual memoing during this iterative process promoted ongoing discovery. As advised by Creswell and Poth (2017), I used memoing to create a digital audit trail that helped validate thinking processes and understanding over time (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

To seek the essence of CCA as experienced by the participants, I employed the data analysis processes advocated by Moustakas (1994). These processes are unique to phenomenological approaches. In summary, I identified significant statements of meaning (Moustakas calls these statements horizons), organized those statements into themes, and derived a textural description (what is experienced) from the identified horizons and themes. Next, I explored the meanings behind the data from multiple perspectives, deeply analyzing and synthesizing the phenomenon to generate a structural description (how the phenomenon is experienced). Finally, I combined these two descriptions to yield an overall essence of the phenomenon. These three steps in phenomenological analysis are called phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the synthesis of meanings and essences (Moustakas, 1994). I performed them iteratively, and much of the final essence became apparent early in the process of analyzing the preliminary interview.

Phenomenological Reduction

As advocated by Moustakas (1994), I conducted phenomenological reduction by transcribing interviews verbatim and isolating all statements of meaning in the data that

seemed essential for understanding the phenomenon. I removed repetitions, a process that yielded invariant constituents that did not repeat or overlap. These invariant constituents are called horizons. By reducing phenomenon down to these horizons, I opened my mind to discover the nature of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). I proceeded with coding horizons, organizing the horizons into themes, and then developing from the horizons and themes a textural description of the experience, or a description of what these participants experienced with CCA.

Codes came from expected information, surprising information, and conceptually interesting or unusual information for the researcher, the participants, or the audiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). However, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest, emergent codes and themes proved highly influential. Appendix K contains a list of codes that stem from the CCA model or that emerged during the pilot study (Anderson et al., 2019). This list formed the initial codes for this study. However, as the study proceeded, the emergence of new codes nearly doubled the list of codes.

Although the CCA model guided me as I explored actuation, I tried to ensure that I practiced enough epoche to allow emergent realities to be clear to myself as researcher and to my participants. Discovery of emergent themes over the course of this study proved to be extraordinarily invigorating and led to a far richer understanding of the processes of actuation than I understood or previous research offered going into the study.

Imaginative Variation

Following Phenomenological Reduction, I engaged in Imaginative Variation

(Moustakas, 1994) by constructing thematic portrayals of the experience from the invariant constituents using reflection and imaginative variation (Miesel, 1992).

Imaginative variation helped me induce structural themes from the textural descriptions that resulted from phenomenological reduction. For me, this process generated the visual model presented later as Figure 8.

Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

Table 3 summarizes my process of phenomenological data analysis. This process culminates with the synthesis of meanings and essences. The integration of textural essences and structural essences enabled me to derive what Moustakas (1994) refers to as “a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon” and what constitutes “that which is common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is (p. 100). This composite essence captures what is experienced and how the participants commonly experienced the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once I arrived at the descriptions and essences, I followed the counsel of Merriam and Tisdell by checking them with participants and then deductively checking them against the data to ensure accuracy and fit. As a common essence emerged early—within the first two interviews—I member-checked the developing descriptions with all participants and—after resounding resonance with all participants—took the developing essence back to the data for further deductive confirmation.

Validation of Findings

The validation standard of qualitative research has moved toward the interpretive

Table 3

Phenomenological Analysis Process (Informed by Moustakas, 1994)

Analysis phase	Task	Description	Products
Data collection	Interviews	Conducted six hour-long phenomenological, open ended interviews (guided by an interview protocol) pursuant of each teacher's individual philosophies and experience related to the four research questions. Followed up with two classroom observations/interviews during the trimester.	Audio recordings, observation/field notes.
Phenomenological reduction	Transcription	Transcribed interviews verbatim.	Transcripts
	Horizontalization (coding)	Identified unique statements of meaning (horizons) relevant to the phenomenon of CCA and then coded each statement into a category	352 initial horizons, 25 a priori codes, 19 emergent codes
	Theme development	Analyzed codes/categories and grouped them into 12 themes. The 12 themes were then reduced to 4 overarching themes.	4 overarching themes, 12 supporting themes
	Textural synthesis	Synthesized resulting themes to derive a textural essence of CCA (what was experienced).	Textural description
Imaginative variation	Structural synthesis	Analyzed existing themes for structural elements, attempting to move beyond facts and into the realm of ideas that revealed the structure of CCA, or how the phenomenon is experienced.	Structural description
Synthesis of meanings and essences	Essence synthesis	Synthesized textural and structural descriptions to derive the essence of CCA as experienced in common among the six participants.	Essence of CCA

lens and researcher reflexivity, and to reach valid findings, qualitative researchers strive for understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also assert that “it is the quality and quantity of the evidence provided that persuades the reader that the findings are trustworthy” (p. 285). For Creswell and Poth (2017), time in the field, detailed, thick, rich description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants all

affect accuracy and validity of a study.

A challenge specific to this study was the fact that the participants were my professional associates. The act of studying my associates necessitated extreme awareness of any encroaching nuances that could be a threat to my participants, the data collected from them, or the findings of the study. To compensate for such risk, Creswell and Poth (2017) suggest multiple data validation strategies to ensure accuracy and insightfulness.

Further, scholars suggest that researchers conducting phenomenological studies ask whether the structural description is location-specific or whether it may apply beyond the sample (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Although phenomenology cannot deal with causal relationships or causal theoretical explanations, Creswell and Poth ask if the findings nevertheless tap into universal essence of a phenomenon. In this way, the generalizability of phenomenological findings may be more aggressive than most other forms of qualitative research. Hence, writers should use multiple validation strategies and should reference their validation terms and strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In addition to epoche, elements of validation in this study included triangulation, construct validation, face validation, member checking, auditing, and reflexivity.

Triangulation

Triangulation is drawing upon multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This study, beyond the phenomenological interviews, included observations, online discussion, and a focus group to provide triangulation and richness in data sources.

Construct Validation

Construct validation is “recognizing the constructs that exist rather than imposing theories or constructs on informants or the context” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 356). Construct validity was an essential component of the preliminary interviews where the participants’ views became the basis of common language between researcher and participants regarding the processes of CCA in seminary classes. Because a primary purpose of this study was the textural discovery of the construct of CCA, construct validation through successful epoche and bracketing were vital to the general validity of this study. Polkinghorne (1989) asks if the interviewer influenced participant descriptions in ways that distort an understanding of the phenomenon. This question penetrates the crux of this study and the validation challenges that threaten it. Thus, the preliminary interview was important for establishing participants’ own views rather than imposing ideas from the proposed CCA phenomenon or from me as the researcher.

Face Validation

As the researcher, it is my supposition that CCA already has strong face validation. Face validation is a “‘click of recognition’ and a ‘yes, of course,’ instead of a ‘yes, but’” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 356). Success for this study is the deduction of the essence of CCA such that actuation-minded teachers in multiple domains who experience CCA can assent to the results of this study based on their own experience.

Research Audit

An auditing of the research process should help establish and enhance both

dependability and confirmability of a study. Creswell and Poth (2017) advise researchers to track key decisions including rationale and potential consequence, and then use an auditor to review the process and findings. This dissertation employed an audit by a fellow doctoral candidate (see Appendix L) who reviewed the research process, the data, data analysis procedures, and findings.

Reflexivity

A researcher can increase validity by engaging in reflexivity. I did this by disclosing biases, views, and past experience with the phenomenon so that readers understand the position and attitude that I assumed in the study. Creswell and Poth (2017) advise researchers to communicate any discovery of negative case analysis or disconfirming evidence to provide a realistic assessment of the phenomenon. They claim that the more open researchers are at continual challenges, risks, and biases, the more validity they add to the study.

Member-Checking

Member checking is considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” in a qualitative study (p. 314). Member-checking occurred all along the study through iterative, communicative interaction between researcher and participants as themes, descriptions, and essences emerged. Another significant member check for this study was the convening of a focus group. The focus group in this study provided a collective check of findings and generated a couple new insights through group reflectivity. However, data were already nearing saturation

by the time of the focus group, so the power of the focus group was largely in its verifying utility.

Ethical Issues

Because this study utilized adults as participants in a common, professional experience, it was a low ethical-risk study. Most ethical issues in this study were acknowledged in previous sections. Ultimately, the greatest ethical threats in this study stemmed from power dynamics in a profession that I as researcher shared with the participants. Studying coworkers in a familiar environment, compounded by supervisorial involvement, permissions, and power dynamics can create circumstances that strain individual agency and compromise ethics (Creswell & Poth, 2017). An imperative element for the ethical strength of this study was the presence of multiple avenues for participants to use if they wished to remove themselves from the study. Such avenues included supervisors, Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the associated university, S&I Educational Research Committee, and me as the researcher. This perpetual option was also made clear in the informed consent letter (see Appendix D).

A final ethical challenge in this study involved the translation of personal teaching experiences in a spiritual, religious environment into an academic study. Released-time seminary teachers for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have a distinct vocabulary that reflects personal, spiritual views and experiences. CCA is a proposed academic construct herein studied in a religious teaching and learning environment. Staying true to participants' experiences and language and expressing those experiences

in an academic report presented ethical nuances to which I as the researcher had to attend.

Preliminary (Pilot Study) Findings

Following the recommendation of Creswell and Poth (2017), I conducted a pilot study that not only provided valuable, initial experience with the process of phenomenological research, but it also yielded discoveries about CCA that have affected how we are viewing this phenomenon. After working with supervisors to identify a willing teacher who we determined to be actuation-minded and who met all criteria, I acted as lead researcher in the process of gathering and analyzing data in a case study conducted in a phenomenological style. I interviewed the participant before the beginning of a 12-week course to assess his personal views and philosophies relating to class collective development—especially relating to productive cohesion and functioning. The interview began with a very general question (what makes a good seminary class?) and followed the views of the participant into tighter philosophical perspectives relating to the phenomenon at hand. This interview formed the basis of epoche, with the participant's philosophies and assumptions driving a common understanding and being the foundation of shared ideas and common vocabulary relating to CCA.

As the participant continued to teach 4 daily classes over a 12-week course, I conducted three additional interviews and one observation. From the data, we were able to derive themes, textural and structural descriptions of the participant's experience with actuation, and an overall essence of his experience (Anderson et al., 2019). In this pilot-study process, I learned many things about interviewing, analyzing data, and conducting

a phenomenology that facilitated this study.

Themes of Collective Class Actuation

From the pilot study, we (Anderson et al., 2019) derived the following 11 themes of CCA from our initial study.

Actuation of the class group. The participant focused on each class as a group and sought to mold each class into a bonded group ready to learn as a collective.

Cohesion. The participant sought to meld his class groups into cohesive learning communities. A sense of unity was paramount in his pursuit of and experience with CCA.

Flow. The language of the participant about his experience with CCA seems akin to the language of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) describe flow as an optimal performing experience that is intrinsically motivating and immensely enjoyable, where high task challenge and high skills balance in a creative process in which the participant becomes completely, mentally absorbed, and where things just flow.

Affective motivation. The participant's pursuit of CCA was an affectively driven process. When things were not "there," he described feeling negative emotions. When things were "there," the result was emotionally rewarding.

Agentic buy-in. According to the participant, actuation-minded teachers may drive so hard for the above indicators that they may tend to force them. Such force, however, would stifle actuation. Actuation for the participant seemed to result from a collective buy-in that is agentially given.

Perpetual balance. Though teachers cannot force the indicators of CCA, the

participant perpetually sought to establish and maintain dynamic equilibrium in the classroom.

The splendid mix. According to the participant, a class in dynamic equilibrium maintains a splendid mix of learning and enjoyment. As expressed by the participant:

There is the splendid mix. And anytime it's not a splendid mix of enjoyability and learning, you're off, and you're going to feel it in the classroom. Kids will feel it. It's not the ideal. The splendid mix is the goal. The splendid mix. And it's tough to get every day, every week. It's tough, it's tough. There's the challenge. How do you create a splendid mix of learning coupled with enjoyability and a pleasant, enjoyable atmosphere? There's the Splendid mix. If you can put those two together, you've won. The game's over. Championship. That is the ideal class. (Anderson et al., 2019, p. 17)

Student leaders. The participant worked to identify and empower student leaders, believing that student leadership within the class collective is vital for actuation.

Common Goal. According to the participant, a common, unifying goal for a class can help bond it into a learning community. He reported that the primary goal for classrooms is learning, but learning and enjoyment as a conjoined, common goal may best propel actuation.

Perseverance. For the participant, the process of CCA is elusive, challenging, and requires great tenacity and perseverance on the part of teachers and students as leaders of the class collective.

Looking for indicators of CCA. The participant looked for specific indicators of CCA. Those indicators, as subthemes, follow:

Sense of flow. The experience of flow was a strong signal to the teacher that actuation may be occurring.

Unified focus and engagement. The participant perpetually sought engagement

and focus of the entire collective.

Social connectivity. The teacher fostered and looked for student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction. As an actuation-minded teacher, he generally preferred norms of high interaction and strong relationships over norms of quiet, independent learning.

Student learning. Evidence of student learning was vital in the participant's experience of CCA.

Positive student experience. The teacher's choices and adjustments in search of CCA pursued signs of positive student affect. In other words, he highly valued students having an emotionally positive experience.

Shared group emotion. Shared emotion, specifically laughing or crying together, indicated to the participant that his class may be bonding as a collective.

Study Implications

Qualitative studies are not generalizable in the statistical sense. However, the purpose of a phenomenology is to find the common essence of a phenomenon. Hence, if a population is homogenous enough that there is a common essence of a lived experience, and the researcher does discover that essence, the study may have implications beyond the sample studied. CCA is an integrated theoretical approach to texturally understand what actuation-minded teachers are experiencing in their classrooms, and how they structurally experience it. This study is a response to the call of Anderson et al. (2019) to phenomenologically explore CCA in various educational domains with appropriate

sample sizes to derive a common essence.

Though this study was a qualitative inquiry into the experience of CCA from the perspective of seminary teachers identified as actuation-minded in a Western state, I believe the universal essence of CCA among seminary teachers may have some transferability to a common essence of CCA in many other domains of teaching. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), even when qualitative research is not conducive to generalizability, knowledge of common experiences among one group can benefit other groups.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of CCA from the perspective of seminary teachers in a Western State. The research questions driving this study were as follows.

1. What is the essence of identified CCA as experienced in common among seminary teachers in a Western state?
2. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what are the indicators of CCA in seminary classes?
3. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of students in manifesting CCA?
4. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of the teacher in manifesting CCA?

To explore these questions, I received recommendations of actuation-minded seminary teachers from seminary principles at three separate seminaries (see Protocol for Determining Actuation-Mindedness in Appendix A). Each principal recommended the two teachers they determined to best match the criteria, and all six nominated teachers accepted the invitation to participate. Data collection began with a preliminary phenomenological interview with the six participants designed to assess their personal experience and philosophies regarding actuation (though I avoided research terminology of actuation in this interview and used participants' own terms and language). Because actuation-minded teachers by definition hold actuation of their class groups as a primary objective, questions designed to elicit participants views of actuation focused on their beliefs and philosophies relating to "good," "ideal," and "high functioning" seminary

classes.

I used data from these preliminary interviews to derive a basis for observation that I conducted within the first 4 weeks of the trimester and tailored to each participant. This derived basis of observation constituted a textural description of CCA for each participant. It summarized in bulleted form—as a redacted interview—each participant’s perspective and philosophy of what he seeks for his classes. I include Figure 3 as an illustration of these redacted interviews. I placed the remaining five redacted interviews in Appendix M.

The second interviews immediately followed these first observations. I used these observations primarily to enrich the interview process. If I observed something essential to actuation during an observation, I asked teachers about it after the observation during the interview. Hence, the bulk of the findings comes from the interviews rather than observational data, but the observations strengthened and substantiated the interviews.

The preliminary interviews also afforded phenomenological analysis of early aggregate data that yielded 4 major themes that coalesced into an emergent common essence of actuation in seminary classes. I member-checked the developing descriptions and essence with each participant. The resulting model—and the essence it illustrates—continued to refine through iterative data collection and analysis. However, data obtained from the second interview merged well with the preliminary interview data, suggesting I was potentially nearing saturation. Also, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize, as I reached saturation, I transitioned from an inductive approach with the data to a more deductive approach—taking the developing scheme, essence, and model that were

<p>An Ideal Seminary Class (From the Perspective of Benjamin)</p> <p>An ideal seminary class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is highly bonded (teacher to students, and students to students). • Has an easy feel that is enjoyable for teacher and students. • Is a group that shares principles of the gospel with each other under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost freely confirms what is happening. <p>By engaging in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep social learning processes (sharing personal experiences and thoughts, asking questions, discussing) where sociality is directed to each other and not just the teacher. The sociality in ideal classes tends to be high (talking, sharing, verbalizing, etc). <p>Ideal classes are marked by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comfort and trust level with each other and with the teacher that allows students to feel like they can be vulnerable, open up, ask questions, and share things that are real, meaningful, and personal. These classes often enjoy high sociality before, during, and after class. • Socially influential students who step up and lead out in the process of opening up, followed by class groups that respond in an appropriate and supportive way. • High mutual empathy, tolerance, and acceptance that allows for contributions of varying maturity without condemnation (mature, older students validate offerings from less-mature, younger students). • Enjoyment that is anchored in learning and purpose. Students smile often and sense the environment is safe. Humor in the class increases trust within the collective and helps students open up, share, and ask questions. This enjoyableness fuels buy-in, increases and maintains interest, and is a tool to achieve and sustain deep learning. <p>This developmental process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is hard work and constant effort until classes get “there.” • Cannot be forced or manipulated, otherwise the forced outcomes are not real. It Requires investment, or buy-in, from students. Students care and seek learning and stronger beliefs. • Requires maturity, which must be developed if not present initially. • Can become consistent and tends to persist once patterns of trust, learning, and enjoyment are established. <p>To lead this development, teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle students who struggle with care, knowing that the treatment of individual students has a major impact on the dynamics, trust, and personality of the whole class group. • Invite students to buy in to the purposes of the class

Figure 3. Example of redacted interview and individual textural elements of CCA.

emerging back to the date from which it emerged—to verify the validity of the developing results.

I made an online discussion format available to all participants, but only two participants posted onto it. All participants saw these two posts, but it never turned into an extended discussion, and yielded very little data. I am not sure if this was due to my

poor administration of the online discussion option, a poor design for the digital format, or if it was simply not necessary.

Later in the term, all participants—including Gordon from the pilot study—gathered for a 1-hour focus-group discussion. I provided food and a setting where all participants could see each other (around a large table). The environment was relaxed and peppered with much laughter. Participants freely collaborated and sought common understanding of their respective experiences and philosophies of the processes of CCA in seminary classes. The participants analyzed a few seemingly incongruent elements and affirmed many common elements of the phenomenon. Although most ideas that surfaced in the focus group had previously reached a saturation for me in the interview data, the focus group offered a couple of new insights and provided an opportunity for the participants to collectively reach a consensus on many vital and germane ideas. In other words, many ideas went from being understood by “me as a researcher” to “we as a team” through the process of the focus group.

A final observation-and-interview pairing served to debrief the participants, member-check results, and consider any new or unconsidered elements of actuation. I present in this chapter information about the participants, the four themes elicited by the research questions, a final synthesis of the themes, the textural description, and the structural description of CCA. I begin Chapter V with the overall essence of CCA—and include an accompanying model that illustrates this essence (Figure 8 later in this chapter)—as experienced by the participating seminary teachers.

Participants

To select a homogenous sample of participants conducive to deriving a common essence (Moustakas, 1994) of CCA in seminary classes, I employed a purposive, criteria-based selection procedure for this study. The criteria for participation drew upon six seminary teachers in a Western State who were (a) full-time, released-time professional seminary instructors for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (b) assigned to a seminary that taught on a trimester system, (c) likely to be actuation-minded as determined by the protocol in Appendix A, (d) nominated by their principal, (e) articulate enough to richly describe their experience and philosophy relating to class groups, (f) had four or more years of classroom teaching experience, (g) were willing to devote 7 hours over a period of three months to the study, (h) were willing to participate in multiple hour-long interviews, and (i) were willing to be observed at least twice during the course of the study. All participants (see Table 4) were white males who taught in faculties of similar size and who taught students of similar demographics—grades 9-12, nearly entirely comprised of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, blended in an even split of male and female students, and usually combined in classes that mixed all four grades together.

Derivation of Themes

The processes of CCA relate to teachers' efforts to develop class groups that are high-functioning and learn deeply together. I began this study with the assumption that the proposed phenomenon of actuation not only exists, but also that this phenomenon is

Table 4

Participants

Site	Participant	Years of experience	Description
Mountain Seminary	John	10-15	Currently in a second career after many years of military service that included collegiate instruction. Has become an expert in group leadership. Praised by his principal as a strong teacher who is adored by students.
	Joseph	10-15	New bishop of a local congregation who recently completed a master's degree. Avidly enjoys sports and outdoors and is raising young boys accordingly.
Hill Seminary	Benjamin	20-25	A new bishop of a local congregation who has taught seminary in another country prior to teaching in the U.S. Has served as a seminary principal before his current assignment. Holds a master's degree and has a large family with only a couple children left in the home.
	Samuel	15-20	Holds a Doctorate in Education, is a principal at a new seminary, and has previously been a principal at another seminary. Connects easily with a wide range of people and is known by peers as a loyal administrator.
Valley seminary	Peter	6-10	New father who is pursuing a master's degree and has worked tirelessly to establish expertise and success as a newer teacher. Highly trusted by his principal as a teacher who uses any available resource to develop as a teacher and to succeed with his classes.
	William	15-20	An experienced teacher who has served as a seminary principal and holds a master's degree. Known by peers to be a passionate instructor. Working through significant health challenges that pulled him from the classroom for a while.

central to how seminary teachers value the quality of their classes as groups. I therefore anticipated that my discovering individual teacher philosophies relating to “good” or ideal seminary class groups was essential for this study. The need to identify participants’ philosophies regarding the processes of actuation—without tainting their views with my views or prior research on actuation—set up the preliminary interviews as perhaps the most vital phase of the study. The questions of the preliminary interview (prior to the

start of the term) were designed to identify and analyze individual teacher philosophies regarding the processes of actuation in seminary classes and their related experience with CCA. Table 5 presents these questions along with questions from later interviews.

Table 5

Preliminary and Later Interview Questions

Interview	Interview question
Preliminary	Using the word <i>class</i> to refer to a group of students who meet for a trimester: What makes a good, high-functioning, ideal seminary class?
Preliminary	For you, what does a good seminary class look like?
Preliminary	What indicators signify to you that your class, as a group, is where you want it to be?
Preliminary	How much control and influence do you believe teachers have on the development of “good” seminary classes? Why?
Preliminary	With high-functioning class groups, what do you believe is the role of the teacher?
Preliminary	In high-functioning seminary classes, what do you believe is the role of students?
Preliminary	What leadership qualities in teachers do you believe are most valuable in consistently leading classes to bond into good seminary classes that learn deeply together?
Later	How is it going so far with each of your classes?
Later	With your classes, what are you finding difficult? Frustrating? Rewarding? Enjoyable?
Later	What signs are you seeing that your classes are (or are not) “there.”
Later	What factors are most influencing your classes being “there” (or not being “there”)?
Later	What do you think your classes that are not “there” need? What do your classes that are “there” need? How should those needs be met?

I did not require that all participants mention a topic for it to be a major theme. However, I did not feel comfortable attaching any theme that came from only one or two participants to the common essence of CCA unless all participants agreed to the resonance and relevance of the idea as a part of their own experience. In other words, the

themes and universal essence are common to all participants, though many elements were initially articulated by individual participants.

The pilot study that first explored CCA with one seminary teacher yielded the CCA model as a description of collective processes in seminary classrooms. One function of this study was to learn if the CCA model maintains usefulness in describing the high-functioning classes of multiple seminary teachers. The a priori codes were derived from the CCA model and the findings of the pilot study. In addition to these a priori codes, a rich set of unanticipated a posteriori themes emerged throughout this study.

Quantitative analysis of qualitative data is limited in its usefulness because not all participant statements are of equal value. Hence, quantifications provide limited information (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For example, one small statement can strike more at the core of a phenomenon than other oft-repeated statements. Moreover, I did not code all statements relating to the themes. Rather, I only coded horizons, or statements that bear meaning to the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Further, in some instances, some of the most poignant themes that resonated most strongly with all participants emerged from the articulation of a single participant.

Nevertheless, I offer some code frequency analysis as it does speak to part of the story being told by participants and reveals to the reader some key information germane to the essence of CCA. Table 6 displays the a priori codes and Table 5 displays emergent codes. Both tables present codes by volume, according to number of excerpts, number of (the six) participants represented in the coded excerpts for each category, and number of words in the related horizons, or coded excerpts.

Table 6

A Priori Code Volume

Code	Excerpt volume	Participant volume	Word volume
Nature (precariousness/difficulty) of CCA	19	6	1,117
Enjoyment	19	5	734
Teacher experience of CCA	17	6	726
Teaching unactuated classes	17	6	811
Splendid mix of learning and enjoyment	17	4	892
Unified engagement and focus	15	5	580
CCA	14	5	633
Evidence of positive experience	13	6	452
Indicators of CCA	12	5	821
Buy in	11	3	343
Student agency/teacher limitations	11	5	451
Unity, cohesion, and bonding	10	5	243
Student roles and student leadership	10	4	431
Connectivity	9	5	399
Learning	9	5	607
Evidence of learning	8	3	374
Teacher leadership	8	4	366
Student to student connectivity	4	2	101
Teacher as group member	4	2	253
Student to teacher connectivity	3	2	99
Common goal/vision	3	2	210
Shared emotion	2	2	80
Teaching and reaching	2	2	82
Teacher expertise	2	2	110
Teacher role balance	1	1	89

I find it interesting that the more abundant a priori codes relate to the first two research questions (essence and indicators of CCA), whereas the less abundant codes tend to reflect more the roles of students and the role of the teacher, which relate to the third and fourth research question. Notice in both Table 6 and Table 7 that excerpt volume indicates how often teachers meaningfully mentioned a code, and word volume

Table 7

Emergent Code Volume

Code	Excerpt volume	Participant volume	Word volume
Opening up/sharing	32	6	1,560
Reaching and inviting	18	5	1,529
Trust	17	4	438
Sense of relevancy	13	4	710
Appropriate emotional management	13	4	693
Overall collective purpose	12	5	640
Student rebellion and resistance	11	5	742
Feeling of safety	11	4	402
The sweet zone of learning	11	2	523
Managing hyposociality	11	4	432
Student-initiated sharing	10	3	581
Managing hypersociality	9	4	484
Students asking questions	8	3	248
Class size	8	4	536
Class maturity	8	4	476
High love, high expectation	8	3	443
The heart (student agency)	6	3	428
Teacher expectations	6	3	497
Critical mass (buy-in)	5	2	260
Social influence toward buy-in	5	2	272
Group focus versus individual focus	4	3	212
Love, empathy, and acceptance	3	3	196

indicates how much was said in total about the code. For example, trust (Table 7) came up often, but the comments about it tended to be briefer. On the other hand, participants mentioned class size less often, but when they did, they said more about it.

The quantity and efficacy of the emergent codes suggests reasonable success in my effort for epoche and in my allowing meaning to emerge from the participants and the data rather than simply my imposing meaning on the participants and the data.

Nevertheless, the a priori codes derived from the pilot study and CCA model provided a valuable lens to commence the study and analyze the data—a process that enabled the a posteriori themes to emerge in the development of a richer and more complete picture of the processes of actuation.

I will now explore the four major that largely parallel the four research questions. As I do so, I note the assertion of Creswell and Poth (2017) that using properly derived themes as headings in a qualitative study helps strengthen the communicative power of a study. I pattern the style of the following findings after these recommendations. The codes became the themes of the study and the headings that follow are these themes. As a researcher, my hope is that the reader feels not only a connection to the participants of the study, but also a sense of validity to the findings of this study through a deep understanding of the experience of CCA in seminary classes through the medium of the participants' original articulation. Creswell and Poth (2017) also advise that phenomenological reports should express the voice and words of the study's participants and that participant quotations should be incorporated into the text of the manuscript. Table 8 illustrates my process of coding and the development of these themes and the resulting descriptions and essences.

Analysis of Theme One: High-Functioning Seminary Classes

(Questions 1 and 2)

The first major theme in the study emanated from the first two research questions (relating to the essence and indicators of CCA). The subthemes that support this major

Table 8

Example of Code and Theme Development

Evidence/participant excerpts	Code	Theme	Major theme	Essences
<p>William: Because you can see that they are willing to share some things that are not necessarily overly sacred but are from their heart. Their answers are much more meaningful and applicable to teenagers. They are not just giving the same correct answers about the Savior, but they are telling me their experiences with the Savior. They are starting to share what difference the word of God is making in their life. They start to see some conversion going on.</p> <p>Peter: To a certain extent I think you learn to the level that you risk. And I'm talking about a good risk and not a bad risk. But, at least for me in a classroom (and I think the students as well), there is a risk in voicing your opinion, in voicing things you have experienced—especially of a spiritual nature in a religious classroom.</p> <p>Benjamin: An ideal seminary class has a comfort level with each other and with me that allows them to share things that mean something, instead of the fake answers that you give when you don't trust people. So that's what I think makes a good class is when they are comfortable enough to share things. Two students, on the last day of class, said that they felt like they could be vulnerable. One of my classes got there. They felt like we could open up and say things and share things of a real nature.</p> <p>Joseph: Students are sharing. You always have your core group of kids who share. But when you are "there," you get students from all over the class that share. They are not always sharing, but they feel like they can share, and they are willing to share.</p> <p>John: And when they start sharing their inner self, then these students can help them, which makes the class so much better. Because then I am not providing all the answers. They are helping each other out.</p> <p>Samuel: I think you need a group to learn. I think also ideas are better solidified often when they are verbalized. This is how I learn. I learn best by opening my mouth, even if it comes out wrong. I can correct myself by throwing it out there and seeing how it is reacted to, and if someone corrects it or has a different opinion, I learn from that. So, I think there's power in the formulation of ideas when you vocalize and throw them out to the group.</p> <p>Peter: There are great opportunities in the class to socially act on what we are learning. It could be writing, choosing to follow along in the scriptures, or reading a verse. But certainly, in a group when there's that social aspect of acting, there's just a greater opportunity. You can see other people's views, you can see what other people are learning, you can hear other people's questions. There's this dialogue of learning together.</p>	<p>Sharing, opening up, risking</p> <p>Students asking questions</p>	<p>Deep social learning</p> <p>Overall purpose</p> <p>Collective class actuation</p>	<p>High-functioning seminary classes</p> <p>processes of buy-in</p> <p>Student leadership in the collective</p> <p>Teacher leadership in the collective</p>	<p>Structural & textural description and overall essence of CCA</p>

theme include the overall purposes of these teachers, their emphasis in the importance of deep social learning, and their descriptions of CCA as conveyed through the concept of ideal, high-functioning seminary classes.

Overall Purpose

Seminary bears many similarities to secondary public education, including similar class sizes, classrooms, desks, professional teachers, lessons, and daily classes during the school day. Nevertheless, the purpose of seminary is unique and may be the primary impetus behind the highly contextualized features of seminary as an educational domain. The participants in this study view their purpose as teachers as lofty. They speak of their focus being “Christ and conversion. Everything we do in this system is geared toward that. Everything” (William, preliminary interview). They also note that “the scripture and Christ-centered purpose of seminary is primary, and the other things (like relationships) are important supports for that purpose” (Peter, preliminary interview).

These participants also aspire to lofty outcomes for their efforts. They seek a transformational learning, or “learning that leads you to become something different. You are acting to become something different—to become more like heavenly Father and Jesus Christ” (Peter, preliminary interview). To have students become “better people when they leave this class than they were an hour earlier” (John, preliminary interview), they want lessons to “go deeper into their hearts, stick with them, changing who they are, helping them, preparing them for the temple, preparing for eternal life through those changes they are making, and through those actions they are taking in their lives” (Peter, preliminary interview). This overall purpose alters teacher expectation, making it “not

just about the 13 weeks. My expectation is about ultimately where we are trying to go with this thing” (Joseph, interview 2).

An Optimal Collective Experience: Deep Social Learning

Common among the participants is a belief that the best way to achieve their lofty intentions with their students is by providing a deep social learning experience. Phrases such as “that experience,” “a good experience,” and “a positive experience” are dominant and frequent throughout the data. Such an experience is not “just the teacher teaching or preaching and the students just listening or receiving, but it’s the whole class as a group learning together, discussing, having this experience together,” and “I think deep down most students want to have that experience” (Peter, preliminary interview). John (focus group) explained: “I want these kids to become something. That means they have to have an experience. They have to have something that makes them want to be different, to be better, and they don’t get that from book learning.”

The following comment from Samuel illustrates the perceived benefit of a deep social learning experience for the students:

The ideal is that everyone is participating and sharing, and they are teaching each other. That is ideal because if they will share with each other, they become the teacher as well, and they will have more investment in the class and more power in the class as a student. I think the learning is enhanced because you get multiple perspectives, multiple opinions, multiple experiences. And the students appreciate the comments of their peers and learn more from them than they do from the teacher a lot of the time. (preliminary interview)

Other participants asserted that collective learning can take learning “beyond what individuals or the teacher alone can provide” (Peter, preliminary interview). Students in

good seminary classes “are listening to each other and are focused on comments that other kids are making” (Benjamin, preliminary interview) and “it opens opportunity for learning—not just for the one sharing, but for everyone else to learn from their experience” (Peter, preliminary interview).

But these teachers’ intentions for deep social learning also stems from their pedagogical desires. For example, Joseph revealed that students in classes who are hesitant to engage in collective learning may be satisfied, “but for me, I want to open things up. I want them to respond to questions. I want them to give me feedback as to where they are at.” Peter (preliminary interview) lamented that “for me it is really hard to see if it is happening. But coming back to if they do share, I feel like that is the greatest indicator of that.” Social learning processes therefore provide valuable feedback to teachers and likely provide a deep learning experience beyond what individuals would experience without the instrumentality of the group.

Opening up, sharing, and taking social risk. The act of students opening up and “sharing from the heart” is at the core of this deep, social learning experience. In fact, the theme of “opening up” was not only unanticipated and emergent in this study, but it also consumes more volume of coded horizons than any other theme—a priori or a posteriori. William (focus group) emphasized the need for teachers to “create a culture, a culture of sharing. And whatever that takes, especially at the beginning of your class, it’s huge.” This personal sharing is vital and is “the joy of teaching” (Gordon, focus group), but “it doesn’t happen that often” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Data relating the theme of opening up were grouped into three subthemes: taking risk, from the heart, and collective

learning.

Taking risk. These actuation-minded seminary teachers report believing that “you learn to the level that you risk. So, I think to really get to a deeper level of learning there has to be some risk taken” (Peter, preliminary interview). This risk is a social risk for students that comes in doing “something that can backfire on them” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). The act of “voicing your opinion and voicing things you have experienced—especially of a spiritual nature in a religious classroom—takes risk” (Peter, preliminary interview). Moving classes toward becoming learning communities, for these teachers, involves fostering a willingness in students to take social risks.

From the heart. “Meaningful,” “that mean something,” “from the heart,” “of a real nature,” and “applicable to teenagers” are all phrases participants used to describe what they hope students share during deep, social, learning experiences. These participants believe that in good seminary classes, students “are willing to share some things that are not necessarily overly sacred but are from their heart. Their answers are much more meaningful and applicable to teenagers. They are telling me their experiences with the Savior” (William, preliminary interview). When students share things from their heart, teachers and students “stand on holy ground, and how you handle that can help it or kill it also. J. Reuben Clark (1938) said that when they open their hearts you need to remove your shoes because you stand on holy ground” (Benjamin, interview 2).

Collective learning. These participants seek collective learning benefits that come from students opening up to each other in social learning processes. These participants believe that “as you share things, you are able to understand better what you are thinking.

It's one thing to have it in your heart, but when you articulate it, write it down, or say it, it becomes clear in your mind" (John, preliminary interview). Collective learning is beneficial because "in a group when there's that social aspect of acting, there's just a greater opportunity. You can see other people's views, you can see what other people are learning, and you can hear other people's questions. There's this dialogue of learning together" (Peter, preliminary interview). In reflecting on an experience with a class that enjoyed this dialogue of learning together, Joseph (preliminary interview) reminisced that

We saw each other for who we really are as humans—mortals, imperfect, struggling, trying, failing sometimes, trying again—rather than just the facade that we often put up with other people to appear to be something that we maybe are not. Insecurities came out and that was meaningful for kids to look around and say, 'wow, I'm not the only one that's struggling. And I can help you, and you can help me in improving together.'

Because the theme of "opening up" is dominant in and central to the essence of CCA in seminary classes, I have included additional key excerpts arranged by subtheme in Table 9.

Students asking questions. Student questions are another indicator to teachers that their classes are achieving deep social learning. Joseph (preliminary interview) declares that his "best classes tend to ask a lot of questions. They feel very comfortable asking questions." The type of question matters too. Another participant noted that the "major indicator for me is the type of questions they're asking. With some questions, you know that the answer you are going to give them will open up a whole new horizon to them" (John, preliminary interview). Joseph (preliminary interview) highlights the importance of good questions for him as a teacher by declaring that "I thrive as a teacher—I do much better—when they are at that point, when they are comfortable with

Table 9

Additional Excerpts: Opening Up

Subtheme	Participant	Participant statement
Taking risk	William	Students, on the last day of class, said that they felt like they could be vulnerable. (preliminary interview)
	Peter	Certainly, there was a feeling of unity—more than in other classes—where people were willing to open up, willing to take that opportunity. (Preliminary interview)
	John	If they share and they realize: ‘hey they didn’t laugh at me. They liked what I shared. I think I’ll share more.’ (Interview 2)
	John	I find that if I asked students to share in front of the whole class group too early in the trimester, students are afraid to stick their neck out. So I do more pair work where they have to interact with one person in a less threatening way. That is the first 3 or 4 days, to get them talking. Then we step things up and work toward the whole class level eventually. But if I try to get them to share with a whole class on day one, epic fail. They won’t bear testimony, they will be scared, they will be fighting me the whole way. (Interview 2)
From the heart	Benjamin	An ideal seminary class has a comfort level with each other and with me that allows them to share things that mean something, instead of the fake answers that you give when you don’t trust people. So that’s what I think makes a good class is when they are comfortable enough to share things. One of my classes got there. They felt like we could open up and say things and share things of a real nature. (Preliminary interview)
Collective learning	Joseph	when I asked them on the last day of the trimester about meaningful experiences they had had as a class, they kept coming back to a day when they were able to open up and share experiences with each other. (Preliminary interview)
	Joseph	Being able to talk openly about trials and challenges was a meaningful experience. (Preliminary interview)
	John	If they don’t share, they are not going to get ideas. (Preliminary interview)
	John	And when they start sharing their inner self, then these students can help them, which makes the class so much better. Because then I am not providing all the answers. They are helping each other out. (Preliminary interview)
	Samuel	I think you need a group to learn. I think also ideas are better solidified often when they are verbalized. This is how I learn. I learn best by opening my mouth, even if it comes out wrong. I think there’s power in the formulation of ideas when you vocalize and throw them out to the group. (Preliminary interview)

each other and with the atmosphere and with asking questions. That's when I start to feel like we have great interactions."

Collective Class Actuation

As the study commenced, a common essence of CCA began to emerge early—even in the preliminary interview. By the second interview, enough of a common picture had emerged to member-check a developing model with all participants. During that member-check, one participant questioned, "Wait, you mean this isn't just my personality?" That common essence represented the participants' sense of ideal seminary classes, indicators of this ideal, what it is like for teachers when they perceive their class as being there, and the nature (the consistency, difficulty, or precariousness) of achieving and maintaining this ideal in seminary classes.

For these participants, seminary classes seldom launch into deep collective learning as a group on day one of a new term. Rather, they believe that something must "happen" to most groups before they can "have this experience together" (Peter, preliminary interview). Early in the trimester, Peter described his experience with this process: "I feel like I am still trying to get a lot of the initial things going, just getting things established and hopefully creating that atmosphere. I feel like we are still young in the process" (interview 2). Notice his classes being young in the effort to get things going and established to create "that" atmosphere.

Interestingly, when I asked these teachers what makes an ideal class, they all described classes where "it" has happened. They talk about their classes being "there" or not being "there." In the pilot study, the words "it" and "there" emerged a posteriori as

meaningful signals, and the same occurred with all participants in the preliminary interview for this study. Based on participant descriptions, classes are “there” when they seemed primed for deep, collective learning. In other words, “the reason why we want this “it” is because a pattern of “it” happening often sinks it deep” (William, preliminary interview).

The well-being of their class groups permeates these teacher choices. Samuel disclosed that “I am speaking what I shoot for with my classes—what I believe in—and that shapes everything I do, and my perception on whether the class is successful or not” (preliminary interview). Peter articulates a similar perpetual motive:

Every day when I’m planning, I consider what can help us get to those moments that we feel, or we open up, that we are ready to take more action. In execution, I don’t know that I’m always able to get there, and hopefully through more experience and teaching I can understand how to make—or invite—that to happen more often. (preliminary interview)

Another said that, prior to this study, “this issue has been huge for me, but I never put a label on what it was. I had classes I dreaded and classes I loved. But this is exactly what goes on and makes the difference between each of those classes. I don’t have a name for it yet” (Benjamin, interview 2).

Discussing ideal classes led to descriptions of a class being “there,” or classes achieving “it.” However, though teachers seemed to be firm on what they wanted as an ideal, they lacked terminology for “it.” For instance, William became emotional when describing what it is like to teach a class that is “there.” After describing it, he noted that he did not have a word for “it,” but suggested that describing it as “it” and “there” seemed too trite for something so special.

Evidence of positive experience. Teachers look for evidence of positive experience as an indicator that their class is there. “They are happy, this ideal class. You can tell that they are edified. They rejoice together in every sense of that word” (William, preliminary interview). William also observes that “I have appreciated from my early days the idea of, ‘give them an experience and not just a lesson’” (preliminary interview). Peter coupled joy and learning in ideal classes by declaring that “there is joy in learning. You are edified and uplifted together, having the Spirit influence you” (preliminary interview). These teachers hope that students feel “excitement to come to their seminary class” (John, preliminary interview) and that “students that maybe used to not look forward to seminary are now excited to come” (William, preliminary interview). Although these teachers want the students to “express some feeling of satisfaction,” evidence of positive experience can be very “hard to see” (Peter, preliminary interview). One way that students communicate positive experience can be through gratitude, but it is “not that the students are necessarily thanking the teacher, but the class is happy to be there and grateful for what they are learning” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

Evidence of learning and change. Likely owing to the transformative purpose of seminary, the participants of this study look for indicators that their students are learning and changing. “Are they applying the things they are learning? Are they experiencing anything deeply” (Peter, preliminary interview)? William (preliminary interview) criticizes the complacency of teachers who are satisfied with merely teaching lessons: “did the students change? If not, what was your point?” A sign of a class being there is that “they are acting on what they are learning—either in class or outside of class. I think

if they are taking steps towards Jesus Christ, it's going to create joy" (Peter, preliminary interview). Increased independence in scripture use and proficiency offers meaningful feedback to these teachers: "You start to see that become more natural. Their scripture marking habits become less teacher-driven and more individual-driven" (William, preliminary interview).

Indications of learning seem to provide valuable feedback to these teachers for in situ decisions during lessons:

I think you just have to go with the flow of what the students are understanding. If they have things to share and things are going good, then you ride that. But as soon as you start to feel like it's losing power, instead of just trying to drive that, you just need to move on and get back into the block. That's why it's hard if a class is quiet and they are not giving you good feedback. (Samuel, interview 2)

This feedback provides indicators for teachers on the condition of the class group as the teachers seek to discern if their class is "there."

Teacher experience of CCA (when it's there). Teaching classes that are not there can feel like fighting a class "the whole way." "When a class isn't there, it's work" (Benjamin, preliminary interview). When a class is there, that feeling of resistance changes to a feeling of easiness. An ideal class acquires a "sense of ease where it's not forced" and where "students feel comfortable. It's relaxed. And yet, not relaxed to the point where we are just joking around and nothing gets done. But we can work together and have a feeling that we're comfortable" (Joseph, preliminary interview). Benjamin (preliminary interview) celebrated the perception that "when it happens, it's easy" and observes that he loved "ending with fourth hour. It was enjoyable. It wasn't work. It made it easy. That took the pressure off of trying to drag it out of them. So, it was fun. It

was easy.” Samuel (preliminary interview) also emphasizes that when it happens “it is exciting. It’s easy. The instruction becomes easier. Not getting there or setting it up, but once it’s there, things just go so smoothly. There is a bonding between everybody, between the group.” Common is the feeling that “I just relax” (Peter, interview 2) in good classes. This sense of easiness is motivating. Joseph (interview 2) confessed that “I want to enjoy this. And if I’m not enjoying it, I don’t want to do it. So, I’m constantly asking myself, ‘what do I need to do to make this a better experience—not just for the students, but for me too.’”

The perception that a class is “there” seems to trigger substantial emotional satisfaction. It is “the ultimate of joys, I think. As a teacher, anyway, it is” (John, preliminary interview). For another participant:

I think for me there is joy! I mean, you feel like you’re learning, you feel like you’re experiencing, you feel the spirit of joy. I mean, I feel just an uplifting experience. More than anything else, I feel like that’s the best part of teaching is feeling that we’re learning—and learning deeply. (Peter, preliminary interview)

Another describes the experience of teaching an ideal class as being “very sacred—a heart full of love for those people. And you are so grateful to Heavenly Father for the opportunity to see it working. It is precious. I wish I had better words to describe it” (William, preliminary interview). As a phenomenon, teaching a class that is “there” is “so fun! It’s so fun! It’s energizing. Those are the days I don’t want to quit. And when those days are strung together, it’s even more enjoyable. Everything just kind of clicks and clicks and clicks and clicks” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Although challenging classes are frustrating, leading challenging classes toward actuation may be especially thrilling: “I want that easy-to-teach class. But I draw more satisfaction from having a

difficult class that starts clicking” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

When it’s not there. Teaching difficult class groups is highly frustrating and emotionally draining. But even more, the impact of low-functioning classes further impairs classroom pedagogy and may negatively influence teachers’ careers.

Emotionally challenging. Participants spoke of “dreading” difficult classes. They can be “bothersome” and “frustrating as it can get” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Teachers seek to get their class groups “there,” but “it is hard. It is hard work. It is frustrating because if that is my goal as a teacher and I am not getting there, then that is a failure in that class. So it is. It’s hard” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). The feeling of resistance emerges because “when it’s not happening, I feel like there is push back from students. You can feel this really negative feeling or attitude” (Peter, preliminary interview). Difficult classes can seem hopeless, and are no small matter for these teachers:

Oh, it is heavy! I mean, when the experience and class is going poorly, I go home, and it weighs on me. I mean, it’s a long trimester if things aren’t going well. I’m trying to help things get better, but sometimes it just seems like nothing is going to get better until the term finishes, and hopefully it goes better next term. (Peter, preliminary interview)

Peter (preliminary interview) also laments that “emotionally, it is really hard. I feel like, ‘What could we have done that could have changed it?’ But it really weighs on me that we are maybe not having that experience.” Such classes can be especially hard when they are the last class of the day: “When you end your day that way as a teacher it is ultra-disabling. You are like, ‘I have got to do this again tomorrow?’ It’s just very, very frustrating” (William, preliminary interview). Failing to get a class there

rips your heart out. And if you have an entire class that is completely tuned out, no matter how hard you tried... yeah. Those are the days you don't want to teach. And then you've got three other classes that are doing well, but that one will rip your heart out. You just pray that it's not the last class of the day. (John, preliminary interview)

Socioemotional and pedagogical impairment. Paradoxically, although challenging classes require more socioemotional and pedagogical effort, according to these participants, the tendency of some teachers with low-functioning classes may be to pull back on socioemotional and pedagogical exertion. Part of that may result from teachers feeling “at a loss as a teacher as what to do” (John, preliminary interview) with such classes. One participant acknowledged that it “is pitiful to admit, but I did not like my third hour,” and the result of those feelings was that “I was scared to go into my third hour. I think I was tighter.” He also admits (interview 2) that “sometimes when I get a class like this I give up.” And he is not alone.

Benjamin (Interview 2) notes that “I am more willing to change up my lessons while I am teaching in classes that are going well than I am in classes that struggle.” He finds himself “hesitant to do the things or to ask from my classes that don't have it the things I ask from the classes that have it, because I don't have the faith that they are going to share” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Peter acknowledged that

I feel like in some of my other classes I am a little hesitant to share some experience there or something to relate with them a little bit because they shoot off on this huge tangent. Then I have to bring it on back and it may take a long time. Whereas in fourth hour I can share quick comments or something about my life to connect with them and we can get right back to where we need to be. (interview 2)

Another teacher identified the irony that, with a difficult class, “instead of inviting more of those experiences that can create it, I did it less, I think. I didn't even really offer

it to them.” One participant proffered that one of many reasons why teachers may pull back like this is because it “feels like manipulation. You feel like the puppeteer and they aren’t responding. Because they’re not going there naturally it can feel mechanical, and that can be a horrible feeling as a teacher” (Benjamin, interview 2).

Career downer. Teaching classes that are not “there” is burdensome enough that its negative impact can sour a career. William (preliminary interview) declared that “ultimately, I don’t think you are going to enjoy your career. I don’t think you can.” Terms when teachers teach classes that will not get there feel like they last forever, and “it does affect me as a person. And, if we’re being honest, those are the days where, if it’s a long time—a long trimester in a class like that—I think, ‘I don’t want to do this for 25 years’” (Joseph, preliminary interview).

The nature (precariousness, difficulty, or consistency) of CCA. As noted by these participants, establishing and maintaining an ideal class seems to be elusive. These teachers suggest that their “classes can fluctuate quite a bit” (John, preliminary interview), and it “can shift from day to day” (William, preliminary interview), and even from moment to moment within the same lesson. Teachers are “constantly trying to keep it there, but it’s very fluid” (Joseph, preliminary interview). The elusiveness of high-functioning classes makes the pursuit of ideal classes challenging:

I think it’s hard. I think it takes a lot of work. It is so taxing—both for the teacher and the students. When you get a class there, it doesn’t stay very long. My experience is that there are ebbs and flows with it. I’ve seen that when we are there, we are there for a period of time. Not just a day. It’s like there is a moment and that builds, and then kids ride this wave, and then it crashes. And then we’re building it back again. And this tends to happen in the good classes too. It is taxing to be that engaged. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

Samuel (preliminary interview) further articulates the elusiveness of high-functioning classes when talking about a class that “reached an ideal status for about two weeks mid-trimester, and it was incredible, and I was like ‘wow!’ But it was short-lived. There were a lot of students in that class that I had to really work on to buy in, and I am not sure if we ever really got full buy-in with some of them” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

Typical for these teachers may be “to have one or two classes get there, a class that is in the middle, and a class that struggles more” (Joseph, interview 2). The elusiveness and dominating motive of these participants’ intention can be seen by the confession of Samuel that “I think that I have seen this ideal less than I’ve had it in my career. I’m always shooting for it. I think it’s hard because it goes against the natural man” (preliminary interview). His use of the phrase “natural man” refers to the weaknesses and tendencies of human nature. In the “classes that don’t naturally go there, doing this is a constant effort. I want them to get there” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). And once a class is there, “a teacher, really, if they get this, knows that if they get there, they cannot let off the gas pedal” (William, preliminary interview).

This ideal also seems fragile to these participants, because “you can kill it in a matter of days if you are a teacher. How quickly can you destroy a plant? All you have to do is step on it and the plant is done” (William, preliminary interview). Ideal classes can be “killed” by the teacher or students: “If it’s there, and I say something stupid, I may never get it back. A student can scoff or make fun of sacred or personal things and kill it” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Myriad factors can derail this experience for a class:

I've noticed that sometimes a class will be there, and then, for example, a student teacher might come in, and the expectation from the teacher changes. Often it is a rebuilding process afterward. And we will either drift out of the zone or get dangerously close to the edge of the zone where we have to rebuild. (Joseph, preliminary interview)

The fragile nature of this ideal may owe to the complexity involved. On a “day-to-day basis, it is influenced by so many different things. There are so many factors” (Joseph, preliminary interview), and “since you’re dealing with so many things, and every kid is different, it’s hard stuff” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

Nevertheless, another paradox of high-functioning classes for these participants seems to be that—despite the elusive and fragile nature of the ideal—it can also tend toward stability, durability, and consistency. A class that experiences getting “there” regularly can develop patterns of high-functionality, and “a pattern of ‘we are there’ creates ‘we’re there’” (William, preliminary interview). Benjamin explained that

when it happens, it tends to persist. If nobody does something stupid, it tends to be there tomorrow and the next day and a whole trimester because they know that it’s safe. Kids are willing to continue to do it. They have experienced that it and know it’s safe. (preliminary interview)

William (Focus Group) added that it is like

a rocket that is taking off and going into space. It takes how much fuel to get up there? It’s taxing. But once it’s in orbit, it’s easier. It takes so much to get there. But man, week seven or eight, I’m not looking forward to the trimester ending. In other words, there may be an immediate, in-the-moment ideal (micro-

actuation), and there may be a longer-term ideal (macro-actuation) established by consistent patterns of micro-actuation. Benjamin (Focus Group) notes that “there’s a lot of little ‘there’s’ to get to the big ‘there.’” Further research may be needed to separate these two forms of actuation because teachers may talk of either form when discussing an ideal class, and both forms are important. These patterns can go from “more extremes”

(Peter, preliminary interview) early in a career to “become steadier” where “there are more opportunities to have that experience” (Benjamin, preliminary interview) over time.

For most classes, this ideal seems to take time to develop. Joseph (preliminary interview) could only “think of two or three classes over an 8-year career that were ready to go from day one.” It is not uncommon for classes to get “there” late in the term: “But they just didn’t feel safe until the last week. So, sometimes it takes an entire trimester” (John, preliminary interview). The timing of it happening seems to be outside the teacher’s control.

I can think of a couple classes where they switched. And the frustrating thing is that it often does not switch until the last two or three weeks of the trimester. Then all the sudden, ‘we are there!’ It may be at the bottom portion of the zone, or at the top portion of the zone, but we are in it. And I’m like, ‘what happened to the last 10 weeks?’ But that’s a training process. And in some of those classes you do need to be excited when you get there after 10 or 11 weeks. (Joseph, preliminary interview)

William (preliminary interview) offers a specific estimate by asserting, “generally speaking, the pattern has been about 6 to 8 weeks to get there. In a 12-week course, you are starting to have amazing trust at about that point.” John had a similar estimate but observed that classes generally take important leaps by about week 2 or 3 because of the development of trust among the collective. Table 10 provides evidence and summarizes elements of the first major theme: high-functioning seminary classes.

Analysis of Theme Two: The Processes of Buy-In (Questions 1 and 2)

The subthemes that emerged in support of the second major theme (The Processes of Buy-In) include (a) buy-in; (b) the internal social environment, or “the heart;” (c) a

Table 10

Evidence of Major Theme: High-Functioning Seminary Classes

Subtheme	Codes (subcodes)	Examples of evidence	Researcher interpretation
Overall purpose	Overall purpose	Peter: Hopefully the things we are talking about can go deeper into their hearts, stick with them, changing who they are, helping them, preparing them for the temple, preparing for eternal life through those changes they are making. So, in simplicity, I guess they would have an experience that leads them to take the next step in their life—to help them find happiness, or peace, or repentance, whatever they need.	These participants seem to hold a deep sense of meaning in their overall purpose and express desires for their students to have a transformative learning experience that benefits their life and eternal wellbeing.
Deep social learning	Deep social learning	Peter: But certainly, in a group when there's that social aspect of acting, there's just a greater opportunity. You can see other people's views, you can see what other people are learning, you can hear other people's questions. There's this dialogue of learning together.	These participants indicate a desire for students to experience levels of learning in class that go beyond what students could experience if they were learning alone.
	Opening up, sharing, taking social risk	Benjamin: There is a risk in voicing your opinion, in voicing things you have experienced—especially of a spiritual nature in a religious classroom. That takes risk. But when it happens, it opens up opportunity for learning—not just for the one sharing the experience, but for everybody else to learn from that experience.	These participants' vision of deep social learning appears to entail a class collective where students "open up" and take social risks by sharing personal, meaningful experiences and ideas that deepen learning.
	Students asking questions	Joseph: They love to ask questions. My best classes tend to ask a lot of questions. They feel very comfortable asking questions. And I think I thrive as a teacher, I do much better, when they are at that point, when they are comfortable with each other and with the atmosphere and with asking questions. That's when I start to feel like we have great interactions.	These participants value classes that socially engage through meaningful questions.
Collective class actuation	CCA	Benjamin: Before the study this issue has been huge for me, but I never put a label on what it was. I had classes I dreaded and classes I loved. But this is exactly what goes on and makes the difference between each of those classes. I don't have a name for it yet.	In describing high-functioning class groups, these participants indicate that a class is "there" when it can engage in deep social learning.
	Indicators of CCA (evidence of positive experience, evidence of learning/change)	Joseph: Indicators that they are there are, there is a sense of, or feeling of ease in a class, and that often manifests itself in laughter. There are questions about what is going on in each other's lives. It feels good. As the class goes on, they are asking a lot of questions. Students are sharing. When you are "there," you get students from all over the class that share. The students are focused.	Because actuation is complex and nuanced, these participants rely heavily on indicators to signify if a class is "there."

(table continues)

Subtheme	Codes (subcodes)	Examples of evidence	Researcher interpretation
	Teacher experience: when it's there	Samuel: It is exciting. It's easy. The instruction becomes easier. Not getting there or setting it up, but once it's there, things just go so smooth. There is a bonding between everybody, between the group.	When a class is "there," these participants enjoy a sense of ease and enjoyment and identify strong group bonds.
	Teacher experience: when it's not there	Benjamin: When a class isn't there, it's work. It is hard work. It is frustrating because if that is my goal as a teacher and I am not getting there, then that is a failure in that class. So it is. It is hard. And I find myself hesitant to do the things or to ask from my classes that don't have it the things I ask from the classes that have it, because I don't have the faith that they are going to share.	For these participants, teaching unacted classes feels like a fight, hard work, and seems accompanied by high emotional frustration.
	Precariousness, difficulty, or consistency of CCA	Samuel: I think it's hard. I think it takes a lot of work. My experience is that there are ebbs and flows with it. I've seen that when we are there, we are there for a period of time. Not just a day. it's like there is a moment and that builds, and then kids ride this wave, and then it crashes. And then we're building it back again. That is my experience.	Getting and keeping classes "there" can a great challenge for these participants due to the complex, nuanced, and tenuous nature of actuation.

Buy-in in seminary is especially poignant for these participants because, as John (Interview 2) estimates, "25% of these students are here because of their parents." This estimate reflects the occurrence in seminary when a student may not wish to take seminary but is required to by their parents. When a class is "there," a teacher may say, "I think I have buy-in in that class. I think they have bought in to what we are doing" (Samuel, interview 2). Buy-in "is a big thing. You have to get them to buy in—that, 'hey, I want to be here'" (John, interview 2). And "there has to be this sense of ease, where it's not forced" (Joseph, preliminary interview). He later adds:

It has to be their idea. They have to want it. If I want it for them and they do not want it for themselves as well, I can't force it. My role is to give them incentive to hope it becomes their own desire one way or the other (Joseph, preliminary interview)

But buy-in can be difficult to achieve because "that choice is going to involve effort on their part" (Samuel, preliminary interview).

Critical mass/majority. These teachers seem to be pushing for a tipping-point of

sorts where enough of the class—whether determined by numbers or levels of social influence—buys in to actuate the class, as a collective, for deep learning process.

Participants use phrases like “the majority” and “the whole class” to describe the “critical mass” of the class that must buy in to get a class “there.” For example, “I don’t have a number for it, but when the majority buy into it, all of a sudden, we’re there—and it becomes safe for them.” (Joseph, interview 2). In other words, “when a majority of them feel comfortable with each other, it becomes easy. It opens up” (Joseph, interview 2).

This point of collective buy-in seems to be a small shift with substantial effect:

There’s a drastic emotional difference between a class that is close but doesn’t buy in compared with the class that buys in. If you have five or six that won’t buy in, it may ruin the whole class. If you have one or two, it may still happen. (John, interview 2)

There may be a “first follower” (Sivers, 2010) stage prior to a “buy-in stage.” To illustrate, “when you get one first follower, it may make it acceptable. When you get three or four or five more—whatever the critical mass is—all of a sudden, everybody buys into it” (Joseph, interview 2). These teachers may feel that a class “as a whole” has bought in even though some individuals have not. They may be “sad because of that one or two students. But at least the entire class is going in the right direction” (John, preliminary interview). “Entire class” here clearly means the group as a whole and does not mean every single student. What happens in high-functioning classes to individuals who do not buy in? John observed that

Most of my classes—if it’s one or two students—they tune them out and they become their own little bubble (which is what they want anyway). If it’s more than two, if it becomes three or four or more, they can bog down the entire class. But if it’s one or two, we almost always lose them. It’s terrible, but that’s what happens. They just kind of isolate themselves. (preliminary interview)

Teachers may still judge such classes that have hold-outs to be “a good class. There are a few that struggle in it, but they are going with the majority. The majority I think has bought it” (Samuel, interview 2). Some students may hold back from buying in and “it’s not a rebellion thing, they’re just waiting for it to get to that critical mass” (Joseph, interview 2). However, if enough students—or more influential students—hold out, it can be devastating to the class:

It’s when the majority of the class has shut off because I have seven or eight boneheads in there that don’t want to do anything, and then the whole class kind of, ‘well I can’t trust anybody in here.’ (John, preliminary interview)

These participants “worry about the group buying in—getting enough buy-in from the majority to sway the minority. And it doesn’t always happen. Sometimes it can go in the opposite way” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

Unity, cohesion, and bonding. A bonded, cohesive, unified class is such a strong indicator of buy-in for these participants that these action-minded teachers seem to hold class unity as a primary objective. They do this because

without a feeling of unity in the class, I feel like there is a lot held back. The students, if they have a willingness, but maybe the unity is not there, then sometimes you don’t always achieve what you hope because students are not willing to invest or take that risk to be vulnerable if the unity is not there. (Peter, preliminary interview)

Teachers describe ideal classes by asserting that “in that class, we connected. And it bonded me to those kids, them to me, and them to each other” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Another teacher observed that “there is bonding between everybody, between the group” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Joseph (focus group) observed that “you are able to have more intimate conversations with those classes.”

The primary bonding element in class groups may be trust. In other words, classes may bond to the level that trust emerges among and across a class group. To foster trust and build unity, these teachers seek to cultivate interaction: “When we talk about respect or unity, I think interaction gives us opportunity for that to happen” (Peter, preliminary interview). This relationship between trust and bonding in a class collective is the basis of William’s insight that “in addition to trust, a class that is there has unity. Class unity is very high at that point” (preliminary interview).

The melding and cohesion of a class into a community of learners seems to also develop through shared emotion: “Are the teacher and students feeling this shared experience and joy in the classroom” (Peter, preliminary interview)? After an observation, following my reference to a student who shared a personal experience, Benjamin (Interview 2) articulated the potential role of shared emotion in bonding and transforming a class:

That could be a turning point for the class, so I am excited for it. I don’t know how, but I need to leverage that. I think that will bond this class because it is a serious and emotional thing, and they all shared it. So, I absolutely think that that is something that is going to transform this class.

When discussing classes that are not yet there, the participants talk about “pockets” of the class where bonding occurs among a few students but not with the group as a whole. These participants seek to bring these pockets together and meld the class into one united collective. One teacher mentioned a class that has “three or four groups that are highly connected, but they are not connected as a whole class. It actually works opposite. Those smaller groups can resist each other and prevent the whole class from bonding” (Benjamin, interview 2). Another teacher discussed moving away from a

seating chart one term as being “no good. We had little pockets that were too high in the zone and little pockets that were too low in the zone. Ultimately, over time, it becomes too low as a class. But the overall social feel distracts from getting there” (Joseph, interview 2). Benjamin (focus group) has begun sprinkling student leaders throughout the class by means of intentional seating charts to affect his classes toward buy-in.

United engagement and focus. Perhaps the most dominating indicator of buy-in for these teachers is the level of engagement and focus of the class. When “a class is not there, there is disengagement,” whereas “in a class that is ‘there,’ everyone is engaged in the learning process” (Samuel, preliminary interview). When describing a class that is there, Samuel identified that

A class is there when they are all actively involved. And that does not mean vocally, because there are different ways to participate. And even though a kid might be quiet it does not mean he has to be sharing to be involved in the class. But that they are all.... The ideal is this: I tell them to go find something in the scriptures and they all go. Every one of them goes looking for those truths. (preliminary interview)

Hence, this engagement may or may not include verbal participation: “All of them are engaged. They may not be saying anything, but they are all engaged” (John, preliminary interview). Samuel (preliminary interview) articulated this point and the dominance of engagement as an indicator by noting that “they all chose to not be distracted and chose to be there.”

These teachers value engagement so highly that they believe that “if they [the students] are not engaged, they’re not learning. I want them all to have a good experience, and they can only do that if they’re acting” (Samuel, interview 2). Individual engagement “helps the whole class rise in productivity” (Peter, preliminary interview).

Engagement shows student readiness to continue the processes of learning: “If you’ve got the majority of your class doing the north-south head bob, then you are going, ‘hey, they are all engaged. I can teach a new concept to them here. They are ready for it’” (John, preliminary interview).

Student resistance against the teacher or collective. Reaching a critical mass for buy-in is often challenging because there may be “just a few students that impede the culture of the class, that really drive it down to a lower-functioning class than the teacher or even a lot of the students would like it to be” (Peter, preliminary interview). Very seldom do these seminary teachers seem to struggle with a true majority of their students on buy-in. Rather, they suggest that:

It is usually two or three students that, either they don’t care, and apathy is infecting, or they are disruptive, and they bring other people into that environment where no matter what you do they cannot seem to help themselves but to oppose it” (William, preliminary interview).

Even when a class reaches a critical mass and buys in as a group, classes are still likely “to have stragglers—students who are working against you. They don’t want to be there at all. Are you ever going to get them to open up” (John, preliminary interview)?

Students may resist buying in or even rebel against the processes of actuation for several reasons. For example, if “a student doesn’t like the teacher, or doesn’t feel respected by the teacher, they will put up walls even though they care about the subject. They don’t care about learning it from you or in this environment” (Samuel, preliminary interview). And if students do rebel, it can be in sundry ways:

If teachers don’t consider the heart, kids are going to rebel. They may not rebel in the way that we normally think of rebellion. If a kid feels dominated by an adult, they will resist. And the student may resist in a lot of ways. They will resist by

checking out mentally. They will resist by hardening that heart, shutting themselves off to learning, not being willing to help the teacher or the class succeed. I believe that is what they do. And the way they do it will be their own form of resistance. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

This rebellion “may be through laziness. They go through the motions, but with the least amount of effort possible. It’s to keep control—to not get in too much trouble, but to where they feel like they are in control and stick it to you in a way” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Categorically, resistant students “who choose to be disruptive can do it in one or both of two ways. they can be out of control and take students with them that way, or they can kind of become secluded” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Even when a critical mass of a class buys in, often “there are others where I can still see a wall up. Now, how do you tear down that wall? I’m not that good” (John, preliminary interview).

Common goal, vision. In seminary, classes gather with a dominant purpose, and that common goal may “make it easier for us than other classes” (John, preliminary interview) subjects, or domains. A common purpose is helpful in cohesion and buy-in, because “if you have an ability to help people see the vision, then that is very powerful. To help them see why they are there, what they’re doing, and see what can happen. I think that would lead to” (Peter, preliminary interview) a class getting “there” more readily. Further, if students

...don’t know what they’re working toward, it’s harder to get there. Maybe they have just happened upon it because the teacher has guided them and then, ‘Hey, we’re here. This is awesome! What happened?’ But, if the students actively know what they are working for, they can contribute to that—and be able to be a part of that—if they know where they are going. And so, if they know what they are working towards, they can contribute to it. (Peter, preliminary interview)

Hence, a common goal may be a vital impetus for collective buy-in.

The Heart

These participants view themselves as managing two different social environments in the classroom. There is “an outward social environment in the class, but whatever is happening on the inside is the critical thing” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Hence, in addition to managing the outward social environment, these teachers also spoke of seeking to manage an inward social environment that may be even more important than the external social environment. They refer to this socially aggregated internal environment as “the heart.” Participants view the heart as vital to the processes of buy-in:

I believe the environment is the heart of each kid. So that is what we are trying to cultivate. We are trying to soften the heart. And a kid that comes in with a bad attitude, if he can feel loved and accepted, then maybe that will soften his heart. If they don't feel safe in class, they are going to harden their heart. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

For these teachers, teaching is “hard because you are dealing with the heart” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Because “learning is a principle of the heart,” these participants may appeal to the heart to foster learning:

Once a kid trusts you with his heart, now where are you going with it? And then you are asking God, ‘what do they need?’ So, as a teacher, are you going in there the next day now that you have got it and teaching doctrine or are we clear back to fun and games again. (William, preliminary interview)

Teachers must therefore help students “realize that there are certain behaviors that increase the likelihood that their heart will be open and receptive” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

The following excerpt illuminates the importance and complexity of this all-

encompassing mission for the heart.

We are dealing with the heart. In the parable of the sower you had hearts that were trampled upon. There are kids in your classes that are being abused at home. They've been offended. They're getting bullied at school. They build up a hard heart or barrier to relationships with other people, and that will affect how they will interact with the group and the teacher. And in the parable of the sower you also had the cares of the world that made that ground hard for stuff to grow in. You have cell phone distractions. You have things that the teenager cares about that are not in line with the gospel. You also are dealing with different levels of testimony. The stony ground—how deep is their understanding? How deep is their commitment level? So, since you're dealing with all that, and every kid is different, it's hard stuff. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

Hence, teachers seek to foster, without force, these behaviors that reach hearts and invite collective buy-in and deep learning.

Sense of Collective Trust

Trust is a dominant, emergent theme in this study and appears to be fundamental for a class to buy in and “open up” for deep social learning. Participants assert that “the class is ‘there’ when it is in trust mode” (John, preliminary interview). They also believe that, pertaining to deep social learning, “trust readies a class to learn together. There is a total readiness to learn. Yes. Because of the patterns. It is the patterns. ‘I know I am always getting something.’ And it does not happen overnight” (William, preliminary interview). Teachers seek to establish these patterns of trust because buy in is most likely to occur if each student is “able to trust everyone else. That way they are willing to share” (John, preliminary interview).

Later in this chapter, I discuss the pivotal role played by student leaders. Student leaders lead in risking vulnerability and inspiring their peers to open up. Such risk seems to require a level of collective trust. One participant noted that he has “another two

students that are chomping at the bit to lead out, but the rest of the class isn't ready yet.

It's the trust issue" (Joseph, interview 2). Regarding another class, the same participant

(Interview 2) articulated the dynamics of trust for such students:

I have students who I had last trimester and last year who were key contributors. I have been looking to one or two specifically. 'Hey, remember how you used to bring things together last year? But you're not doing that this trimester.' I think she is a little afraid because the trust issue is not there. She doesn't feel quite comfortable. She would ask good question after good question last year. She would bring things together. But she doesn't quite feel comfortable yet with this group. The dynamic isn't quite there. We're getting there.

The workings of trust in a class collective are complex—affected by numerous factors. For example, "group dynamics—or the personality of the class—completely and entirely affect the willingness of students to open up" (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Many facets of group dynamics seem to strengthen trust. For one, humor can "make it so there's trust" (John, preliminary interview). Also, trust seems to be the offspring of patterns: "Students will allow a lot to happen if the right patterns are there. It is the patterns. Always patterns" (William, preliminary interview). Generally—but imperatively—the "emotional side of teaching leads to trust if you take advantage of it in all the appropriate ways. Meeting social and emotional needs helps get the trust to be able to teach" (William, preliminary interview). These participants believe that their efforts to meet students' social and emotional needs are pivotal in creating trust.

As discussed earlier, teachers may so desperately long for (a) buy-in from their students, (b) actuation of their class collectives, and (c) the opening up of students in deep social learning that they may tend to force the outcomes and indicators of these processes. These participants believe, however, that if teachers attempt such forceful

means, “[students] put up a wall bigger than the one they had before,” and “if you try to force positive outcomes in a class, you lose their trust. And why are you doing this? There are ulterior motives” (John, preliminary interview). In other words, trust may be the goose that lays the golden eggs of buy-in, actuation, and deep social learning.

Feeling of safety. Trust in seminary classes seems heavily associated to students’ sense of safety as well as the level of connectivity (between teacher and students and among students) in the collective. If teachers are seeking the heart as they pursue buy-in, they must consider the students’ sense of safety, because “if they don’t feel safe in class, they are going to harden their heart” (Samuel, preliminary interview). A sense of safety, then, may enliven the trust that fosters buy-in. John noted that

They feel safe here. It goes back to the trust thing. Trust is so huge. If they come in and there is a safety... you can almost see their wall fall down when they walk in. They are willing to talk. They’re willing to listen. (preliminary interview)

This wall coming down can yield the “opening up” that these seminary teachers seek:

“And then they are not afraid, and there’s that environment in the class—that it is a safe place and they can share” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

For a class to develop a sense of safety, there must be “a concern for the person that’s putting themselves out there” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Teacher leadership for these teachers, then, is largely in inviting students to take risk in opening up, and helping their classes respond appropriately. In fact, “when the class doesn’t feel safe, doesn’t trust each other... man, that’s where you spend your time is working to get there” (Joseph, interview 2). A practical example of how John seeks to foster this sense of safety is as follows:

I want to make it so they have met every single person here within the first week of the trimester. Then they see that none of them bite. They realize after they have met every single person in this class that there is nobody to be scared of here. (preliminary interview)

Connectivity/interactivity. Uncertain whether it was “a personality thing or maybe a pedagogical thing” Joseph (preliminary interview) revealed that “I thrive off the interaction. I use interaction as a gauge, as an assessment of where we are at.” He is not alone. The drive for interactivity is common among the participants. John (preliminary interview) asserts that “An ideal class is safe but open, fostering interaction.” For these teachers, interaction may serve as a valuable means for bonding: “those sharing experiences open up those opportunities to deepen between teacher and student, and between the students. Hopefully it’s this growing experience” (Peter, preliminary interview). Development of a class collective may occur largely through the bonds that grow out of interactivity.

Apparently, interactivity is a basis for much of the enjoyment in high-functioning seminary classes, where class members (teacher and students) “talk to each other before and after class” and where “we actually enjoy each other. It’s not just, ‘I’m answering questions in a lesson,’ but they are talking on the way out of seminary. They enjoy each other’s company before, after, and outside of the class” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). These individual interactions lead to deeper bonds in a developing collective:

You will start to see them respect each other’s comments, express gratitude for those comments—that they are making a difference to them. There is a feeling of caring for one another that goes beyond the classroom. They start to see each other in the hall, and there is a love for one another. It’s different than on the first day. (William, preliminary interview)

These developing connections bring increased “respect from teacher to student,

from student to teacher, and from peer-to-peer. And the more respect you have at each of those levels the more opportunity there is to have that unity—that willingness to participate” (Peter, preliminary interview). Note the assertion that willingness to participate results from a sense of unity. Thus, the bonds that form the basis of a developing collective serve to bond the class, thereby helping open the class up into deep learning processes. To cultivate these processes, actuation-minded teachers seem to seek opportunities for students-to-student interaction as well as teacher-to-student interaction.

Both Joseph and John arrange their classes so that everyone is “able to see everyone else” (Joseph, preliminary interview). John explains why.

Everybody can see each other’s face, so when somebody is saying something that is like a testimony or a personal experience, we can see the one sharing. Visual is more important than audio there, in my eyes. So, I want everybody to be able to see each other’s face. This is a form of interaction. (preliminary interview)

These teachers are continually looking for ways to have students interact: “When I have students work together, I like to have them chat together and break the ice before they work together. I want to get them talking. and I want them to know multiple people in the class” (Peter, interview 2). Teachers play a vital role in classroom connectivity because “it’s hard for students to develop that relationship between each other if they don’t first feel the love and that the teacher has for them” (Peter, preliminary interview). These teachers seem to direct interactions toward the development of collective trust.

Sense of Relevancy and Purpose

In addition to a sense of collective trust, these actuation-minded teachers also reported fostering a collective sense of relevancy, or purpose, in their quest for collective

buy-in. A sense of relevancy is important because buy-in does not happen until “it matters to them. Where they care. They are trying to deepen and increase what they know and believe, and so they are invested in the class” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Teachers seek to foster this sense of relevancy early and perpetually: “Relevancy has to stay the whole time, but you really need to get them from the beginning” (Samuel, preliminary interview). To “gain a sense of relevancy, they have to see that this is helping in their life” (Samuel, preliminary interview), and “it is very important that you are bringing the sense of purpose daily. The consistency is so important in maintaining that environment” (William, preliminary interview).

Because of agency, these teachers feel a need to kindle within students a desire to buy in, and “part of that desire comes from the need to realize that there is relevance. They have to see the relevance in what they are learning and recognize that they need it in their life—to have a desire” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Therefore, without establishing relevancy, teachers may lose buy-in due to lack of effort, because

Relevance is motivating. As seminary teachers, we used to talk about readiness. I don’t call it that anymore. I call it relevancy. It’s not about starting the lesson with something to trick them into the scriptures. At the start of the lesson, it has got to be said, ‘there is something in this chapter for you today. You want to be involved today.’ (Samuel, preliminary interview)

These teachers seek to nurture within the heart a sense of relevancy through both relationships and instructional content:

Fairness and love are motivating factors. I think fairness and love helps establish that relevancy. Why do I care to learn this? Why should I put forth an effort in this class? Sometimes a kid might do it because they see that the teacher loves it and the teacher loves them, and so they do it just out of kindness for the teacher because they like him. Other times, the student might do it because they really feel and believe that, ‘this must be important. I need to be engaged.’ But, if a

student doesn't like the teacher, or doesn't feel respected by the teacher, they will put up walls even though they care about the subject. They don't care about learning it from you or in this environment. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

Teachers also target instructional content because they believe that

The relationships are important, but high-functioning seminary classes also have the right content focus. They are focused on the scriptures and the Savior. So, there is relationships and there's content. The content has to be there too, or it is not going to be there. (Peter, preliminary interview)

For these seminary teachers, a sense of relevancy seems especially poignant in high-functioning seminary classes because

There is this feeling in the room of yearning for that, and they know that this is a place where they can come that is so unique in the world, that offers spiritual guidance, council, and opportunity that they cannot get anywhere else in the world. It is one of the greatest gifts of Seminaries and Institutes for these kids. Once they feel that way, then the excitement... That is what I mean by the excitement. Then they are like, 'I want to go learn. What am I going to get today in Seminary?' (William, preliminary interview)

Figure 4 illustrates the internal social environment (the heart) with the two respective beliefs that comprise it and influence a collective choice to buy-in.

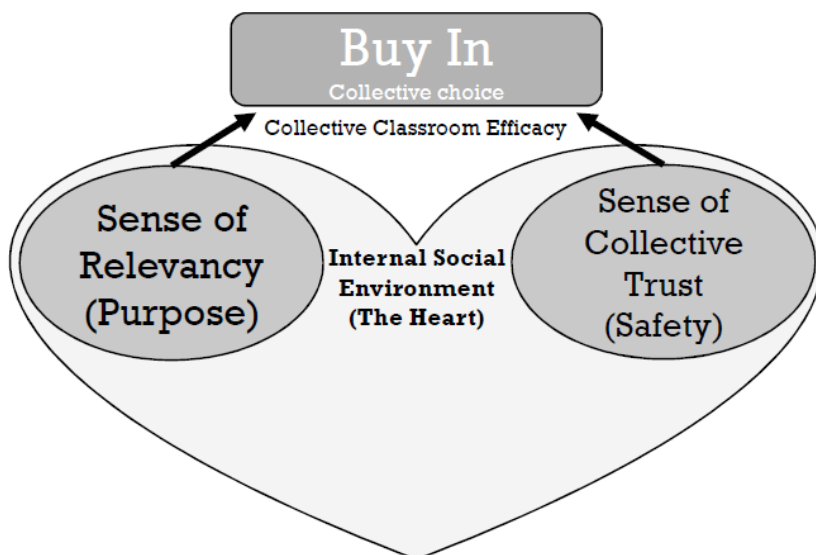


Figure 4. The internal social environment (The Heart) with collective beliefs relating to a sense of relevancy and trust.

The Sweet Zone

In addition to managing the internal social environment of the classroom, or the heart, these teachers also manage the external social environment. The external social environment is what you hear and see when you walk into a classroom. It is easily observable—as opposed to the vaguer and more ethereal internal social environment of the classroom. If the external social environment is too social (hypersocial), students are less likely to learn. But learning may also suffer if the external social environment lacks sociality (hyposocial). Thus, these actuation-minded teachers seek to “continually bring it back into that sweet spot, that sweet zone, where learning takes place. If you’re too low or if you are too high, it’s not going to happen” (Joseph, preliminary interview).

When a class is “in the zone, there is just enough enjoyment and laughter, but it is a nice mix of seriousness and focus, and we are just right there where everything is good. We’re not too high; we’re not too low” (Joseph, preliminary interview). This “sweet zone is the eye of the storm when you are in that vortex” (Joseph, interview 2). Figure 5 illustrates this external social environment.

Although classes fluctuate in their sociality, these teachers strive to keep their classes in the sweet zone because

When you’re down on the lower end, learning is not going to take place. When you’re up on the higher end, you are too far out. You have to be right in the middle. Sometimes you might be too low, and sometimes you might be too high, and you’ll be fluctuating around. It looks like this heartbeat as you beat around the middle of that zone. (Joseph, preliminary interview)

When a class is hypersocial, it lacks focus. When a class is hyposocial, it lacks engagement. Students who are not distracted and “who are willing to jump in and

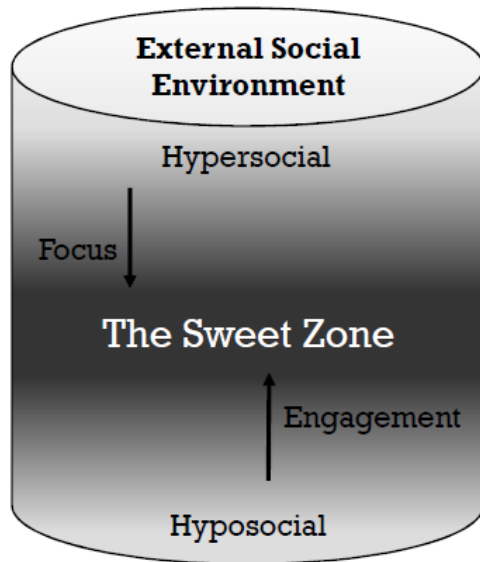


Figure 5. The external social environment.

engage” help “the environment to start off” (Peter, preliminary interview) and enable discussions to deepen more quickly. The teachers in this study tend to be “comfortable with the social hum while [students] work,” but not “comfortable with the hum of distracted talking when they are not focused” (Peter, interview 2). A common problem is the dilemma of “pockets.” These pockets usually entail some pockets within the class that are hypersocial and other segments that are simultaneously hyposocial. Such environments are emotionally grating for these teachers, who will work to meld the entire collective into a unified learning community.

Management of the external social environment has a major impact on the internal social environment (the heart), and can therefore greatly affect collective buy-in. To illustrate, a class that is too high in sociality may fail in learning processes, and the sense of relevancy in that class will likely suffer. Further, for hyposocial classes, the low sociality may signal a lack of collective trust and will likely deepen that lack of trust if

the hyposociality persists. Hence, to get and stay in the sweet zone of learning, these teachers seek classes that are highly engaged, but that remain highly focused. To achieve this, teachers must manage both hypersociality and hyposociality in the external classroom environment.

Hypersociality. Classes that are too social tend to be filled with pockets of hypersociality that lack focus:

On the high end of the zone, if they are too out of control, they are just there to have a good time. And that often looks like small conversations going on with each other. They are happy to be there with each other. They love it. But there is no expectation among them of learning. There's no desire to learn or to be focused on any particular thing. That is a very aggravating experience. I feel my blood pressure start to rise. When the class is up there, I feel myself getting frustrated and angry and wanting them to come back. (Joseph, preliminary interview)

Hypersocial classes may tend to be “very chatty. They are very bonded, but on a shallow level” (Benjamin, interview 2). One teacher demonstrated hypersociality management during an observation and articulated it later by explaining that “two students were not focused on what we were doing. So, I went and stood by them to invite them to be engaged with what we were doing” (Peter, interview 2). From this teacher's statement, we can see that *focus* refers to being socially engaged with the group—its activity and purpose. Lack of focus, then, comes from engaging with something other than the class group and its immediate purpose. Interestingly, concurrent to this teacher managing these two hypersocial students with his proximity, he was creating an activity to spawn movement elsewhere in the class so he could simultaneously manage developing hyposociality.

Because of rich sociality and strong social bonds, classes that get “there” may

tend to become hypersocial over time if not managed well. As Samuel (Interview 2) expressed, “because my classes have a good experience together, by the end of the trimester they tend to become too social. Sometimes learning can become impeded the last couple weeks of the trimester.”

Hyposociality. These teachers seek to engage their classes in social learning. They believe that if sociality is too low, learning may be constrained. As I mentioned earlier, some teachers may be tempted to offer unactuated classes a lesser pedagogy or a diminished emotional investment. This problem may be common in hyposocial classes. One participant confessed that

When you have a ‘dead horse’ class, you just love them and are patient. You keep teaching the expectation. But, ironically, I find myself using less banter with them, and it becomes, ‘okay you guys are going to get the generic lesson that I prepared.’ I don’t feel like I am myself with those classes. (Samuel, interview 2)

When these teachers have “quiet classes, it’s hard. There’s some techniques maybe that I revert to to try to help them engage” (Peter, preliminary interview). These techniques that these teachers use to stir engagement include teachers’ efforts to use variety. Teachers provide this variety “for stimulus, for a challenge, and for a wake-up call to remind themselves that they have to act in this process for it to work, that the minute that they start waiting to be acted upon, there are problems” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

Are teachers more frustrated with hypersocial classes or hyposocial classes? Based on the participants of this study, teachers vary on which sociality extreme they find more aggravating. It appears to be a matter of preference and is not part of the universal essence of CCA among seminary teachers. But, all the participants in this study seek to

pull their classes toward the sweet zone with an appropriate level of sociality.

The Splendid Mix of Learning and Enjoyment

For these participants, much of the complexity of teaching, buy-in, and actuation comes in managing both the external social environment and the internal social environment. Based on the experience of these participants, I believe that teachers manage the complexities of their class groups and establish and maintain dynamic equilibrium in their class collectives by maintaining the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment (Anderson et al., 2019). The data for this study richly sustains the role of the splendid mix in explaining how seminary teachers seek to meld their classes into cohesive communities that are primed for deep learning. The splendid mix manages both the sweet zone and the heart. In other words, these actuation-minded teachers use the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment in each class to manage both the external and the internal social environment and invite buy-in.

This splendid mix may shift from large swings between learning and enjoyment early in a career to a more balanced, steady mix as teachers gain experience with these processes.

Early in my career it was this: heavy learning, then, ‘boy, we’ve got to have some fun!’ And then, just a whole day of something fun. Now it’s, ‘we are going to learn, but we are going to laugh along the way.’ (Samuel, interview 2)

This mix provides “the right balance to get them to interact, to feel safe” (John, interview 2), which links the splendid mix to interaction and the development of collective trust. If the mix is off, teachers “need to rebalance those things” so that their classes “can get to that spot where things are happening” (Joseph, interview 2).

Sometimes the mix may be off due to the social propensities of the class. One teacher observed that “in my fifth hour, I do nothing to try to increase fun, because they bring that” (Benjamin, interview 2). Ultimately, the approach of actuation-minded teachers may be fairly simple and highly focused on the splendid mix as such teachers “hope to see that [students] are understanding the material and that they are enjoying what we are doing” (Joseph, preliminary interview).

Teachers usually mix learning and enjoyment simultaneously, but they occasionally separate the two:

I think it’s more often a simultaneous mix. But there are those times where we separate it. And I think that we separate them when we are not in the zone. If we separate the enjoyable, we take out the enjoyable because we are up here, and we need to bring it back down to there. It is to pull back, or to pick up. And if I sense that the class is just not enjoying it (they come in and sit down, and you see that look on their faces), then maybe we scrap the learning for a moment and we start to have a little bit of fun for a minute—that we just enjoy each other’s company, each other’s presence, to pick them back up. And then we go back to mixing them together to where we can have a good experience. (Joseph, preliminary interview)

Some classes tend more easily toward the ideal because “the mix is already good;” but in other classes, teachers must “go in and train so they know what they need to do, so that their experience becomes one of learning and enjoyment, so they’re in the zone” (Joseph, preliminary interview). When the mix is good, classes tend to be “focused on accomplishing the task but are comfortable and relaxed doing it. They are engaged but are having a good time. It’s not forced for sure” (Joseph, preliminary interview). These teachers believe that because the process of buy-in is agentic on the part of students, engagement without force is vital, and classes that enjoy the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment are more likely to enable sustained student engagement.

These actuation-minded teachers view learning as a primary goal, but they believe that—because of student agency—learning without enjoyment is unsustainable. “I want it to be enjoyable. But that is not all of it. Enjoyable is just the tool to get to the learning” (John, preliminary interview). If there is

not learning, if there’s not focus, if there’s not a desire to come work together, and there’s only playful banter, and we’re having a good time, I find myself getting frustrated with that. We have gone too far the one way and we are not enough in the middle. The banter, the playfulness, and the enjoyment are there to help us to achieve the purpose of understanding. So, if all we are here to do is have a good time, we have missed the point and I become frustrated with that. I don’t enjoy that. (Joseph, preliminary interview)

Further, “if learning is not enjoyable, I think it will stop it from getting there, because they don’t want to be there. It’s part of the agency thing. But I want to be careful. We are not here to entertain” (John, preliminary interview). Enjoyment serves to re-engage students in the learning process, which is vital because “if you don’t have humor popping in every now and then, or a personal story, you lose their interest at the high school level” (John, preliminary interview). For these teachers, enjoyment relates to interest, which relates to learning. These teachers use this balance of learning and enjoyment (see Figure 6) to guide their in-situ decisions as they lead their class collectives.

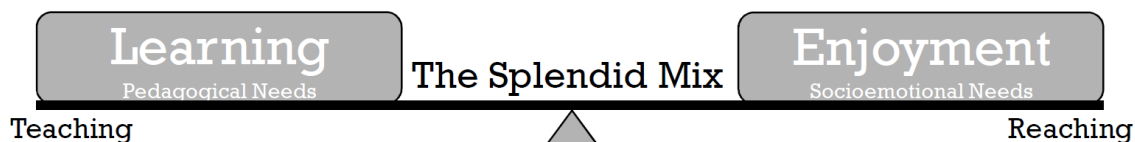


Figure 6. The splendid mix of learning and enjoyment.

Samuel noted that his lesson preparation “is enough that when I get in the class, I

go with the flow of things” (interview 2). In football, when a quarterback is about to begin a play, he may see something in the defense that prompts him to change the play just before the hike of the ball. These in-the-moment changes are referred to as audibles. Joseph uses this as a metaphor to emphasize how the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment affect his choices:

I will come in with the lesson prepared and if I’m gauging that we are not there, then it is game time decisions. I am calling audibles from the front of the room. I’m making changes. We will do something a little differently, just depending on where the class is. (preliminary interview)

Samuel, also using the same football metaphor, claimed that “I prepare detailed lessons, but I am calling audibles all the time” (interview 2).

Enjoyment. These teachers seem driven to maintain a high level of enjoyment in their classes. There is “a level of appropriate laughter and maybe banter that I feel like needs to happen in class so that... It goes back to that comfort thing. If we are not comfortable then it just becomes a tense situation” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Speaking of a class getting “there,” Benjamin suggests that “when it happens, it’s fun. So, it is enjoyable. People are smiling. It has to be enjoyable. It has to be good-natured and pleasant and cannot be serious all the time” (preliminary interview). In such classes, “there is a sense of, or feeling of ease in a class, and that often manifests itself in laughter” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Teachers plan enjoyment into lessons and change lessons in the moment to “break things up a little bit to get them moving, to keep them awake. If I can joke with them or get them joking with each other a little bit, that’s nice” (Peter, interview 2).

The participants in this study believe that enjoyment can invite trust and deepen

learning. Benjamin expresses that “If they are not enjoying it, the learning does not sink in” (interview 2). When learning seems to slow, teachers may need to take “a few minutes to pull them in and then you move on and teach them” (John, interview 2).

Therefore, much of the lesson planning of these teachers involves finding “what is going to grab them” and help “keep them in the scriptures” (Benjamin, interview 2) during the lesson. If deep social learning is linked to trust, William (preliminary interview)

illustrates how enjoyment can deepen learning and foster trust:

You’ve got to laugh with them. You have got to make them feel valued and build that relationship of trust. You can’t get to that deeper stuff without that foundation. So, some of that occurs light-heartedly. They have to laugh with you, because then they will trust you. They have to smile. (William, preliminary interview)

These teachers seem to seek a steady flow of smiles because “if you can get them to smile, then it is not a hostile environment” (John, preliminary interview).

These teachers may seek enjoyability in their classes even beyond learning. Their efforts toward enjoyability belies a yearning for their students to have a good experience. Joseph suggested that “it’s more important to have a good experience and to enjoy it than to get through the scripture block” (interview 2) without enjoyment. Seminary teachers use “the block” to refer to the segment of scriptures that forms the basis of a lesson. He further emphasized that “if my classes aren’t enjoyable, then we are going to take the time needed to get there. There’s always pressure to jump in the scriptures and get in the block, but I am even more concerned with what the students are experiencing as a group” (Joseph, interview 2). This does not mean that the scriptures are not vital to these seminary teachers. On the contrary, the scriptures are so vital to them that they work with

such focus on their class groups so that their students can learn the scriptures in the most substantial, enjoyable way possible in a group-learning environment.

Another teacher observed:

For me, I don't want to use the f-word (fun), but it has to be an enjoyable experience. I think it has to be if it's going to last. If it's all stoic and serious, I think that gets old. Even if it's great stuff, it gets old. (Benjamin, preliminary interview)

He believes further that an enjoyable student experience is important because “that’s how I experience the gospel and truth. It’s fun. It’s enjoyable. It makes me happy” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). The presence of positive affect in a group-learning environment may create a circumstance where class collectives “are working, but they enjoy coming. That could be because they enjoy each other, they enjoy the teacher, they enjoy the atmosphere. Work becomes a joy. It becomes pleasant for them” (Joseph, preliminary interview).

Learning/purpose. For these teachers, a class that has high enjoyment but lacks learning focus—especially a focus on scripture—is a hollow experience. To be “in the sweet spot more often,” a seminary class should “be grounded in the scriptural text. That’s where the focus goes. A teacher who is not in the scriptural text very much might get high engagement, but they’re not going to be focused” (Samuel, interview 2). Unified engagement signals readiness for deep collective learning:

Even with a feeling of unity, we still won't get to that deeper level of learning. Maybe it will be more of a fun class where there are enjoyable feelings, where there's unity, which is good. For me, however, with a good class, there's this deep level of learning that probably will not take place unless there's willingness to engage. (Peter, preliminary interview)

In addition to a scriptural focus, these teachers reported seeking transformational

instruction that goes beyond mere cognitive storage of information or positive feelings:

Our teaching has to extend into their lives or else we have not hit the mark. All we have done is give them a happy experience. Most teachers that are hired into this system can give students a happy experience, a fun experience. But it takes a different kind of a teacher to.... It becomes leadership, not just teaching. Teaching is one aspect of leadership in the classroom. But you know you are maturing when you are now loving these disciples of Christ and not just teaching them. And it becomes a richer experience, a deeper experience. (William, preliminary interview)

Without deep, purposeful learning

It feels shallow and like it is just a break from the school. And this has to be more than that. So, if it is just fun, I feel like I cheated them. And they may probably love it. But I feel like I have cheated them if we don't get them some depth and appreciation of the doctrine instead of just, 'let's enjoy each other.' (Benjamin, preliminary interview)

In pursuit of deep learning, "it won't get there if they are here to just be entertained but they are not learning. There's no learning going on. They're just playing" (John, preliminary interview). Hence, these teachers value more than mere learning, and more than a mere positive experience. Rather, they value an experience of edification and change. In pursuit of learning and enjoyment:

If we are just saying having good feelings, that is good. But I guess my definition of joy leans more toward the feeling of being improved, of being uplifted. Feeling like you had an insight, you're ready to act on something, you're ready to make a change (Peter, preliminary interview).

This deeper level of purposive, transformative learning may be associated with deeper levels of unity:

Maybe they're engaged with each other, but it's off task, or it's not deepening the learning. Then maybe there's still not that feeling of unity and learning. There may be a feeling of unity, like 'Hey we care about each other. We like each other. We're having fun!' But there may not be a deeper feeling of unity, and the, 'Yeah we feel like we're growing. We're going to take action upon what we're learning.' And as they learn and grow together, they're acting, they're changing.

Then there is that unity between each other—that, ‘Hey, you’re learning and you’re doing something about this, I’m doing something about this.’ We can share that and support each other in this process and hopefully have better experience as we go forward in this class. (Peter, preliminary interview)

Though these participants long for and lead their classes toward the ideal, it can be hard to discern. As Samuel (preliminary interview) lamented, “I don’t know if I can actually always assess when a class hits the ideal and when we haven’t.” Because “some things are hard to measure that we are trying to do” (Peter, preliminary interview), the participants continually look for indicators that reveal where their classes are at regarding these processes. Individual interactions help immensely, but “because individual interactions are so limited, group indicators are all I can feed on here” (John, preliminary interview). When asked to describe a class that is “there,” teachers tend to launch into lists of indicators. John expressed, “boy, if I get eagerness to learn, trust, and sharing, it’s a homerun” (preliminary interview). Another concluded that “some elements of a good class are a willingness to engage in learning, respect for one another (especially in the learning process), and a feeling of unity—to be able to come together in a common cause” (Peter, preliminary interview). According to William (preliminary interview), “there’s going to be:

- meaningful sharing—and sharing will be heartfelt and testimony-based,
- a willingness to participate,
- an engagement in the learning process,
- a high level of trust between the student and teacher,
- a love for the scriptures, a love for the Lord, and a love for each other,
- a sense of feeling valued and appreciated by every member of the class, and
- daily invitations to meet the expectations for the class.”

Similarly, Joseph (preliminary interview) declares that “indicators that they are there are:

- there is a sense, or feeling, of ease in a class, and that often manifests itself in

laughter.

- There are questions about what is going on in each other's lives, and they will ask me, and I will ask them something at the beginning of class.
- It feels good.
- As the class goes on, they are asking a lot of questions.
- Students are sharing. You always have your core group of kids who share. But when you are "there," you get students from all over the class that share. They are not always sharing, but they feel like they can share, and they are willing to share.
- The students are focused.
- When I have expectations, they are meeting those expectations."

Table 11 provides evidence and summarizes elements of the second major theme:

processes of buy-in.

Analysis of Theme Three: Student Leadership in the Collective (Question 3)

In the perception of these participants, student leadership is vital in the processes of buy-in. In reflecting on a great class, one teacher concluded: "What did I do that's different from any other trimester to establish this culture where everyone bought in? I don't think I did anything different. The difference was what the students did" (Benjamin, preliminary interview). The difference comes from certain students, because "there are those class leaders that really affect the dynamics of the class. I expect a lot from those kids whether they expect it from themselves or not" (Joseph, preliminary interview). Such leaders make a major difference because teachers may be "trying to invite and encourage the class, but to have some student leadership say, 'Yeah, let's do this. Hey, grab your scriptures.' It went so much better" (Peter, preliminary interview).

The processes of actuation take time, and these processes are largely dedicated to

Table 11

Evidence of Major Theme: Processes of Buy-In

Supporting theme	Example of evidence	Researcher interpretation
Buy in	Joseph: I think that same thing happens in the classroom where not everybody buys in, but when you get one or two followers, three or four, or whatever the number is. I don't have a number for it. But when the majority buy into it, all of a sudden, we're there.	These participants indicate that a class enters an optimal collective state ("there") only after there is a collective buy-in. This buy-in is a complex result of social dynamics and seems to trigger actuation.
The heart	Joseph: There is the outward social environment in the class, but whatever is going on on the inside is the critical thing. Samuel: I don't think the environment is the classroom. I believe the environment is the heart of each kid. So that is what we are trying to cultivate.	To target buy-in, these participants attend to "the heart," which seems to be an internal social environment within the classroom.
Sense of collective trust	John: They feel safe here. It goes back to the trust thing. Trust is so huge. If they come in and there is a safety... you can almost see their wall fall down when they walk in. They are willing to talk. They're willing to listen.	A sense of collective trust seems vital to these participants as they cultivate buy-in. This sense seems to be one of two collective beliefs that play out within "the heart."
Sense of relevancy and purpose	Benjamin: [A class buys in when] it matters to them; where they care. They are trying to deepen and increase what they know and believe, and so they are invested in the class.	A sense of relevancy seems to be a second collective belief that plays out in "the heart" as teachers nurture buy-in.
The sweet zone	Joseph: if you get too far this way, you are out of the zone. If you get too far that way, you are out of the zone. You have to continually bring it back into that sweet spot, that sweet zone, where learning takes place. If you're too low or if you are too high, it's not going to happen.	These participants seem to manage sociality so that classes have strong sociality (engaged) but are not too social (focused) so they may remain in "that sweet zone, where learning takes place."
The splendid mix of learning and enjoyment	Samuel: Early in my career it was this: heavy learning, then, "boy, we've got to have some fun!" And then just a whole day of something fun. Now it's, "we are going to learn, but we are going to laugh along the way."	These participants seem to negotiate the processes of buy-in (both the internal and external social environment) by maintaining a splendid mix of learning and enjoyment for an optimal learning experience.

the creation of collective trust that emboldens student leaders to take risk and lead others in “opening up.” Whether a class is “there” very early on in a course “is influenced by a number of things, but mostly a few really solid individuals that allow the rest of the class to get there, to come up with them” (Joseph, preliminary interview). In one such class for Joseph:

There was a core group that had been together. They knew how to interact already. So, the rest of them just gravitated to this core group of probably six or eight kids who knew how to do it. And I did not have to do anything. Everybody jumped on. And the kids themselves were the kind of kids that were leaders, who the students looked up to. (preliminary interview)

The influence of student leadership on the collective seems to be affected by many factors, including levels of social prominence and social influence of student leaders, student-leader willingness to initiate sharing, class maturity, class size, and class structure.

Social Prominence and Influence of Student Leaders

These teachers seem to seek a collective trust that emboldens students toward a willingness to open up and share meaningful things. They also rely on student leaders to lead out vocally, to take social risk, and lead the processes of deep social learning. However, “if you want your class to get there, vocal leaders have to have some social pull” because “if you have students who are less socially aware or influential lead out, it has a reverse effect and pushes buy-in away” (Joseph, interview 2). For example, Peter speaks of a class where “there are a few students that are very vocal, even in a detrimental way sometimes” (interview 2).

Similarly, Joseph (Interview 2) is dealing with a similar dilemma in one of his classes:

I have got three kids who are not socially aware but are very vocal—one in particular. He always has his hand in the air. But, instead of leading the class, it is snuffing it out. Other kids are like, ‘man, no. So and so is going to take it.’ That’s a hard one to balance because you don’t want to totally shut the kid down. But at the same time, you are trying to bring others up. And he is kind of distracting from where we want to be.

Joseph further observed that

There are enough key players in this class that my student who is not socially aware but is super vocal can be part of that vocal group without hurting the class. If it were just him, I think it would have an opposite effect. (preliminary interview)

Therefore, emergence of vocal leaders who lack social awareness or prominence can stymie collective class functionality. However, another challenge occurs when students in a class who do have social influence refuse to buy in. Often this is the case for students who are socially influential, but apathetic. Benjamin (Interview 2) describes his “weakest class,” noting that “it is interesting because there is a jock that intimidates the heck out of the kids with his apathy.” Joseph (preliminary interview) suggests that “It’s a total social influence thing. In some cases, it might be one kid that carries the whole class—or destroys it.”

Another participant describing a struggling class observes that there are some “socially prominent kids in that class who I think intimidate other students. When they are on board, we have good experiences. And when they decide that they want to shut down, the rest of them shut down as well” (Joseph, interview 2). In describing a class that struggled, Benjamin (preliminary interview) remembers “a fear because there were some

cool kids in the class—some cool seniors, the star of the football team, one of the head cheerleaders, some kids that the kids think are cool—and they were not vocal.” On the other hand, Benjamin (Interview 2) describes a different class, mostly ninth graders, that went well, surmising that their success may be because “there was nobody they were scared of.”

Student-Initiated Sharing

In the perspective of these participants, deep social learning may depend on student leaders who are willing to “rise up and make a lot of comments and who can create an openness in the class,” students who “lead out. They share when there’s opportunity. They can really get things moving. They open the door for a lot of other people to step in and to step out of their comfort zone” (Peter, preliminary interview). These student leaders tend to “talk. They share. They verbalize, even when that may not be their nature. It may not be the vocal, put-themselves-out-there person, but they do it. They open their mouths” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). These leaders are marked by their willingness to risk. They are willing “to talk where others aren’t. So, it is just a willingness for that vulnerability, to put themselves out there. And they just do it. Somebody will spark it, initiate it. They may share something personal, and the kids respond” (Benjamin, preliminary interview).

The response of the class to these vocal riskers is imperative because these students make themselves vulnerable. “One person will initiate it and others will follow, or else that person may never do it again” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). When student leaders “make themselves vulnerable and the class responds in a supportive way,”

other students may become imbued with “the courage to be vulnerable” (Benjamin, preliminary interview) as well. As an example, Benjamin describes a girl “whose father was not a member of the church. She put herself out there, and it changed the whole class because of her willingness to be vulnerable and talk about the struggles that she faced with that” (preliminary interview). After this student risked, “the rest of the kids felt comfortable because the big kid was willing to do it. She opened it up and they were all like, ‘okay, I can share things that are personal to me.’”

Class Maturity

To achieve collective buy-in and experience deep social learning, classes seem to require mature students of adequate social influence who will lead in sharing and in responding appropriately when others share. Participants of this study frequently assert that “age and maturity has made a difference—just the makeup of the class—to have that happen” (Peter, preliminary interview). This is likely because mature classes are more likely to risk in sharing and responding in appropriate, supportive ways to students who lead out in opening up. Younger or less influential students may be “scared to death to talk in front of” (Benjamin, preliminary interview) apathetic seniors or socially influential students. Rather, “classes that I have seen that have it from the get-go seem older. They tend to have more seniors” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Maturity seems to be important as it relates to student focus. Peter (Interview 2) asserts the importance of “the makeup of the students. I think if they are focused it can be great. With younger students, it seems like we can have a harder time focusing.” Hence, for these participants, it may not be so much about age as it is about focus, trust, and acceptance.

These participants often refer to “the mix” of their classes. For example, “I think there’s some classes that just... the mix of the students—the way they are—allows those classes to be there more often than not” (Joseph, preliminary interview). This mix can affect deep social learning early in a term:

There are older students, which maybe does contribute to the depths of sharing that is already there. There are natural leaders that are stepping in. For me, it’s a really fun class. It seems like there is a good mix already. (Peter, interview 2)

In addition to the depth of sharing, mature classes are more likely to be accepting when less-mature students share meaningful—though less-mature—perspectives:

And even when the freshman does share something that is pretty stupid to a senior, there is an empathy for their experience even though they don’t feel it now as a very mature senior. So, there is a willingness to let other people be at their level instead of expecting them all to be at your maturity level. (Benjamin, preliminary interview)

From the perspective of these participants, the maturity of a class group, therefore, is a key factor of student leadership germane to the functionality of a class collective.

Class size

Class size seems to have an effect on the performance of classes. For example, large classes tend to provide “more people who are willing to talk—maybe a few more leaders” (Peter, interview 2) but “it’s harder to get everyone engaged. I try to do it, but my ability to perceive and catch a kid who is drifting is harder” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Also, large classes can be more difficult because of the “trust factor:”

We talked about that trust factor. I mean, there is a lot more people to have to become comfortable with in that class. In my fifth hour, we have 35, so we are still at that point where I don’t think they really trust each other yet. There are moments. There are moments when we are there, then it shuts down. But, they’re not quite to that point where they are ready yet to say, ‘Okay, I trust every single

one of these people in here, or a majority of them.’ (Joseph, interview 2)

Similarly, Benjamin (Interview 2) concluded that “because they are small, I think we have connected better in those classes.” In a large class, teachers may not “get enough of those one-on-one moments” that help to “break down that wall, that individual wall” (John, preliminary interview).

In addition to smaller classes having a more manageable connectivity and trust, smaller classes are also easier to gauge. Disengagement in smaller classes seems easier to perceive and adapt to for these participants. However, smaller classes bring challenges too. For example, small classes tend “to be quieter” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Of all classes taught by the participants in this study, the smallest by far is a class of 10. In analyzing that class, Peter (Interview 2) observed that

Most of them are quiet. We are still trying to create that environment and they are not opening up yet. We have had some great moments where good things are happening, but I really have to draw and pull and guide. We are not naturally contributing as much as we need to daily to get there.

In small classes, student leaders feel a heavier burden. Often they “don’t want to overstep. ‘I’m sharing, I’m sharing, and now I have shared too much.’ When you have double the numbers you kind of spread that burden. You have a few more people who may be willing to talk” (Peter, interview 2). Based on the available data, I suggest that these participants tend to judge classes with less than 20 students as likely being smaller than they desire, and classes with more than 30 students as being larger than they desire.

Class Structure

Some participants in this study reported using classroom structure to initiate or

formalize student leadership. For instance, Peter believes that “using formal student positions frees me up to have those one-on-one interactions. For me it’s probably about structure” (preliminary interview). Another teacher concluded that “surrounding structure allows me to fulfill my purpose and feel comfortable” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Part of that purpose is to reach students and foster student leadership. John (Interview 2) feels inadequate in meeting student needs, and therefore relies on systematic structure to help him: “I wish I were better at making my decisions based on what the students need, but I am more systematic. and I hope that my system meets the students’ needs.”

Table 12 summarizes the themes relating to research question 3 and the influence of students on the manifestation of CCA.

Analysis of Theme Four: Teacher Leadership in the Collective (Question 4)

The role of seminary teachers in the processes of buy in and deep social learning emanate from their lofty purposes with their students and is limited by the realities of student agency. The data therefore contain heavy emphasis on teacher leadership and expertise.

Student Agency and Teacher Limitations

Because of individual agency, teachers cannot force a class to get “there,” and “if you try to force this, you can actually kill it, because our natural tendency is an aversion to being forced to do anything” (William, preliminary interview). Joseph articulated potential results of attempting to force buy-in and high-functionality.

Table 12

Evidence of Major Theme: Student Leadership

Supporting themes/codes	Example of evidence	Researcher interpretation
Student leadership	Joseph: There are those class leaders that really affect the dynamics of the class. I expect a lot from those kids whether they expect it from themselves or not.	These participants rely on and cultivate students as leaders of collective processes.
Social prominence and influence	Joseph: ‘If you want your class to get there, vocal leaders have to have some social pull. But there are enough key players in this class that my student who is not socially aware but is super vocal can be part of that vocal group without hurting the class. If it were just him, I think it would have an opposite effect.	These participants articulate the need to have some students lead out vocally, but vocal students can help or hinder collective actuation within the class depending on their social awareness and influence.
Student initiated sharing	Benjamin: It’s just that they are willing to talk where others aren’t. So, it is just a willingness for that vulnerability, to put themselves out there. And they just do it. Somebody will spark it, initiate it. They may share something personal, and the kids respond.	These participants speak of the role of students in initiating deep social learning by “opening up.” In classes that actuate, such student efforts prove efficacious and are highly valued by these participants.
Class maturity	Benjamin: classes that I have seen that have it from the get-go seem older. They tend to have more seniors.	More mature classes seem more capable of actuating.
Class size	Peter: I think with more numbers you get a few more people who are willing to talk, maybe a few more leaders. Whereas in this class I think the leaders don’t want to overstep. “I’m sharing, I’m sharing, and now I have shared too much.” When you have double the numbers you kind of spread that burden. You have a few more people who may be willing to talk.	These participants view establishing trust in classes that are “too large” as more difficult, whereas classes that are “too small” place undue burdens on student leaders. These six participants seem to prefer classes that range between 20 and 30 as more optimal for processes of buy-in and actuation.
Independence of the class group	Joseph: But you are always trying to make the environment such that at the end of the day on that last class of the term, they can be independent to a certain degree as a group and individually in learning. If I step out of the mix, they are still going to collectively do those things that make it a powerful experience for the class.	These participants seek collective strength by sharing power with students to lead out, leading to more independent classes that rely less on the teacher in deep social learning functions.
Formal class structure	John: I wish I was better at making my decisions based on what the students need, but I am more systemic. and I hope that my system meets the students’ needs.	Though most student leadership functions for these teachers seems to be informal leadership, formal structures do help meet student needs.

When you do force it, we start to move out of the zone. They either fail one way or the other. They either shut down, or they lose that focus. You are squeezing them down, and they are squeezing out of the sweet zone. (preliminary interview)

Seeking to force outcomes of actuation can proverbially kill the goose that lays the golden egg. The will of the students “is extremely important. Their will, their agency, their choosing to act makes or breaks it. As a group, if it’s not their will, it’s probably not going to happen” (Peter, preliminary interview).

Teachers must exert and lead, but a class cannot be compelled into collective buy-in or deep social learning:

You can’t force it. If it’s dragged out of them, it’s fake. It’s not real. So, you can encourage them, and they can take the invitation. But I think when people try to drag it out, you get the manipulation that we love to talk about. It’s fake. I think that when it is manipulated it is shallow. It is fake, and I don’t think it is ‘it.’ I don’t think you’re ‘there.’ (Benjamin, preliminary interview)

As a teacher, because of agency, “you can only go so far. you can’t make the student do anything if he doesn’t want to. [Personal] agency is still there, no matter how hard I try” (John, preliminary interview). Teachers have the power to “ask and love and invite all day, but if the students are not willing to do it, it’s going to be low-functioning, no matter how much the teacher wants to help” (Peter, preliminary interview). Hence, “sometimes, no matter what a teacher does, I feel like maybe they will not achieve what they hope to” (Peter, preliminary interview). In the end, “there are things you can do to encourage it—to entice it out of them—and sometimes they will take it and sometimes they won’t” (Benjamin, preliminary interview).

Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership seems central to so much of what these teachers do with their

class groups. The move toward actuation-mindedness may be a move “from teaching to leadership” (William, preliminary interview). These participants teachers believe that classes can develop and that they as leaders can influence that process: “I think there’s growth opportunities—that classes can be worked with. If the teachers can kind of guide them through the process, it can become high-functioning” (Peter, preliminary interview). Gordon, in the focus group, declared that

So much of this is determined by the teacher. I think we have to establish that first. We are often, ‘well it’s a bad class. It’s a hard class. These kids don’t want to listen. This is going to be tough.’ But I believe the teacher can come in and change a class. And that’s the struggle. That is what we are trying to do.

Nevertheless, these participants also realize that “the teacher can kill it. And I have done that” (Benjamin, preliminary interview). Realistically, “you can take a class that comes already in the zone and if the teacher cannot keep them there, they are going to slip one way or the other” (Joseph, preliminary interview). As the data from this study show, these teachers believe their power to influence acutation comes in loving and caring for their students. The students must know “that you genuinely care about them and you are interested in their life. You are interested in them. Then they tend to respond naturally when they know that somebody is interested. They will come wanting to share” (Joseph, preliminary interview).

Teacher role as class group member. Senior (2006) emphasizes teachers’ dual roles as class group leader and class group member, and the tendency for teachers to alternate strategically between those two roles. I include only a few excerpts relating to the teacher’s role as class group member, but the following excerpts are meaningful.

John uses his physical positioning to merge into the group as a member of the

class with the hope that students will take the lead:

If I am standing up, they are waiting for me to say something. If I am sitting down, I am merged into the group. Then, all of a sudden, they are taking the lead. It also makes it easier for them to ask and answer each other's questions. Then I just have to do little direction checks, make sure we have the rudder in the right spot, just make sure it's going in the right direction. (Interview 2)

John (Interview 2) further explains that

I want them to lead the discussion, so I purposely sit in the back row (but where they can still see me). That way I can still lead the conversation, but it is really easy for me to merge in. I can pretend like I'm with the group. But I also do that to make the group think, 'oh wait. I'm in charge of this.' If I want them to teach, then I sit down. If I sit down, they realize, 'oh it's my turn.'

Joseph revealed that "when I was young, it was like, 'I am a teacher and you are a student.' Now I am more comfortable being myself. I'm much more comfortable now" (interview 2). Perhaps teachers' allowing themselves to be a part of the class group reflects a comfortability of the teacher. Also, when teachers fill their role appropriately as a member of their class group, they may enhance their power to connect. John (preliminary interview) expressed that "I want them to see that we are all working together. I'm not any better than they are." The data indicate to me as the researcher that teachers tend to fill the role as class group member when they wish to set students at ease for bonding and when they seek to better cultivate student leadership.

High love, high expectations. In June of 2016, Neil L. Andersen, an Apostle in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, taught in a speech at the Mission President's Seminar that leaders should lead with a balance of high expectations and high love. Chad Webb, administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints relayed this message to seminary teachers. I do not

know if this message changed the teacher leadership philosophy of these participants or if it simply gave them a label for what they already believed, but this concept is now clearly a part of the philosophy of the participants of this study.

Teachers give themselves the “best chance at ideal classes if they have high love and high expectations. Something I’ve been taught that I believe in is that this is an important attitude or attribute in teachers” (Peter, preliminary interview). The balance of high love and high expectations contributes to the experience these teachers are seeking to provide for students:

When there is high expectations and high love it allows that environment to be a place where learning and enjoyment combine. It becomes a very wonderful experience. And that is something I have thought about often over the last couple of years is that balance. (Joseph, interview 2)

These teachers “try to create an environment in class where we care for one another, where there’s high expectations, but there is also that relationship going on” (Samuel, interview 2). Hence, “when great teachers discipline, they discipline with fairness, with high expectations, but with love and mercy to the person” (Samuel, preliminary interview).

When these participants speak of high expectations, some of those expectations relate to the success of the class as a group.

Going back to the question of what teachers do to bring about the ideal class most often, I think they have high expectations that they don’t bend on. They discipline with fairness and love. When I talk about high expectations, they expect students to contribute to the success of the class and to be engaged in learning. And if a student isn’t engaged, then the teacher is patient and long suffering, and doesn’t abandon the kid. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

Nevertheless, having high love or high expectations is likely not enough. These

teachers believe they need to have both—abundantly and in balance. High expectations alone are not enough because “when there is high expectation but low love, you don’t get that splendid mix” (Joseph, second interview). In fact, high love and high expectations may be deceptively hard to truly separate: “I think if you really do love the students, you are not satisfied with low expectations” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Samuel also believes that a shortage of either love or expectations reveals deficiency in a teacher.

If you are one or the other (high love or high expectations) and not both, you are selfish. If you are either high expectations, or you are high love, but not both, you are self-serving. Either way, if you don’t have both, you are only trying to get the buy-in from the students to make life easy for you. But you are not trying to increase the learning or experience of the class. (preliminary interview)

Expectations. A teacher who loves his or her students but has “low expectations is that classic teacher who is worried about being liked, and they sway their instruction to what they think the group wants. But it ends up being a shallow experience for the group as far as deep learning” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Such high-love, low-expectation teachers are more likely to have

lower-functioning classes. We might have shared feelings, we love each other, we care about each other—at least the student and teacher relationship and probably the student to student relationship might happen as well—but if there is no expectation there, it is really hard to fulfill a class purpose and get something deeper rather than something shallow. You accomplish things, but without that vision it cannot fully get to where you hope to be. (Peter, preliminary interview)

High expectations are essential for teacher leadership because “you can kill your 7-week ideal really quick on the first week if you don’t take care of some business here. And they need to know those expectations” (William, preliminary interview). Without a proper leadership balance as a teacher, you may pull back from high expectations because “you are afraid of killing it. And by being afraid of killing it, you are dealing with it in an

inappropriate way rather than the proper way—which is to take care of it right up front” (William, preliminary interview). In fact, paradoxically, “discipline is love. And it really is caring. And it really is nurturing,” and “I know now that teenagers know that too. Whereas, I think that at the early part of my career, I don’t think I believed that” (William, preliminary interview).

Love, empathy, and acceptance. Love is at the core of these teachers’ leadership philosophy because

When there’s high love, it creates this motivation. I think about the teachers who taught me in religious settings. I knew they cared about me, and I was willing to try whatever I could to match the expectation, because I knew they cared about me. Even if it was something hard that they asked me to do, I felt like it was going to be in my best interest. (Peter, preliminary interview)

Common among these participants is a belief that “love opens a heart quicker and better than anything else” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Therefore, “if I find that my expectations are high but I just don’t care, I have to start tweaking. ‘Okay, what do I do to start increasing the love for these kids’” (Joseph, interview 2). These teachers operate on the hope that if a student “comes in with a bad attitude, if he can feel loved and accepted, then maybe that will soften his heart” (Samuel, preliminary interview). Hence, these participants seek to

Start the trimester in a way that they know that you care. And then, over time, they will take the next step of trust with you. And then they will share something. Then, there is a different kind of happiness and joy—a different kind of experience. ‘Love them today so you can teach them tomorrow’ (Holland, 2007), right? (William, preliminary interview)

Reaching and inviting. The agentic nature of buy-in positions the role of invitation at the heart of teacher leadership. As an actuation-minded teacher, “you are

inviting the class to have this experience of unity” (Peter, preliminary interview).

Invitation is vital because

It gives them the opportunity to use their agency wisely. And if I validate that and appreciate it, you start to see some of those kids start to come around. The invitation is huge. I think there is a lot of kids in our system that don’t feel like they have even been invited in the classroom. And I’ll tell you, if you want to hit it, one of the things is for each of those kids to feel valued—just to make sure that each one has had an invitation. (William, preliminary interview)

Many students will move toward buy-in when they see “other kids buy into what they just heard. But it cannot happen for many kids without an appropriate invitation”

(William, preliminary interview). To provide this invitation

The teacher has to give opportunities because the students probably will not naturally move to deep learning on their own. Some will, but many need some invitation, some guidance, questions to ponder, things to consider, things to look at, to help them learn deeply. Students’ willingness to take that step comes with the invitation. There’s a need for work, to try to put aside distractions, or try to actually engage in deep learning for themselves. Maybe they have not experienced it for themselves that much, so it’s a harder thing to try to get in. But, if the teacher is inviting and the students are willing to take that opportunity, I think there is some opportunity there. (Peter, preliminary interview)

These teachers seem to be constantly reaching, seeking to pull students into unity with the class. Because of agency, many students “put up walls” and “you have got to break the wall down” (John, preliminary interview). To break down walls, these teachers try to “reach out to them, to love them” (Samuel, preliminary interview). This love must be persistent:

I can’t just say, ‘well that’s their choice.’ Because I can influence their choice by what I ask them to do in class and by the expectations I set for the class—by how I treat them, by how I respect what they say, the type of questions I ask, the relationship I’m able to build. So, I feel there is a huge responsibility that I have in that process, and I don’t think I can ever throw up my hands and say, ‘Oh he’s just sitting and he’s just hard-hearted and does not want to learn,’ and then stop trying with him. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

Students may wish to be isolated. They may communicate to the teacher, “‘don’t worry about me.’ ‘Well, I am going to worry about you. I want you to come be with us.’ And it does affect the feel of the class” (Joseph, preliminary interview). Though these actuation-minded teachers are building a class collective, it

starts with individuals. I’ll see one or two kids come in and I’ll see that they are just hanging. Whatever is going on in their life has got them down. So, we are going to try to lift their spirits, give them a sense that, ‘I am aware of you. I’m aware of you. I don’t know what’s going on fully, but I am aware. Let’s just talk you for a minute.’ And then we can get back to work. (Joseph, preliminary interview)

This effort to strengthen the group by reaching out to individuals seemed common among the participants. John declared that

What I’m trying to say is, most people come in with some luggage, and with weights, and the world, and no matter what you do, if that weight is too hard on them, that’s all they are worried about. Wouldn’t it be great as a teacher to spend time with each one and find out what is going on in their world? (preliminary interview)

These teachers reach for individuals by trying “to figure out what is going on in their life. I might start a group project and sneak by and ask them” (John, preliminary interview). Samuel revealed that he used to dread getting students who make it clear that they do not wish to buy in. But he has changed to where now, “it’s like, ‘okay, I’ve got some work to do. Hopefully, we can make him feel loved and that he’ll get involved’” (preliminary interview).

The participants in this study view emotional management as a major facet of teacher leadership. Samuel (preliminary interview) expressed his belief that “a teacher that is successful in creating this is one who does not get ruffled with behavior. If the kids know what buttons to push, it gets hard.” He also asserts that “great teachers have

emotional self-management. And it's not necessarily that the kids don't bother them.

They just don't show it." He theorizes that

When teachers do not self-manage their emotions when they discipline, they either lose respect from the kids, or they lose trust from the kids. And I think that how you handle that tough kid is going to do more for disciplining the group than trying to discipline the whole group, because they are watching. (Samuel, preliminary interview)

As Samuel (preliminary interview) asserted, the way a teacher manages a challenging student can substantially affect the functionality of class groups. Benjamin (preliminary interview) confesses that he once "killed" the actuation of a class, and "the way I killed a class was just how I responded to a kid." When a teacher manages a difficult student, the rest of the students in the class "are watching you with that individual" (William, preliminary interview). Hence, though these actuation-minded teachers seek to maintain high expectations and standards, they seek to focus "on the love and the positive in the relationship," which they believe helps them "on a one-on-one basis with students who might be distracted, or maybe need some realignment to help them have the best experience" (Peter, preliminary interview). Peter also reveals that, over the course of his career, "how I approach hard situations in class, I think it has become more positive" (preliminary interview).

Benjamin's report of having "killed" a class by handling a difficult student in a way that was not emotionally appropriate:

That was about a month into the class, and I never got them back because of how I handled it. And I apologized publicly the next day to the class and I apologized privately to him and his parents about how I handled it. But we never got anywhere the rest of the trimester. (preliminary interview)

Another teacher relates a similar confession:

In the past, I have tried to be too strict when students are not focused. Maybe I come off harsh and it just falls apart. If the rapport is gone with the student, I feel like we have lost the battle because then they don't want to change. I can lose the student or the group. I have had both happen. I have responded poorly, and definitely lost the student. (Peter, interview 2)

When participants discuss what they do to disturb the processes of buy-in in their classes, they usually describe becoming emotionally frustrated—usually because of a lack of focus in a student or group of students—and then interacting in emotionally inappropriate ways. This finding relates to the concept of emotional intelligence as it relates to teacher leadership.

Other interactions—beyond discipline—seem to also require emotional management on the part of actuation-minded teachers. For example, “it takes some effort to listen. If you don't listen, that will kill it pretty quick. Blowing a comment off or not validating appropriately can take something out of that emotional bank account” (William, preliminary interview). Also, the way teachers handle students who lead out in deep learning processes can feed or strangle class functionality:

There is a manipulative way to use their shared experience and there is a non-manipulative way. And I don't know what it is, but you can totally use experience. Using it in the wrong way can destroy this “there” that we are seeking. There's a right way to use experiences and a manipulative way that can kill it. (Benjamin, interview 2)

Group focus vs. individual focus. An intriguing analysis in these classroom processes of CCA relates to whether these actuation-minded teachers tend to focus on individuals or the class as a whole. The answer, of course, is both. But how they do so is nuanced. John asks:

What do you do when you have a kid that will not join the group? They are going to hurt the class. They are going to. But in the meantime, while you are trying to

show love and patience with that person, you also cannot abandon the group. And that is where it gets tricky. (preliminary interview)

For these teachers, “that is what a teacher does, initially. He is teaching a group. He may focus on the least common denominator amongst the group, but he is still focused on the group and trying to create the group” (John, preliminary interview). Nevertheless, this effort for the group is also “a loaves-and-fishes effort” where the teacher uses the instrumentality of the group “to reach and feed every single student” (William, preliminary interview). For John (preliminary interview), teachers must first “break the group bubble, and then you break individual bubbles. And people say, ‘Hey wait, he just shared something, and nobody is making fun of him. It’s safe.’ But there are individuals whose individual bubble is more reinforced.” The group priority is important because “without group success...forget it then!” (John, preliminary interview).

Teacher Expertise

The a priori theme of teacher expertise is prominent in the theoretical premise of this study. Nevertheless, I only coded two excerpts under this theme. This statement from Joseph, however, conveys the role of expertise in enabling actuation-minded teachers to be able to cognitively manage the complex dynamics of the processes of CCA:

I think that the more you do this the slower the game gets, and you are able to process more. You are reacting. You are able to see how the students are reacting and engaging with others. When I was new, everything was so fast. I just couldn’t keep up with it. I think that’s why I was struggling so much with early classes. I wasn’t fast enough. I was running a 4.9 (40-yard dash) and everyone else was running a 4.5. I wasn’t up to speed yet. (interview 2)

William also identified that “another dynamic here is the experience of the teacher, and their ability to discern what needs to be done” (preliminary interview). Expertise opens

up cognitive ability and enables teachers to perceive and discern the more nuanced needs of their classes. Table 13 summarizes the themes relating to research Question Four and the influence of teachers on the processes of actuation.

Observational Findings

I conducted a total of 12 observations. Each observation immediately preceded an interview. The primary purpose of the observations was to strengthen these phenomenological interviews. However, these observations also enabled me to see—in practice—what these teachers were experiencing with one of their classes. Also, these observations provided chances for me to “see” how teachers lead their class groups toward actuation. This data, recorded in observational field notes, provide a source of data triangulation. Table 14 offers an example of observational evidence of actuation from each participant.

Analysis of data in a phenomenology involves phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). This process generated the aforementioned themes and then yielded three concentrated outcomes: the textural description (what was experienced with the phenomenon), the structural description (how the phenomenon was experienced), and the essence of CCA (combination of textural and structural descriptions). This arrangement of themes was a major step toward identifying the descriptions and essence of this phenomenology, and I depict this arrangement in Figure 7 before presenting the textural and structural descriptions. I render the overall essence of this phenomenology early in Chapter V.

Table 13

Evidence of Major Theme: Teacher Leadership in the Collective

Supporting theme	Subordinate codes/(subcodes)	Examples of evidence	Researcher interpretation
Teacher leadership	Teacher leadership	Peter: From my experience and seeing other teachers' experiences that I would consider great teachers, I see them have really good classes and some not so high-functioning classes. Now, whether that's inherited or not, I think the makeup of a class definitely can lead to that. However, I think there's growth opportunities, that classes can be worked with—if the teachers can kind of guide them through the process—it can become high-functioning.	Despite the lack of full control that these participants emphasize, they do believe that they, as leaders, wield substantial influence with their class groups.
	Teacher role as class group member	John: If I am standing up, they are waiting for me to say something. If I am sitting down and I am merged into the group, then all of a sudden, they are taking the lead.	In addition to leading their classes, these participants position themselves as members of the class group to foster leadership and increase cohesion.
	High expectations and high love/support	Peter: Teachers have the best chance at ideal classes if they have high love and high expectations. Something I've been taught that I believe in is that this is an important attitude or attribute in teachers.	The splendid mix of learning and enjoyment seems sustained by these participants through holding high expectations and maintaining those expectations with love and support.
	Reaching and inviting (appropriate emotional management)	Samuel: When teachers do not self-manage their emotions when they discipline, they either lose respect from the kids, or they lose trust from the kids. And I think that how you handle that tough kid is going to do more for disciplining the group than trying to discipline the whole group, because they are watching.	These teachers describe reaching out to students, inviting them to buy into the collective. This reaching requires emotional intelligence in teachers, or they "can kill it."
	Group focus vs. Individual focus	John: You have to first break the group bubble, and then you break individual bubbles. And people say, "hey wait, he just shared something, and nobody is making fun of him. It's safe." But there are individuals who their individual bubble is more reinforced.	These participants appear to attend to individuals to strengthen the group, and to attend to the group to strengthen individuals. This dual focus is complex and nuanced.
Teacher expertise	Teacher expertise	Joseph: I think that the more you do this the slower the game gets, and you are able to process more. When I was new, everything was so fast. I just couldn't keep up with it. I think that's why I was struggling so much with early classes. I wasn't fast enough. I was running a 4.9 (40-yard dash) and everyone else was running a 4.5. I wasn't up to speed yet	As "the game" of classroom processes moves so fast with high complexity, teacher expertise enables teachers to cognitively manage these complexities.

Table 14

Observational Evidence of Actuation

Participant	Field note	Related interview codes
Benjamin	Students write in Journal. Teacher asks, “Who will share?” Boy shares right away. Teacher probes a bit deeper. “Let me hear one more.” Girl’s comment leads back into further scripture (D&C 64:9-11). Multiple students sharing at a very deep level. Students continue to share and share. (Observation 2)	Student sharing. Opening up
Samuel	Samuel had a number on the board for every verse in the text for today’s lesson. Students invited to come write their names next to any verses for which they have an insight from their personal reading. During the lesson, students who wrote their names on the board were invited to share their insights at the appropriate time for that verse. (Observation 1)	Trust, student leadership.
Joseph	Continued relaxed feel. A couple of students have given multiple answers, but not dominantly. Other students sharing. There are a few students who carry a larger load of the group, but they are leading, not leaving behind, the rest. (Observation 1)	Students leadership, opening up.
John	Small groups study and discuss various scripture blocks. After a preparation time, the teacher roles a dice to select the first and subsequent groups to share. As each group is selected, the teacher sits among the students and the students lead the class until their group is done sharing. (Observation 1)	Teacher role as group leader, student leadership.
Peter	Two students in the back corner are talking during a discussion, others seem to be disengaging just a bit. The teacher walks back and teaches from right next to the two who are chatty. This brings the two into focus. The teacher then announces that everyone needs a paper from the front table. Some students get their own, others get papers for themselves and others. This creates a new energy that reengaged the bulk of the class. (Observation 1)	Hypersociality, hyposociality, engagement, focus
William	“Is everyone looking at the screen?” ...The class is very quiet as the teacher shares a personal experience. ...Scriptures open on every desk. ...All within my view are writing. The class is very quiet. “...Riley is going to have the floor. Give her your undivided attention.” “It’s important that everyone has a chance to share...” This teacher sought perpetual focus and engagement throughout the lesson and had it. Constant efforts to draw attention and increase engagement, mixed with variety and humor. (Observation 2)	Unified focus, united engagement

1.0 High-Functioning Seminary Classes
1.1 Overall Purpose
1.2 “That Experience:” Deep Social Learning
1.2.1 Opening Up, Sharing, Taking Social Risk
1.2.2 Students Asking Questions
1.3 Collective Class Actuation
1.3.1 Indicators of CCA
1.3.1.1 Evidence of Positive Experience
1.3.1.2 Evidence of Learning and Change
1.3.2 Teacher Experience of CCA (when it happens)
3.2.1 When It’s Not There
1.3.3 Precariousness, Difficulty, or Consistency of CCA
2.0 Processes of Collective Buy-In
2.1.0 Buy In
2.1.1 Student Agency and Teacher Limitations
1.1.2 Critical Mass/Majority
2.1.3 Unity, Cohesion, and Bonding
2.1.4 Unified Engagement and Focus
2.2 The Heart
2.2.1 Student Rebellion and Resistance
2.3 Sense of Collective Trust
2.3.1 Feeling of Safety
2.3.2 Connectivity
2.4 Sense of Relevancy and Purpose
2.4.1 Common Goal, Vision
2.5 The Sweet Zone
2.5.1 Hypersociality Management
2.5.2 Hyposociality Management
2.6 The Splendid Mix of Learning and Enjoyment
2.6.1 Enjoyment
2.6.2 Learning/Purpose
3.0 Student Leadership in the Collective
3.1 Social Prominence/Influence
3.2 Student Initiated Sharing
3.3 Class Maturity
3.4 Class Size
3.5 Independence of the Class Group
3.6 Structure
4.0 Teacher Leadership in the Collective
4.1 Teacher Role as Class Group Member
4.2 High Love, High Expectation
4.2.1 Expectations
4.2.2 Love, Empathy, and Acceptance
4.3 Reaching and Inviting
4.3.1 Appropriate Emotional Management
4.4 Group Focus vs. Individual Focus
4.5 Teacher Expertise

Figure 7. Synthesis of themes.

Textural Description of Collective Class Actuation

For these actuation-minded seminary teachers, the effort for CCA in seminary is the pursuit of an ideal class (as a group). These actuation-minded teachers want more for their students than merely learning. Rather, they strive for an experience that can deepen learning and empower change and development within their students' lives. They pursue this experience through maintaining a balance of learning and enjoyment in their classes, and this pursuit is highly affective. They believe that learning is fundamental and that their classes are not gathering merely to have a good time. But they also believe that learning is deeper and more enduring if it is enjoyable.

Before a class actuates, these teachers may describe teaching that class as feeling like a fight. When they lead a class to actuation, a sense of easiness arises, a feeling of cohesion emerges, things just flow, things click, and teaching that class becomes immensely enjoyable. Actuated classes are primed for deep social learning and enable students to open up and ask impactful questions and share meaningful ideas with their peers (i.e., personal experiences, beliefs, and insights). When these students open up and share, actuated classes respond appropriately. Feelings of trust dominate actuated classes and fuel social learning processes.

The quest for actuation is not fully controlled by teachers, though they have great influence. High teacher influence, tempered by lack of full control, situates the pursuit of CCA as a highly affective process that involves frustration, hope, and joy for these teachers. Strong negative emotions haunt these teachers when their classes are not actuated, whereas actuation brings them immense emotional reward. These actuation-

minded teachers seem to rely on indicators of actuation, including levels of student focus and engagement. Actuation seems precarious, hard to achieve, and can be fragile. These actuation-minded teachers direct a high portion of their choices and effort toward establishing and maintaining actuation in their classes.

Much of what these teachers do with their class groups (including planning and teaching lessons) is designed to help actuation “happen.” Nevertheless, teachers cannot force actuation and instead direct their efforts to inviting students to buy in so that the intended experience can happen. Teacher valuation of actuated classes seems far higher than unactuated classes, although actuated classes may have some students who hold out or shut down individually. The tipping point of buy-in that leads to actuation may involve small changes in classroom dynamics, but—based on descriptions of these teachers—the emotional effect on these actuation-minded teachers when that shift occurs seems robust.

Structural Description of Collective Class Actuation

These actuation-minded seminary teachers seek a splendid mix of learning and enjoyment in their classes. They set high expectations and maintain those expectations with high love and support as they sustain this splendid mix of learning and enjoyment. In doing so, they are perpetually teaching and reaching in ways that invite buy-in from their class groups.

The splendid mix, accompanied by high love and high expectations, seems to influence an external social environment and an internal social environment of the classroom. These actuation-minded teachers seem to manage the external social

environment (sociality) by helping classes be highly engaged and still stay highly focused. Classes that are too social (hypersocial) or not social enough (hyposocial) may comparatively struggle to learn, whereas classes with a better balance of sociality may be more likely to enjoy the sweet zone of learning. These actuation-minded teachers seem to foster more enjoyment for hyposocial classes to kindle engagement, and they emphasize learning in hypersocial classes to elevate levels of focus.

The internal social environment, or the heart, is where collective beliefs and agency seem to play out and determine buy-in and actuation. Students are likely to buy in when they feel a belief, or sense, of collective trust and a belief, or sense, of relevancy. They must feel safe with the members of the group, and they must feel that the class has purpose for them personally. The external environment seems to influence the heart. Classes that are hypersocial or hyposocial can degrade—or reveal a degraded—sense of relevancy or a sense of collective trust. These actuation-minded seminary teachers also use the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment to foster both the sense of relevancy and the sense of trust that comprise the internal social environment.

When these teachers maintain high love and high expectations and balance the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment, they perceive their classes as being more likely to remain in the sweet zone of learning and feel a sense of relevancy and trust. When this occurs, students tend to buy in. If the buy in reaches a critical mass, the class as a collective may actuate for deep social learning. Students who lead out in opening up facilitate this actuation. The social learning processes that occur in actuated classes can deepen learning and support transformative learning and change.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Research Questions and Findings

In this study, I explored the possibility and existence of a proposed universal essence of the developing theoretical concept known as collective class actuation (CCA). This concept was introduced by me and colleagues (Anderson et al., 2019) in a study that accessed only one seminary teacher. Our work served as a pilot study and guide for this current study. This study responds to the call for a full phenomenological exploration of CCA with a sufficiently large sample to derive a common essence of CCA. I chose to undergo this exploration among six seminary teachers for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To fulfill this purpose, I proceeded with four research questions:

1. What is the essence of identified CCA as experienced in common among seminary teachers in a Western state?
2. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what are the indicators of CCA in seminary classes?
3. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of students in manifesting CCA?
4. From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of the teacher in manifesting CCA?

The primary method for answering these questions was through phenomenological interviews (Moustakas, 1994)—especially a preliminary interview conducted prior to the start of a 12-week term. This interview yielded an early common essence that resonated with all participants and guided further interviews, observations, digital collaboration, and a focus group near the end of the study. As a phenomenology, I

privileged the interview data and used the other data sources to triangulate, check, and strengthen the interview data. The data from this research process enabled the derivation of individual teacher textural descriptions, four aggregate themes, and an overall textural and structural description (all reported in Chapter IV). I now provide a concise answer to Research Question 1 by combining the four themes and the resulting textural and structural descriptions to provide the essence of CCA.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “*What is the essence of identified CCA as experienced in common among seminary teachers in a western state*”? The essence of CCA as experienced in common among actuation-minded seminary instructors in a Western state is as follows.

To pursue their principal purpose for their students (seeking eternal salvation and becoming more like Jesus Christ), these actuation-minded seminary teachers are seeking to foster a rich, enjoyable experience of deep, collective learning for their students. They believe that this group-learning experience can provide levels of learning and development not possible without the instrumentality of the collective. But, because classes seldom “open up” into deep social learning immediately or automatically, these teachers perpetually guide their classes through a process of collective actuation—to be actuated for deep, social learning. A class collective actuates when the class, as a group, does not inhibit social learning, but rather deepens and facilitates it.

Before a class actuates, teaching may feel like a fight with the class. When a class actuates, a sense of cohesion prevails, things just “click” and “flow,” teaching the class

acquires an “easiness,” and teaching that class becomes immensely enjoyable. Teachers of actuated classes may feel freer to be themselves and enjoy the class. Teaching unactuated classes is difficult work that is emotionally draining, can sour a teaching career, and likely tends toward diminished pedagogical quality and student learning.

Because actuation is difficult to discern, these teachers rely on indicators such as evidence of learning and signs of positive student experience. Actuation is precarious and elusive, is usually difficult to achieve, and seems fragile once attained. Nevertheless, patterns of actuation may create a more stable macro-actuation in a class. When actuation-minded teachers speak of a class being “there,” they may be speaking about either of these states of actuation (micro or macro).

These teachers believe they cannot force actuation. Because of agency, actuation follows a collective buy-in. These actuation-minded teachers therefore do not view themselves merely as teachers of lessons, but rather as leaders of their class groups who guide their classes toward collective buy-in. Classes buy in when a critical mass of the class ascribes the group’s purpose, resulting in a high-functioning learning community that is actuated for deep collective learning. Teachers monitor indicators of buy-in, including class unity, connectivity (teacher to student and student to student), and unified focus and engagement. When not actuated, classes—especially large classes—tend to have various pockets of students throughout the class that vary in their levels of focus and engagement. Actuation entails melding these pockets, through the processes of buy-in, into a more unified collective that is primed for deep, social learning.

These actuation-minded teachers seem to seek actuation by managing two

separate (but interrelated) social environments: the internal social environment and the external social environment. The internal social environment, or the heart, is where class collectives agentically determine buy-in. To invite buy-in, these teachers cultivate within the heart two senses, or beliefs: a sense of collective trust and a sense of relevance. To buy in, students must believe (a) that they are safe in that class, and that they can trust the teacher and class members, and (b) that the class is relevant to them—it has personal, meaningful purpose.

The external social environment in the classroom affects the heart (internal environment), is what you can see or hear in the classroom, and relates to the sociality of a class. If a class is too social (hypersocial) or not social enough (hyposocial), learning may suffer. These actuation-minded teachers therefore seek to keep their classes in the “sweet zone” of learning where they are not only highly engaged but are also highly focused. Both social environments interact. Classes that are hypersocial or hyposocial may experience a reduced sense of relevancy and collective trust (the internal social environment). On the other hand, a poor sense of relevancy or trust can impact the sociality of the class (the external social environment).

Because actuation often occurs when socially and emotionally intelligent students lead out in meaningful sharing (opening up), these teachers work not only to embolden student leaders to open up, but also to guide their classes in responding appropriately. Student factors of class maturity, “the mix” of students, and class size all bear on actuation processes. These actuation-minded teachers work to lead their class groups with high expectations as well as high love and support.

Actuation-minded seminary teachers manage the complexities of buy-in and actuation by maintaining the simplicity of a “splendid mix of learning and enjoyment.” They use this splendid mix of learning and enjoyment to both reach the heart and to regulate the external social environment. With hypersocial classes, these actuation-minded teachers seek to increase focus by concentrating on learning. With hyposocial classes, these actuation-minded teachers invite engagement by cultivating enjoyment. Though they may for a time focus exclusively on learning or enjoyment, actuation-minded teachers seem to prefer maintaining both learning and enjoyment in a splendid mix to achieve the optimal learning experience. Figure 8 depicts the processes of actuation that comprise this common essence.

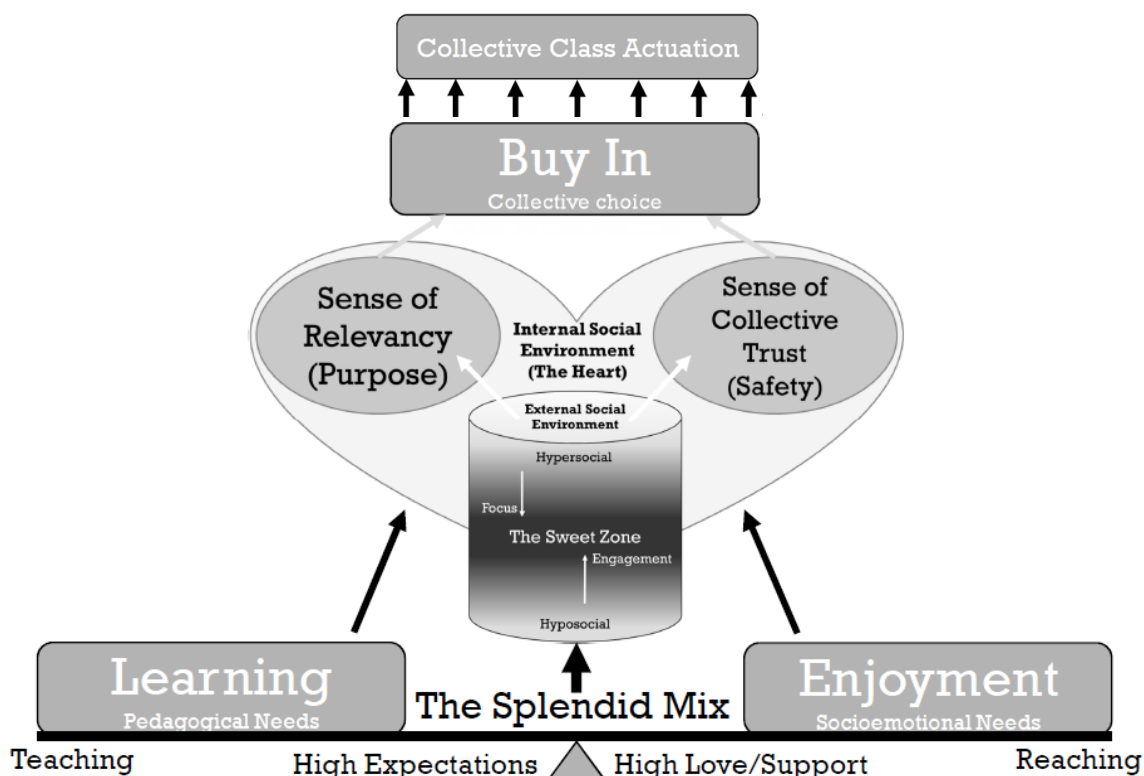


Figure 8. The processes of buy-in and actuation model.

Further analysis of the essence of CCA. Actuation seems to be the point at which (from the perspective of teachers) a class ceases being a burden to social learning and rather becomes a catalyst in the collective learning process. Low-functioning classes, as groups, may tend to inhibit social learning, whereas high-functioning classes may deepen social learning.

This switch, or point, or shift is so important to these actuation-minded teachers that their descriptions of ideal classes entail descriptions of this collective status. Nevertheless, although teachers describe an actuated class when describing an ideal class, actuation does not appear to be their ultimate goal. Rather, actuation is a state that enables collectives to realize ultimate collective goals. Teachers may value actuation then as the shift or state of a collective that enables the execution of higher functions and goals.

An optimal experience. Without a whole picture from the full range of the data, one may arrive at various erroneous conclusions. For instance, seeing how important enjoyability is for these teachers (both for the students and for themselves), one may judge actuation-minded seminary teachers to be entertainers. They may be entertaining, but they disdain the idea of being viewed as entertainers. Their aim is not to entertain. Rather, they use enjoyment to further and deepen learning, development, and transformative change.

However, once this is understood, another erroneous conclusion would be that the main aim of actuation-minded seminary teachers is informational learning. Paradoxically, though informational learning is a high priority to seminary teachers, it is not their

highest priority for their individual students and class groups. To illustrate, when asked to consider a class that acquires the highest levels of knowledge, but—as a class—has a relatively poor experience as a group compared to another class that acquires less knowledge, but has a much higher experience as a group, actuation-minded seminary teachers seem to prefer the latter. In other words, the aim of actuation-minded seminary teachers is not enjoyment without learning, nor is it vast learning without enjoyment. Rather, the aim of seminary teachers is the optimal experience that comes when enjoyment and learning are appropriately mixed in a way that deepens and sustains transformational learning and development. It is the experience they most seek.

After conducting this study, I would point out two commonalities that I believe all participants of this study share: love of the subject, and love of the students they teach. These teachers care deeply about what and who they teach. I suggest that both qualities contribute strongly to their being actuation-minded. Certainly, seminary teachers should be high in both tendencies, but surely these two qualities are common in education domains far beyond seminary. Nevertheless, if I were to identify the three most consistent motivators that may yield actuation-mindedness, they would be

1. A love of the students they teach,
2. A love of the subject they teach, and
3. A desire for their students to have an experience comprised of a splendid mixture of learning and enjoyment that can take the content of the course deep into the hearts and lives of those who they teach.

Happen. The recurrence of the word “happen” in the data is intriguing to me. The word “happen” suggests uncertainty—something for which occurrence was not ensured and may include an element of wonder. The word “happenstance” reflects this sense of

uncertainty with the idea of “happen.” I suppose that if teachers believed they had more control over actuation of their class groups they would likely speak less about “it happening.” I also suppose that the uncertainty of actuation even happening contributes substantially to the highly emotional reward-like nature of actuation from the perspective of teachers.

Teaching a challenging, unactuated class can feel like trying to ride either a wild stallion that is dangerous and uncontrollable, or instead like trying to ride a near-dead horse that fails to respond to prodding or stimulation. On the other hand, the combination of control, but not complete control, in the process of actuation is thrilling when it happens—much like riding a wild horse that runs in the right direction and proves safe but exhilarating.

Developmental shift. What kindles within individual students a desire to buy into the collective? The first time I observed these participants teach, I could see that the social influence of individual students seemed to determine how much sway they could have on collective buy-in. In some classes, the influence of one or two students seemed so strong that their choice whether to buy-in or not may have determined the collective buy-in of the entire class. Their influence seemed to take the music more thoroughly throughout the class collective.

As a class nears actuation, is there a tipping point where it happens? Is actuation more of a switch, or is it more of a point on a spectrum? The participants in this study believe there is a critical mass, or a point where the nature of a class changes in a remarkable way. To me, this change seems to be a developmental shift of the collective.

Teacher emotions relating to individual students may remain consistent before and after the actuation of a class, but teacher emotions relating to a whole class seem to change dramatically before and after buy-in. Teachers seem to pass from a sense of agitation or frustration to immense relief and enjoyment, and even into a sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) when classes actuate. Teachers of actuated classes are likely to say things like, “I love that class.” Teachers may also talk about disliking unactuated classes despite having kind feelings or strong relationships with individuals in low-functioning classes.

It opens up. As the participants of this study collaborated in the focus group, they reached a consensus that their individual interviews had already revealed to me. Actuation often occurs when a student leads out in sharing something meaningful—something that is personal or from the heart. The class then responds appropriately. Then, triggered by the risk-taking student leader(s), others in the class may “open up.” This collective process may lead to a deep social learning experience that is immensely desirable to actuation-minded seminary teachers and that they believe can take the class to the levels of learning that only the instrumentality of a collective can reach.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, “*From the perspective of seminary teachers, what are the indicators of CCA in seminary classes?*”? Figure 9 summarizes the purposeful sequences of the processes of actuation and the indicators that accompany each sequential element. Though not all, many of these indicators emerged previously in the pilot study.

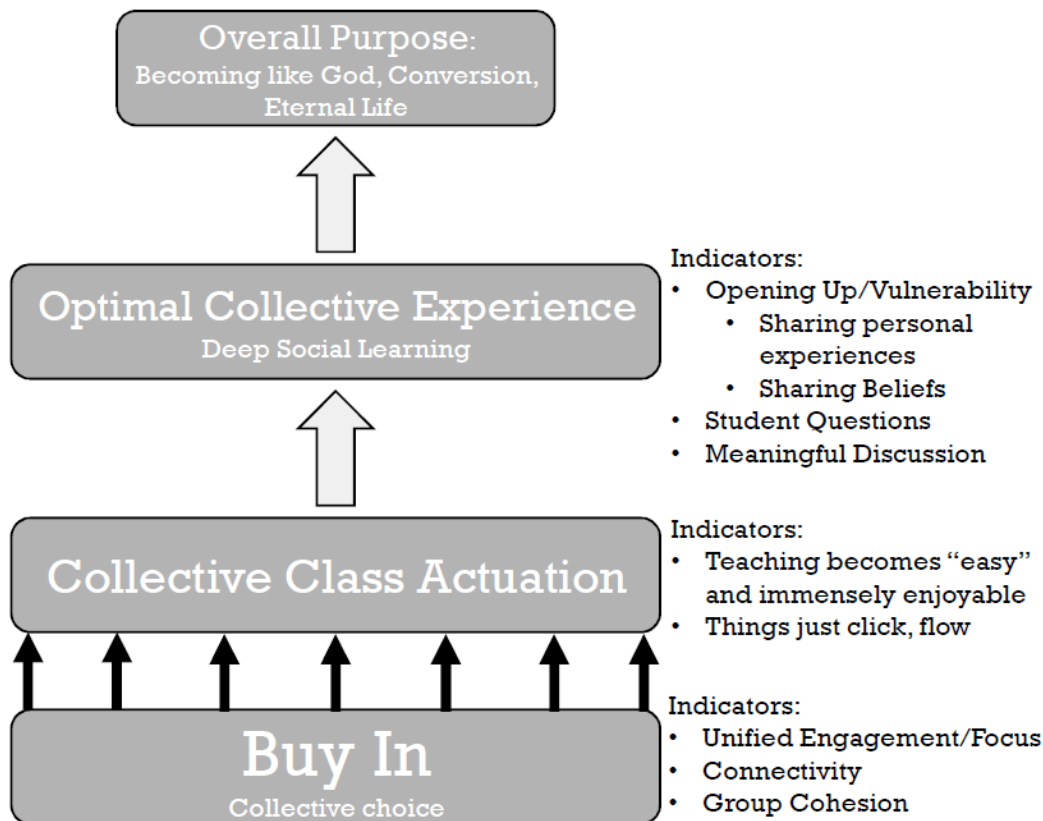


Figure 9. The purposeful sequences and indicators of actuation.

Nevertheless, this study offered additional indicators and more precise insight into which element of CCA each indicator signifies.

Beyond the indicators depicted in Figure 9, additional indicators of the processes of CCA that emerged in this study include a sense of relevancy and a sense of collective trust—both of which are elements of the internal social environment and seem to drive buy-in for the class collective. Table 15 displays the rich set of the indicators these teachers rely on. These participants depend on these indicators for many of the decisions they make regarding their classes (in both preparing and teaching), including a vast array of in situ decisions.

Table 15

Indicators of Collective Class Actuation

CCA Element	Indicator	Description
Optimal collective experience	Opening up, vulnerability	Premier indicator of deep collective learning (the opening up of students in the sharing of appropriate-yet-personal, meaningful experiences or beliefs that come from their heart). Such sharing requires risk and vulnerability for the student(s).
	Student questions	The asking of questions requires risk and can foster deep levels of social learning. Teachers also view the type of question students ask as indicative of collective experience.
	Meaningful discussion	The most common indicator of collective experience may be the engagement of a class in discussion processes.
Collective class actuation	Teaching becomes “easy” and enjoyable	At actuation, teaching moves from feeling like a fight to a sense of easiness. This shift may trigger feelings of joy within teachers and is compellingly motivating.
	Things click and flow	Much like catching a wave, a class that actuates seems to just go. Things just click and click. Things just flow.
	Evidence of positive experience	Anchored in the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment, teachers look for signs of student positive experience.
	Evidence of learning	Teachers look for indications that learning is occurring and will adjust planning and pedagogy to maintain learning.
Buy-in (collective)	Unified engagement and focus	Engagement and focus are dominant indicators of buy-in that are visible in the external social environment of the class. They also signify that the class may be in the sweet zone of learning.
	Social connectivity	Social connectivity signifies the existence or the development of trust and is pertinent both between teacher and student as well as between student and student.
	Group cohesion	The group takes on a collective personality. Teachers look for unity in the class as a group.
Internal social environment (the heart)	Sense of collective trust	All processes of actuation are influenced for good or bad by the level of trust in the collective. Buy-in, actuation, and collective learning all hinge on students feeling safe enough to engage and open up.
	Sense of relevancy	Student belief that the purposes and actions of the collective have personal meaning and are worth ascribing.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, “*From the Perspective of Seminary Teachers, what is the Role of Students in Manifesting CCA*”? Because the dynamics of actuation include the processes of agentic, collective buy-in, willingness of students to be socially vulnerable and take risks have a large bearing on CCA. Student efforts to lead out in deep social learning can have a trigger-effect on a class collective, thereby kindling social dynamics that fundamentally affect the shared learning experience. Social influence and socioemotional intelligence empower students to lead their peers toward buy-in and actuation, whereas lack of social influence and socioemotional intelligence in students who socially lead out in their classes may stifle processes of buy-in and actuation. The maturity and size of classes also seem to affect actuation. Some teachers use class systems or student role structures (class jobs) to facilitate processes of actuation and buy-in. The role of students, then, in the processes of actuation is to engage in actions and behaviors that foster collective trust, lead out in opening up and taking suitable social risks, and respond appropriately to peers who take social risks.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, “*From the perspective of seminary teachers, what is the role of the teacher in manifesting CCA*”? The findings of this study richly describe the role of teachers as primarily the role of leader in the processes of CCA. This role is vital due to the agency of each student in the class collective. Actuation-minded teachers appear to shift their thinking from being presenters of lessons to being leaders of class groups. Teaching high-quality lessons is a tool of their leadership. Leadership is vital for

teachers because they cannot force or simply enact actuation. Actuation occurs only through buy-in, which requires teachers to be highly effective as leaders of the processes of buy-in. Hence, the role of teachers is to teach, reach, lead with high expectations, and support those expectations with high love. Teachers must discern levels of learning and enjoyment and adjust planning and in situ decisions according to their perception to restore a splendid mix. The development of teacher expertise seems to enhance teacher capacity for discernment and collective leadership.

Contradictions and Discrepancies

This study used the proposed CCA model (Anderson et al., 2019) as a theoretical lens to explore an extraordinarily complex classroom phenomenon. In light of these complexities, contradictions and discrepancies did emerge during the study. Many of these discrepancies may be expressed as dichotomies. First, when asked what makes an ideal, high-functioning seminary class, these participants described an actuated class. However, their descriptions of an actuated class would at times describe an in-the-moment ideal, while at other times they would describe a more stable, long-term actuation. During the focus group, participants termed these two phenomena as micro-actuation and macro-actuation. When actuation-minded seminary teachers conceive of an ideal class, which of these actuations are they pursuing, and how are they related?

Second, although all participants agreed that they do not like classes that are “too social” or that are “not social enough,” and would rather their classes be in the sweet zone of learning, if they had to pick which of the two problems they would prefer to

manage, these participants were not consistent with each other. Some prefer hypersocial classes and others prefer hyposocial classes. Hence, this dichotomy stands separate from any common essence of CCA and is a matter of preference, not a universal experience among actuation-minded seminary teachers. A third contradiction encompasses the question of whether actuation-minded seminary teachers are focused on their class as a whole or on individuals within the class. The data appears contradictory.

Fourth, the data convey strong support for strong teacher influence as leaders of the class collective. Nevertheless, the data also convey clear limits to the capacity of teachers to fully control the processes of buy-in and actuation. How much control do teachers as class leaders have, and where does their power end in these dynamics? Fifth, and similarly, the data illustrate not only expressions of strong teacher efficacy from these participants but also strong laments of lack of ability to reach certain students or classes. Sixth, and also related, is the tendency for these teachers to identify a need for greater pedagogical effort and effectiveness with challenging classes while acknowledging a tendency to pull back and offer difficult classes a lesser pedagogy.

Despite these seemingly oppositional elements in the data, I believe that many of these apparent contradictions and discrepancies may rather be paradoxes and nuances of complex phenomena. For example, it is likely that actuation-minded teachers have learned that an actuated class may be the most efficient way to benefit individuals in the collective. They may also have discerned a poignant role that meeting individual needs can meet in the processes of collective actuation. Also, teacher perceptions of limitations of full control may accentuate the role of teachers as leaders. The role of leaders is to

lead, not compel. Finally, as mentioned in the results, micro- and macro-actuation may be heavily related to each other (macro-actuation may be established by patterns of micro-actuation). Further, both forms of actuation may be vital elements to the perception of ideal, high-functioning classes in the perception of actuation-minded teachers.

The Collective Class Actuation Model and Results of This Study

Though the CCA model (Anderson et al., 2019) has foundation in data and the literature, it ultimately rests—prior to this study—on a case study that explored the experience of one teacher. It would come with no surprise that this larger, full phenomenology exploring the phenomenon would yield new considerations for the CCA model. As the study commenced, the CCA model, including specific elements, did not fail to explain what it purports to explain. However, where the CCA model fell short is in what it neglects—the processes of buy-in that lead to actuation. When these participants were asked to describe the essence and indicators of high-functioning classes, much of what they focus on are processes of buy-in that the CCA model does not depict. Figure 10 depicts the CCA model (Figure 2) side-by-side with the processes of buy-in and actuation model (Figure 8) and illustrates the part of the CCA model that is enriched by the processes of buy-in model.

Limitations

I pursued research questions that necessitated deep qualitative exploration. The qualitative nature and phenomenological approach of this study provided rich insights to

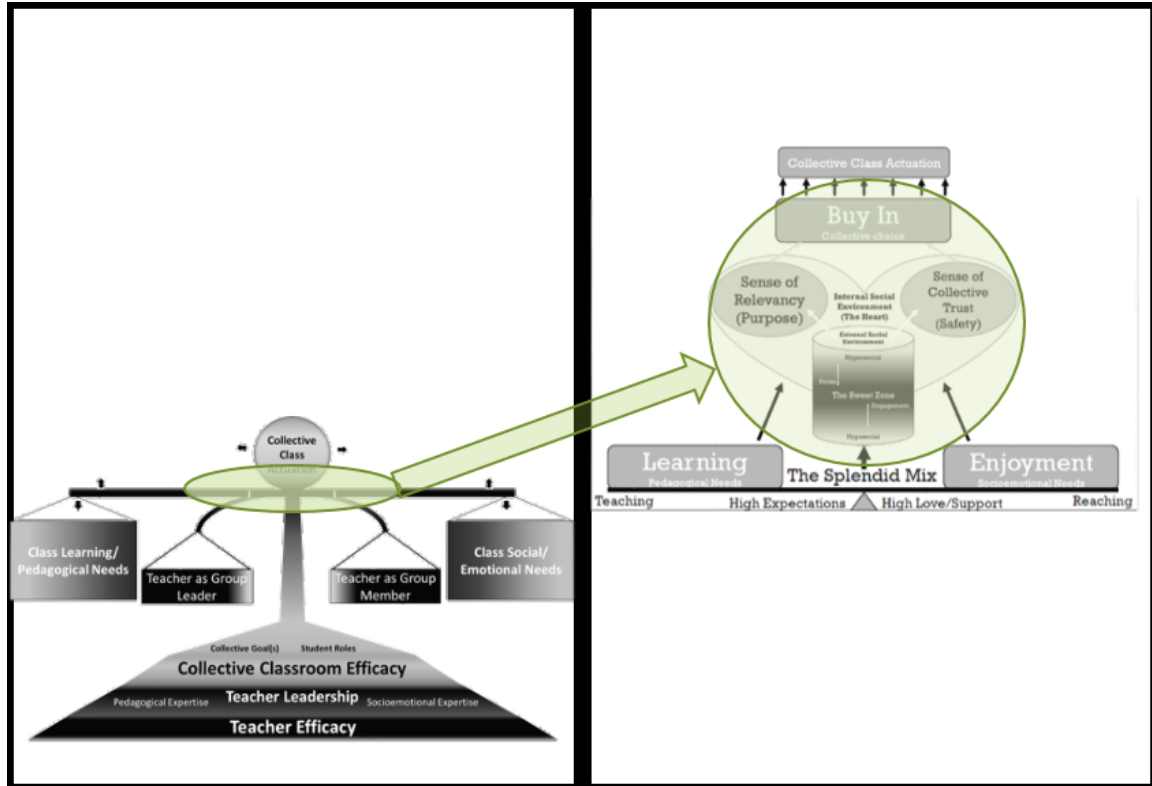


Figure 10. Comparison of the Collective Class Actuation model and the processes of buy-in and actuation model.

the processes of actuation. However, this approach placed an enormous burden of trustworthiness on me as the researcher. I am the sole researcher and primary instrument involved in this study, which brings my biases and weaknesses as a researcher to bear on what I saw and how I interpreted and reported it. Also, qualitative studies, by nature, present challenges to generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2017), although phenomenology and grounded theory studies may venture further in generalizability than most other qualitative approaches (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, although demographics of seminary teachers are shifting, current demographics limited this study to only consider the perspective of white male teachers, with no inclusion of female teachers or student

perspectives. Further studies are needed to close these gaps by including the perspective of students and the steadily-increasing ranks of female seminary teachers.

I performed this study among seminary teachers, which situates this study in a unique context. How universal is the essence derived from this study? Does it apply to all seminary teachers, or to any domains beyond seminary? Ultimately, this study describes the experience of the six participants (seven including the pilot study) who contributed to it. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study may bear strong implications not only for many seminary teachers, but also for some teachers in other domains of education who seek for the socioemotional and academic benefits of actuated class groups.

Implications

I believe that the essence of CCA derived in this study (articulated earlier in this chapter and illustrated in the processes of actuation model depicted in Figure 8) reflects the essence of actuation as experienced in common among actuation-minded seminary teachers. Not all seminary teachers are actuation-minded, but I suppose that many are. If that supposition is true, the essence of this study may well speak to the experience of most seminary teachers. But how far might this essence relate to teachers beyond the domain of seminary?

In many domains of education, informational learning may be far more important to teachers than the overall experience of students (Obenchain & Ives, 2006). In these domains, actuation-mindedness may not be as common as it may be in domains in which the overall experience is a higher aim than the transfer of information. In this sense,

actuation takes classroom teaching from a “lesson” to “an experience.” In other words, I believe actuation-mindedness will heavily correlate with the extent that teachers prioritize an overall collective experience compared to the individual acquisition of knowledge.

As an example, many mathematics and science teachers who are preparing students for standardized tests or who are held accountable for levels of knowledge learned by students may be less concerned about the overall experience of their class groups compared with the amount of information students learn. Many domains are likely to be comprised of teachers who predominately fall within this description. Yet, I also posit that the ranks of all teachers in almost any domain of education are likely to include actuation-minded teachers. Whether they are actuation-minded because they perceive that an actuated collective will enhance student learning, or whether they are actuation-minded for their own enjoyment or needs, actuation-minded teachers in any domain may benefit from the rich perspective and simplicity this study provides against the complex backdrop of the processes of actuation.

I suppose that for actuation-minded teachers in any domain of education, the emotional effects of actuation are strong and compelling. Therefore, I believe many teachers are likely conducting a perpetual, informal, yet effectual study of these very processes of actuation in their own classes. Nonetheless, these dynamics are so complex and ethereal that, despite many years of teaching experience, I was surprised to learn from a composite experience of other teachers factors that have influenced my own experience without my being explicitly cognizant of them. For that reason, I believe the findings of this study may bear great value for teachers who prioritize a high collective

experience for their classes regardless of the age or domain in which they teach.

I also assert that teachers who seek actuation may find increased enjoyment in their career if they better understand these processes. Further, because of the enhanced pedagogy and more positive affect experienced by teachers in cohesive, actuated classes, I also suggest that student learning and student enjoyment may also increase with amplified success with actuation processes. Teacher turnover is high and costly for teachers, for educational systems, and especially for students. Would teacher persistence and success increase if more beginning teachers understood the dynamics conveyed in the essence this study?

Preservice education programs commonly include strong emphasis on theories and practice of teaching and learning but may be weak on teacher leadership—especially group leadership. Classroom management is a separate concept that focusses on behavioral maintenance. But harnessing the social power and benefit of the group in the learning process runs far beyond mere classroom management and may be heavily neglected in preservice programs. Yet, as teachers begin teaching, these group processes are often a dominant part of their lived experience and may be a large factor in teacher burn-out. Preservice educational programs may benefit from courses relating to group dynamics, including actuation.

For the participants in this study, classes may be easier to actuate if they have more than 20 students but less than 30 students. For them, small groups may impose excessive burdens on student leaders and large classes become too large and complex to form the individual bonds necessary for CCA. Likely, this range is particular to seminary,

and each domain may have different preferences for class size. For example, some domains may prefer classes well under 20 students. Also, some educational settings may find high levels of trust among classes much larger than 30 students. Nevertheless, class size does seem to influence the processes of actuation, and leaders in each educational domain should consider collective actuation when making administrative decisions that affect class size.

The essence of actuation among seminary teachers has obvious practical implications for seminary classes. However, many of these principles may transfer to other domains of education, and perhaps even to other purposeful groups. For instance, teachers who wish their classes to actuate as a collective for deep social learning experiences might consider the levels of collective trust and the collective sense of relevancy in their classes. The development of these two collective beliefs may comprise the collective efficacy that unites classes as groups. Knowing this, actuation-minded teachers may wish to lead classes through escalating levels of trust and begin these efforts as soon as a term commences. Social interactions that increase connectivity and strengthen collective trust may support the likelihood of buy-in and actuation in classes. Also, teachers in any domain may benefit from steadily assessing the learning and enjoyment of their students, and then make any adjustments that might enhance overall student experience.

The Place of this Study in the Research

The theoretical lenses that shaped this study emanated broadly from social

cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1986), and more narrowly from sociopedagogical theory (Senior, 2006) and collective classroom efficacy (Putney & Broughton, 2011). Anderson et al. (2019) merged these perspectives, conducted a pilot study to explore them, and derived the integrated theoretical construct of CCA. These theoretical foundations offered explanation of the development of collectives and how those collectives influence individual learning and development through collective learning experiences. With this current study, I explored CCA in a full phenomenology in pursuit of the essence of CCA as experienced by six seminary teachers in a Western state.

Building on these theoretical foundations, the essence derived in this study may further our understanding of the development of classroom collectives as well as the intricacies of CCE. For instance, collective trust and collective sense of relevancy—as elements of the internal classroom environment (the heart) that emerged from this study—may deepen scholarly understanding regarding the workings of CCE. In other words, a sense of relevancy and a sense of collective trust may be the beliefs that form the touchpoints of collective efficacy in class groups that unify and function at high levels. In addition to the work of CCE, this study may also contribute to current understanding of sociocultural exploration of classroom dynamics. More specifically, the role of deep social learning and the dynamics of the internal social environment conveyed in this study's findings offer a rich basis to interpret classroom social processes from a Vygotskian perspective.

Also, the findings of this study further substantiate in a new domain of education

the findings of Senior (2006), especially relating to sociopedagogical theory of the dual roles of the teacher as class group member and class group leader. The splendid mix of learning and enjoyment as articulated in this study also provides further support for Senor's (1999, 2006) sociopedagogical equilibrium.

Also, classroom management research may benefit from the simplicity of the external social environment derived from the experience of these participants. More specifically, the effort to maintain classes within a sweet zone of learning where students are highly engaged but remain highly focused in the collective learning process may simplify explanations of what teachers are trying to do in practice. Even more, the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment may explain the simplicity with which effective teachers seek to manage the extraordinarily complex social dynamics of classrooms.

In addition, the findings of this study may further reaffirm the importance of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) in classroom dynamics. As emotional mismanagement can "kill" actuation, and proper emotional management may heavily influence the development of collective trust, emotional intelligence could hardly be overemphasized as a contributing element of teacher leadership in the processes of collective actuation.

Future Research

During the focus group, Gordon invoked laughter by recommending something that I believe has merit as a potentially valuable idea. He suggested that teachers should have a button on their lectern, or near the front of their class, that they can press when

they believe their class is “there” (actuated). He also suggested that the students have a button as well that they could push when they believe the class is “there.” This imagery was humorous to the participants and became a recurring joke during the focus group. Yet, Gordon’s idea reveals a vital need in further research in CCA: student perspectives. Do students view actuation more similarly or more differently than teachers? When a teacher believes a class is there, would students tend to agree? Would other teachers tend to agree if they were observing the perceived actuated class? Do students tend to align or vary in their perceptions of actuation? Could multiple observers of actuation processes achieve valid inter-rater reliability?

If actuation contributes to an optimal collective experience comprised of high levels of both learning and enjoyment, could researchers quantify students’ learning blended with perceived levels of enjoyment? Could aggregated measurements contribute to the development of instruments that might measure aspects of the processes of buy-in and actuation? Could researchers find ways to assess levels of collective sense of relevancy and collective trust as they specifically relate to buy-in? Only further research can answer these questions, and the implications of such research could be an extraordinary boon to further exploration of CCA.

As the participants of this study identified, when teachers articulate “ideal,” high-functioning classes, they tend to describe one of two actuations: micro-actuation (in the moment, during a lesson) or macro-actuation (long-term patterns of actuation that create a sense of stability and consistency in the class). Both realms of actuation invite potential, rich exploration to explain how they develop, unfold, and fluctuate over time.

Another idea from this study that needs further exploration is the “critical mass” at which collective buy-in occurs. Is it a trigger, a switch, a tipping point, or is there a better way to describe and explain what happens when collective buy-in occurs? How do teachers who successfully actuate their classes regularly foster collective trust and a sense of relevancy? The answer to these questions could offer substantial benefit to the practice of classroom teaching.

Vital to additional research on CCA and its processes is an exploration of CCA in contexts outside of seminary. How well does the essence of CCA from this study explain CCA in other domains? Is actuation-mindedness an American or a western cultural phenomenon? What elements of the processes of actuation model may need adjustment to move toward a more universal essence of CCA in any domain? If further research could derive ways to assess levels of actuation, researchers could explore sundry vital relationships among actuation and many facets of learning and teaching (e.g., student learning, student affect, teacher career satisfaction). Relationships between teacher effectiveness and propensity toward actuation-mindedness could reveal the value of actuation beyond personal teacher preference. Comparisons between transfer-of-knowledge approaches and deep-social-learning approaches offer rich opportunities for scholars to better understand many factors of class actuation, classroom teaching, and student learning.

Conclusion

I enacted this study to pursue a deeper understanding and to derive a common

essence of the experience of seminary teachers with their classes as groups. More specifically, I have combined the perspective of six seminary teachers in a Western state to understand their experience with the processes of actuation (CCA). In addition to this common essence, I have learned what indicators teachers rely on to discern the presence of CCA and the role of students and of teachers as leaders of their class groups in these processes.

This study improves our understanding of the functions of deep collective learning, what must happen to classes (actuation) before they undergo deep collective learning, and the classroom processes that support collective buy-in and actuation. From this study, we now have an awareness of the two social environments that actuation-minded teachers seem to manage as they pursue collective buy-in, the beliefs that play out in the internal social environment, and the dynamics that play out in the external social environment. This study also affirms the role of the splendid mix of learning and enjoyment (Anderson et al., 2019) that teachers use to manage the dynamics of buy-in and actuation and to create an optimal learning experience that enables transformative learning.

These theoretical principles emerge from and intertwine with the classroom practices of actuation-minded seminary teachers. These findings therefore contribute to the literature by adding a first full-sampled study into the dynamics, processes, and experience of CCA in any domain. This study provides researchers with opportunities to test the full range of these processes in seminary classes in other regions and in domains outside of seminary, or to explore specific elements of these processes in any domain of

education.

The findings of this study may increase the understanding of preservice and in-service trainers relating to collective class development, buy-in, actuation, and deep social learning. The gains and effect of this understanding may especially improve novice teachers' early career efforts, which could possibly alleviate teacher burn-out and turnover. These findings could also assist teachers of all experience levels to focus on the principles and dynamics that are most likely to mediate the challenges of teaching groups of students. This effort could lead to increases in student learning, student enjoyment, and large increases in teacher enjoyment. Finally, these findings increase our understanding of the processes that many teachers intuitively pursue. I believe that this increased understanding may expedite teacher success with these highly relevant functions of classroom teaching.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Protocol for the Determination of Actuation-Mindedness in Seminary Teachers

Protocol for the Determination of Actuation-Mindedness in Seminary Teachers

In this study, the primary determinant of participants is the recommendation of supervisors (seminary principals). This study relies on principals to help the researcher identify teachers who are “actuation-minded.” This protocol is designed to assist principals in identifying actuation-mindedness in teachers.

When teaching multiple students at once, the resulting group dynamics can hinder or deepen learning. Many teachers therefore focus on their class as a group and seek to improve the teachability of the class by “actuating” classes into a community of learners that is primed for deeper learning. The researcher in this study is exploring the perspective and experience of actuation-minded teachers. *Actuation-minded teachers hold as a primary motive the melding (actuation) of each class into a productively cohesive group that is primed for deep learning as a class.*

Based on preliminary research, actuation-minded teachers are likely to

- Valuate (judge) each class based on how well the class bonds together and learns as a group
- Care about their students’ learning needs.
- Care about their students’ social and emotional needs.
- Understand and manage their own emotions as well as understand students’ emotions, and then manage relationships with their students and classes considering those emotions.
- Seek to cultivate both learning and enjoyment in their classes.
- Foster high levels of interactivity between and among students and the teacher.
- Demonstrate sufficient expertise to manage the complex group dynamics of their classes.
- Value and attend to individuals while maintaining focus on their class as a group.
- Allow themselves to be a part of their class group while maintaining their role as the leader of the class group.
- Cultivate student leadership of their classes.
Help their classes to unite behind common goals.

Appendix B
Supervisor Support and Consent



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v.8.3; May2017

Supervisor Support and Consent

High-Functioning Seminary Class Groups as Experienced by Seminary Teachers in Northern Utah

Purpose

The purpose of this study will be to discover the essence of high-functioning class groups as commonly experienced by seminary teachers in Northern Utah.

Inclusion Criteria

This study requires participants who are experienced seminary teachers, with four or more years of seminary teaching experience, who teach seminary on a trimester system, and who are actuation-minded. Actuation-minded teachers seek to meld (actuate) their class groups into a cohesive unit that is both unified and productive.

Time Commitment and Benefits

A teacher's participation will involve four interviews, which should each take approximately one hour (during the work day) and occur at the seminary where he or she teaches. The first interview will be just prior to the start of a trimester. The remaining three interviews will be conducted every third week during the trimester. The researcher will observe (and audio record) one of the teacher's classes three times during the trimester in conjunction with the last three interviews (the researcher will observe a class and then interview the teacher shortly thereafter). The participant will also be invited to record thoughts and exchange ideas with the researcher and fellow participants through a digital format. Near the end of the trimester, the participant will be invited to join five other participants in a focus group. The participant's total time in this project is expected to be about ten hours. We anticipate that he or she will be one of six participants in this study.

There is no direct benefit for participating in this research study. More broadly, this study will help the researchers learn more about deep learning in class groups. Such information may help educators' abilities to establish and maintain cohesive class groups.

Supervisor Consent

I consent for one or more of the teachers who I supervise to participate during the second trimester of this school year (November 2018 through February 2019). USU IRB Protocol #9635.

Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix C

Invitation to Participate

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in a study that will explore the lived experience of seminary teachers with leading each class toward deep learning as a high-functioning group.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study will be to discover the essence of teaching high-functioning class groups.

Inclusion criteria

This study requires a participant who seeks to meld each class group into a cohesive unit that is both unified and productive. You were identified by your supervisor as a teacher who is seeks this and is capable of leading high-functioning seminary classes.

Time commitment and Benefits

Your participation will involve interviews, which should each take about an hour (during the work day) and will occur at your seminary. One interview will be just prior to the start of the trimester. The other three interviews will be conducted every third week during the trimester. The researcher will observe one of your classes just prior to the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th interviews. You will also be invited to record thoughts and exchange ideas with the researcher and fellow coresearchers through a digital format throughout the trimester and in a one-hour focus group at the end of the trimester. Your total participation in this project is expected to be about ten hours. We anticipate that you will be one of six participants in this study.

There may or may not be any direct benefit to you from these procedures. However, the researcher believes that participation in this study may enrich your career and directly benefit you by expanding your understanding of high-functioning classes. This study may also accelerate your professional growth as a teacher and increase your capacity to establish and maintaining cohesive class groups.

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USU IRB Protocol # 9635

Appendix D

Informed Consent Letter



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v.8.3; May 2017

Informed Consent

High-Functioning Seminary Class Groups as Experienced by Seminary Teachers in Northern Utah

Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Suzanne H. Jones, an Associate Professor in the department of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University, and by Donald Anderson, a Doctoral Candidate. The purpose of this research study will be to discover the essence of high-functioning class groups as commonly experienced by seminary teachers in Northern Utah.

This form includes detailed information on the research to help you decide whether to participate in this Study. Please read it carefully and ask any questions you have before you agree to participate.

Procedures

If you join this research project, you will participate in four interviews, which should take approximately one hour each. The first interview will be conducted just prior to the start of a trimester. The remaining three interviews will be conducted every third week during the trimester. The researcher will observe and audio record one of your classes three times during the trimester in conjunction with the last three interviews. Audio recordings will be destroyed three years after the study. You will also be invited to record thoughts and exchange ideas with the researcher and fellow participants through an online discussion throughout the trimester and in a one-hour focus group near the end of the trimester. Your total participation in this project is expected to be about ten hours. We anticipate that you will be one of six participants in this study.

Risks

This is a minimal-risk research study. That means that the risks of participating are no more likely or serious than those you encounter in everyday activities. You may experience some discomfort discussing detailed information about your teaching philosophy or the events that are occurring in your classroom. There is a small risk of loss of confidentiality, but steps will be taken to prevent that as described below under confidentiality.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this research study. More broadly, this study will help the researchers learn more about deep learning in class groups. Such information may help educators' abilities to establish and maintain cohesive class groups.

Confidentiality

The researchers will make every effort to ensure that the information you provide as part of this study remains confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study.

We will collect your information through interviews, observation, and digital communication. This information will be securely stored in a restricted-access folder on Dedoose.com, an encrypted, cloud-based storage system. This form will be kept for three years after the study is complete, and then it will be destroyed.

It is unlikely, but possible, that others (Utah State University, state, or federal officials) may require us to share the information you give us from the study to ensure that the research was conducted safely and appropriately. We will only share your information if law or policy requires us to do so.



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Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now and change your mind later, you may withdraw at any time by informing the researcher or your supervisor. If you choose to withdraw after we have already collected information about you, we will remove that information from our records. The researchers may choose to terminate your participation in this research study if they deem the burden on you for participation is greater than the benefit to yourself or the research purpose.

IRB Review

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at 801-520-9240 or email her at suzanne.jones@usu.edu. If you have questions about your rights or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about questions or concerns, please contact the IRB Director at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu.

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Informed Consent

By signing below, you agree to participate in this study. You indicate that you understand the risks and benefits of participation, and that you know what you will be asked to do. You also agree that you have asked any questions you might have and are clear on how to stop your participation in the study if you choose to do so. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.

Participant's Signature

Participant's Name, Printed

Date

Appendix E

Parental Informational Letter



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 Protocol #9635
 IRB Approval Date: 11/14/2018
 Consent Document Expires: 11/13/2021
 IRB Password Protected per IRB Coordinator

v.8.3; May2017

Parental Information

Deep Learning in Seminary Class Groups as Experienced by Seminary Teachers in Northern Utah

Purpose

Your child's seminary teacher is participating in a research study conducted by Dr. Suzanne H. Jones, an Associate Professor in the department of Teacher Education and Leadership at Utah State University, and by Donald Anderson, a Doctoral Candidate and Seminary instructor. The purpose of this study will be to learn more about how classes gel into productive, cohesive groups and experience deep learning as a group. As a part of this study, a researcher will observe a seminary class three times. Because your child may be in the class that will be observed, we wish to inform you, as a parent/guardian, of the study, its risks, and your options.

Procedures

A researcher may observe your child's class three times this trimester. The researcher will observe as a non-participant. The researcher will not participate in or seek to become involved with the lesson. He will audio-record the class session and take extensive notes, focusing on the dynamic interactions of the class group, and the decisions of the teacher as they relate to purposeful class group cohesion and learning.

Risks

This is a minimal risk research study. That means that the risks of participating are no more likely or serious than those your child encounters in seminary on any given day. He or she may experience some discomfort by having an extra adult in the classroom as an observer. Further, notes taken by the observer may reflect actions and comments from students, including your daughter or son.

Confidentiality

The researchers will make every effort to ensure that the information taken in observation as part of this study remains confidential. Your child's identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your child may withdraw at any time by you or your child informing the researchers, seminary teacher or administrators, or the USU IRB listed below. If you or your child choose to withdraw from the study, her or his name, responses, and actions will be omitted from all data analyses and will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study. Your child may be placed in another class or study on their own away from the classroom somewhere in the seminary on observation days if you or they wish to withdraw them from this study. Withdrawing from the study will not adversely impact your child's seminary credit.

IRB Review

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at 801-520-9240 (suzanne.jones@usu.edu), or the IRB Director at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu.

Suzanne H. Jones
 Principal Investigator
 (435) 797-1568; Suzanne.jones@usu.edu

Donald B. Anderson
 Student Investigator
 (435) 512-5277; donald.anderson@aggiemail.usu.edu

Informed Consent

If you do not wish your child to participate in this observation, please sign this form and return it to your child's seminary teacher. Thank you for your consideration of this research opportunity.

Student Name, Printed

Parent Signature

Date

Appendix F

S&I Educational Research Committee Approval Letter

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

SEMINARIES AND INSTITUTES OF RELIGION

September 28, 2018

Donald B. Anderson
Millville Utah Seminary
410 N 100 E
Millville, UT 84326

Donny,

The Seminaries & Institutes of Religion Education Research Committee (ERC) has approved your research project with the following provisions:

1. Data must be collected as outlined in your proposal. Any changes to procedures must be reviewed and approved by the ERC.
2. All program administrators (e.g., seminary principal, institute director, coordinator, area director) impacted by your study must be informed of your efforts.
3. Any presentation or publication of your research outside of your degree requirements must be approved by the ERC.
4. A digital copy of your final research report must be provided to the ERC.

We wish you the best of success!

Sincerely,

Grant Anderson
Associate Administrator

Appendix G

Collective Class Actuation Preliminary Interview Protocol

Collective Class Actuation Preliminary Interview Protocol

Using the word *class* to refer to a group of students who meet for a trimester: What makes a “good” seminary class?

(Follow up) Based on your answer, you seem to value _____ in a class group. Why is that? (repeated as necessary)

For you, what does a high-functioning seminary class look like?

In your view, what distinguishes higher-functioning seminary class groups from lower-functioning class groups?

What do you believe helps a class unify as a group?

What indicators signify to you that your class, as a group, is where you want it to be?

How much control and influence do you believe the teacher can have on the development of “good” seminary classes? Why?

With high-functioning class groups, what do you believe is the role of the teacher?

In high-functioning seminary classes, what do you believe is the role of students? (What influence do you believe teachers have with students in these roles?)

What leadership qualities in teachers do you believe are most valuable in consistently leading classes to bond into good seminary classes that learn deeply together?

Appendix H

Collective Class Actuation Interview Protocol, Interviews Two and Three

Collective Class Actuation Interview Protocol, Interviews Two and Three

In the preliminary interview (or previous interviews), you seemed to value _____ in your class groups. Do you still feel the same way? How is that going so far with your classes? (repeated for all major elements carried over from the preliminary interview)

What signs are you seeing that your classes are (or are not) “there.”

What factors are most influencing your classes being “there” (or not being “there”)?

What do you think your classes that are not “there” need? What do your classes that are “there” need? How should those needs be met?

What have been your best moments this trimester? What made them so good?

What insights have you learned about class size? Class make up? Student maturity/student leadership? Class needs? Teacher influence? Anything else of importance to you?

Appendix I
Observation Protocol

Observation Protocol

What is observed (general):
CCA:

Pertinence to

Description of evidence of:
Teacher Role Balance:

Analysis:

Cohesion:

Affective motivation:

Looking for Indicators of CCA:

Signs of Flow:

Unified Focus and Engagement:

Social Connectivity:

Evidence of Learning:

Evidence of Positive Student Experience:

Shared Group Emotion:

Agentic Buy-in:

The Splendid Mix (Learning and Enjoyment):

Student Leadership:

Common Goal:

Perseverance:

Appendix J

Example of Raw Observation Notes

V2 (William) Observation, Jan 3, 2018 Observation/field notes

29 Students, 16 Girls, 13 Boys

Teacher selected students for piano and prayers

Get your journals out. Your going to need them.

Before all open, seven laffy taffy placed on lectern.

Price is right activity ([Unified focus](#)), students are writing guesses while teacher displays.

Calling out prices and some side conversations related to the activity.

[Smiles and much engagement/participation early on. \(Hight Enjoyment!\)](#)

[Banter ongoing. High level of vocal interaction.](#)

You can pull out your phones for calculation.

I need you to tell me the value of these three items:

[Is everybody looking at the screen? \(Focus\)](#)

Highlight verse 10. [We are going to quote it twice together](#)

[Class is very quiet. Teacher shares personal experience.](#)

Ladies, how does the world convince you you're not good enough?

How do you know the value of something? The price you're willing to pay for it.

The next verse, 11, says the price that was paid for us.

Video clip

[Scriptures open on every desk I can see \(Unified Focus\).](#)

[Asked specific question of a student, asked another deep question for the class.](#)

If I were to bring in my children and someone asked me to kill my son for you... you must be something of great worth.

Writing in Journal experience, written on board," Because the Lord sacrificed so much for others, I should treat them..." Two minutes. Journals out. [All within my view writing \(Unified engagement\).](#)

[Class very quiet.](#)

[Share what you wrote with your neighbor. \(Teacher initiated sociality, increasing engagement\)](#)

Specific student called on to share what they wrote (Invitation to participate).

That student called on another student. Another students selected by the teacher. [\(more invitations\).](#)

Teacher placed a string stretching from end to end.

What are we going to be like in 10 million years? Overhead of President Nelson.

Everyone in this room has the potential to be like Father in Heaven.

What if you walked around (the high school) and saw people for their potential?

Back to section 18. Read a verse. To 3 Ne 11:15. Find phrase that tells us Christ loves every individual in here.

Students to read a verse and raise hand when they see words that say how much he loves...

One by one. What is done in this Church one by one?

[Class remains very quiet through cross reference \(unified focus\)](#) and back to D&C 18

What are we going to leave here to go and do?

Video of lifeguard saving someone that nobody can see.

How would you know if someone were in trouble? How would you help them?... *you with me?* (unified engagement/focus)

Put the name of 5 people you know, teenagers who are close to you. Are they struggling? Who do you know that is struggling? Picture of pool to all students. Write down what you can do to help them.

It's important that everyone has a chance to share... (Increasing social engagement).

Everyone please share with your neighbor what you learned today.

Kay, *look at me. Riley is going to have the floor. Give her your undivided attention.*

Question for Rile. Kaleb... *One last thing. Look at me.* ...Testimony. (Focus)

"Love you guys" as students head out. Shaking hands.

This teacher sought perpetual focus and engagement throughout the lesson, and had it. Constant efforts to draw attention and increase engagement, mixed with variety and humor...

Appendix K
List of A Priori Codes

List of A Priori Codes

The following Codes stem from the CCA model or emerged from the pilot study

Collective Class Actuation

- The Experience of CCA

- Flow

- Affective Motivation

- Indicators of Actuation

- Unified Compliance

- Unified Focus

- Indications of Social Connectivity

- Indications of Learning

- Indications of Positive Experience

- Shared Group Emotion

- Establishing CCA

- Maintaining CCA

Sociopedagogical Balance

- Social Needs

- Learning Needs

Teacher Role Balance

- Teacher as Group Leader

- Teacher as Group Member

Student Roles

- Student Leaders

- Student Role Players

Common Goals

Collective Classroom Efficacy

Teacher Leadership Expertise

- Pedagogical Expertise

- Socioemotional Expertise

- Emotional Intelligence

- Democratic Leadership

- Humor

- Care for Students

Teacher Efficacy

- Perseverance

Appendix L
External Audit

EXTERNAL AUDIT

I hereby attest that this study meets the validity requirements for qualitative inquiry. I have performed an external audit examining the audit trail which consists of raw data, analyzed data, records of study processes, and theoretical framework. In my opinion the researcher has followed proscribed and recognized qualitative methodology for establishing trustworthiness.

Zachary R. Horton, Ph.D.

Principal, Salt Lake City East Seminary

Appendix M

Redacted Interviews

Redacted Interviews (Individual Participant Textural Descriptions)

An Ideal Seminary Class (From the Perspective of Benjamin)

An ideal seminary class:

- Is highly bonded (teacher to students, and students to students).
- Has an easy feel that is enjoyable for teacher and students.
- Is a group that shares principles of the gospel with each other under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost freely confirms what is happening.

By engaging in:

- Deep social learning processes (sharing personal experiences and thoughts, asking questions, discussing) where sociality is directed to each other and not just the teacher. The sociality in ideal classes tends to be high (talking, sharing, verbalizing, etc).

Ideal classes are marked by:

- A comfort and trust level with each other and with the teacher that allows students to feel like they can be vulnerable, open up, ask questions, and share things that are real, meaningful, and personal. These classes often enjoy high sociality before, during, and after class.
- Socially influential students who step up and lead out in the process of opening up, followed by class groups that respond in an appropriate and supportive way.
- High mutual empathy, tolerance, and acceptance that allows for contributions of varying maturity without condemnation (mature, older students validate offerings from less-mature, younger students).
- Enjoyment that is anchored in learning and purpose. Students smile often and sense the environment is safe. Humor in the class increases trust within the collective and helps students open up, share, and ask questions. This enjoyableness fuels buy-in, increases and maintains interest, and is a tool to achieve and sustain deep learning.

This developmental process:

- Is hard work and constant effort until classes get “there.”
- Cannot be forced or manipulated, otherwise the forced outcomes are not real. It Requires investment, or buy-in, from students. Students care and seek learning and stronger beliefs.
- Requires maturity, which must be developed if not present initially.
- Can become consistent and tends to persist once patterns of trust, learning, and enjoyment are established.

To lead this development, teachers:

- Handle students who struggle with care, knowing that the treatment of individual students has a major impact on the dynamics, trust, and personality of the whole class group.
- Invite students to buy in to the purposes of the class

An Ideal Seminary Class (From the Perspective of Samuel)

An ideal seminary class:

- Can offer a deep social learning environment where learning may go beyond what individuals might experience alone.
- Has a feeling of easiness, excitement, gratitude, is highly bonding for the class group, and everything seems to just click.
- Is hard to achieve, though teachers are always pushing for it.

By engaging in:

- High vocal participation (asking questions, sharing with peers, opening up with personal experiences) and interactivity

Ideal classes are marked by:

- A safe classroom environment (comprised of the hearts of each student) of love, respect, and

purpose where everyone is participating and sharing, caring for and teaching each other.

- High trust, respect, and a deep sense of relevance, which opens the heart and cultivates motivation.
- A balance of both high expectations and high love that inspires buy-in.
- Unified engagement, including quiet, less-vocal students. Students feel comfortable and willing to share.
- High interactivity where students learn deeply from each other's contributions and not just from the teacher.

This developmental process:

- Involves extraordinarily complex social dynamics, the heart, and human agency, and therefore cannot be forced. It must be led. Students must feel loved and accepted, or else they will resist buying in to the teacher and the class as a whole.
- Is most effective when mature or socially influential students lead out in asking questions, opening up, and buying in to class purposes.

To lead this development, teachers:

- Establish high expectations and unbendingly maintain those expectations, but do so with patience, fairness, long-suffering, and high levels of love.
- Invite, reach, love, and inspire relevance to meet social and emotional needs, or the heart.
- Demonstrate emotional intelligence and self-management and are not easily ruffled.
- Reach out to individuals, but without abandoning the group, and seek buy-in from enough students that the majority can sway the minority toward a collective actuation.
- Seek buy-in from the group for the purposes of deep learning and conversion, and not to simply make life easier for the teacher.
- Use variety to reengage, provide stimulus, and invite student action.

An Ideal Seminary Class (From the Perspective of Joseph)

An ideal seminary class:

- Bonds together in a way that everything just clicks and clicks and clicks.
- Provides a revelatory, healing, hopeful, and helpful experience for class members to improve.
- Is aware of high collective expectations and meets them.
- Is fun and energizing for the teacher and students.

By engaging in:

- Collective learning processes that foster deep learning (sharing, listening, interacting, discussing, asking questions, etc.)

Ideal classes are marked by:

- A relaxed and comfortable yet highly productive environment with a mix of learning and enjoyment. Appropriate laughter and banter sets class members at ease and fosters the openness and interaction that fuels deep, collective learning.
- A classroom sociality that remains in the sweet zone of learning. Classes in the sweet zone are neither hypersocial (too social and unfocused) nor hyposocial (too dormant and tending to shut down), but rather maintain the right balance of sociality to experience deep learning.
- Excitement to come to class and eagerness to learn.
- Unity. They work together and have substantial connectivity (teacher to student and student to student) with great interactions.

This developmental process:

- Seeks student buy-in because it cannot be forced. This buy-in requires a comfortable environment.
- Requires training as teachers seek for their classes to settle more consistently in the sweet zone. This training usually seeks higher levels of classroom interaction.
- Leads a class toward independence in collective learning processes.
- Can take most of a trimester, and can suddenly, at some point, just click.

To lead this development, teachers:

- Perpetually gauge their classes to discern the current needs of the group and make in situ decisions

accordingly (calling audibles).

- Continually mix learning and enjoyment to retain their classes in the sweet zone. Though teachers seek to blend both learning and enjoyment, they may focus more exclusively on one or the other (learning or enjoyment) if they perceive their class as being too high or too low in energy and sociality and therefor outside of the sweet zone.
- Teachers maintain this mix of learning and enjoyment by teaching and reaching. This teaching includes variety and strong pedagogy. This reaching ultimately seeks to inspire students on the higher end to increase their focus and students on the lower end to increase their engagement. This reaching can be most successful if the teacher cares about and is interested in individual students. This personal interest can encourage student buy-in to the purpose and expectations of the class.

An Ideal Seminary Class (From the Perspective of John)

An ideal seminary class:

- Learns together and helps each other to become better people, more like God.

By engaging in:

- Deep social learning processes that lead to change and application.
- Interactivity, which includes listening and looking at the face of the student who is sharing.
- Asking the right questions, sharing ideas, and completely open up by sharing their inner selves.

Ideal classes are marked by:

- A feeling of safety, abiding trust, and high interaction.
- Unified engagement—including non-vocal students.
- Excitement to come to class and an eagerness to learn.
- Enjoyment that is anchored in learning and purpose. Students smile often and sense the environment is safe. Humor in the class increases trust within the collective and helps students open up, share, and ask questions. This enjoyableness fuels buy-in, increases and maintains interest, and is a tool to achieve deep learning.
- Enough students buying in to the purpose of the class that disinterested students either join in or else isolate themselves without overtly harming the collective learning processes.

This developmental process:

- Cannot be forced. If teachers force these outcomes, students put up walls that prevent the formation of the group or the opening up of individuals.
- Requires emotional awareness as embarrassment can destroy the trust that fosters collective actuation.
- Is not guaranteed, takes time, and can even take the entire trimester.

To lead this development, teachers:

- First seek to pop the group bubble (bring the group together in power) and then seek to pop individual bubbles (reach out to individuals who are slower to open up or buy into the purposes of the class). The popping of the group bubble can have some influence on the popping of individual bubbles, and teachers have very little power with individual bubbles if the group bubble fails to pop. Sharing, interacting, and opening up mark the popping of these bubbles. To pop individual bubbles, teachers reach out to individuals, seeking common ground and personal connection.
- Teach at high levels and establish a trusting, interactive environment.
- Foster interaction and trust between each student in the class and are willing to lead out in sharing

An Ideal Seminary Class (From the Perspective of Peter)

An ideal seminary class:

- Unifies behind the common cause of learning principles from the scriptures and experiencing Jesus Christ.
- Learns and acts, ultimately becoming more like the Savior.
- Grows through a dialogue of learning together

By engaging in:

- Deep social learning and high interactivity
- Thinking, sharing, writing thoughts and feelings, and asking questions.
- Taking action on what is learning

Ideal classes are marked by:

- Bonds between teacher and students and among students.
- Unified engagement with learning—discussing, sharing thoughts and feelings, asking questions, and expressing beliefs.
- A trust among the class that supports students risking, becoming vulnerable with each other, and opening up.
- Student leaders who actively participate and lead out in opening up and sharing in ways that inspire others to feel safe, open up, and buy in.
- A satisfying feeling of joy that is more substantial than mere fun because it is based on a sense of meaningful learning, personal edification, and a feeling of being improved.
- High expectations that are maintained in conjunction with high love from the teacher. The high love and care is a motivating factor.

This developmental process:

- Students learning clear expectations and buying in to the vision and purpose of the class group. This buying in is the unification of the class.
- Interaction and sharing to facilitate buy in.
- Is agentic. Students' willingness to choose to act makes or breaks the process.
- Involves students willingly opening up and taking the opportunities offered, including a willingness to invest or take that risk to be vulnerable
- Requires teacher leadership, not force, in inviting students to have this experience of unity.
- Is hard and complex.

To lead this development, teachers:

- Cultivate strong class groups while reaching out to individual students with love and care, hoping to cultivate trust and a willingness for students to take risk.
- Approach classroom challenges in positive, emotionally intelligent ways.
- Invite students to work, put aside distractions, engage in deep learning,
- Lead with high love and high expectations

An Ideal Seminary Class (From the Perspective of William)**An ideal seminary class:**

- Is a sacred and enjoyable thing for teachers and students to experience, invoking gratitude and love
- Maintains focus on the Savior, personal conversion, and the Word of God
- Provides a unique environment for spiritual guidance and counsel
- Is more meaningful than a merely entertaining experience, but where students are happy, edified, and rejoice together

By engaging in:

- Patterns of deep, social learning that focusses on the word of God and fosters change and improvement
- These patterns include meaningful sharing of thoughts and experiences that are heartfelt and are applicable to teenagers.

Ideal classes are marked by:

- High levels of class unity that emerges from high trust
- High engagement in learning that is sustained by high levels of enjoyment
- High expectations that are maintained by high love and support
- Students who love and respect the scriptures, the Lord, and each other
- Student-driven habits and student expressions gratitude

This developmental process:

- Requires the development (usually around 6-8 weeks) of a social and emotional foundation so students can **trust** the teacher and each other and enjoy gospel content
- Is tenuous and in flux (like a testimony). Classes can gain a consistency once patterns are established. These patterns take time to form. Patterns of a class getting “there” lead a class to being “there” more consistently. These patterns establish trust.
- Takes time to build but can be killed quickly if handled poorly by the teacher.
- Requires sustained leadership from the teacher without let up.
- Cannot be forced because of individual agency and must therefore be led.
- Is different for each class, with expectations tailored to the maturity and needs of each group.
- Involves students seeing the purpose enough to buy into their class group.

To lead this development, teachers:

- Patiently invite, persuade, and knock, hoping students will open the door of their heart
- Don’t just teach, they lead
- Really listen and validate appropriately
- Know something about each student (how they learn). They seek success with classes so they can better reach individuals. They love students today so they can teach them tomorrow (Holland, 2007)
- Help students engage
- Give students have an experience and not just a lesson
- Gain the trust (heart) of students and manage that trust appropriately
- Create and maintain high expectations and show caring and love by maintaining those expectations

Appendix N

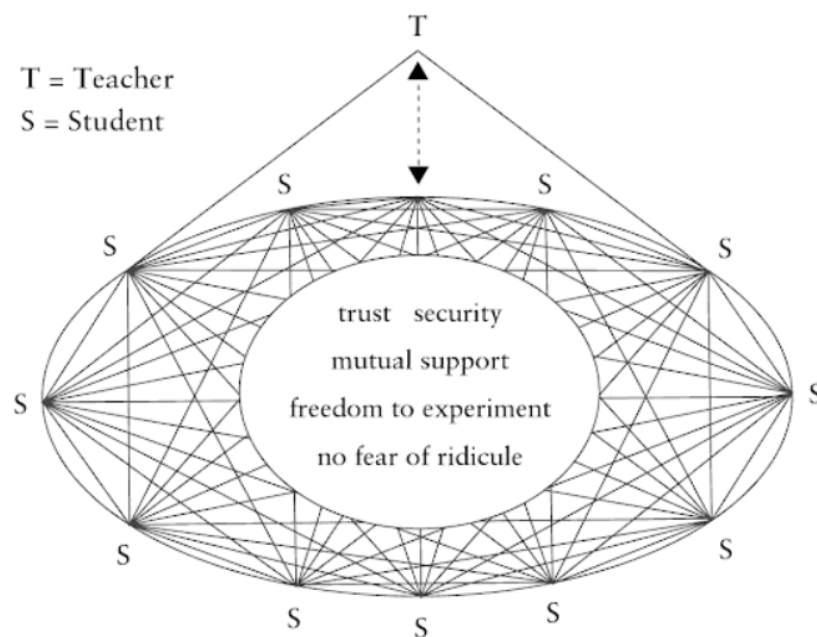
Permission to Use Figure 1: Teacher as Group Member and Group Leader

Permission to Use Figure 1: Teacher as group member and group leader

On December 14, 2015, Rose M. Senior sent me an email that included 10 numbered items responding to inquiries I had made into her research, including a request to use one of her diagrams in my work. Her response to this request is as follows:

“You say that you will request permission to use my diagram of the teacher as both group member and group leader, and I will certainly grant it! (See pp 31-33 of my thesis for why I modified the initial diagram into an ellipse with the teacher both a part of the class group, but also outside it.)”

This diagram is Figure 1 in this dissertation.



CURRICULUM VITAE

DONALD BRUCE ANDERSON

1. Academic Degrees

- Ph.D. Utah State University, Education with Specialization in Curriculum and Instruction, 2019,
- M.S.S. Utah State University, Social Science—Public Administration Emphasis, 2005
- B.S. Brigham Young University, Business—Organizational Behavior, 2000

2. Professional Experience

- 2016-Present Instructor, Millville, UT Seminary
- 2019 Spring Instructor, TEAL 3660, Educational Psychology, USU
- 2017-2019 TA, TEAL 3660, Educational Psychology, USU
- 2013-2016 Instructor, Hyrum Utah LDS Seminary
- 2010-2013 Instructor, Smithfield Utah LDS Seminary
- 2005-2010 Instructor, Logan Utah LDS Seminary
- 2002-2005 Instructor, Brigham City Utah Seminary
- 2000-2002 Principal, Taber Alberta Seminary, Alberta Canada

3. Related Experience

- 2019 Presenter, Qualitative Research Doctoral Course, USU, guest lecture. *Conducting Phenomenological Research.*
- 2018 Presenter, Conference on Academic Research in Education (CARE). *Collective Class Actuation as Experienced by a Seminary Teacher in a Western State.*

- 2015 Presenter, S&I Utah North Area Certification Course, Logan, UT.
To Force or Not to Force: Implications from the Book of Samuel
- 2008 Key Note Speaker, Bay City Stake Youth Conference, *Working
Toward the Ideal Family*, Bay City, Texas

4. Publications

- 2019 Anderson, D. B., Jones, S.H., & Longhurst, M. L., (2019).
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dynamic equilibrium in the classroom. *Journal of Ethnographic &
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- 2010 Anderson, D. B. (2010) *Hanging by The Thread*. Atlanta, GA:
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