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## Talk Amongst Yourselves: A SoTL Manifesto

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## Talk Amongst Yourselves: A SoTL Manifesto

This is my last issue as Managing Editor of *Common Good*, a job I leave in the capable hands of the newly appointed Assistant Director of the SUNY Plattsburgh Center for Teaching Excellence, Dr. Michael Murphy. As Managing Editor, it's been my privilege to read, edit, and publish some truly thoughtful and thought-provoking articles on teaching. Over the past decade, I've also been fortunate enough to attend numerous state, national, and international teaching conferences and to publish several articles of my own contributing to the scholarship on teaching and learning.<sup>1</sup> I've been impressed and humbled by how many excellent teachers are out there and how many of them are willing to make the effort and take the time to share insights and strategies that have helped me and many others improve our teaching.

But I've also been dissatisfied by many aspects of the scholarship on teaching and learning. As part of our editorial responsibilities, Dr. Becky Kasper, *Common Good's* Editor-in-Chief, and I implicitly addressed some of what I see as recurring shortcomings in much SoTL. Now I'm going to take this opportunity to make explicit what I would like to see more of in SoTL, and offer these four guiding principles for improving our scholarly conversations about teaching and learning.

### **#1. Be Yourself**

A shy young woman in her first year on the tenure track and with little classroom experience is teaching introductory biology. The large class is inattentive and disengaged during her lectures. When she seeks assistance from a peer mentor, she's advised to "shake things up" by "using a light saber instead of a laser pointer" during her next lecture. You can buy some pretty convincing toy *Star Wars* light sabers, complete with lights and sound effects, and the mentor imagined whipping out the light saber to point out something on a slide: "And here's the

endoplasmic reticulum” [gesture with saber—bbzshoooo]. The mentor who gave her this advice was an extroverted tenured male professor and accomplished classroom performer. He would have totally rocked that light saber. He would have been all “There’s a quiz next Friday—may The Force be with you” [student laughter]. But his advice to her, like so much SoTL that I read and hear, failed to take into account the single most overlooked yet absolutely essential factor to consider when we seek out ways to improve our teaching: *we are unique individuals working with specific, localized student learning populations.*

In the above example, “use a light saber” was bad advice not because there’s something fundamentally wrong with this tactic for adding a little pizzazz to one’s lectures but rather because it is fundamentally wrong for that professor in that teaching situation. She’s already self-conscious in the classroom, and the performative flair it would take to effectively wield mock sci fi weaponry is simply not in her toolkit. Moreover, there is already a problematic dynamic established in these particular classes that could very well impact how students react to any of her efforts to improve. Will they appreciate the professor’s playful effort to energize her lectures or are there serious student perception and instructor communication problems that need to be addressed first? Finally, because she is young and because she is female, she faces certain issues, prejudices, and obstacles that her male mentor does not, and which will have a real impact on her job evaluations and advancement. That’s not political correctness—that’s a fact.<sup>2</sup> Just like in the “real world,” an instructor’s race, gender, appearance, sexual orientation, and so on has real implications for the classroom. Before implementing any new pedagogical strategy or technique she’ll need to carefully assess it in light of that reality.

Our identity matters.<sup>3</sup> As longtime educator and activist Parker Palmer writes in an influential book on spirituality and pedagogy, “Who is the self that teaches” is “the most

fundamental question we can ask about teaching and those who teach.”<sup>4</sup> Who we are as individuals, with all our unique strengths, matters.<sup>5</sup> Who our students are matters too. There are huge differences among learning institutions and student populations. I’ve often read articles and heard presentations that suffer from Light Saberitis. That is to say, they are oblivious to the importance of localized and specific teaching situations. I’ve heard presenters add, as a mere afterthought, essential information about their classrooms, such as the fact that all their classes are small seminars or that most of their students are first generation. I’ve read articles that implied that the author’s success with a particular assignment could work anywhere, with anyone at all. And it’s downright disturbing how few SoTL publications and presentations acknowledge, let alone seriously consider, white male privilege in college teaching.

I’m not arguing that because we are unique individuals and because we teach at a dizzyingly varied range of institutions, that it’s impossible to even try to identify best teaching practices, although I prefer professor of sociology and pedagogy scholar David Daniel’s term “promising principles.”<sup>6</sup> I’m not saying that a young, reserved female professor of color working as an adjunct science teacher at a state university has nothing to say about teaching that would be applicable and useful to a tenured white extroverted male professor teaching philosophy at a liberal arts college. But I do want to assert that SoTL must become much more attuned to diversity: diversity of faculty personalities, experiences, challenges, personal strengths and weaknesses; of student populations and institutional cultures. Greater awareness of this fact would elicit more articles and presentations that deliberately encourage readers and listeners to consider how the ideas or techniques or research being presented could be realistically utilized or applied. You engage in SoTL because you care about your teaching and are willing to examine your pedagogical practices. More attention to the specifics of our individual personalities and

teaching situations would demand that whenever we participate in SoTL we are always thinking about and reflecting on the “takeaway” for us and considering what it might be for others, in somewhat or radically different contexts.<sup>7</sup>

## **#2. Be Convincing—but Be Clear**

Like any other scholarly publication, a SoTL publication has to make an argument and support it with evidence. SoTL authors must show readers that their thesis is conversant with pertinent previously published literature. They must convince readers that their interpretations or reflections or suggestions have merit. But academic writers often equate being convincing with being rarefied, jargon-laden, and long-winded. Good SoTL demands crystal-clear writing, accessible to a wide range of readers. Not all SoTL is interdisciplinary of course, but much of the best SoTL applies across disciplines and therefore must stringently avoid unnecessary terminology and bloated verbiage that do not strengthen the argument. We have to guard against the academic default mode of argumentation—using intimidating words to show off our vocabularies and crushing readers under the weight of our learned references and literature reviews.

In addition, if we are conscientiously being ourselves when we’re engaged in SoTL, and if we are aware of the complexities of identity and specificity of our readers and listeners, then it is even more essential for us to be as clear as possible in conveying our ideas, research, and reflections on teaching. Precise language and a specific, clear thesis with specific, clear evidence help guard SoTL against overly broad conclusions or assertions about the applicability of any one body of research. We should value clarity in our SoTL because its most important function is to communicate and, more so than our other scholarly work, to convey *usable* information or

reflection or research to instructors with varying experiences, strengths, challenges, and student populations.

### **#3. Be Honest**

We need to talk more about our teaching mistakes. We all know how important failure is to learning. We know that the opportunity to fail at something, to make mistakes and then try again, correcting mistakes and moving forward, all builds grit in students.<sup>8</sup> That's why we scaffold assignments that build on previous understanding, require drafts, and in a myriad of other ways encourage our students to learn from their mistakes and missteps. As Michael Murphy once described it to me, the best classrooms are like belonging to a sports team in that an effective class offers students numerous opportunities to practice their skills, hone their abilities, and get detailed feedback from the "coach" and the other members of the team about how to fix mistakes and to improve performance before the big game/assignment/test, when it really counts.

Yet ironically, there is very little SoTL that talks openly and honestly about our own teaching mistakes.<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of us are not born being great teachers. Most of us learn as we go. It's a process that usually takes years and includes oh so many mistakes. But it's rare that I see a SoTL presentation or read an article that describes and reflects on real-life teaching mistakes. One reason for this is the academic advancement and tenure process, which at most institutions does not encourage truly open and honest self-criticism and reflection on any aspect of our work. But another reason is the culture of academia and academic publishing in general, which fosters mean-spirited and petty criticism in an endless and ultimately unwinnable game of "I'm Smarter Than You (Think You) Are." Anyone who's received an unnecessarily vicious, anonymous (of course) peer review for a scholarly article or manuscript—which frankly is

anyone who's ever submitted anything for peer review—will be leery of publically revealing a major mistake that hampered their efficacy in the classroom.

Yet it's precisely such mistakes that provide our most essential learning about teaching. Imagine a SoTL field where, with the professional cachet conferred by scholarly publication, we could legitimate public discourse about mistake-making. Now imagine how many mistakes you could have avoided in the classroom if you had read or heard about other instructors' mistakes before you began teaching! Indeed, at its very heart, SoTL is about helping each other be more effective teachers and facilitating better student learning. Surely that begins with all of us admitting we had to learn how to be good teachers, and that we made mistakes along the way.

#### **#4. Be Generous**

It's worth repeating: at its heart, SoTL is about helping each other be more effective teachers. Period. With that in mind, I want to urge us to be as generous as possible in our scholarly conversations about teaching and learning.

What I mean by generosity is being open to a multiplicity of approaches, reflections, research, conclusions, and approaches in SoTL. There is no one best, right, and only way to contribute to good SoTL. And that's okay because there's lots of room here. Every teacher, each one a unique individual, is working in a specific, localized learning environment, trying to reach their students, each one themselves a unique individual, with specific and unique learning abilities and challenges, often varying dramatically from student to student in even a single class. There are literally infinite numbers of teaching and learning situations. There are, therefore, a literally infinite number of ways to discuss improving our teaching.

There's room under this enormous SoTL umbrella for rigorously defined scientific experiments that seek to methodically measure student learning, especially in those fields with a

clearly quantifiable knowledge basis. There's also room for philosophizing about teaching and for offering other more esoteric reflections on the complexities of teaching and learning. There's room for everything in between, from describing a single effective assignment to offering straightforward general teaching tips to postulating sweeping theories about learning that have widespread ramifications for educators. There's ample room for student voices, for quality writing from the student point of view in the classroom. Based on our experiences attending presentations by our university's Center for the Teaching Excellence Student Advisory Committee at the SUNY Plattsburgh teaching conferences, good teachers positively crave thoughtful and articulate student contributions to the scholarly discussion of best teaching practices, yet to my knowledge this is practically nonexistent in SoTL.

We have to think generously about SoTL and frame it as an opportunity for us to learn and to share. If that sounds too touchy-feely, think of it this way: we simply need the time and the space and the opportunity and professional support to converse about teaching. Teaching sabbaticals for all! Research on the hotly contested topic of assessing public elementary and secondary school teachers' efficacy shows that one of the best ways (perhaps the only proven way) to improve *any* teacher's ability to help students learn is to give that teacher the time and opportunity to observe other teachers, to discuss teaching with other teachers, and to carefully and honestly reflect on their teaching.<sup>10</sup> The same is undoubtedly true for college teachers.<sup>11</sup>

My own SoTL experiences have demonstrated this time and time again. The most effective SoTL articles I've read have clear "takeaways," inviting readers to think very specifically about some aspect of their own teaching, either in terms of individual assignments or nuts and bolts practices like grading or in terms of broader pedagogical practices. The same is true for conference presentations. The most effective conference presentations I have seen have

sparked a lively dialogue among an interdisciplinary group of teachers; a dialogue that, like any great classroom discussion, inspired us as *learners* seeking new ideas about teaching. In fact, simply observing great teachers teaching in conference settings has transformed my own classroom practices in some important ways.

Let me give you one noteworthy example. In 2013, I attended a session at the Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching annual conference presented by Dr. Carl S. Moore, Director of the Research Academy for Integrated Learning at the University of the District of Columbia. Something I saw Dr. Moore do as part of his presentation/teaching style inspired me to make a small but extremely meaningful change in my classroom. It was not actually a component of the presentation content but rather something he did after every question or comment from the audience: he thanked the participant who contributed, then went on to answer the question or respond to the comment. I was forcefully struck by this habit, this teaching technique, he was employing. It immediately and effectively conveyed to students (in this case, the other teachers listening to his presentation) that Dr. Moore acknowledged and appreciated their willingness to participate in a dialogue and discussion.

Dr. Moore gave me a clear, meaningful, usable takeaway. Most of my SUNY Plattsburgh students need a great deal of encouragement and support to feel confident enough to actively contribute to class discussion or even to ask questions. As a whole, they are not academically confident and many successfully completed high school by keeping their head down, never drawing attention to themselves, and checking boxes on state mandated tests. So when they've ventured to contribute in my class, even if they are way off the mark, I want to acknowledge their effort and signal to every other student that I am grateful. Incorporating the simple but powerful teaching technique modeled by Dr. Moore gave me a highly effective means

of communicating this to my students. It made me a better teacher. It also made me a happier teacher. Expressing gratitude has a way of actually fostering and actually increasing one's gratitude.<sup>12</sup> This pedagogical practice made a noticeably positive impact on my own perceptions of students and my attitude toward classes. It's actually increased my real gratitude for the efforts my students make. Obviously not every or even most SoTL articles or presentations or workshops are going to change your teaching life. But truly outstanding SoTL—the opportunity to see good teachers teaching, or to read what they've discovered, and to learn from them—has the capacity to do exactly that.

Good teachers always keep trying to improve. They are constantly assessing what works and what doesn't. But we need to talk to each other to keep improving. We'll only get so far trying to improve in a vacuum, in our self-contained, sacrosanct classrooms. We need to open up the doors, take a risk, and reveal ourselves as students and learners. We will all benefit when we reframe SoTL as a conversation, not a dusty tome available only to a few learned insiders conversant in the latest edu-jargon. We must have lots and lots and lots of options, things to try in the classroom, ways to think about teaching and learning. We need more SoTL that communicates all kinds of ideas. We need to generously listen and contribute to the conversation.

I would go so far as to advocate a “study of” teaching and learning, rather than “scholarship of” teaching and learning. From my tenured, full-professor position of professional academic power, it's easy for me to make this assertion. It's not a pressing performance review issue for me that my SoTL publications be counted as “real” scholarship. But even with the very real issue of tenure and promotion reviews at stake, and even though I believe research on teaching and learning is indeed legitimate academic work, I believe “*study* of teaching and

learning” better captures the spirit of what we’ve tried to do at *Common Good* and what I’ve seen at the best teaching conferences: simply encouraging a conversation among teachers as co-learners of good pedagogy. I would much rather participate in a conversation about teaching grounded in the premise that we’re all still learning and studying than listen to insecure intellectuals pick each other apart and bombard each other with obscure jargon and pompous proclamations—which is what often passes for “scholarship” in our other research fields. Just talk to me about what you’ve learned and help me think about what I might learn.

SoTL cannot be rigid dictates or rules. We’re too varied. Our students are too varied. We need a smorgasbord of ideas and reflections and studies and research, and the time and opportunity and professional support to talk over these ideas with many other teachers.

SoTL needs more real conversation. Conversation about our mistakes, what matters to us, what’s worked for you and what hasn’t. So, please, go ahead and talk amongst yourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> I’ve been Managing Editor of *Common Good* since its conception and inaugural issue in September 2013. Here’s a list of my other SoTL bona fides: “Can We Counteract the September 11 Conspiracy Meme with Cinematic Firefighters? An Argument for Using the Documentary *9/11 in U.S. History Classes*,” *Teaching History*, forthcoming Fall 2015 or Spring 2016; “Teaching Historical Thinking as Threshold Concepts: Pedagogical and Practical Challenges” (paper presented at Teaching History: Fostering Historical Thinking Across the K-16 Continuum conference, University of California Berkeley, May 1-2, 2015); “Contributing to Scholarship on Teaching and Learning: ‘Dos’ and ‘Don’ts’ from Two SOTL Journal Editors” (paper co-presented with Dr. Becky Kasper at the Annual Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching, Bethesda, MD, May 29-June 1, 2014); “Don’t Try to be Cool: Three Simple Rules for Using Pop Culture in Your Classroom” (paper presented at the Annual Lilly Conference on

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College and University Teaching, Bethesda, MD, May 30-June 2, 2013, and the Center for Teaching Excellence Annual Conference, SUNY Plattsburgh, April 27, 2013); “How Wonder Woman Helped My Students ‘Join the Conversation:’ Comic Books as Teaching Tools in a History Methodology Course,” *Comic Books and American Cultural History*, ed. Matthew Pustz (New York: Continuum Press, 2012); “Asking the Wrong Questions: Combating 9/11 Conspiracy Theories in Undergraduate U.S. History Survey Classes” (paper presented at Making Meaning of 9/11 Ten Years After: Local Impacts, Global Implications conference, St. John’s University, New York City, September 16-17, 2011); “‘Shake this square world and blast off for Kicksville:’ Teaching History with Post-WWII Prescriptive Classroom Films,” *The History Teacher* 44, no. 1 (November 2010): 35-50; “Mistakes Were Made: Recognizing, Acknowledging, and Putting to Good Use Our Teaching Blunders, Gaffes, Missteps, and Muddles” (paper presented at Center for Teaching Excellence Annual Conference, SUNY Plattsburgh, April 10, 2010); “Father, Mother, Policeman, Teacher, and Doctor Know Best: Postwar Prescriptive Classroom Films and Their Pedagogical Potential in Undergraduate History Courses” (paper presented at Diefenbunker Cold War Symposium, Ottawa, Canada, November 7-9, 2008); “Unruly Women and Immoral Girls: Teaching about Suffragettes, Flappers, Fly Girls, and Civil Rights Activists in Introductory U.S. History Classes” (paper presented at National Women’s Studies Association Annual Conference, Oakland, CA, June 15-18, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Although academia is in some ways a better workplace for women than other industries, there is abundant evidence that women face particular obstacles in the classroom and in achieving tenure. See for example Mari Castañeda and Kirsten Isgro, eds., *Mothers in Academia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Melissa Hart, “Missing the Forest for the Trees: Gender Pay Discrimination in Academia,” *Denver University Law Review* 91, no. 4 (2014): 873-

892; Stephanie Jones and Elyn Palmer, "Glass Ceilings and Catfights: Career Barriers for Professional Women in Academia," *Advancing Women in Leadership* 31, no. 1 (2011): 189-198; Juanita Johnson-Bailey, "Academic Incivility and Bullying as a Gendered and Racialized Phenomena," *Adult Learning* 26, no. 1 (February 2015): 42-47); Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, ed., *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Utah: Utah State University Press, 2012); Lillian McNell, Adam Driscoll, and Andrea Hunt, "What's in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teachers," *Innovative Higher Education* (December 2014) doi: 10.1007/s10755-014-9313-4, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10755-014-9313-4> (acc. June 17, 2015); Chavella Pittman, "Race and Gender Oppression in the Classroom: The Experiences of Women Faculty of Color with White Male Students," *Teaching Sociology* 38, no. 3 (July 2010): 183-196; Heather Savigny, "Women, Know Your Limits: Cultural Sexism in Academia," *Gender and Education* 26, no. 7 (December 2014): 794-809; Kelly Bridget Turner and Kristin McCann, "Women Faculty of Color: Stories Behind the Statistics," *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education* 46, no. 4 (November 2014): 681-702; Suzanne Young, Leslie Rush, and Dale Shaw, "Evaluating Gender Bias in Ratings of University Instructors' Teaching Effectiveness," *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 3, no. 2 (2009): 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Suzanne Buglione and Jennifer Safford-Farquharson, "The Difference Between You and Me: Faculty Identities at Play in the Classroom," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 91-98; Peter Seldin, "College Teaching: Myths, Evaluation, Improvement" (plenary session presentation at the Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching and Learning annual conference, Bethesda, MD, May 29-June 1, 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life Tenth Anniversary Edition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998, 2007), 8. Palmer argues that “good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (10), asserting that teachers who care about student success must regularly reflect on their own unique and individual identities. Self-knowledge, he posits, is an essential part of becoming a good teacher. See also Steve R. Simmons, “‘An Imperishable Attitude:’ A Memoir of Teaching and Learning,” *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education* 33 (2004): 147-154. Simmons argues “that for academics to continue to grow as effective teachers, they must live *examined* teaching lives [original emphasis]” (147).

<sup>5</sup> For examples of SoTL that address our unique personalities and abilities, see Kimberly Case, “Teaching Strengths, Attitudes, and Behaviors of Professors that Contribute to the Learning of African-American and Latino/a College Students,” *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 24, no. 2 (2013): 129-154; Sara Ernst, “Cultivating a Tenacious Teaching Spirit,” *American Music Teacher* 64, no. 4 (February/March 2015): 20-23; Peter Filene, *The Joy of Teaching: A Practical Guide for New College Instructors* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Yun-Chen Huang and Shu-Hui Lin, “Assessment of Charisma as a Factor in Effective Teaching,” *Journal of Educational Technology and Society* 17, no. 2 (April 2014): 284-295; Rob Jenkins, “The 4 Properties of Powerful Teachers,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 61, no. 26 (April 3, 2015): 1; Mylène Leroux and Manon Théorêt, “Intriguing Empirical Relations Between Teachers’ Resilience and Reflection on Practice,” *Reflective Practice* 15, no. 3 (June 2014): 289-303; Rosanne Liesveld and Jo Ann Miller, with Jennifer Robinson, *Teaching With Your Strengths: How Great Teachers Inspire Their Students* (New York: Gallup Press, 2005); Mary Wilson, Carol Cook, and F. Bailey Norwood, “The Attributes and Attribute-Consequences of

Great College Teachers,” *NACTA Journal* 54, no. 4 (December 2010): 55-65; Hikmet Yazici and Fatma Altun, “Type-A Behavior, Gender, and Job Satisfaction: A Research on Instructors,” *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice* 13, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 1455-1459. Much more plentiful and varied are books and articles aimed at teaching specific student populations. See for example: Kathleen F. Gabriel, *Teaching Unprepared Students: Strategies for Promoting Success and Retention in Higher Education* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2008); Louis B. Gallien, Jr., and Marshalita Sims Peterson, eds., *Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student: Strategies for Success in Higher Education* (Boston: Pearson, 2005); Stefan Austin Perun, “What the Hell Is Revise?”: A Qualitative Study of Student Approaches to Coursework in Developmental English at One Urban-Serving Community College,” *Community College Review* 43, no. 3 (July 2015): 245-263; Vivian Price, Gregory Lewis, and Vanessa Lopez, “Service-Learning with Students of Color, Working Class and Immigrant Students: Expanding a Popular Pedagogical Model,” *Currents in Teaching and Learning* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 23-36; Deborah A. Stewart, *Effective Teaching: A Guide for Community College Instructors* (Washington, D.C. Community College Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> David Daniel, “Neuroscience, Learning Science and Other Claims for the Classroom” (plenary session presentation at the Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching and Learning annual conference, Bethesda, MD, May 29-June 1, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> On additional factors that shape the context in which we teach, see for example Maxine Atkinson, “Context Matters for Teaching and SoTL: Economic Constraints, Contingent Faculty, and Technology,” *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 8, no. 2 (July 2014): 1-10; Felix Maringe and Nevensha Sing, “Teaching Large Classes in an

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Increasingly Internationalising Higher Education Environment,” *Higher Education* 67, no. 6 (June 2014): 761-782.

<sup>8</sup> Angela Lee Duckworth, “The Key to Success? Grit,” *Ted Talks Education*, April 2013, [http://www.ted.com/talks/angela\\_lee\\_duckworth\\_the\\_key\\_to\\_success\\_grit?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit?language=en) (acc. June 19, 2015); Jon C. Dalton, “Making Moral Mistakes: What Ethical Failure Can Teach Students About Life and Leadership,” *New Directions for Student Leadership* 146 (Summer 2015): 71-79; Aaron Hochanadel and Dora Finamore, “Fixed and Growth Mindset in Education and How Grit Helps Students Persist in the Face of Adversity,” *Journal of International Education Research* 11, no. 1 (2015): 47-50; Phil Langton, “Could GRIT Help Shape the Learning Experience?” (paper presented at the Annual Lilly Conference on College and University Teaching, Bethesda, MD, May 29-June 1, 2014); Elana Sandoval-Lucero, Johanna B. Maes, and Libby Klingsmith, “African American and Latin(o) Community College Students’ Social Capital and Student Success,” *College Student Journal* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 522-533.

<sup>9</sup> Some SoTL publications do touch on the author’s own mistakes in the classroom or on the important role teaching mistakes play in learning how to be a good teacher. See for example Elizabeth Breaux, *How the Best Teachers Avoid the 20 Most Common Teaching Mistakes* (Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, 2009); Coralie McCormack, Thea Vanags, and Robyn Prior, “‘Things fall apart so they can fall together:’ Uncovering the Hidden Side of Writing a Teaching Award Application,” *Higher Education Research and Development* 33, no. 5 (September 2014): 935-948; Andrew Richards and Juan Velasquez, “First-Year Students’ Perceptions of Instruction in Large Lectures: The Top-10 Mistakes Made by Instructors,” *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 25, no. 2 (2014): 25-55; Kenneth Stewart, “Lessons from Teaching Millennials,” *College Teaching* 57, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 111-118.

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Amanda Ripley, *The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> On college faculty peer observation and improved teaching, see for example Mark Colgan and Matt DeLong, “A Teaching Polygon Makes Learning a Community Enterprise,” *Primus* 25, no. 1 (2015): 41-49; Marion Engin and Barnaby Priest, “Observing Teaching: A Lens for Self-Reflection,” *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice* 2, no 2 (2014): 2-9; Peter Grainger, et. al., “Working in Triads: A Case Study of a Peer Review Process,” *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* 12, no. 1 (2015): 1-25; Graham Hendry, Amani Bell, and Kate Thomson, “Learning by Observing a Peer’s Teaching Situation,” *International Journal for Academic Development* 19, no. 4 (2014): 318-329. On other types of discussion groups or learning and writing communities improving college teaching, see for example Julia Moore and Joya Carter-Hicks, “Let’s Talk! Facilitating a Faculty Learning Community Using a Critical Friends Group Approach,” *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 8, no. 2 (July 2014): 1-17; Trent Maurer, et. al., “A Faculty Learning Community on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Case Study,” *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 4, no. 2 (2010): 1-7; Nicholas Popovich, et. al. “Effectiveness of a Weekly Faculty Conversation Forum about Teaching,” *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 70, no. 5 (December 2006, Vol. 70 Issue 5): 1-7; Steve R. Simmons, “‘An Imperishable Attitude:’ A Memoir of Teaching and Learning,” *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education* 33 (2004): 147-154.

<sup>12</sup> This psychological and spiritual truism is well documented in books such as Robert Emmons, *Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008). There is a small body of literature on teaching and gratitude, mostly aimed at primary

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and secondary school teachers. See Owen Griffith, “The Moment Gratitude Changed My Perspective in the Classroom,” May 5, 2015, *Huffington Post Education Blog*, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/owen-griffith/the-moment-gratitude-chan\\_b\\_7215872.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/owen-griffith/the-moment-gratitude-chan_b_7215872.html) (acc. June 19, 2015); Kerry Howells, “An Exploration of the Role of Gratitude in Enhancing Teacher-Student Relationships,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 42 (August 2014): 58-67; Kerry Howells, *Gratitude in Education: A Radical View* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012); Holly Triacario, “The Impact of a Brief Gratitude Intervention for Teachers,” Ph.D. diss. St. John’s University, 2013. Robert J. Nash also addresses this in his work on scholarly personal narratives, advising college teachers to “Look for the miracle of joy in your educational work-settings first, before looking for the joylessness....Don’t give in to the periodic brokenness and burnout that sometimes come out of teaching and learning.” Robert J. Nash and Sydnee Viray, *How Stories Heal: Writing Our Way to Meaning and Wholeness in the Academy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 92-93.

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