AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Marinda L. Peters for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling presented on May 4, 2017.

Title: Understanding and Supporting the Role of Facilitator in Teacher-Led Class

Meetings

Abstract approved:

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Deborah J. Rubel

The purpose of this dissertation was to contribute to understanding teachers'

experiences as facilitators of class meetings and the supports that can affect their

facilitation. Chapter 2 is the manuscript, *Maximize the Benefit of Class Meetings:*

Facilitating the Class Meeting as a Therapeutic Group. It was a conceptual article on

using group theory to understand and intervene in teacher-led class meetings. This

article had several objectives: to connect class meetings to therapeutic groups; to

provide basic leadership skills to aid in facilitation; to highlight membership skills that

can be taught, and to provide case examples.   Implications for school counselors as

consultants were discussed. Chapter 3 is a manuscript entitled, *Qualitative Inquiry into*

How Teachers Experience the Facilitator Role of Class Meetings. This grounded theory

study investigated 10 participants' experiences as facilitators of class meetings and the

conditions under which they move from the teacher to facilitator role. The inquiry also

illuminated similarities and differences between teaching and facilitating. Data was

collected from semi-structured interviews and data analysis procedures followed

guidelines proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2008). The results described contextual

and moderating influences to teachers assuming the facilitators role. Results also

illustrated the complex dynamic of participants' perceived outcomes of facilitation.

Implications, limitations, and areas for future research were explored. The two

manuscripts are joined by their common focus on class meeting facilitation,

conceptualizing the class meeting as a therapeutic group, and the role of school

counselor consultation for effective class meeting facilitation and are bookended with

an introduction and a conclusion.

Understanding and Supporting the Role of Facilitator in Teacher-Led Class Meetings

by
Marinda L. Peters

A DISSERTATION

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APPROVED:

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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Marinda L. Peters, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dedication

For my family: my husband, Brian and my children, Liam and Sean.

Chapter 1

General Introduction

As school systems adjust to accommodate the diverse needs of modern students,

social-emotional learning (SEL) has become an important component of public education

(Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012). The class meeting is a

universal strategy suggested by multiple pedagogical theories to support students in SEL

(Glasser, 2007; Gibbs, 2006; Charney, 2015; Nelson, 2006). Class meetings are complex

systems that incorporate components of therapeutic groups as well as components of

classrooms. Teachers are often the professionals charged with facilitating class meetings,

although little is known about how they assume and experience the facilitator role.

Understanding the teacher experience is an element necessary for gaining insight into how

class meetings can be most effective (Braun & Garrett 1988; Edward & Mullis, 2003;

Lundeberg, et. al., 1997).

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate scholarly work by utilizing the

Manuscript Document Dissertation Format as outlined by the Graduate School of Oregon

State University. In following this design, this dissertation is comprised of two journal-

formatted manuscripts. Manuscript 1 (Chapter 2) is a conceptual article with practical

implications entitled, *Maximize the Benefit of Class Meetings: Facilitating the Class Meeting*

as a Therapeutic Group. Manuscript 2 (Chapter 3) is a grounded theory investigation

entitled, *Qualitative Inquiry into How Teachers Experience the Facilitator Role in Class*

Meetings.

The implications of the conceptual article and research study are in the areas of

teacher training and support, and the school counselor consultative role. Variables that

support or impede teachers in effective class meeting facilitation are unveiled through the

research. Suggestions of strategies to effectively facilitate class meetings are delineated in the conceptual article. Consequently, teacher-education programs and school district leadership can use the information to plan trainings that better prepare teachers to engage in SEL through class meetings. By understanding the teacher experience and effective facilitation strategies, professionals that support teacher development can enhance areas of training in which teachers encounter deficits. These areas are related specifically to the class meeting, facilitation skills, and SEL in general.   Because school counselors have the unique role of being SEL experts, therapeutic group leaders, and consultants for teachers, outcomes of this line of inquiry have the potential to inform school counselors in their consultative role as it relates to class meetings. School counselors can now make informed decisions on how to support teachers as they facilitate class meetings. This understanding allows school counselors be more effective in serving all students, as their consultation efforts can have exponential benefits for the entire school community.

Research on the teacher experience in class meetings is limited, let alone research on the teacher experience as facilitators. The majority of research on class meetings has been focused on student outcomes when class meetings are implemented with purpose and fidelity (Gray & Drewery, 2011; Grant & Davis, 2012; Landau & Guthercoal, 2000). The teacher's facilitator role in class meetings has not been investigated. While it has been suggested that teachers may have difficulty with the facilitator role (Lundeberg et al, 1997), research has not been conducted to verify this assumption. This qualitative article fills the critical gap in the literature on teacher experiences in class meeting facilitation.

Manuscript 1 Overview: Maximize the Benefit of Class Meetings: Facilitating the Class Meeting as a Therapeutic Group

The first manuscript, Chapter 2 of this dissertation, is a conceptual piece on the relevance of conceptualizing class meetings as therapeutic groups. The motivation of linking class meetings to therapeutic groups was based on the realization that class meetings share similar structures and goals with therapeutic groups but facilitators of class meetings are not necessarily trained to facilitate them as such. Teachers, more specifically, have little to no background in group leadership.

This conceptual article has several objectives: to connect class meetings to therapeutic groups; to provide basic leadership skills to aid in facilitation; to highlight membership skills that can be taught, and to provide case examples. Class meetings are similar to therapeutic groups because they share the similar goal of using the group system to try out new behaviors and receive feedback (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2010). Both have a similar configuration with a circle format and an identified leader. As is true of therapeutic groups, class meetings are also a system that is comprised of individual, interpersonal, and group-as-a-system levels (Kline, 2003). Facilitators can intervene at any of the three levels with differing outcomes for the group and individuals.

The most fundamental leadership skill highlighted in the conceptual article is the basic facilitation sequence. The basic facilitation sequence is a three-step sequence of elicit, clarify and connect (Kline, 2003 p. 189). It is used to connect members to each other to reduce their reliance on the facilitator. It is through this sequence that meaningful SEL can occur.

This article also emphasizes the importance of teaching membership skills. These skills are categorized as sending messages and receiving messages. Sending messages is distilled to the concept of the I-message. Receiving messages is reduced to paraphrasing and communicating non-judgment. It is suggested in this article that it is through these skills that students can learn effective communication and develop socially and emotionally.

Through the use of case examples, Manuscript 1 illustrates the defined concepts. Common class issues such as exclusion, name-calling, and interrupting are resolved though the class meeting and utilization of the basic facilitation sequence and teaching membership skills. Implications for school counselors are emphasized.

Manuscript 2 Overview: A Qualitative Inquiry on How Teachers Experience the Facilitator Role in Class Meetings

The second manuscript, chapter 3 of this dissertation, is a grounded theory qualitative study that was conducted to better understand the teacher experience of facilitating class meetings.

An area identified as needing further investigation is how teachers assume the facilitator role of class meetings since they are rarely explicitly trained in group facilitation. Because class meetings are highlighted as a strategy that teaches social-emotional skills in students, and builds class community and school safety (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012), knowing how teachers facilitate them is necessary.

A literature review reveals that class meetings has moderate empirical research. The research that exists focuses on student behavioral changes that occur when meetings are implemented. These outcomes included improved listening and dialoguing skills (Gray

& Drewery, 2011); more inclusive classrooms and groups (Grant & Davis, 2012); fewer fights between students; fewer angry outbursts of individual students (Landau & Guthercoal, 2000); and improved in-class behavior that extends to other locations of the school (Grant & Davis, 2012). How teachers experience the facilitator role in class meetings had not been investigated. The teacher experience of class meeting facilitation is identified as a significant gap in the research.

The purpose of this study is to increase understanding of the teacher experience of facilitating class meetings. Existing studies provide little insight into the teacher experience, although it had been suggested in previous research that more needed to known about teacher experiences and their comfort level with class meeting facilitation (Lundeberg et al, 1997). This study fills that gap and provides the insight needed to understand how to better support teachers in class meetings and consequently provide a more authentic experience for student members of class meetings. Through this study, the following research question is addressed: "How do teachers experience the facilitator role in class meetings?"

Thematic Relevance

The two manuscripts are linked thematically by the topics of class meeting facilitation, conceptualizing the class meeting as a therapeutic group, and the role of school counselor consultation for effective class meeting facilitation. Manuscript 1 presents a conceptual article that suggests a relationship between class meetings and therapeutic groups and details leadership and membership skills that supports facilitation. Manuscript 2 investigates how teachers facilitate class meetings and the supports they need to do so effectively. Manuscript 1 and Manuscript 2 stipulate that school counselors are equipped

to support teachers with facilitating class meetings effectively and both manuscripts call on school counselors to take on a consultative role because of their unique training and position.

Organizational Structure of the Dissertation

The organization of this dissertation meets the standards of the Manuscript Document Dissertation format. Chapter 1 acts as an introduction to the topic of class meeting facilitation.   It delivers a general description of the topic and outlines the necessity of this line of inquiry. Chapter 1 offers an overview of Manuscript 1 (Chapter 2). Manuscript 1 provides an argument for conceptualizing and intervening with class meetings as therapeutic groups. Chapter 1 also provides an overview of Manuscript 2 (Chapter 3). Manuscript 2 outlines the grounded theory research on the teacher experience of facilitating class meetings. Finally, Chapter 1 provides definition of specialized terms used throughout the dissertation. The following terms have been identified as requiring definition:

1. Class meeting, as defined by Lundeberg et al. (1997), is a scheduled time when the class comes together in a closed circle to discuss issues that affect the entire class.

2. Therapeutic group, as defined by Corey, Corey, & Corey (2010) is a predefined group that is used to increase members' understanding of themselves and others through the venue of social interaction and feedback.

3. Facilitator, as defined by Prains (2005) is the person that creates and maintains a collective space within in a group to assure the safety of the members and sustain the quality of interaction.

To this researcher's knowledge, a systematic inquiry into the teacher's experience of facilitating class meetings has not been conducted until now. This new line of research increases understanding of the variables that support and impede teachers in the facilitation process. Subsequently, this can inform teacher-training programs in their pre-service and in-service training as well as school counselors as they define the consultative role with teachers. With this knowledge, teacher's comfort in the facilitation role can increase and their competence in facilitation may increase as well.

Chapter 2

Maximize the Benefit of Class Meetings:

Facilitating the Class Meeting as a Therapeutic Group

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Abstract

Class meetings are classroom interactions that share characteristics and goals similar to therapeutic groups. However, teachers who are typically the facilitators of class meetings do not necessarily have training in group work. This conceptual article describes the similarities between class meetings and therapeutic groups and provides subsequent strategies for facilitation. Using group theory as the framework, leadership skills and membership skills are outlined. Case examples provide models of application for the described skills. Implications for school counselors as consultants of group-work are delineated.

Keywords: class meetings, therapeutic groups, leadership skills, membership skills

Maximize the Benefit of Class Meetings:

Facilitating the Class Meeting as a Therapeutic Group

Long gone is the notion that the classroom is only an environment of scholarship and academics. With the variability of student background and the necessity of social and communication skills, classrooms have become a venue for social-emotional learning (SEL) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2012) identifies SEL as "five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies…(including) self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making" (p. 9). Embedding SEL into the daily life of the classroom can be an effective approach to supporting the acquisition of the five competencies (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). The class meeting is a strategy that allows for embedded SEL. Class meetings are a low-cost intervention that can be utilized in all classrooms at all grade levels. There are multiple student and classroom benefits when class meetings are utilized regularly. They improve student interaction; increase trust and inclusion; and influence student social behavior (Gray & Drewery, 2011; Landau & Guthercoal, 2000; Grant & Davis, 2012).

Without a clear understanding of the mechanisms that allow for social-emotional learning, class meetings can be facilitated in an authoritative manner that inhibits the acquisition of SEL competencies. The aforementioned benefits of class meetings become apparent when facilitators adhere to a mindset that supports student interaction. By linking the similarities between class meetings and therapeutic groups I will outline the basic skills that facilitators can apply in order to engage students in interpersonal interaction and the skills facilitators can teach in order for students to communicate

effectively.   With these leadership skills and membership skills in place, class meetings can generate meaningful SEL outcomes.

The Purposes of Class Meetings

The class meeting is essentially a setting for meaningful dialogue. It breaks down the hierarchy of teacher and student to allow for democratic decision-making, conflict resolution, and community building.   According to the description by the Developmental Studies Center (1996) "class meetings usually serve one or more of the following purposes: to plan and make decisions, to 'check in,' and to solve problems or raise awareness" (p. 7). Topics of class meeting often have a social or academic focus. Amstutz and Mullet (2005) illustrate the purpose of class meetings further:

> Class meetings provide an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns important to [the students], rather than having activities that revolve only around the prescribed curriculum. If one of the goals of education is to teach our children vital skills for living, such as communication, learning to listen, and learning to participate meaningfully because their thoughts are valued, then the time required to conduct class meetings is a crucial investment in our children's lives. (p. 51)

Conceptualizing Class Meetings as a Therapeutic Group

Class meetings share characteristics with therapeutic groups. Corey, Corey and Corey (2010) describe therapeutic groups as forums to interact with others in a trusting atmosphere with an opportunity to try out new behaviors and receive honest feedback. The result is an individual's insight into how he or she affects others (p. 11). Essentially, this is also the goal of class meetings. Class meetings support students in their social communication skills in a structured and safe environment.

Class meetings not only have goals similar to therapeutic groups, they are structured like therapeutic groups as well with similar configurations and norms (Landau & Gathercoal, 2000). Before the meetings begin, the facilitator goes through a process

comparable to informed consent by notifying the class members on the frequency and duration of the meetings, and the basic expectations. During the meeting process, the meetings typically occur in a circle with the facilitator as part of the circle and all members with equal physical space in the group. The facilitator negotiates the norms and roles with the group so they are established and can be referenced throughout the duration of the class meetings. Most therapeutic groups share these structures.

As in therapeutic groups, class meetings are social systems. Kline (2003) describes the social system as composed of individual, interpersonal, and group-as-a-system levels (p. 180). The facilitator can intervene at any one of the levels. As is true of group leaders, facilitators of class meetings can easily rely on the individual level of intervention. At this level, students are not involved with each other, and instead interact directly with the facilitator. While the individual level of intervention can engage students who are struggling with participation, overuse inhibits the impact that the group can have on interpersonal learning. The interpersonal level is where the majority of interpersonal learning occurs. The facilitator promotes student interaction and feedback with each other. There is less reliance on the facilitator to carry the group, and the relationships between students become the agents of change. The group-as-a-system level represents the shared experience of all members. The facilitator focuses on group cohesion and norms so that learning can occur at this level. The facilitator brings focus to shared concerns and encourages reflections on group learning. The group-as-a-whole is a shared identity that all students have as members of the class meeting. When understood as a system similar to therapeutic groups, facilitators of class meetings can intervene effectively at all three levels.

Skills Necessary for Class Meetings

According to Kline (2003), in order for therapeutic groups to be effective, basic

leadership skills and basic membership skills must be present. Basic leadership skills are a

set of skills that should be learned and utilized by the group facilitator to create meaningful

group interaction among the members. The most fundamental skill is active listening

(Kline, 2003; Corey, Core, and Corey). When active listening is mastered, the leader can

utilize more complex and facilitative skills. Subsequently, group members have an

opportunity to develop their own set of skills to utilize in the group and generalize outside

of the group. These skills are basic membership skills. Encompassed in basic membership

skills is effective interpersonal communication (Kline, 2003, p. 210). For this reason,

membership skills will also be referred to as communication skills. All of these skills are

relevant to class meetings when the class meeting is characterized as a therapeutic group.

Basic Leadership Skills

Kline identifies several basic leadership skills including listening skills, directives,

and observation. These three skills, when combined effectively, create the framework for

an influential intervention that engages members with each other. The facilitator is

responsible for stimulating student use of key communication skills with each other in

class meetings. This can be challenging because just like in therapeutic groups, students in

class meetings naturally address the adult facilitator. It is necessary for the facilitator to

engage members with each other at the interpersonal level. This can be accomplished

though the leadership skill known as the basic facilitation sequence.

Kline describes the basic facilitation sequence as a three-step sequence: elicit, clarify

and connect (p.189). Elicit refers to the facilitator's ability in drawing out student

disclosures of their emotional experiences as they relate to the content of the meeting. When clarifying, the facilitator uses a statement or question to confirm the meaning of the student's assertion. The goal of this step is to make clear the meaning of the student's statement for both the facilitator's understanding and the understanding of other students in the meeting. Finally, the facilitator uses a statement or question to enable student-to-student interpersonal interaction. The connection between the students is based on a shared experience and the facilitator makes the connection with purpose. Once connected, students can interface with each other. This sequence reduces the dependence students have on the facilitator. It moves the facilitator away from the individual level of intervention and allows for communication between the students. Connection can also go further to the group-as-a-whole level, when the facilitator asks students to engage in dialogue on the relevance the issue or experience has on the entire class. This group-as-a-whole connection engages each student and causes individual matters and interpersonal interactions to become meaningful for all students.

The facilitation sequence in action. To get a better understanding of what the basic facilitation sequence is like, consider the following situation: Mrs. Gómez has a regular routine of weekly class meetings that focus on democratic decision making and conflict resolution. This week, Mrs. Gómez knows that there have been issues on the playground, and one student, Hector, has been excluded from games. Neither Hector, nor any of the other students are talking about this problem in a meaningful way during the meeting. Mrs. Gómez utilizes the basic facilitation sequence to generate interaction between the students about the conflict. After Hector describes the problem to the group, Mrs. Gómez elicits Hector's emotional reaction to the situation by asking him how he feels

about it. Hector describes feeling lonely and confused. Mrs. Gómez clarifies further by

investigating those feelings. She asks, "Are you confused because you don't know why the

other students are not letting you play?" Hector is able to confirm and elucidate his

meaning. Because Mrs. Gómez has elicited meaningful information (his feelings), and has

clarified his statements, it is imperative that she now use the strategy of connect. She

purposefully connects Hector to Nolan, a student who has routinely excluded Hector but

who has also experienced exclusion in the past.   Mrs. Gómez asks Hector to directly state

his feelings to Nolan. She also directs Nolan to respond back to Hector regarding what he

heard Hector say. Now the two students are relating and are no longer dependent on Mrs.

Gómez for keeping the flow of interaction going. The other students in the group are also

becoming more engaged as they observe the communication between the two students.

Mrs. Gómez then pushes for connection with the group-as-a-whole. She asks all the

students to reflect on times they have felt similar to Hector. She invites students to share

how they feel when they are included or how they intend to make sure they include others.

Without Ms. Gómez's prompting, many students talk directly to Hector as they pledge to be

more inclusive at recess.

Basic Membership Skills

        In order for the basic facilitation sequence to have effective outcomes, the students

themselves need to learn and utilize group membership skills. These skills can be

conceptualized as effective communication skills. A key purpose of class meetings is for

students to learn, utilize, and generalize communication skills. These skills are not only

necessary for class meetings; they are necessary as skills of life. Ananiadou and Claro

(2009) assert "Communication plays an important role in the preparation of students to be

not only be lifelong learners but also members of a larger community with voice and sense

of responsibility to others. Young people need to have the ability to communicate,

exchange, criticize, and present information and ideas" (p. 10).

Once communication skills can be used fluently in class meeting, generalization to

daily life is possible. When this happens, the effects of class meeting can be seen in changed

student behavior and interaction.   Communication skills can be branded into two

categories: sending messages and receiving messages (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Within

each category is a distinct skill that students can learn to master in class meetings.

Sending messages and the I-message. Students in class meetings need to become

proficient in how they send messages. Essential components of well-sent messages

includes owning the statements by using I-messages, communicating clearly with all the

necessary information, sending congruent messages, and including emotion statements

(Johnson & Johnson, 2009). A basic skill in this area would be using I-messages (Frey &

Doyle, 2001). I-messages are I-statements that a student uses to convey and own emotions.

An example of an I-message is, "I feel lonely when you don't invite me to play at recess".

Using I-messages is a skill that requires direct instruction, practice, and sheltered

opportunities for application. Class meetings can offer all of these occasions. When

students have perfected the I-message, they will use it to own their statements, identify

their emotions, delineate all the information necessary for others to understand the basis

of their feelings, and convey their emotion with congruent verbal and non-verbal cues.

Receiving messages and paraphrasing without judgment. How students receive

messages is also an integral component to effective communication. Johnson & Johnson

(2009) elucidate that effectively receiving messages relies on accurately understanding

others' points of view and then conveying that understanding. This is often described as

active listening (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Restating or paraphrasing what one has heard is the

basis for receiving messages. It can only be done effectively if evaluation or judgment on

the listener's behalf is omitted. Paraphrasing without judgment may sound something like,

"I hear you saying that when I don't invite you to play with me at recess, you think that I

don't like you". Teaching students to inhibit their own judgment when they receive

messages is a challenging but necessary component of hearing messages and conveying

their understanding of them. It may require direct instruction and practice during class

meetings before students are able to effectively receive messages and communicate

understanding outside of the meeting times.

<div align="center">**Case Example**</div>

Teaching Membership Skills when Orienting to Class Meeting

Mr. Peterson is the homeroom teacher of a fifth grade class of thirty students. He

has completed a professional development course on utilizing class meeting and he has

committed to running weekly class meetings this school year. To get the support he needs

as he is learning to facilitate the meetings, he has asked Ms. López, the school counselor, to

co-facilitate with him.

The first several meetings of the year revolved around the theme of developing

norms. Mr. Peterson and Ms. López utilized the norms suggested by Tribes Learning

Communities (Gibbs, 2006): attentive listening, mutual respect, appreciation-no put downs,

and the right to pass. The students had been utilizing class meeting time to understand and

practice the norms. At the fourth week of class meetings, Ms. López felt the students were

ready to begin learning membership skills. She clarified to the class that over the next several weeks they would be learning about and practicing I-messages and paraphrasing.

Teaching I-messages. Ms. López explained, "I-messages are statements that you use to describe how you feel. It starts with 'I feel' and then you add an emotion word. Lastly you explain why. For example, 'I feel lonely when you don't sit next to me at lunch'. I have brought a feelings chart that I will project just to give you some ideas on the types of words you could use. Please look at the chart and find any feeling word you don't quite understand. We will pass the talking stick around and you can either say the word that confuses you or pass. At the end we will talk about what those confusing words mean. Aaliyah, why do you start us off?" Ms. López and Mr. Peterson let the class complete the directive and the two of them helped the students understand the emotion vocabulary. Mr. Peterson continued the direct instruction on I-messages. "I am now going to project a sentence frame for an I-message. Here it is written out for you – 'I feel blank, when you blank'. In the first blank you need to use an emotion word that fits for you. On the second blank you need to explain why."

Practicing I-messages. He went on, "We are going to do a quick snowball activity. Before you came to the circle I asked you to anonymously write a time you were upset with someone at school. Now we are going to crumple up those papers you wrote on into a tight ball. When I say go you are going to throw your ball into the circle and then collect a ball from the middle of the circle that is not your own. Everyone understand? Go!" The students followed the directive. When all the students had a new paper ball in their hand, Mr. Peterson continued. "Now you will open up this new paper ball you have. You are going to read the situation to yourself and come up with an I-message to communicate how

this person feels. We will use the talking stick again to go around the whole circle to

practice making I-messages. Don't worry; if you get stuck we are all here to help you." The

class finished the directive, reflected on it, and shared out appreciations. The class then

ended class meeting for that day.

The following week, after a check-in, Ms. López reviewed I-messages in the class

meeting. She explained that throughout the rest of class meetings, students would be

expected to use I-messages with each other. It would be a new norm for class meetings.

She also reiterated that they would all support each other in doing so since it is a new and

potentially difficult skill. She then introduced paraphrasing without judgment.

Teaching paraphrasing. "Just like it is important to be able to express how we feel,

we also need to be able to hear what other people have to say and show understanding. We

are going to call this paraphrasing. When we paraphrase, we say back to a person what we

heard them say in fewer words and by using our own words. Lets try it out. Who would

like to tell me something they did last night? Ana?" Ana told the class about going to the

high school basketball game to watch her brother play. Ms. López continued, "What I heard

you say, Ana, is that you enjoyed watching your brother play basketball last night even

though his team didn't win because you got to sit with your friends and cheer the team on.

Ana, was I accurate? Did I use the exact same words as you? I didn't, but I still showed

understanding. Anyone else want to try paraphrasing?" Ms. López facilitated 5 rounds of

paraphrasing, where one student volunteered to tell a quick story and another tried to

paraphrase it in their own words. Students helped each other when they were challenged

by the exercise.

Practicing withholding judgment. "You all seem to really understand this. Now we are going to make it harder. We are going to paraphrase without judgment. This means that even if someone is saying something we don't like or agree with, we will not use statements that show that we think it is good or bad, right or wrong. So, it's going to get even trickier. You all are going to practice paraphrasing my statements without judgment. If anyone hears a judgment word, we will just try it again until there is no judgment. So here is the first statement you all need to paraphrase without judgment: I feel annoyed when students ask me what they are supposed to do after I have just given the directions. It seems like they don't even listen to what I have to say. OK, who wants to try it?" Ms. López facilitated several practice rounds of paraphrasing without judgment. She asked the students to evaluate whether judgment was communicated or not. It required several more practice rounds than she expected, but gradually the students became more proficient. They ended the class meeting by reflecting on the exercise and sharing out appreciations. Mr. Peterson and Ms. López reviewed I-messages and paraphrasing at the beginning of each class meeting for several meetings to assure they were becoming a standard of operation in the meetings. They continued to coach the skills as opportunities arose during all class meetings thereafter.

Using the Facilitation Sequence in Class Meetings

Several months after the introduction of membership skills to class meeting, Mr. Peterson noticed a repeated conflict occurring with several students. He consulted with Ms. López and they agreed that it should be brought up in class meeting. He explained to the class that he repeatedly witnessed Amelia coming into the classroom crying and other girls in the class whispering to each other. He admitted that he was unsure what was

happening and asked if Amelia would be willing to talk about what was going on for her. Amelia agreed and explained that on the playground some of the girls she used to be friends with were calling her names and it really upset her.

Elicit. Ms. López noticed this was a good opportunity for the basic facilitation sequence, so she began the process. "Amelia, talk more about what you are feeling and why." Amelia explained, "I feel really sad because I used to be friends with Charlotte, Jasmine, and Lily. Now when I go out to recess they won't play with me and they call me things like 'fat' and then turn their back to me."

Clarify. Ms. López clarified, "Are you feeling sad because you miss their friendship or because of the names they are calling you?" Amelia confirmed that she was sad about both situations and explained why.

Connect. Ms. López moved into the connect phase. "Amelia, Charlotte, Jasmine, and Lily, I am going to have all of you move into the center of the circle. Amelia once you are there, I want you to use an I-message directly to the other three girls. Then the three of you can respond to her statement. We will all be here to support you so if you feel stuck on how to respond, you can ask anyone in the meeting for help." The girls all moved into the center and Amelia began the dialogue. "I feel sad that you don't want to be friends with me anymore. I feel even worse when you call me names out at recess. I don't understand what I did wrong". The three girls were hesitant to respond. They all appeared embarrassed by the situation. Ms. López allowed for silence and then Jasmine spoke up. "I'm sorry we call you names. It was supposed to be funny, but I feel bad every time we do it." Amelia reacted, "Then why do you do it?" Jasmine stated, "I don't know, I guess because everyone else does. I'm sorry. I liked it better when we were friends with you."

Ms. López noticed another opportunity to connect. "Jasmine, why don't you tell Charlotte and Lily how you are feeling about this situation?" Jasmine looked toward the two girls, "I feel bad about how we treat Amelia. I don't even remember why we are mad at her. I wish we could just stop. Charlotte, I feel uncomfortable when you tell us to say mean things to Amelia. Why do you keep doing that?" Ms. López allowed the girls to dialogue for several minutes. They no longer needed the basic facilitation sequence to keep the conversation going.

Engaging the group-as-a-whole. Eventually the girls came to a resolution and Ms. López directed the entire group to hold all students accountable for respectful behavior. Through the use of the talking stick, each student in the circle made a verbal commitment toward helping the girls maintain respectful interactions. Before ending the meeting, Ms. López gave time for students to reflect aloud on what the whole group had experienced and learned from the interaction. Lastly, they shared out appreciations. Many appreciations were directed toward the four girls for being honest and solving their problem.

Sending and Receiving Messages during a Conflict

Class meetings continued on a weekly basis. Eventually, Ms. López stopped attending because Mr. Peterson felt confident with the facilitator role. During the last weeks of school a conflict arose in the middle of class meeting. Jorge was disruptive and noisy when Camille had the talking stick. Mr. Peterson noticed that Camille appeared frustrated by this and seized the occasion to address the issue instead of letting it pass by. "Camille, something is happening right now that seems to be bugging you. Try using an I-message so we can work on solving this problem we are having right now." Camille seemed empowered by this directive and looked toward Jorge, "Jorge, I feel annoyed when

you keep talking to other people while I am talking and I have the talking stick. I don't do

that to you. I think you should be more respectful to me". Jorge seem surprised by the

directness of her statement. Mr. Peterson stimulated a response by Jorge by suggesting he

paraphrase without judgment. Jorge replied, "You are mad at me because I am talking

when you are talking." Camille took the opportunity to respond, "Yes, I am, could you

please stop doing that? We all agreed to attentive listening and mutual respect. I think you

should have to do those things too." Jorge apologized and remained quiet for the

remainder of the meeting, unless he had the talking stick. In fact, at all the subsequent

meetings, Jorge attentively listened. The other students also seemed affected by the

interaction and became more direct with each other in the meetings. Several students used

I-messages without being prompted by the teacher and resolved here-and-now issues

during the meetings. Mr. Peterson noticed that students were beginning to generalize their

learned communication skills to the regular class setting.

Summary

When class meetings are conceptualized as similar to therapeutic groups,

meaningful interaction can take place during the meetings and interpersonal learning can

occur. Classroom teachers may be uncomfortable with running class meeting as a group,

because of their lack of training and experience. Many school systems, however, have

experts on-hand to act as consultants. School counselors are specifically trained in group

dynamics and running therapeutic groups (Braun & Garrett, 1988; Edwards & Mullis,

2003). Once school counselors understand the similarities between therapeutic groups

and class meetings and the related skills necessary to facilitate both, they can strategically

support teachers in implementing class meetings with meaningful SEL outcomes. Simple

strategies like focusing on the basic facilitation sequence, and teaching I-messages and

paraphrasing without judgment, can have exponential benefits in class meeting facilitation.

When utilized with integrity within the class meeting structure, these basic strategies can

promote the social-emotional learning of all students in a proactive and universal

approach.

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Chapter 3

Qualitative Inquiry into How Teachers Experience the Facilitator Role in Class Meetings

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Abstract

Classroom teachers frequently utilize class meetings as a strategy to build social and emotional skills in students. This grounded theory study investigated 10 elementary teachers' experiences of facilitating class meetings. Data was collected from semi-structured interviews and data analysis procedures followed guidelines put forth by Corbin and Strauss (2008).   An emergent theory of moving from teacher to facilitator is presented. Contextual influences, moderating influences, and perceived outcomes of facilitation are outlined as key components of the theory. Implications for school counselors as consultants of class meetings are delineated.

     Keywords: class meeting, facilitator, SEL, teacher roles, school counselor

Qualitative Inquiry into How Teachers Experience the Facilitator Role in

Class Meetings

Safe and Supportive Schools is a leading educational initiative that emphasizes the importance of classroom management and school community (Yoder, 2014). It is a priority in the United States because reduced aggressiveness, violence, and delinquency are noted outcomes for students when supportive learning environments are established (Learning First Alliance, 2001). With the public's increased fear of school violence, school officials have a renewed interest in improving the learning environment. It is no longer secondary to academic achievement. Instead, supportive learning environments have been identified as congruent with academic rigor (Learning First Alliance, 2001) and have become just as much of a priority in public education.

The class meeting has been named as a universal strategy for improving and maintaining a supportive learning environment (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012). Multiple pedagogical theories support the use of class meetings. Glasser's Choice Theory and the Competence-Based Classroom (Glasser, 2007), Tribes Learning Communities (Gibbs, 2006), Responsive Classrooms (Charney, 2015), and Positive Discipline (Nelson, 2006) are programs that utilize class meetings. Through class meetings students are able to establish norms such as mutual respect and attentive listening, process interpersonal dynamics, apply democratic decision-making, and solve class issues (Gibbs, 2006; Charney, 1992; Nelson, 2006). These activities have been shown to improve students' sense of safety and support in the classroom evidenced by improved behavior and communication skills (Grant & Davis, 2012; Gray & Drewery, 2011). More specifically, in classrooms where class meeting are implemented with fidelity, students

improve in listening and dialoguing skills (Gray & Drewery, 2011); are more inclusive of each other (Grant & Davis, 2012); engage in fewer fights and angry outbursts (Landau & Guthercoal, 2000); and improve in class behavior that extends to other locations of the school (Grant & Davis, 2012).

While they may be influenced by various pedagogical theories, class meetings adhere to a basic structure. The structure comprises of arranging students in a circle; adult as facilitator; establishing ground rules; encouraging student appreciations; and using the circle to solve conflict or class issues (Angell, 2014; Gray & Drewery, 2011; Grant & Davis, 2013; Edwards & Mullis, 2003). These common practices are intended to promote positive, trusting, and meaningful relationships and assist in social-emotional development (Edwards & Mullis, 2003).   Class meetings are utilized for a variety of purposes. Most commonly, class meetings are structured to improve communication, problem solve, or resolve conflict (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

Moreover, these goals may be accomplished preventatively or responsively. A routine meeting, either daily or weekly, is often utilized as a preventative intervention for classrooms. A meeting that is called after a conflict arises or a change occurs would function as a response to an issue in the classroom and is more restorative in nature (Amstutz & Mullett, 2005).   Both types of meetings are considered class meetings and follow the basic class meeting structure. Any school professional can facilitate these types of meetings, but classroom teachers are typically the adults charged with facilitation. However, because of the noted social and emotional implications of class meetings, school counselors have been identified as professionals with the knowledge to support their implementation (Edward & Mullis, 2003).

While potentially helpful, class meetings are systemically complex and have the features of both groups and classrooms. Theorists who have established the necessity for class meetings are more often in the field of psychology or social work than the field of education (Glasser, 2007; Nelson, 2006; Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). Consequently, class meetings can be conceptualized through group development, group work, and group leadership theories. In that vein, Braun and Garrett (1988) identified the class meeting as a group intervention. Dynamics that are in play between students in a classroom can be effectively addressed during class meeting (Kline, 2003).

Because class meetings have features of helping groups, those who facilitate them should have basic knowledge and skills related to group facilitation (Hall & Williams, 1970). Yalom (1995) posits that for the group culture to effectively exist the facilitator is responsible for creating a safe and supportive environment and for engaging members in honest feedback. More specifically, the leader needs to establish trust and support, involve all members, encourage cross-member dialogue, encourage expression of conflict, and help members overcome barriers to direct communication (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2010). Literature is not available to back the idea that teachers are provided training in group leadership. However, teachers are trained in classroom management both in their preparation coursework and in professional development opportunities throughout the duration of their careers (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

While similarities do exist, classroom management is inherently different than group leadership. Marzano and Marzano (2013) identify best practices and point to key core components of effective classroom management: teacher dominance, clear consequences, and cooperation. According to the research on teacher dominance, teachers

should air on the side of controlling a classroom rather than adhering to a permissive style.

(Chiu & Tulley, 1997).   In contrast, in helping groups, control is not the aim of leadership;

instead group leaders influence the environment so that it offers an atmosphere of safety

and support for members (Yalom, 1995). Marzano and Marzano posit that establishing

clear consequences for behavior is essential to classroom management. While group

leaders do this through managing group norms, they rely on the group to confront

breeches of the norms (Kline, 2003). Lastly, Marzano and Marzano define cooperation as

teaming with students and allowing for student contributions to the learning process. This

aligns more closely with group leadership, however the premise of group leadership

assumes leader-member cooperation as well as cross-member interaction and cooperation

(Ormont, 1990).   There is currently not research available to suggest that teachers are

knowledgeable in the differences between classroom management and class meeting

facilitation. However, research illustrates that class meetings can still be effective when

teachers assume the facilitator role (Grant & Davis, 2012; Landau & Guthercoal, 2000).

Teachers take on the role of facilitator of class meeting for numerous reasons. Some

teachers are exposed to class meetings in their teacher preparation courses (McDonald,

2009). These teachers may utilize class meetings early in their career and embed the

practice within their teaching paradigm. Other teachers seek out strategies for improving

the learning environment (McDonald, 2009). These teachers may attend professional

development workshops that emphasize class meetings as a preventative and responsive

measure for developing a healthy learning environment. The teachers may implement

class meetings after they have had experience in the field and struggled with establishing a

safe and supportive learning environment (Barrett, Butler, & Toma, 2012). Many teachers,

however, may be required to lead class meetings by building or district-level

administrators (McDonald, 2009). Current legislation has forced districts to do away with

zero-tolerance policies and instead utilize restorative practices and implement restorative

discipline (Darling-Churchill et al, 2013). Such practices require in-class solutions often

garnered through class meetings (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). These teachers may feel

unprepared or uncomfortable doing this.

While theories exist to support the use of class meetings, and administrators may

encourage the use of class meetings, according to Lundeberg et al. (1997) many teachers

are uncomfortable or feel unprepared to facilitate the process.   Findings indicate that the

majority of teachers value strategies and pedagogy that support student social and

emotional learning, but they lack the training to implement them with fidelity (Bridgeland,

Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013).   Moreover, teachers are rarely trained on group dynamics and

group facilitation. Because very little is understood about the experience teachers have

with structuring and facilitating class meetings, it is unclear what support teachers need in

operating them. Once the teacher experience is known, supports for teachers can be

implemented. These supports could include, but are not limited to, improved pre-service

training, improved in-service training, or improved consultation during implementation.

If inquiry into the teacher experience of facilitating class meetings reveals that

ongoing consultation is needed, school counselors may be the school professionals

qualified to do so.   According to the national model of school counseling, school counselors

are called to act in a consultant role to support teachers with classroom management,

community building, and the social-emotional learning of their students. (American School

Counselor Association, 2012) Additionally, school counselors are trained in group

dynamics and have knowledge about group facilitation skills that would benefit teachers who run class meetings (Braun & Garrett, 1988; Edwards & Mullis, 2003).   School counselors can play the consultant role in this case but more needs to be known about teachers' experiences to do that well.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the teachers' experiences of facilitating class meetings. I investigated this through qualitative inquiry. The grounded theory approach of this study was aimed at answering the central research question: How do teachers experience the facilitator role in class meetings? Supporting questions revolved around how teachers have been trained and utilize class meetings and how they have felt about their facilitator role. With this understanding, researchers are able to isolate the variables that support teachers in facilitation and the variables that impede effective facilitation. Teacher training programs may use results of this inquiry to plan pre-service or in-service training that better prepares teachers to facilitate a positive learning environment through class meetings. Outcomes of the study may also inform school counselors so that they may better plan their consultative role in supporting teachers with class meeting implementation.

Method

For this study I utilized a qualitative approach to better understand the process behind teachers' experiences of class meeting facilitation. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative research as holistic, naturalistic, and with an emic perspective, which allows for complex understanding. In that vein, this study was aimed to uncover the complex process of teacher-facilitated class meetings from the unique perspectives of the teachers themselves within the natural environment in which the meetings occur. Furthermore,

Creswell (2013) identified multiple approaches in qualitative research but pointed to grounded theory as the most fitting method for this study because of the potential for diversity of experiences in teacher-led class meetings.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) described grounded theory as an interpretive method that moves beyond description. It is utilized when theory is needed to explain a process. Grounded theory attends to the lived experience of the participants and the world from which they construct meaning (Charmaz, 1990). Because the holistic and constructed experience of class meeting facilitation needed to be investigated, grounded theory aligned directly with the goal of my research. The theory I generated from this research is anticipated to help me and other professionals in the field better understand how and why teachers have success with or struggle with facilitating class meetings. This understanding will provide an impetus for better preparation and support for teachers as they implement class meetings as a tool for creating safe learning environments for their students.

Researcher Disclosure

To manage researcher subjectivity, it is important to disclose the world-view that drives the researcher's understanding of lived and experienced constructs (Ponteretto, 2005). The world-view that guides me in my research is social constructivism. Within the framework of social constructivism, it is assumed that people create their own meaning based on their lived experience. Meaning is also generated through interaction. Participants have created meaning through previous interactions and continued to refine meaning through their interactions with me. My goal was not to find the one truth but the many truths of my participants.

My experience also defines who I am as a researcher. I am a professional school counselor and I have experience in facilitating class meetings and participating in staff trainings on implementing class meetings. The class meeting structure I have been trained in is based off of Tribes Learning Communities (Gibbs, 2006). I have also integrated pieces of restorative justice through the practice of restorative circles (Zehr, 2002). I believe class meetings enhance social-emotional learning and align to school counseling standards (American School Counselor Association, 2004). I also believe school counselors can emphasize the use of class meetings as a mean to reach all students' social needs. Class meetings can be used as a universal intervention to help all students in a school. Moreover, from personal experience I know that class meetings, if not facilitated well, can have a negative impact on the class system. I believe that class meetings are a form of group processing that can be best conceptualized by system's theory (Kline, 2003). From my experience in schools, I believe that most teachers are not trained on group dynamics or systems theory. Because of my experience, I strived to manage my subjectivity throughout the research process from data collection to analysis.

Participants and Procedures

I recruited participants through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Based on my purposeful sampling strategies I identified key informants to recruit participants. I enlisted informants from the field of education. The informants were practicing and retired teachers, practicing and retired school counselors, practicing school administrators, and teacher trainers. These informants provided me with contacts of potential participants who fit the requirements of the study. Subsequently, through criterion-based sampling, I identified potential participants named by the informants. To ensure that a central

phenomenon was under investigation, the participants were required to be practicing

elementary teachers in the United States. My criteria also required that they had been

exposed to class meetings through their teacher training programs, professional

development work, or peer collaboration efforts. Participants must have tried class

meetings but were not required to be currently utilizing class meetings. According to

Corbin and Strauss (1990), the number of participants needed for a study depends on the

variety and clarity of concepts that are illuminated by each interview. Accordingly, I

recruited 10 potential participants from several sites through informants in order to

incorporate a heterogeneous view of the facilitation story and to have a better sample of

the concepts.   The sample size was sufficient to confirm that theoretical sampling

procedures were in place and saturation was achieved (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). All of the

10 potential participants agreed to join the study and were interviewed in two rounds of

interviews.

Of the 10 participants, seven identified as White or Caucasian, two identified as

Latino/a, and one identified as Chicana. All but one were female. Four participants were in

their thirties, two participants were in their forties, and four participants were in their

fifties. Participants had between six and 28 years of teaching experience. One had taught

for six years. Five had taught between 11 and 19 years. Four had taught for 20 to 28 years.

Only one participant was working in an urban school. Four participants worked in a rural

school and the remaining five were in a suburban school. Finally, all participants taught at

the elementary level. One participant taught at each of the following grade levels:

kindergarten, first, fourth, fifth, and sixth. Three participants taught second grade. One

participant taught pre-kindergarten, but transferred to sixth grade during the time of the

interviews. Another participant taught multiple grade levels, kindergarten through fourth grade, as a specialized teacher. The fifth grade teacher also acted as an instructional coach.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online. Face-to-face meetings were scheduled at a location of the participants' choosing. Online interviews were done through a HIPPA-compliant platform. Video-conferencing options for the participants were omitted from the online platform during the interview phase to increase confidentiality; only audio was recorded. Both face-to-face and online interviews were recorded for transcription.

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), it is important to build a trusting research relationship with the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1989) asserted that the relationship between a qualitative researcher and the participant is one based on equality, mutual respect, dignity, and trust. Gaining permission, developing sensitivity, and refraining from judgment are but some of the integral components of building rapport with participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Giving participants a voice is an inherent advantage of qualitative approaches to inquiry. When I interviewed teachers, the rapport was built quickly once teachers understood the rationale for the interview. From my perspective, teachers are typically cognizant of the many initiatives they are being asked to implement, and often appreciate having a voice in how they perceive those initiatives. I made an effort to assure that the participants felt that their identity would not be revealed and identifying information would be excluded from publication. From my experience, teachers often feel that their job is at stake if they disagree with administrative decisions. I made certain that identifying remarks or information remained confidential.

The Research Team

As the primary researcher, I assembled a team of two additional scholars to aid in the domains of methodology and trustworthiness. One member of the team was an expert in qualitative methods and specifically in grounded theory. Her role was to consult during the design, data collection, and data analysis phases of the study. The other member was a fellow doctoral student also experienced in qualitative methods. Her primary role was to help me manage researcher bias through peer debriefing. She inspected the data, memos, conditional matrices, and visuals of the central categories to assess my suppositions and offered written feedback. For example, regarding my second round memos, she disseminated the following feedback. "I don't see a clear personal reflexivity process here (where you personally engage with the data and outwardly process your own feelings/thoughts around the findings)." Both team members attended to potential biases that surfaced through the multiple phases of the study. They examined my emerging assumptions and challenged me to see past my personal biases.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, interviews are a common data source. In grounded theory, the interviews are typically unstructured or semi-structured. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008) the original question should be broad and subsequent questions should narrow in on the concept under investigation. In this vein, the interview questions should also be broad, general, and focused on the central phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

This study was informed by teacher interviews. The interviews were personal reflections on the experiences of facilitating class meetings by participants who were actively teaching at the primary level. The interviews were semi-structured and audio

recorded for later transcription. They were completed in-person or through a digital

platform and done one-on-one with the primary researcher. The interview questions began

broad and then narrowed in on the topic of facilitation. The questions were as follows:

What has it been like for you to facilitate class meetings? How does your training affect

your experience of facilitating class meetings? Who has affected your experience of

facilitation and how did they affect you? What feelings have you had about facilitating class

meetings? Can you tell about a time when facilitation was particularly rewarding and a

time when facilitation was particularly challenging? How do you view yourself as a

facilitator?

A second round of interviews was conducted after the first round concluded. The

second round of questions were created by two members of the research team to clarify

the participants' experiences, understand the contexts of conditions described, and

comprehend the spectrum of experiences within the categories that were emerging. The

second round of questions included the following: How did you develop or not develop

confidence in leading class meetings? How did you decide to start doing class meetings?

What, if anything, motivates you to continue to implement class meetings as a strategy in

your classroom? How do your beliefs about teaching and learning affect the way you

engage in class meetings? What would need to happen for you to let go of the teacher role

when leading a class meeting?

Data Analysis

I followed guidelines by Corbin and Strauss (2008) for analyzing the data, which

consisted of the transcribed interviews. After the data was collected, I engaged in a three-

phase process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Corbin and Strauss

defined open coding as "breaking the data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data" (p 195). By open coding the data I opened up the data for all possible meaning and identified the major categories. I achieved this by identifying and coding all meaningful concepts of the transcribed interviews. I then distilled the data into conceptual labels and provided names for the emerging concepts. Throughout this process I refined each category by creating subcategories and defining characteristic properties of each major category.

During the subsequent phase I engaged in axial coding. Corbin and Strauss defined axial coding as "crosscutting or relating concepts to each other" (p 195). Comparative analysis helped me find similarities between coded incidents and create dimensions for the codes. I compared codes within and between coded interviews to clearly define the concepts. As is common during this phase a central category emerged (Creswell, 2013).

Lastly, I moved from description to conceptualization through selective coding to create a storyline that connected the categories and explained the central category (Creswell, 2013, p. 86). The final result was a substantive-level theory. Throughout the entire process I engaged in memoing; a written account of my developing theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I also utilized conditional matrices to assure that the connections I made between categories were supported by objective data. These matrices are outlined in Table 1 and Table 2. Memoing and the use of conditional matrices helped me track my interpretations of the data and illuminated issues of subjectivity.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is how the rigor of qualitative research is obtained. There are four dimensions to trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability (Morrow, 2005).   According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) credibility refers to the internal consistency of the research and how the rigor of the research is communicated. Transferability is how far researchers can make claims for general application of the research. Dependability is the consistency of the research and how repeatable it is. Confirmability refers to how objective the research is.

In order to strengthen trustworthiness I employed six strategies as prescribed by Morrow (2005): making biases and assumptions transparent, reflexivity, peer debriefing purposeful criterion-based sampling, negative case analysis, and member checks.

With the aim of building trustworthiness I worked to make my biases and assumptions transparent to others. Subsequently, I had to become aware of my own assumptions of teachers, class meetings, school structures, and student engagement. To reduce my biases, I immersed myself in the literature on class meetings, classroom management, and teaching practices. Throughout the study I also documented my experience through digital journaling. This kept an ongoing record of my assumptions. With feedback from the research team, journaling allowed me to examine myself and see beyond my biases when appropriate and possible. Further peer debriefing with my research team permitted me to converse with fellow qualitative researchers to identify and reflect on my assumptions and confirm my emerging concepts.

Through purposeful criterion-based sampling I selected participants based on specific criterion of having tried or currently using class meetings. Using negative case analysis I generated and revised my theory regarding the teacher's facilitator role to retroactively assure that my final theory fit the majority of reports.

Finally, member checking required me to propose my categories, interpretations and conclusions to participants to ensure accuracy and credibility. This process also empowered participants to be active contributors to the research. The participants' feedback through member checking resulted in minor revisions of the results. An example of such a revision resulted from the following feedback from a participant:

> Moderating influences - it says interacting with the teacher's ability to facilitate effectively…In that part I would say I don't completely agree with that because certainly it affects HOW you run the meetings but it doesn't affect IF you run them. I read the IF that if you have difficult members you don't have class meetings or you don't run them as often and I would think it's the opposite, that you need more.

Results

Data analysis revealed that participants encountered a progression of moving into the facilitator role of class meetings, which was impacted by external factors. Figure 1 illustrates the theory of teacher's experiences as facilitators of class meetings. The core category, moving from teacher to facilitator, is affected by the contextual influences of personal teaching style, confidence, school environment and training. Furthermore, the moderating influences of class composition, response of the group, and students' membership skills interact with a teacher's ability to move from teacher to facilitator. Perceived outcomes of group productivity, student change, and teacher style are the consequences of the converging external conditions. These outcomes then feedback as part of the context and influence the teacher's continued assumption of the facilitator role. Collectively, these concepts illustrate a comprehensive depiction of the encounters teachers have as facilitators, and lead to recommendations for teacher support.

Figure 1: Core Category – Moving from Teacher to Facilitator
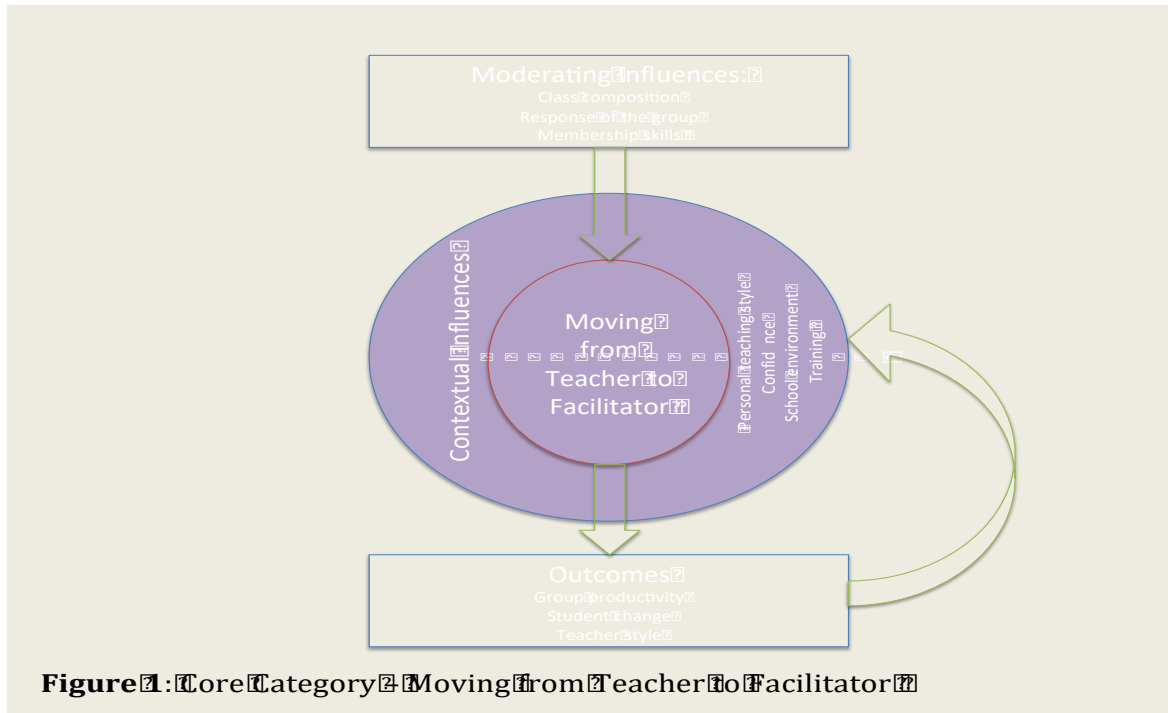
Core Category: Moving from Teacher to Facilitator

The core category that emerged from the data analysis is the experience of moving

from teacher to facilitator. All participants revealed that when class meetings are

facilitated routinely with a cohort of students, a progression occurs throughout an

academic year. In order to explain this process, the relationship between teaching and

facilitating as described by the participants is illustrated. Successively, the processes that

teachers undergo as they move towards assuming the facilitator role is outlined.

Relationship between teaching and facilitating. Participants described both

differences and similarities between teaching and facilitating roles. The interviews

illuminated that participants perceive teaching to have the primary function of instructing

and instructing is meant to disseminate information from an expert. Participant H

described teaching's specific purpose and role. He stated, "I think that I have to always be

aware of whether I am facilitating or kind of the teacher I guess. If it's a new concept, then I

am the teacher. I am the more knowledgeable other". The participants alluded that in their

experience the teacher is the leader in the room. He or she has a plan in mind, and works

towards implementing that plan. Participant H further described that, "As a teacher I have

a plan of what I want to do. And for the most part…I'm going to adhere to that regardless of

what goes on." Participants also disclosed that in order to do this, the teacher works on

maintaining control of the classroom.

Participants described experiences of facilitating class meetings that are distinctly

different than experiences of teaching. They identified facilitation as an act of monitoring

student interactions. To do this, the teacher relinquishes control and observes the

interactions that are in play. Participants indicated that the flow of interaction moves

between students instead of from the teacher to the students.   Participant C described how

she engages as a facilitator, "I listen to see where the conversation is going. You know, I

guide the reflecting questions…I just listen. I don't always need to be talking. I would much

rather them have that conversation with each other than me doing any of that".

While participants experienced clear differences between teaching and facilitating

as they conducted class meetings, they noticed some components of teaching and

facilitating that were similar.   Multiple participants referenced that in both teaching and

facilitating they know that they are the person that maintains safety for students. They also

admitted that in both roles student learning occurs and teachers need to scaffold the

learning. Participant H described the importance of maintaining safety in both roles, "I

think ultimately as the adult you are in control, you are keeping them safe, you are

responsible". Several other participants acknowledged that building student social skills in

class meetings follows a similar process as building academic skills that are taught in the

normal classroom environment. When referring to those similarities, Participant C

referenced the process of scaffolding and stated:

> I think that students learn the best when they're able to have that space for meta-
> cognition, where they're really thinking about what it is that they're thinking about.
> And you know, I think that in order for students to do that, you have to have some
> sort of foundation, something in place so that they have something solid to stand on
> to be able to get to where it is that they want to go.

> Participant D referenced a scaffolding strategy she used in class meetings that

mirrors her teaching practices, "It's just like I do, we do, you do that we learned in other

academic areas".

The Process of Moving from the Teacher Role to Facilitator Role. A storyline

materialized from data analysis involving the movement that took place as participants

evolved from being the teacher to being the facilitator. Subsequently, several sub-

processes appeared to surface that highlighted the features of the core category of moving

from teacher to facilitator. Two sub-processes emerged as tasks that teachers engaged in

to move toward acting as a facilitator: establishing group norms and building student skills.

The other two, increasing confidence and releasing control, can be described as internal

sub-processes and are related to how the teacher develops. All together, these four sub-

processes help elucidate how moving from the teacher role to the facilitator role can occur.

Establishing group norms. In the interviews, participants described working

toward agreed upon standards for interaction as group norms, agreements, or protocols.

Participant F illustrated that establishing standards with her class at the beginning of the

school year was an integral component of her ability to access the facilitator role:

> We have quite a few protocols. That's what we do at the beginning of the
> year…Being that I have laid down those protocols and we have worked them out as
> a group, we've made group agreements, and you know everyone knows their role
> even though it changes based on what activity we are up to. But they know what

their roles are, the definition has been established early on. When we have that classroom community that can support each other and the kids can support each other.

Data analysis suggested that participants perceived that safety was established when the norms were developed and monitored. They implied that this allowed for deeper engagement as the year progressed and the class meetings developed.

Building student skills. Data analysis indicated that participants perceived that building student skills throughout class meetings was a sub-process of moving from teaching to facilitating. While all participants described building student skills at some point during their class meetings, most participants indicated that they taught student skills directly to students during the beginning stages of class meetings. As the year advanced, they then facilitated the application of these skills during class meetings. All participants identified a range of social skills they perceived that students acquired during class meetings throughout the year. Participant H described experiences he had when instilling the skill of apologizing:

> Empathy is really big…I have this kind of system so if you are feeling…something, happened at recess, you threw a ball and it hit them in the head kind of thing, like you feel bad, you want to apologize, that kind of helps us to learn…So you know they start apologizing...'Hey I'm sorry at PE I like yelled at you, and do you forgive me?' 'Yah.' And so we have this system on how to do that. Facilitating that also creates kind of that atmosphere.

The participants perceived that when students developed the skills to engage in meaningful interactions with other members of the meetings, they, the teachers, were able to more easily move into a facilitative role rather than a teaching role.

Increasing confidence. When referencing the process of moving from teacher to facilitator, participants described a developmental progression in their sense of confidence in the facilitator role. All participants emphasized that confidence in their own abilities

was an important element of facilitation. Participant C stated, "I think I developed

confidence in leading class meetings by just having them, so-- and being uncomfortable,

being comfortable with the uncomfortable".   Participants indicated that confidence

developed over time and with practice. Some participants referenced training or

mentoring that helped them gain confidence, while others inferred that just experiencing

class meetings was confidence building. Many indicated that fluency in teaching overall

amended them to becoming more confident in facilitating class meeting. Based on the

reflections on many participants' experiences, confidence appeared to be a precondition for

releasing control during class meetings and subsequently adopting the facilitator role more

completely.

      Releasing Control. Data analysis indicated that as participants experienced

increased confidence they were able to release control within the meetings. Participant H

described releasing control as a, "…gradual release of responsibility, so you know, just kind

of take the baby steps or whatever until they're independent".   Participant D went further

by saying, "We lead the class completely and we structure it and then little by little we can

let go of our responsibilities and then the kids eventually can basically run it." Releasing

control required participants to move away from being the sole leader of the meeting after

a period of training the group to become more independent in the meetings. Some

participants implied that releasing control meant that they allowed the flow of interaction

to move from teacher-to-student to student-to-student during the meetings. Other

participants indicated that releasing control meant that they gave students the autonomy

to decide the content and flow of the meeting. Still others reported that releasing control

meant that they handed-over the task of running the meetings to students themselves.   No

matter how they identified it, participants perceived that once they released some amount

of control they had effectively transitioned to the facilitator role.

Contextual Influences

Several contextual categories materialized from the analyzed data that seem to

influence the participants' experiences of moving from teacher to facilitator. These

categories are best described as the contextual influences. The influences include a

teacher's personal teaching style, the teacher's confidence, the school environment, and the

quality of training.

Personal teaching style: structured vs. fluid. Participants described a variety of

personal teaching styles that seemed to interact with their experience of moving from

teacher to facilitator. The concept of personal teaching style is best described as the

general pedagogy and management methods teachers use in overall class instruction and

can range from structured to more fluid or responsive. Two participants who reported

being more structured also reported more difficulty assuming the facilitator role as

illustrated in the conditional matrix in Table 1. Participant J revealed that dynamic. "What

I really do is more directive, I am more directed. You know. And, like I said, I don't feel like

I go deep." Participant C, however, described her teaching style as more fluid and based on

the needs of the students. She also reported a high level of confidence with the facilitator

role. She described the structure she has in place when teaching and facilitating:

> [The students] put that structure in place for themselves. It's really about what
> works best. Every class dynamic is different. And so it's about what works best for
> each class dynamic. I think that in some classes, there's-- I've had dynamics where
> kids can come up with their own agreements, and I don't have to really guide them
> very much in the direction that they want to go. And it functions fine. I have other
> classes where I need to do a little more guiding to get them to a place where we
> could have a conversation or have a safe place to have a community meeting.

Confidence: low vs. high. A spectrum of teacher confidence in facilitating class meetings surfaced from the data analysis. Confidence emerged as being both contextual and developmental. The confidence that participants developed or did not develop with experience seemed to feed back into the influential circumstances that can sustain the facilitator role. Participants who reported confidence in the facilitator role seemed to experience assurance that they had the skills necessary to assume the role with fluency and efficacy. Some participants reported limited confidence; most reported a developing confidence, where as one participant reported complete confidence. Participant E described how she built confidence over time, "I think each time you do them, you kind of just feel a little more confident and comfortable with it. So I think I'm still learning the confidence. But I'm-- I feel better with them than two years ago when I barely even attempted [class meetings]". Participant C, who described an established facilitative style said:

> I don't feel scared of class meetings. They don't, you know worry me. Or, what if a kid says something. Because, I know I can always tell a student that I don't know. Or, that I don't always feel like I have to have the answer. So I think just knowing that kind of puts me at ease a little bit. And, I'm okay with the uncertain".

This comfort with the uncertain allowed her to report complete confidence in her ability to assume the facilitator role.

School environment: supportive vs. non-supportive. School environment can be conceptualized as an interaction of the school climate, administration management style, staff collegiality, school-wide structures, and protected time for class meetings. As illustrated in the conditional matrix in Table 2, the support level of the school environment appeared to be an influential contextual factor of assuming the facilitator role in class meetings. Participant G described how the staff and leadership supported her facilitation,

"For the last two years doing it every morning I just see the benefits of it. I feel I've grown

through talking with colleagues, talking with mentors, like [the counselor] and [the

principal] who have been through a deeper cycle of the training". Participant J, however,

reported that the environment restricted her ability to run class meetings. Time appeared

to be the biggest barrier for her:

> I really don't feel like I'm continuing them, and I'm very, very frustrated by that. So
> my schedule, the way we share our students, and it's kind of gone to a specialty
> what we're teaching. So I'm doing literacy and math, and [my team teacher is] doing
> science, social studies, and literacy. And that's all I have them for. It's not like there's
> a half hour it could be this or this. It's just not there.

Participants who reported a supportive school environment, such as designated

time to facilitate class meetings, collaboration with colleagues on class meetings, or

leadership that supports facilitation, seemed to facilitate class meetings more regularly or

with more confidence than teachers who experienced non-supportive school environments

(see Table 2).

Training: comprehensive vs. limited. Training in facilitation appeared to be a

contextual factor for all of the participants as suggested by the evaluated data. Participants

reported that comprehensive training with a structure to try strategies, and on-going

support aided in their facilitation of class meetings. Participant E had that exact

experience. "The fact that we had training which was really great and we got to practice

the strategies as well, it wasn't just like, here's a way to do it. It was that we actually did it."

Participant A did not experience her training to be as beneficial and subsequently felt less

successful in running class meetings:

> I haven't had a lot of training in class meetings, specific to that. I've had a lot of class
> management and sometimes they'll mention a class meeting but it hasn't been like
> formal training in class meetings…I feel like I've had to figure it out on my own. And
> l feel like I'm not really that great at it. You know, I hear teachers talk about how

wonderful they can be. I'm still struggling with how to make it effective.

Moderating Influences

Moderating influences that interacted with a teacher's ability to facilitate effectively

emerged from the data analysis. The data suggested that these influences fluctuated

annually because they were related to how the students involve themselves in class

meetings and each year teachers have different students in their classes. Based on the

analyzed data, the moderating influences included class composition, response of the

group, and students' membership skills.

Class composition: harmonious vs. difficult members. Based on the analysis of

the data, it appears that individual students could influence how class meetings were

facilitated. Participant I acknowledged the variability of class composition, "I've had

difficult groups of students I've worked with, and I've had easier groups of students I

worked with". Some participants indicated that when individual students proved to be

more difficult members they had the potential to interact with the response of other group

members and how the teachers ran the meetings. Participant D explained, "I do have some

personalities in this particular group that can just throw everybody else off". Participant G

reflected on one specific female student's behavior in class meetings. "There were times

where she would blow-up and leave. And, most of the time she would apologize and stay in

the class but it took time." The difficult members appeared to have the potential of

influencing the entire group, and for some participants, affected how they facilitated class

meetings.

Response of the group: engaged vs. not engaged. The analysis of the data

indicated that the level of group engagement also appeared to interact with participants'

perception of their ability to facilitate. Engagement was the participation, commitment, and contribution each student had within the circle. Participant E acknowledged the difficulty she faced when students did not engage in class meeting. However, she emphasized the fact that the level of student engagement could change over time. "I mean I would like 100 percent participation but I have also found that children at the beginning are usually pretty quiet but by the end of the year most of them are willing to participate". Participant A noted what it was like when students were engaged and invested in class meetings. "The kids get so excited. We do it at the end of the day, usually, talk about how our day went and we do appreciations or something. Whatever happens to have been going on that day. And they're like, 'Can we do it? Can we do it?'…They get excited by getting to do that kind of thing."

Membership skills: having skills vs. struggling with skills. A process that arose from the data analysis was building up student social skills and group membership skills throughout the duration of the school year. Most social skills and membership skills were related to effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Some participants perceived that many of their students started class meetings with limited skills and that affected their quality of facilitation. Participant J illuminated one such difficulty when her students had not yet built the skills to turn-take and listen, which limited productivity. "They're all talking at once and not hearing each other". Participant A described a specific meeting in which the lack of membership skills impacted her ability to facilitate the group, "…it just blew up in my face. They start naming kids. 'Well so-and-so did this'. 'No I didn't'. And off we go, and it's not productive".

All participants, however, were able to identify times in which students applied the skills they were learning through class meetings within the class meeting structure. When that occurred it had the potential to increase the participants' confidence or pleasure in their facilitator role. Participant B recalled a time in which a student utilized a social skill during a class meeting and how that meeting ended up being productive for all students in the circle. "[The student] was able to actually say, 'That was a bad choice. I really didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I really didn't mean to knock you down'."

Perceptions of Outcomes of Facilitation

The analyzed data ultimately pointed to a spectrum of outcomes that participants perceived. In the central category of moving from teacher to facilitator, contextual and moderating influences interfaced with the movement between the two roles. Contextual influences affected how teachers integrated the role of facilitator as part of their identity. Moderating influences interacted with how fully teachers could assume the facilitator role with a specific group. Subsequently, how completely teachers took-on the facilitator role potentially affected their perceived outcomes of facilitating class meetings.

Data analysis suggested that participants who adhered to the teacher role throughout class meetings appeared to perceive more limited positive outcomes. Those who progressed into the facilitator role had the potential to experience more consistent or meaningful positive outcomes. Perceptions of the outcomes may have been related to real, observable effects, or may simply have been related to the emotional lens that the teachers wore when viewing the outcomes from their own contextualized perspective. Participants who perceived positive outcomes also reported positive perceptions of the facilitator role. These two perceptions were likely interrelated and may have ultimately acted as a

feedback loop for continued facilitation.   The analysis of the data suggested that

participant's perceived group productivity, student change, and teacher style to be

influential outcomes of facilitation.

Group productivity: low vs. high. Data analysis indicated that group productivity,

or how much was accomplished through class meetings, was an outcome many participants

looked for. Participant A acknowledged her own role in ensuring group productivity. "I

think when I do it regularly, I see a better social climate in the classroom, when I can get to

it on a consistent basis, so that's really motivating." As noted by the participant, a highly

productive group not only utilized skills in the meetings but also generalized skills

effectively enough to impact the entire climate of the classroom.

Student change: noticeable vs. not noticeable. Ultimately, the analyzed date

intimated that participants looked for class meetings to impart change in their students

and the class. Based on the reports of the participants, these changes were both specific

and comprehensive. Participant D emphasized the comprehensive change she noticed:

> I could also see the impact that it had on the kids and I could feel that impact.   And I
> could feel it during the meetings but also during class time. And there is level of
> trust that increases over time with those kinds of meetings where because they're
> able to express themselves more. They learn to trust me more, and trust
> themselves more and then a side-effect of that is that their academics improve
> and get more quality time out of it.

Teacher style: largely teaching vs. largely facilitative. Based on the data analysis

it seemed that the process of engaging in class meetings affected the teacher's style overall.

Some teachers reported that they remained within the teaching role and needed to

challenge themselves to continue to move outside of their comfort zone. Participant A

explained that well:

I talk too much. I know that about myself. And I want to feed the kids the answers and I want to tell them, what is this? And, what is that? You know. And I want them to be more independent in the conversation that happens, without me interjecting anything.

Participant B acknowledged her ability to be more facilitative over time, "I'm asking them questions that help them access how they're feeling. Giving them vocabulary to talk about it, but not telling them what to say".

Discussion

The theory that emerged through this research closes the gap in the literature on how teachers' experience the facilitator role in class meetings. Results gleaned from the experiences of the participants indicate that teachers seem to perceive the facilitator role as developmental and contingent on many factors that influence teaching in general.   They do not assume the facilitator role in isolation but rather in affiliation with contextual issues that affect the dynamic work of teaching. It seems that teachers develop a sense of confidence in the facilitator role when contextual and moderating influences align with conditions necessary for productive class meetings. While some of these influences are clearly in the hands of the teachers (such as personal teaching style), many are not. These outside influences have the potential to greatly impact how teachers assume the facilitator role and if they can do so with fluency.

Interestingly, the results are supported by earlier research on teacher burnout by Grayson & Alvarez (2008). This previous research investigated both external and internal influences to perceived teacher contentment. The researchers suggested that a feedback loop exists between teacher satisfaction and emotional reactions. When teachers feel supported to engage in meaningful teaching strategies they perceive the context of their teaching assignment as more positive which in turn impacts their perceptions. This seems

to mirror the results on teachers' experiences with class meetings. Furthermore, Grayson & Alvarez's study points to relationships with students and administrators as influential components for teachers. This finding supports the results of the current study. How teachers experience moderating factors, which are essentially student influences, shape how they regard the outcomes of class meetings. Additionally, administrators, who have a great effect on supportive school environments, impact teachers' ability to assume the facilitator role proficiently.

Previous research on how teachers develop over time aligns also with this study's findings. The core category assumes that teachers develop as facilitators over time. In the study by Marso and Pigge (1996), increased exposure to teaching and time practicing instructional skills related directly to decreased anxiety and more positive attitudes about teaching. The same is likely true for teachers learning to facilitate class meetings. Teachers develop as facilitators over time and confidence likely increases with time and practice. Because confidence was a central category that emerged from the data analysis, understanding that it is a developmental progression in potentially all aspects of teaching gives credence that it is a genuine process in assuming the facilitator role as well.

Implications

The theory of moving from teacher to facilitator illustrates that there are many processes that co-occur and can ultimately impact the transition. Because of this, there are multiple entry points in which support could happen for teachers who are struggling with assuming the facilitator role. These entry points are within the contextual and moderating influences already outlined. The contextual entry points are providing training and

advocating for supportive environments. The moderating entry points are giving teachers

strategies and intervening with problematic students.

Many people within a school can support teachers who are struggling with class

meeting facilitation, but school counselors are in a unique position to be of most service.

School counselors are specifically trained in group processes and systemic change but do

not have the same evaluative role of administrators. They are also assigned the task of

being consultants (American School Counselor Association, 2012), which has exponential

benefits for both teachers and students.

Providing training. Participants reported that their training ranged from

comprehensive to limited. The quality of training impacted their fluency with the

facilitator role. School counselors have the ability to either advocate for effective training

or provide training themselves. In this study it appeared that teachers appreciated

trainings based on specific frameworks of class meetings. Consequently, school counselors

can assume the role of advocate by investigating useful frameworks and encouraging

school-wide training on the identified framework. Furthermore, the school counselor is

typically the one staff-member in a school skilled in group facilitation and group dynamics.

Consequently, school counselors can provide direct instruction to teachers so that they

may effectively understand and run class meetings.

Advocating for supportive environments. School counselors have the unique role

of supporting school systems. If teachers are struggling with class meetings, it may be

because the system is limiting their effectiveness. School counselors may be able to

pinpoint the specific limiting factor and advocate for systems change. Not only is a school

counselor in a position to notice the need for change, they have been called upon to

advocate for systemic changes that will benefit students (American School Counselor Association, 2012).

Giving strategies. More specific than overall training on groups, school counselors can provide teachers with specific strategies to try within their class meetings or their classrooms to reduce impeding moderating influences.   These strategies may be related to increasing student engagement or teaching membership skills. School counselors utilize many of these strategies on a routine basis and can instruct or model to teachers how they can be effectively applied to support class meetings. This aligns with recommendations by Braun and Garrett (1988) in their publication on applying system's theory to classrooms.

Intervening with problematic members. When one or two troublesome students are the impeding moderating influence, school counselors may need to intervene with them directly. School counselors are experts in supporting students with chronic behavior issues. They can provide pullout services to those students who are impeding the development and progress of class meetings. School counselors may need to teach and reinforce specific social skills or membership skills with these students. They may also need to implement a gradual reintroduction to the class meeting so as not to disrupt the benefit the other students are gaining from the process.

Limitations and Direction for Further Research

The results of this investigation need to be considered within the context of the following limitations. One potential limitation of the study was the use of the primary researcher as the sole interviewer. This dynamic may have opened up opportunities for bias within the interview process itself or in analyzing the data, and in turn could have impacted the results. However, as the primary researcher, I took steps by enlisting the

support of my research team to reduce bias when analyzing the data and generating the

theory.

The recruitment of participants may also be a limitation in this study. The

participants do not adequately represent a diverse spectrum of teachers. It should be

noted that the participants were mostly women and all but one had taught for 11 years or

longer. They were not representative of teachers new to the profession. Furthermore, all

were practicing teachers in the west coast of the United States. School cultures and related

experiences outside of this region were not represented in this study. Investigation into

the experiences of teachers from different regions or locales could be an important line of

future research. Understanding how teaching locales affect the use of class meeting may

give insight into where and why class meetings are utilized or overlooked as a strategy.

An unexpected issue that arose during this study was the variability in definitions of

class meetings by some participants. While the majority used class meetings that aligned

with the community circle conceptualized by Tribes Learning Communities (Gibbs, 2006),

one referenced Socratic circles as a class meeting structure, which was not an orientation

that was predicted to be included in this investigation. While it seemed to have little

bearing on the results, it is unknown what affect different orientations may have on

teachers' experiences of facilitating class meetings. This line of research is certainly one to

explore in the future. The inquiry could have the potential to illuminate frameworks that

are more supportive in establishing the facilitator role for teachers.

Another unexpected discovery was the differing experience participants had with

the same training. At least two of the participants attended the same training together and

worked at the same site. One referenced the training as supportive and helpful. The other

recounted the training as limited and difficult to apply. This raises the issue of teacher

perspectives. The training was the same but the perspectives were divergent. This

discrepancy may align with previous research on teacher attitudes and implementation of

social-emotional learning curriculum (Reyes, et al, 2012). According to the research,

attitudes regarding a new initiative or training are connected to the level of openness and

related skill of the teacher. This outcome may clarify the differences between participants

that surfaced. Furthermore, experienced teachers report wanting more training

throughout their careers in classroom management strategies according to Stough et. al.

(2015) in their study of persistent classroom management training needs of experienced

teachers. Teachers who have been in the field for many years desire more professional

development on serving the social and behavioral needs of their students. The participant

who reported her training as limited also had more years of teaching experience. Her

training needs may have simply been different than the needs of a less-experienced

teacher. An interesting area for further study may be on the experience teachers have

with training programs of class meetings.

I hope that this study will have positive effects on teachers as they assume the

facilitator role in class meetings. By learning more about the process, teachers can both

normalize their experiences and work to resolve barriers they have the facility to control.

Furthermore, I hope that administrators appreciate their responsibility in creating

supportive environments for teachers to facilitate class meetings. About one-third of the

participants cited time as one of the primary barriers to implementing class meetings with

fidelity. School administrators have the power to reduce that barrier if social-emotional

learning is a priority and a safe and supportive school is their goal. Lastly, I hope this study

has a positive influence on school counselors. School counselors are situated to be one of

the biggest influencers on how teachers experience class meetings. Their unique position

can have a great effect on the success of class meetings school-wide. The pragmatic

implications of this study have the capability of becoming a recipe for school counselors to

help remediate ineffective class meetings with teachers. The subsequent benefits have the

potential of being exponential for all stakeholders of class meetings.

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Table 1: Conditional Matrix of Personal Teaching Style and Confidence with Facilitation

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Personal Teaching Style and/or Beliefs about Teaching	I'm a very direct instruction kind of person	You need to teach the whole-child. That you cannot just say, okay I'm here to teach you reading, period that's it,	[The students] put that structure in place for themselves. It's really about what works best. Every class dynamic is different. And so it's about what works best for each class dynamic	I believe that kids have more going on in their heads than just soaking up our academics and children to kind of be whole different learners	I want children to be engaged and take a look at what's going on with them at the different whole different learners. Our goal is to get our kids to be successful academically but if they can't focus on that then we need to address that	I watch my students look at about learning through experiences maybe and also connecting personally, I coach them along and through their challenges	meeting individual student needs	I think education, I've kind of learned that it's organic, definitely, for teaching and learning, and you have to just be aware of what the students need, what they need	If there weren't the need for human interaction for teaching and learning, then we would just have Wikipedia, and we would be all by ourselves in rooms	What I really do is more directive
Confidence with Facilitation	class meetings are not natural to me	I don't know that I am confident in leading class meetings. I think it is something that I feel is important enough to do regardless of my confidence level.	I don't feel scared of class meetings	I like doing community circle	I feel more confident in leading them now, but I still don't know that I'm fully confident in leading them	It's definitely developed over time, but I have never shied away from it	I feel comfortable	If there's something that we need to talk about, we need to have a meeting.	And I've been consistent about doing meetings no matter what kind of group I've been given	I really don't feel like I'm continuing them

Table 2: Conditional Matrix of Supportive School Environments and Assuming the Facilitator Role

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Supportive School Environment	How do I do this in the constraints that I have?	it is that time issue always	There are things that my principal has done, trusting in my professionalism and knowing as an educator what works in my classroom and being able to support that. I've never had to defend spending 10 minutes a day on a class meeting.	support[ed] in our building at my school and have my whole staff um, with Tribes and that was (the school counselor and the principal) who brought that	a special ed facilitator at my school [affected my facilitation of class meetings]	We have a professional learning community, talking with mentors, come with different strengths. Two of us have facilitation strengths	I feel I've grown through work with one of the mentors, like [the counselor] and [the principal] who have been through a deeper cycle of the training.	[I] had a chance to work with one of the most amazing more experienced individuals who did help me navigate whatever the local culture is	I think that a longer school day, they have smaller class sizes, you know, not that I necessarily want a longer school day but there is not enough time to do...	They have a longer school day, they have smaller class sizes, you know,
Outcome: Assuming the Facilitator Role	It's hard to keep it up	It's a little stressful. It really is	there's very few times in my teaching career, very few days that I haven't had a class meeting	I was able to do a really good job as a facilitator regular class meetings, and sometimes I would do once a week, a mediocre job.	I feel like a do a really good job as a facilitator facilitating class meetings. Um, I enjoy leading class meetings	I have no anxiety about facilitating class meetings. Um, I enjoy leading class meetings	And, now for the last two years doing it every morning I just see the benefits of it	the classroom meetings, um I think that's something also I try to facilitate as much as I can	I mean I feel like I have room for improvement.	I really don't feel like I'm continuing them, and I'm very, very frustrated by that.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

During the time that this project was completed, from April 2015 to May 2017, school culture and classroom community continued to be an emphasis in public education. The use of class meetings to improve community is proving to be an invaluable intervention for the diverse and highly impacted study body that educators are now recognizing to be present in America's public schools (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012). The once nationally prioritized "zero-tolerance policy" for any act against school rules, is currently being replaced by restorative and inclusive methods that not only assure school and student safety but value the social development of even the most at-risk students (Redford & Pritzker, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The class meeting falls under the umbrella of restorative and inclusive methods and is hailed as an effective tool by experts in the field of social-emotional learning (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012).

The need to understand how teachers assume the facilitator role in class meetings is as important as knowing that they can be an effective tool. Up to this point, no research has been published on how teachers assume the facilitator role in the class meetings. Further investigation was deemed essential because comprehending how teachers understand themselves as facilitators has the potential to provide insight into how facilitation occurs and when facilitation is perceived as successful. Likewise, this understanding has the prospect of pointing out which supports may aid teachers as they facilitate class meetings.

As a professional school counselor, I came to this line of inquiry through my observations in the field of education and my study of group theory. I witnessed various degrees of success with teacher-facilitated class meetings. I also perceived differing levels

of confidence among teachers as they led the meetings. I routinely found myself in the role of consultant when teachers were struggling with class meeting facilitation. Consequently, I end this project with a summary of my overall conclusions as well as implications for professionals who support teachers, specifically school counselors.

The two manuscripts that comprise this dissertation investigated the role of the teacher as facilitator of class meetings. Previous research has suggested that class meetings can be effective in supporting student social and emotional development but teachers may be uncomfortable with the facilitation role (Lundeberg, et al., 1997). The two manuscripts illuminated teachers experience as facilitators; the influences that affect their facilitation; potential supportive interventions that may guide them as facilitators; and the role of school counselors as consultants for class meeting facilitation.

Manuscript 1 Conclusions

The conceptual article on utilizing group theory (Kline, 2003) to understand class meetings uncovered several concepts new to class meeting literature. The article innovatively connected class meetings to therapeutic groups; provided instruction on basic leadership skills to aid in facilitation; and highlighted membership skills that can be taught to students. Case examples illustrated the integration of group theory and class meeting facilitation and provided models of implementation.

Manuscript 2 Conclusions

The grounded theory on how teachers experience the facilitator role in class meetings revealed that teachers undergo a process of moving from teacher to facilitator. This movement is affected by contextual and moderating influence's that are both within

and outside of the teacher's control. Teachers' perceived outcomes of facilitation feed back into their experience as they implement class meetings.

Implications for Practice, Training, and Research

The multiple influences on teachers' facilitation of class meetings results in numerous entry points for support or intervention. School counselors were recommended to be the consultants and change-agents because they play a unique role in schools and have specific training in groups (American School Counselor Association, 2012; Braun & Garrett, 1988; Edwards & Mullis, 2003). They have an opportunity to be an advocate for systemic change and to provide professional development. By using systems theory (Kline, 2003), school counselors have access to specific interventions they can utilize with teachers and students.

Based on the conclusions and limitations of the study, future research on teacher-led class meetings could focus on the use of class meetings across regions or locales. The current manuscripts were based on experiences of professionals in the West Coast of the United States. It is unknown how class meetings are utilized and experienced outside of this region. Additionally, investigation into the different class meeting frameworks and which are most supportive for teacher-facilitators could be a potential line of inquiry. Because many frameworks exist, it is not yet known which have the best results for fidelity of implementation. Lastly, perceptions of training on class meetings may be an area of continued study. Direct investigation into training structures and years of teaching experience may point to differentiated training strategies that may be necessary for more experienced teachers as they adopt new strategies such as facilitation of class meeting.

Overall Conclusions

As schools continue to utilize class meetings as a strategy to build classroom community and support student development, implementation needs to be done with an understanding of the influences on teachers' ability to facilitate. When barriers are ignored, facilitation may be less successful or may mimic the more control-focused task of teaching. An examination into the contextual and moderating influences of facilitating class meeting may illuminate changes that can be employed. Some of these changes likely require outside intervention from the school counselor. With the use of theory to guide the school counselor's understanding of the group within class meeting, specific interventions become clear. School counselors are subsequently tasked with acting as a teacher-consultant as prescribed by the American School Counselor Association (2012).

Effective facilitation of class meetings creates the opportunity for students to improve in communication skills (Gray & Drewery, 2011); become more inclusive of each other (Grant & Davis, 2012); manage strong emotions (Landau & Guthercoal, 2000); and generalize their improved behavior (Grant & Davis, 2012). When this occurs students are likely to feel safe and more open to becoming scholastic learners. Teachers seem to have an awareness of this dynamic as evident by the interviews in the study. However, unless teachers have the support to assume the facilitator role completely, these outcomes are prone to being stunted. With support, the outcomes could be exponential. As stated by one participant when referring to the importance of investing in class meetings and being able to facilitate them effectively:

I think that a class meeting is just as important as math. And I think it's just as important as writing. And it's just as important as reading. And I think that it's a long-term investment. I think that I will, my students will perform better in reading and writing, and math, and science if they feel included and if they feel comfortable and they feel safe and they feel connected to their peers… I see it as investing in what I know is good for kids.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Thank participant for agreeing to participate in the study.

Review the purpose and process of the study:
- To understand teachers' experiences as facilitators of class meetings
- To fulfill the dissertation requirement of my PhD
- Information gained through interviews
- Today is the primary interview, and there may be one or two follow up interviews
- Interviews will be recorded for transcription

Confirms that participant recalls the *Verbal Consent* given at the screening interview

Ask and document the following demographic questions:
- What grade(s) do you teach?
- How long have you been teaching?
- Would you describe your school setting as urban, suburban, or rural?
- How do you identify your race?
- What is your gender?
- What is your age?

Assure that the video option is turned off for the participant if using the online platform.

Begin Recording

Begin the interview.

Questions:
- What has it been like for you to facilitate class meetings?
- How does your training affect your experience of facilitating class meetings?
- Who has affected your experience of facilitation and how did they affect you?
- What feelings have you had about facilitating class meetings?
- Can you tell about a time when facilitation was particularly rewarding and a time when facilitation was particularly challenging?
- How do you view yourself as a facilitator?

Ask if there is anything else the participant would like to share

End Recording

Inform participant they will be receiving an email for a follow up interview date upon completion of the first found of interviews and analysis.

Allow for participant questions

Thank the participant for participating

End

Appendix B

Second Round Interview Questions

Project Title: Qualitative Inquiry Into How Teachers Experience the Facilitator
Role in Class Meetings

OSU IRB #:   7478

Principal Investigator: Dr. Deborah Rubel

This is the supplemental document to the Project Revision dated 11/09/2016. This research utilizes a Grounded Theory methodology, which requires multiple rounds of interviews. The first round of interviews has been completed. We are submitting this project revision to seek permission to use the questions listed below for the second round of interviews:

1. How did you develop or not develop confidence in leading class meetings?
2. How did you decide to start doing class meetings?
3. What, if anything, motivates you to continue to implement class meetings as a strategy in your classroom?
4. How do your beliefs about teaching and learning affect the way you engage in class meetings?
5. In my first round of interviews, I discovered that teachers take on multiple roles as facilitators of class meetings: from the manager during the meetings, the person who mediates during the meetings, or even the person who creates the structure to allow students to facilitate the meetings themselves. All of these roles require some relinquishment of the teacher role during facilitation. What would need to happen for you to let go of the teacher role when leading a class meeting?

Appendix C

Figure 2: Relationship between Teaching and Facilitating

TEACHING   **FACILITATING**

Leading

Instructing

Maintaining Control

Maintaining
Safety

Scaffolding

Building
Skills

Monitoring

Observing

Relinquishing
Control
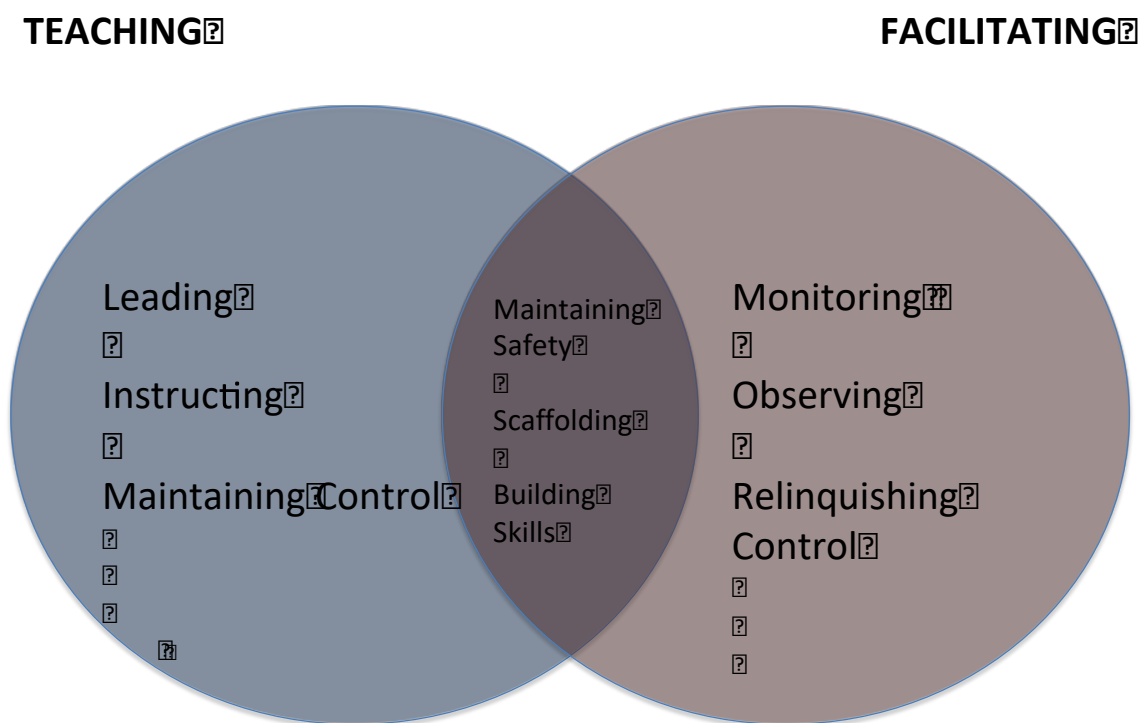
Appendix D

Recruitment Materials

Dear (informant name),

As you may know, I am currently working on my dissertation to complete my Ph.D. requirements for Oregon State University. My dissertation is a research study entitled, "Qualitative Inquiry into How Teachers Experience the Facilitator Role in Class Meetings". The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand teachers' experiences as facilitators of class meetings. I am asking for your support in **identifying participants who may qualify** (see below for eligibility). Participation in this research project is strictly voluntary**.** If you believe you know any teachers who may qualify, please forward the participant recruitment letter (attached) to them and have them contact me directly via email at petersm@oregonstate.edu or by calling me at: (503) 313-9348. *Please do not use your professional or personal influence to pressure any persons to participate in this research.*

The Principal Investigator is Deborah Rubel, PhD. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Board of Oregon State University and is study #7478. Participants will be asked questions regarding their experience with facilitating class meetings. Participants will take part in approximately two to three, 45-minute interviews that will take place in person or online flexibly scheduled. The total time commitment should not exceed two-and-half-hours over several months.

Participants eligible for this study:

- Must be over the age of 18

- Must be employed as a teacher at the primary level (PK-6)

- Must reside within the United States

- Must be experienced with facilitating class meetings: either have tried them in the past or currently using them

As stated previously, participation is this study strictly voluntary and if you know someone that may be interested, please share this request for participants and/or have them contact me directly via email petersm@oregonstate.edu or by calling me at: (503) 313-9348

Thank you for your consideration,

Marinda Peters
Oregon State University PhD Candidate

RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Dear Teacher

My name is Marinda Peters. I am a doctoral candidate in Counseling at Oregon State University. I am conducting a research study titled "Qualitative Inquiry into How Teachers Experience the Facilitator Role in Class Meetings". Participants will be asked questions regarding their experience as facilitators of class meetings. Participants will take part in approximately two to three, 45-minute interviews online or at a convenient face-to-face location. The total time commitment should not exceed two and a half hours over several months. Participating in this research study is strictly voluntary and, if you qualify, it is up to you to decide if you would like to participate. If you believe that you qualify and would like to be a part of this study, please contact me, the student researcher, directly.

Briefly, to be eligible for this study you need to:

- Be over the age of 18

- Must be employed as a teacher at the primary level (PK through 6th grade)

- Reside within the United States

Additionally, you must:

- Be expereinced with facilitating class meetings: either have tried them in the past or currently usinging them

- Have the ability to participate in up to three 45 minute interviews flexibly scheduled over several months

- Be willing to have study interviews be audio recorded

- Have the ability to access the Internet and email

As stated previously, participation is strictly voluntary. If you are interested, you may contact me, Marinda Peters, directly via email at petersm@oregonstate.edu or by calling me at my direct phone number: (503) 313-9348. Please include phone or email contact information so that I might contact you to set up an initial screening interview. During the initial screening interview, you will also have the opportunity to ask questions about the research. You may also contact the Principal Investigator about this study: Deborah Rubel, Ph.D. at deborah.rubel@oregonstate.edu or by direct phone at (541) 737-5973 if you have any questions or concerns I may not be able to address.

Thank you,
Marinda Peters,
Oregon State University PhD Candidate

Appendix E

Informed Consent Documents

Verbal Consent Guide

Purpose.
The purpose for this study is to increase understanding of the experiences teachers have as facilitators of class meetings. This investigation aims to address a lack of research and understanding by developing a theory to address the experiences of teacher-facilitators of class meetings. This research may help add recommendations and insight into how teachers are trained in class meetings and the type of support they need as they facilitate them. This study is being conducted by a student for the completion of a dissertation and will include interviews with up to fifteen participants.

Activities.
Participating in this study will involve completing two to three rounds of interviews that will take approximately 45 minutes each. In the interviews, you will be asked questions about your experience, training, feelings, and perceptions about facilitating class meeting The interviews will take place by in person or online on a date and time that is convenient for you. A final "member check" will be conducted by email after all the interviews are complete, data has been analyzed, and a theory has emerged. This will be an opportunity to provide feedback about whether your feelings and experiences are represented in the theory and are in-line with the researcher's interpretations. You will have seven days to provide this feedback. All interviewing sessions will be audio recorded. The interviews will be transcribed and checked for accuracy and the original recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the write-up of the research report. You are advised to not enroll in this study if you do not want to be recorded. A copy of the interview transcripts, with all identifying information removed will be emailed to you after the last interview has been transcribed. This will be an opportunity for you to make comments, corrections, or remove any information you feel may identify you. You will have seven days to let the researcher know by email, any comments you have or changes you would like made. If you do not respond after seven days the data will be used as recorded. The interview transcripts and the completed thesis will be submitted to the Oregon State University Scholars Archive at the termination of the study

Time.
Your total time commitment to the study will be no more than two-and-a-half hours over several months. .

Payment.
You will not be paid to participate in this study.

Voluntariness.
Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop being a part of the study. If you

choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researcher may keep information collected about you. This information may be included in study reports.

Contact information.
If you have any questions about this project, please contact the student researcher, Marinda Peters, at:
Ph: (503) 313-9348
Email: petersm@oregonstate.edu

You may also choose to contact the principal investigator, Deborah J. Rubel, Ph.D., at:
Ph: (541)737-5973
Email: deborah.rubel@oregonstate.edu

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant in this study, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

Office of the Institutional Review Board
Oregon State University
A312 Kerr Administration Bldg.
Corvallis, OR 97331-2140
Ph. (541) 737-8008
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IRB@oregonstate.edu
http://oregonstate.edu/irb

Appendix F

Round One Key Memos

Emerging categories
- Student characteristics that support effective facilitation
- Range of teacher feelings
- Variables that support facilitation
- Variables that impede facilitation
- Training
- Teacher skillsets
- Teacher needs/desires
- Teacher development in facilitator role
- Lacking facilitation skills
- Supports
- Effects of administration
- Role of the class meeting
- Building student skills
- Teacher mindsets
- Role of the teacher
- Development of students

Round One Key Diagrams

Teacher Development as a Facilitator (can enter at any phase, depending on personal background, personality, and training)

Phase of Awareness

Characterized by:

- Acknowledging gap in skills
- Needing to better serve/support students
- Lacking classroom managment
- Noticing student conflict
- Exposure to class meetings
- Feelings: frustration, inspiration

Phase of Anticipation & Apprehension

Characterized by:

- Controlling the meeting
- Dominating talk-time
- Directing
- Feeling "stuck"
- Needing to do it right
- Needing to be productive
- Experiencing time as a barrier
- Feelings: stressed, awkward, innefective, hopeful

Phase of Transition

Characterized by:

- Seeking and utilizing resources
- Seeking feedback
- Building observation skills
- Balancing teacher & student voice
- Needing students to be engaged
- Building routine
- Awareness of student developmental levels
- Feelings: isolatted, incompetant, relieved, rewarded

Phase of Mastery

Characterized by:

- "Reading" the group
- Responding to needs of students
- Supporting student voice
- Differentiating student participation
- Connecting students
- Guiding not directing
- Ability to "recover"
- Balancing flexibility and structure
- Preparing
- Establibshed routine
- Prioritizing the time
- Feelings: love, unafraid, comfort

Silence

Listening

Engaging

Connecting

Generalizing

Process of Training

Passive
observation, mentor

Active
formal training, self-study, collaboration

Reflective
self-reflection, consultation

Levels of Influence for Utilizing CM and Support People for Facilitation

1. An Expert(s)

2. Students

3. Team Teachers

4. Support Staff & Leadership
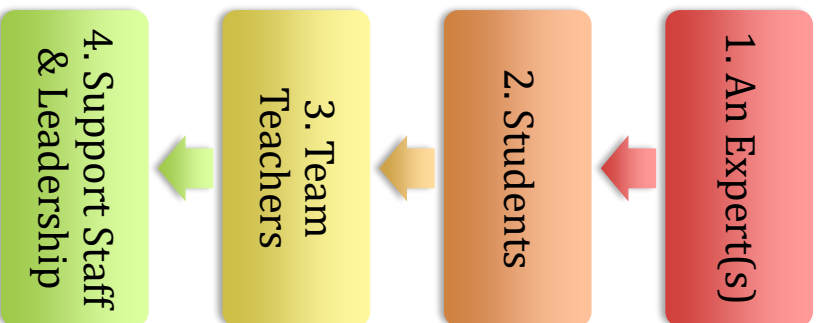
Components that Support Facilitation

Model Framework

Differentiating for Participation

Connecting Between Students

Attending to Feelings/Emotions

Allowing Student Autonomy

Establishing Norms

Guiding and neutrality as a facilitator

Establishing Routine/Protocols

Focusing on Student Voice

Allowing Flexibility
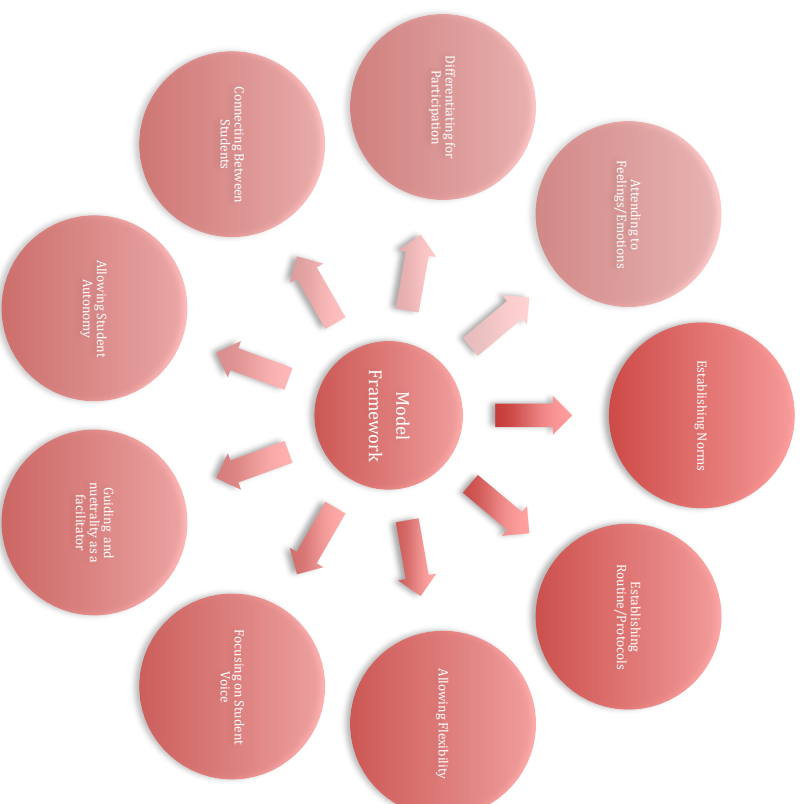
Building Student Skills

- Listening skills
- Communication skills
- Connecting with emotions
- Problem-solving skills
- Conflict-resolution skills
- Assertiveness skills
- Creating a sound argument
- Understanding cause and effect

Improving Class Community

- Increasing universal feel of safety
- Celebrating success
- Decreasing barriers
- Supporting problem-solving
- Supporting inclusion
- Responding to crisis

Shifting Teacher Lens

- Undertanding relationship between SEL and academics
- Getting insight into student lives and perspectives
- Prioritizing student emotional needs
- Becoming a co-learner with students
- Acknowledgging students as experts
- Viewing students as agents of change

Appendix H

Round Two Key Memos

Memo 1/22/17 – Trying to Discover the Central Category

      After completing my first round of interviews I observed some common experiences of the participants. It appears that teachers who facilitate class meetings experience a process of development in three primary areas. One is process of development in how the teachers, themselves develop as facilitators over time. This occurs as teachers are introduced to and trained in class meetings, begin implementing class meetings, and then work toward perfecting their skills in facilitating class meetings. Another is the process demonstrated by students in how they develop as participants of class meetings and the skills that they build over time. The participants reported that students develop skills in communication, perspective taking, problem solving, listening, and turn-taking through participating and engaging in class meetings. Finally, is the process in how the class meeting itself develops within a cohort over a school year.   This level of development is evident by the highly structured and routine class meetings that are common in the fall to the deeply engaging class meetings that occurs in the spring.

      These multiple processes of development triggered a deeper line of questions for me to ask in the second round of interviews. As part of the answers derived through the second round, I discovered the process of development teachers experience in becoming competent teachers overall. So here I have four processes of development that are co-occurring and intersecting to influence how a teacher experiences the facilitation-role in class meetings: teachers developing as teachers; teachers developing as facilitating over time; students developing as participants of class meetings; and the development of the class meeting in an academic year.

      Along with development, I noticed a centralizing subject of confidence. While some of my line of questioning revolved around the feelings teachers had as facilitators of class meeting, the data distilled into a spectrum of confidence that teachers experience as facilitators. The confidence appears to have multiple contributing factors.   I reworked many drafts of a visual to understand the intersection of confidence and other emerging categories such as experience, training, and beliefs about students. Again, the need for me to understand the concept of confidence of teacher-facilitators led to a series of questions in my second round of interviews. Based on the participant responses and the data that emerged, I discovered the influence of the following categories to confidence: Support and Training, Motivation, Experience, Pedagogy, and Beliefs about Students.

      Teachers who believed their training to be comprehensive and based on a framework reported greater confidence as did teachers who had ongoing mentoring or collegial support during their early implementation of class meetings. Conversely, teachers who experienced their training as passive felt less confident as facilitators.   Typically teachers cited motivating factors that increased their confidence as facilitators. These motivators are the positive outcomes that teachers observed when class meetings were implemented with fidelity, such as improved student outcomes, knowing the students better, increased academic time, feeling successful as a teachers, etc. Moreover, the level of confidence reported by teachers appears to go hand-in-hand with the amount of

experience they have as class meeting facilitators. Just like many other components of teaching, time implementing it increases confidence. Teachers who adhered to a pedagogy, which emphasizes relationships, differentiation, constructing meaning, and learning through interaction reported a greater amount of confidence than teachers whose pedagogy revolved around direct instruction, repetition, and seat-time. This seems to be highly related to the confidence teachers experience when they believe students to be autonomous, capable of learning, and trustworthy. Together all these experiences and perspectives influence teacher confidence as facilitators that that affects how they wear the facilitator role.

The question then becomes: what is the central category that connects all the processes that have emerged through the data? One component that seems to be central to the teacher's experience as facilitator of class meetings seems to be the development of confidence. There certainly are many intersecting experiences that affect teacher confidence. But it seems as if confidence is a component of a larger dynamic at play. I cant also help to wonder if confidence and the influences on confidence are not a shared experience with many parts of teaching, and are not specific to the experience of facilitating class meetings. My goal is to explain an experience specific to facilitating class meetings. As such, it appears that the central category is Moving from Teacher to Facilitator. This central category encompasses the multiple developmental aspects of facilitating class meetings, as well as the components that build teachers' confidence as facilitators.

Memo 1/22/17 – The Dynamic (Relationship) Between Teaching and Facilitating

One main distinction that must be made, in order for this theory to have any basis, is the dynamic between teaching and facilitating. Through the interviews I conducted I discovered some differences as well as similarities between the two roles. Both appear to exist within a spectrum; depending on the pedagogy a teacher is operating under, the lines may not be as hard-and-fast as I seem to draw on this narrative. However, based on the data I have collected, I feel I discovered some clear differences between teaching and facilitating.

Teaching has a primary function of instructing. Instructing is meant to disseminate information. How this is done is based on the teacher's style. While some teachers report being more didactic others have a style that appears more constructivist. No matter the style, the teacher is obviously the leader in the room. He or she has a plan in mind, and works towards implementing that plan within a spectrum of flexibility and ability to differentiate. In order to do this, the teacher works on maintaining control of the classroom and the audience. Normally, when teaching, a teacher will interact directly with the whole class, a small group, or an individual student.

Facilitating, however, is based on the preface that that role of the facilitator is to monitor interactions. Students gain understanding though interacting with each other. Therefore the teacher relinquishes much of her control and observes the interactions that are in play. The goal of facilitation is not to take the back seat but to intervene as necessary to maintain effective interactions. Instead of the flow of interaction being from teacher to student, when facilitating, the interactions occur between students or from a student to the group.
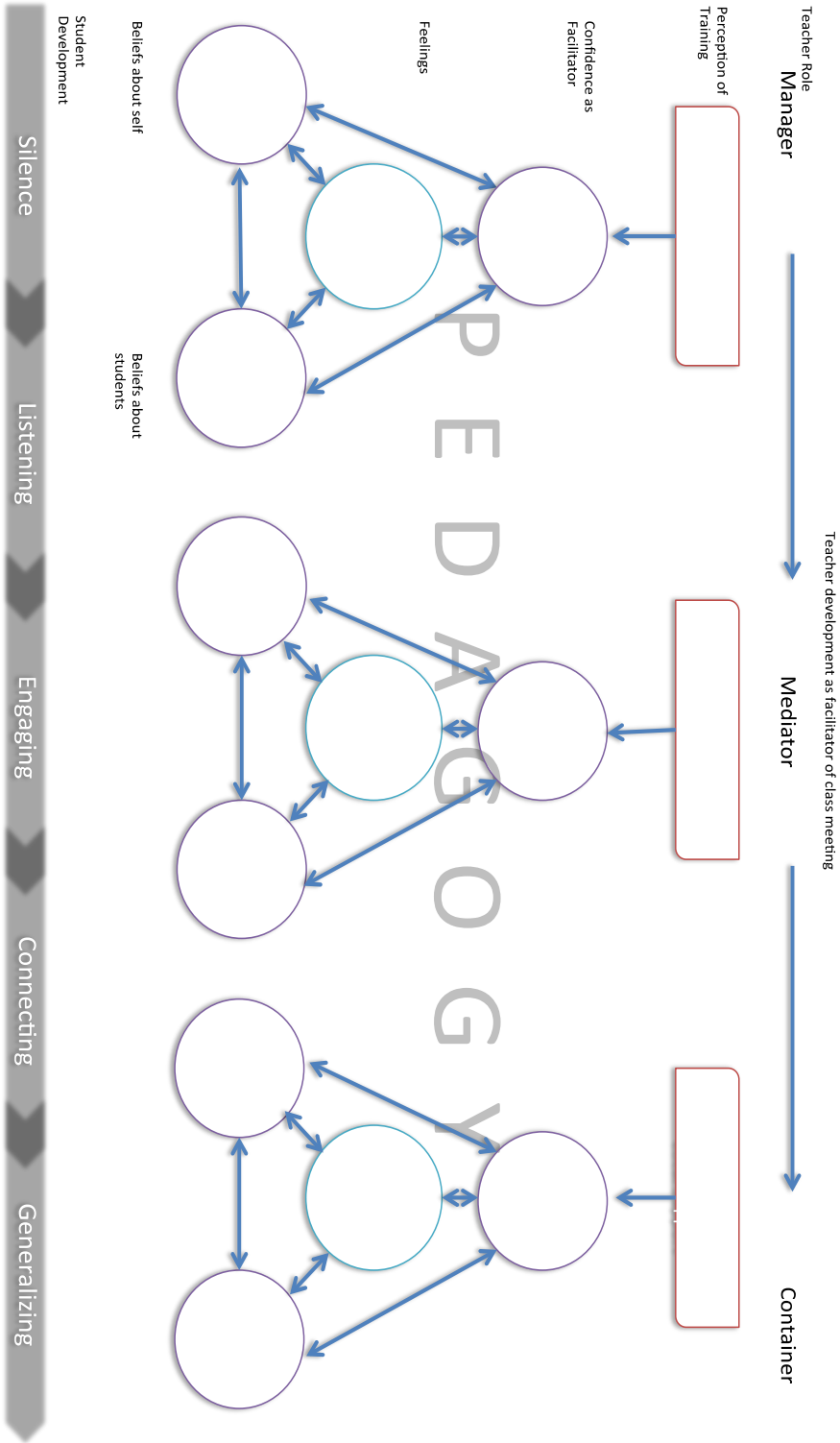
Teaching and facilitating share similarities as well, and within this vein, may not be considered quite as dichotomous as they may seem. The task of the teacher in both roles is to make connections. As a teacher, those connections may be between topics being taught, or between the topic and life, whereas in facilitating it may be between experiences or between people. However, connecting within both roles may look almost exactly the same, depending on the pedagogical framework the teacher utilizes. In both roles, the teacher's task is also to enforce norms. Within teaching, it may be learning norms (raise your hand, pay attention, cooperate, etc.), and facilitating it may be group or social norms (attentive listening, mutual respect, no put downs, etc.). Whatever the norms may be, neither the learning nor the class meeting environment is safe if the teacher does not effectively enforce the norms. Establishing safety through norms is the backbone to both effective teaching and facilitating. Lastly, the teacher is tasked with reinforcing student skills. In the classroom these may be learning skills. Teacher may spiral and review topics already taught and encourage students to implement them in a new way. As facilitators of class meetings, teachers reinforce the social and communication skills learned and implemented through class meetings. This reinforcement could be done through practice, reflection, effective questioning, or eliciting student disclosures on the skills being implemented or outside of the circle.

While teaching and facilitating are both different, they share essential similarities. As such, there is a dynamic relationship between teaching and facilitating. It appears, from the data, that teachers must be competent and confident in both teaching and facilitating to become effective facilitators of class meetings.

Appendix I

Round Two Key Diagrams

Teacher development as facilitator of class meeting

Teacher Role

- Manager
- Mediator
- Container

Perception of Training

Confidence as Facilitator

Feelings

Beliefs about self

Beliefs about students

Student Development

Silence → Listening → Engaging → Connecting → Generalizing

P E D A G O G Y

I am not good

Beliefs about Self

It's already what I do

I can get better

Limited

Perception of Training

Based on Frame-work

Incomplete

Low in all Situations

Confidence

High in all situations

Dependent on Situation

Overwhlemed

Feelings

Comfrtable

Conflicted

Need Adults

Beliefs about Students

Are Experts

Need Each Other

T + Bself + Bstu = C

T+ C = F

Teacher Role

Manager
Mediator
Container

Appendix J

Final Member Check Quotes

It makes me think I can do better. I don't know that I'm doing as much as I could be doing. I don't know what I would do differently; I would just do better. Because I think it's helpful for kids.

What I picked out was with the moving from teacher from facilitator. I think its really hard but super necessary. And I think you and I had talked before about the fact that its kind of developmentally, I'm not sure, appropriate for second grade, that they can move to that role. But I can imagine groups of second graders out there that could move to that role. You know where the teacher is more of the facilitator and the kids kind of run the meeting. I have not have been able to relinquish control.   I think class meetings are good for all kids. It would be great for them to be independent and for me to be the facilitator, and even for me to be a participant - an equal member of the group. But, I think that's where I see myself being able to do more. How do I get my kids to be there? I don't do a lot. That's one thing I realize after having all these conversations with you; I don't do a lot. There is lots of room for me to try things new things and do it more and get more practice. I have that excuse to not do it more. To allow them to show me their potential.

I thought it was a cool idea. That whole idea of class meetings and the role and what it can play in the classroom in the terms of developing relationships and classroom culture. I think its cool and it's useful. And I wish I had more time to devote to it. That's what we always talk about - I want to have relationship with my kids; I want to do this and I want to do that, and it's like the first thing to go. I think its great that you showed that to highlight and focus on. I think it's a great a thing. I think it gave me pause. I don't know how to fix what I'm doing but it makes me want to think about it more and other ways to be better at it so my kids can benefit.

One thing that really resonated with me is that the more of the facilitator role you have as a teacher the easier it is to have that kind of release of responsibility.

There is that whole section of moving from teacher to facilitator and I think that is definitely true, it's a different set of skills. I think that you are often a facilitator when you teach, but not so often a teacher when you facilitate. I mean there certainly is teachable moments.

I see that facilitator role also in teaching. You have to be able to facilitate in order to teach because really it should all be about what you're doing. I see your point there. I'm looking at that part with the arrow from teaching to facilitating. I think there is a bit of a two-way arrow as well and you should be facilitating - I mean there should be a release of responsibility when you are teaching too. Once you have taught something they need to be able to problem solve and work out things on their own.

In the structured vs. fluid teaching style, I feel that is very true. I feel that if you are very structured and rigid you are going to have a problem with that class meeting kind of a set up, just because it's not that.

The moderating influences, I feel like last year was a good example, I had not the easiest cohort ever - but I don't think that affected my class meetings, we still did them. I ran them more or less the same. Moderating influences - it says interacting with the teacher's ability to facilitate effectively and seem to be annually because its related to the students themselves. In that part I would say I don't completely agree with that because certainly it affects HOW you run the meetings but it doesn't affect IF you run them. I read the IF that if you have difficult members you don't have class meetings or you don't run them as often and I would think it's the opposite, that you need more. You want, to the best of your ability, to pull those kids in. Those are the kids who need the class meetings the most. It's on you to figure out a way to facilitate that works for them. Not that you don't do it because they are difficult. Their issues are occasionally central. That's what class meetings are about, trying to deal with the things that the kids are having difficulty with in a safe environment. You did say IF and HOW. I agree with the HOW part. But, I kind of went, hmm, I don't know IF I wouldn't do it.

Then there is response of the group, engaged versus non engaged. That's a tough one. To me each group is different on that and each subject that you broach is different, the one's that the kids are totally on board with and have a ton to say versus the ones they have nothing to say.

I totally agree that it is a process in helping the group develop. I definitely think that confidence is a big thing.

Looking at the double-bubble thing, I see the teaching and facilitating overlapping. I think you could add to that the teacher-student relationship can be in both.

The school environment thing is huge too, supportive versus not supportive. That's huge because I've been in both and it makes a huge difference of how and when and how often you are able to do that. And the other thing that comes into play is the time constraint. You have to be able to justify the time spent. I've been in places where there is accountability for your minutes.

I identify with the process that was captured when moving from teacher to facilitator role. I agree that all components work in tandem to shift leader role.

An assertion that differs from my experience is that I believe students come in with skills to participate in class meeting but that each teacher has different expectations and students are not familiar with teachers expectations or objectives at the introductory phase of class meetings.

I was curious about what specific types of changes participants said they were looking for in students when running class meetings

All findings were clear

I appreciate the structure of looking at this progression as a person moving from a teacher role to a facilitator role. I think that is a clear way to look at this! I think there's a bit of a spectrum between the two and some fluidity depending on groups/grades/days in my experience, but I feel that you addressed that.

I found all of the responses to be things I have experienced at some point in my years of running class meetings.

I'm not sure if this is something that goes in a dissertation, but I found myself wanting some specific examples or vignettes illustrating some of the examples of class meetings. I wonder about the unsuccessful class meetings--are those teachers feeling defeated or are they still working to improve their meetings? And I wonder about the teacher who has full confidence in her/his meetings--how did that person get to that point of such confidence?

The figure 1 core category shows empty boxes above and below--were those just supposed to say teacher and facilitator?

I found them (the interpretations of the findings) to be very validating as they are pretty much what I've experienced!

It was hard to read. It's like watching yourself on video. I say "Um" and "you know" too much.

It was interesting rereading our conversation and has me contemplating class meetings more. I mentioned wanting to start them to build community, and yet when our schedule gets busy, that seems to be one of the first things that goes. That is sad and should not be the case. I will need to make sure to have a class meeting each week because they are so important. They are good for children to have a voice, to communicate needs and feelings, to connect, and to come together as a class in a meaningful way that is different than academics.

I also mentioned something about having "someone put it in their shoes" and I have no idea what that is about! I am not sure exactly what I meant to say there, but that is incoherent.

I found your findings interesting and spot on. It was great to see all of the data compiled and analyzed. You definitely had some experts who lead class meetings and I realize that I still have a decent bit to learn on implementing them in my own classroom. I especially found the confidence piece interesting though because I spoke to feeling more confident as time went on and it seemed most participants also felt the same way.

The graphics you use to represent the themes fits my experience very closely, particularly the progression from teacher to facilitator. The way you present the ideas is clear and compelling. This is a very thorough study and the themes are interesting.

I'm also interested in your "contextual influences" section. It appears to be very thorough and addresses many of the factors that teachers face when creating positive classroom cultures of their own. Sometimes this is in harmony with a broader school culture, and sometimes it is in response to more negative influences in the school.

I think you hit the nail on the head with your figure 3 (moving from teacher to facilitator. You can't do this without developing norms, student skills and developing the group and it's relationships. I also think this looks slightly different as age of students grow. I think the control released is greater as age is greater. I also think teaching and facilitating kind of go back and forth depending on the needs of the class or the goals and that teaching can be done, not by 'telling' the students, but by asking the right questions.

I also agree with your 5 bullets for the process from moving from teacher to facilitator. However I wonder for me if instead of using the word confidence in the third bullet, I would use the word 'patience'. When I am feeling pressed for time and constricted by testing requirements, I tend get impatient and move away from frequent and regularly scheduled class meetings. I also agree with you, that a supportive school environment and training leads to successful class meetings.

I am a little confused by what you mean as 'moderating influences'. Are you saying that the make up of the class each year along with the teacher's ability to facilitate will effect the outcome of successful class meetings? If so I would agree that the make up of a class can take more patience and time in developing norms, skills and relationships and the effectiveness of the facilitator is very important. All groups of students can have effective meetings and cohesive cohorts, but it also takes an effective teacher/facilitator.

Appendix K

Bias Check

Regarding the Rationale for the Study: Study seems to be backed by significant research and seems to provide support for the research questions that were written for the initial interviews

Regarding Researcher Disclosure: Is this your perspective? Or research based? May be important to clarify here

Regarding Managing Subjectivity: How? Maybe clarify that you will explain this in the trustworthiness section below?

Regarding Third Question in Round 1 Interview Questions Is it standard for someone to affect one's experience? Or would it be possible that this would be an "if at all" question?

Regarding Round 1 Interview Questions: These seem to be thoughtful questions and don't seem to have a bias present

Regarding Round 2 Interview Question: Again, these questions seem like they come out of results from the first round of interviews. The questions seem legitimate and I don't see biases present here

Regarding Trustworthiness: Very thorough efforts to maintain trustworthiness. Seems like a very comprehensive attempt at building trustworthiness in your study

Regarding Round 2 Key Memos: Your memos seem to thoroughly engage with the data and I don't see biases present in the analysis/memos. However, I don't see a clear personal reflexivity process here (where you personally engage with the data and outwardly process your own feelings/thoughts around the findings), but I also don't see bias present in the way in which the data is represented.

Regarding Final Member Check Notes: I assume these are direct quotes? Might clarify that by putting them in quotes (otherwise it might seem that they are your thoughts as the previous section is written in memo style)