



(Re)conceptualizing preservice teacher supervision through duoethnography: Reflecting, supporting, and collaborating *with and for* each other



Mary Higgins^{a,*}, Amy E. Morton^a, Rachel Wolkenhauer^b

^a The Pennsylvania State University, 258 Chambers Building University Park, PA 16802, USA

^b The Pennsylvania State University, 178 Chambers Building University Park, PA 16802, USA

HIGHLIGHTS

- Duoethnography encourages reflective practice through collaborative research.
- Authors (re)conceptualized supervision as a collaborative learning experience.
- The duoethnographic process broke down the supervisory role's isolating aspects.

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on ways duoethnography encouraged reflection, support, and collaboration for two novice teacher educators. Through duoethnographic research, they juxtaposed their experiences in new roles supervising preservice teachers as lived curriculum, or “currere.” Although supervisors often work in isolation, their collaborative research allowed the opportunity to reflect, coach one another through challenging situations, and collaborate on tools and strategies to use with preservice teachers. By engaging in the process of duoethnography, these teacher educators found themselves jointly (re) conceptualizing the role of supervisors. The authors suggest that duoethnography can promote critical reflection and break down supervisor isolation.

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Duoethnography (Norris, 2008; Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012) is a “collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers of difference juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world” (Norris et al., 2012, p. 9). Recognizing the complex and challenging nature of research in educational settings, this emergent approach to educational research has been gaining popularity among teacher educators as the process honors the meanings that are often transformed through the research act itself (i.e. Krammer & Mangiardi, 2012; Lund & Veinotte, 2010; Sawyer & Liggett, 2012; Seidel & Hill, 2015). To do so, duoethnographies present two (or more) texts side by side, creating a hybrid text of alternating alliances promoting rigorous study as partners jointly reflect on, and (re) conceptualize, their life stories. This, in turn, acknowledges the

reformation of researcher/educator beliefs, values, and ways of knowing as a result of thinking and writing about research in participatory and emancipatory ways (Norris & Sawyer, 2015).

In this article, we share the duoethnographic research of two graduate students (first and second authors on this paper), Claire and Kay, who use the process of duoethnography to articulate emergent thinking and changes in perceptions about their new roles as teacher educators supervising elementary education student teachers through dialogic storytelling. Through their research, which is facilitated by their graduate advisor, Rebecca (third author), Claire and Kay discover the value of exploring and articulating personal narratives while challenging one another to reflect on life in deeper ways. They find that as reflective practitioners they can begin to make sense of the ways their personal experiences intersect with the world, and in doing so, hold one another accountable to discuss, reflect, and debrief their work as supervisors, as well as push one another into critical engagement for the (re)conceptualization of their perceptions of the work. The purpose

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: maryelizabethhiggins@gmail.com (M. Higgins), amymorton21@gmail.com (A.E. Morton), rxw40@psu.edu (R. Wolkenhauer).

of this paper is to provide evidence for how duoethnography can be employed as a methodology for teacher educators to identify their positionality as supervisors and to develop a reflexive stance of supervision.

We begin our paper with an overview of the process of duoethnography and how the method became Claire and Kay's way of working as novice supervisors. We then introduce Claire and Kay and discuss the importance their professional similarities and differences played in juxtaposing their experiences in their new roles. Next, after a brief explanation of our analysis process, we share an illustrative example of Claire and Kay's duoethnographic conversation organized episodically to reveal the changes in these researchers' perceptions and experiences over time. We end with a discussion of the ways supervisors can utilize the duoethnographic process, especially by those new to their position, to promote critical reflection and break down the role's isolating aspects.

1. Our duoethnographic process

As graduate students studying curriculum and supervision, Claire and Kay were assigned supervision assistantships within a well-established partnership between their university and the local school district. Rebecca served as a mentor to them in their new positions. While Kay had been an elementary intern in the same partnership as an undergraduate student, and had worked in a similar partnership later in her professional career, Claire had no previous experiences in the partnership to which she was now assigned, and was new to school-university partnerships in general. Claire and Kay's assignment was to supervise preservice teachers in elementary classrooms, but they were new to the role and were provided with little preparation before beginning their work. As the only novice supervisors in the program, as well as Ph.D. coursework classmates, they came to rely on one another, and their conversations quickly became dominated by struggles and common experiences associated with supervision practices. They spoke at length about the act of supervision and wondered together about the relationships between mentor teachers and interns (the terms used in their partnership to refer to cooperating teachers and preservice teachers engaging in student teaching), and if their interns were responding positively to their individual supervisory styles. They also discussed feeling like outsiders (Gardiner & Lorch, 2015; Slick, 1998a). They did not have personal relationships with the mentor teachers or other supervisors in the program, who had worked with the district and one another for upwards of 18 years. And furthermore, as graduate students, they were grappling to balance their coursework, research, and supervision responsibilities.

Coming into this new role, Claire and Kay brought with them their previous experiences with supervision within a school setting. In their duoethnographic journal, described below, Kay addresses their varying supervision style by writing:

I've been thinking a lot about our differences and I do think we have clear differences of practice I'm just not sure how to define them. The best I can do is to say that Claire has a more personal method of supervision whereas mine is more professional. What I dislike about those labels is that it sounds like Claire's method is unprofessional (which it isn't!!) and my method is impersonal (which I don't agree with, either). What I mean by those terms is that, from my perspective, Claire takes a "we're-in-this-together" approach in working with her student teachers. She'll meet with her interns and together they'll problem solve or plan. My approach is more of a coaching stance. When I meet with interns it's less focused on collaboration and more focused

on meta-cognition- getting to the "why" of a decision either by intern or mentor.

When analyzing this idea, the two researchers found a strong connection to Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon's (2014) differentiated model of supervision. They recognized Claire's approach to supervision in the collaborative model in that it involves negotiating roles, problem solving, and a "meeting of the minds of equals" (p. 72). Alternately, Kay, with a coaching background, utilized more of a nondirective approach in that she regularly engaged in reflecting, encouraging, and listening to the needs of the interns. Although working within the same context and taking similar coursework, the two found themselves integrating these individual styles with their newfound knowledge of supervision.

As they were learning to become supervisors, Claire and Kay took two influential classes that helped in their efforts to support one another in these new challenges. In the fall semester, they were introduced to shared journaling as a mechanism for studying teaching and teacher education, and began to have many of their conversations about supervision asynchronously in written form through shared electronic journal entries. Then, in the spring, they took a research course on duoethnography with Rebecca and recognized the potential journaling could have for systematically studying their practices as supervisors to learn from their experiences, while simultaneously engaging in dialogue that would challenge them to reflect on those experiences. In following Norris, Sawyer, and Lund's tenets of duoethnography (2012), they hoped to begin to (re)conceptualize themselves as novice teacher educators and researchers, while (re)conceptualizing their perceptions about the cultural world of supervision. Acknowledging that duoethnography is transactional and open to multiple forms of engagement, Claire and Kay used the tenets as a guide for their work rather than following them formulaically. Using a shared polyvocal journal (Fig. 1) as evidence of their lived curriculum, Claire and Kay worked to juxtapose their experiences to construct and reconstruct meaning for their new roles as supervisors. Their journaling was fluid. They used color coding to move in and out of conversations over time, frequently returning to passages started earlier in their experiences. Each had a color for initial writing, and a second color to signify their return to a passage (see, for example, Fig. 1). They found the isolation they expected in supervision was disrupted as they learned through one another's different experiences. Instead of conducting research *on* a topic, they took a stance of conducting research by deliberating *with and for* one another. Participatory and emancipatory in nature, the methodology allowed them to critically reflect on their experiences over time while taking action on new learning, trusting they would be supported through the duoethnographic process. Table 1 provides greater detail into the ways Claire and Kay's research approach aligns with Norris, Sawyer, and Lund's fluid tenets of duoethnography (2012).

2. Claire and Kay

Claire and Kay came to graduate school with extensive and diverse teaching experiences. As they learned about one another through duoethnography, they frequently discussed the similarities and differences of their education journeys and how their professional roles were reflected in their supervision work and duoethnographic dialogue.

Claire and Kay earned undergraduate elementary teaching degrees at different institutions – Claire attended a small, private liberal arts school, whereas Kay attended a large, public state university. Claire taught third grade for two years with Teach for America in the rural south while completing her master's degree in

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