

FACULTY BELIEFS OF CURRICULUM AND THE CONTEXTS IN WHICH THEY ENACT
THOSE BELIEFS IN PRACTICE

By

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ABSTRACT

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Curriculum, and the teaching and learning that stem from it, is at the heart of each higher education institution. Faculty have the responsibility for developing curriculum in higher education contexts, yet little is known about the beliefs faculty hold of curriculum that underpin how they engage in the curriculum development process. Using qualitative methodology and Grundy's (1987) theory of curriculum as *product*, curriculum as *practice*, and curriculum as *praxis* as a conceptual framework, this study explored the following research question with eleven faculty participants: What are faculty beliefs of curriculum and in what contexts do they act on those beliefs?

Findings reveal faculty hold a myriad of deeply held beliefs about curriculum. They associate curriculum with their own courses, as well as with their academic programs or majors. Faculty beliefs center on the process of teaching and learning and the transformative possibility of the curriculum for students. They outlined both philosophical and practical goals for student learning, including preparing students for their lives as critical thinkers and engaged citizens, while also instilling applied skills to use in the workplace. Faculty enacted their beliefs when engaging in individual and/or group curriculum development work, and through pedagogy, teaching, and assessment. Faculty also discussed challenges to enacting curriculum and outlined administrative barriers, access to large-scale curriculum processes, tensions between teaching, research, and service responsibilities, and department culture. The discussion addresses these

themes and includes recommendations for future research to examine the relationship between faculty beliefs of curriculum and accreditation bodies, the impact of department culture, faculty appointment type, and the COVID-19 pandemic on how faculty enact their beliefs of curriculum. Suggestions for practice include more training for faculty to engage in curriculum development work, more self-reflection opportunities, and recognition of curriculum-related work in the reappointment, promotion, and tenure process.

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For my person - my mother Susan

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The concept of curriculum in higher education is often misunderstood. With ever-evolving job markets and the development of new industries and technologies, academic departments are constantly reassessing the effectiveness of their current curricula or proposing to start new programs to meet the demands of employers and the needs of students (Barnett, et al., 2001; Bridges, 2000; Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Lattuca & Stark, 2011). In recent years, calls for greater access to higher education have increased, as have the costs (Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Colleges and universities are also under pressure to assure the public that their curricula provide students with the crucial skillsets needed to succeed in today's job market (Bernstein, 2000; Clark, 1998; Shay, 2015).

This chapter begins by introducing the often confusing, contradictory, or vague conceptions of curriculum outlined in the higher education literature¹, as well as the implications of varied curriculum definitions for individual faculty and curriculum development committees. Subsequent sections of this chapter discuss the purpose of this study, the formation of the research question, definitions of several key terms, and the significance of this study.

Some critical questions surface when considering curriculum. Chiefly, what is curriculum? Is it an academic plan? Is it an academic expression representing what faculty hope students learn? Is it the student learning that takes place in individual courses or in a major or minor? Is it simply a roadmap for disciplinary subjects, including the content and delivery of

¹It is important to discern the difference in curriculum related literature from both higher education and K-12 standpoints. K-12 curriculum literature, often referring to “schools” or “schooling”, assumes governmental and state controls over school curriculum. While some programs in higher education (e.g., education, engineering and nursing) may have some governmental oversight, curriculum development in higher education contexts is largely developed by faculty with little oversight from the state or Federal Government.

academic content? Is curriculum a formal course of study representing all the elective and required courses that a student must take to complete a degree? Is curriculum a product that is *delivered* to students? Do students engage with curriculum in a meaningful way? Should curriculum evolve or should it remain rigid? Is curriculum a static idea or can it change when considering different disciplines? Or can curriculum be some or all these things, depending on different institutional, disciplinary or faculty perspectives?

Objective answers to these questions may not exist, but curriculum and curriculum development literature suggest faculty hold ideas about the meaning of curriculum. These ideas are not simple viewpoints, but are personal, deeply rooted, and epistemological in nature (Lattuca & Stark, 2011; Toombs & Tierney, 1991). Lattuca and Stark (2011) assert that definitions of curriculum in higher education literature are ambiguous, large in scope, and full of words that are equally unclear. These ambiguous definitions lead to confusion and result in a lack of shared meaning or understanding of the word, especially when faculty and staff engage in curriculum-related work (e.g., curriculum development process, course and program development). According to Fraser and Bosanquet (2006), “academics associate many different meanings with the word, and will, to a large extent, use the term in different contexts without realising its problematic nature” (p. 282). Faculty and staff commonly act on their own understanding of curriculum, whether in casual conversation or in a curriculum development process, likely assuming a shared understanding that is not actually present.

This lack of shared understanding is particularly problematic when considering faculty and staff are often engaging in curriculum-related work in tandem with other faculty members. For instance, faculty are frequently charged with curriculum development processes to update, modernize, or develop new academic programs to meet the needs of today’s students, while

curriculum-related literature is ripe with assertions of the contested nature of curriculum on campuses across the nation (Bridges, 2000; Carnochan, 1993; Cornbleth, 1990; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Toombs & Tierney, 1991). Carnochan (1993) proclaimed curriculum the battlefield of higher education (in fact, he named his book, *The Battleground of the Curriculum*), while Bridges (2000) asserted “[t]he higher education curriculum has become the site for a fascinating clash of epistemologies as well as values” (p. 41). The words these scholars use regarding the contested nature of curriculum on campuses are telling. Words like “battleground” and “clash” evoke images of war, conflict, or at best, strenuous argument. Lattuca and Stark (2009) offered the viewpoint that faculty involved in a curriculum development process often “argue from varied definitions and assumptions without spelling them out” (p. 3). Curriculum scholars agree large-scale committee-driven curriculum processes and decisions can be wrought with tension. Scholars also note faculty hold deeply rooted viewpoints of curriculum. Yet, the beliefs individual faculty hold of curriculum and the values that underpin those beliefs are seldom studied.

Purpose of the Study

From policy and planning documents to development committees, and among academic staff (in both formal environments and informal conversations), “curriculum” is ubiquitous at colleges and universities. Yet, faculty members, academic staff, deans, provosts, or presidents may not have a shared understanding of curriculum and what it should accomplish (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Lattuca & Stark, 2009). The danger here is not that faculty and administrators have different views of curriculum, but that they assume others think as they do. When faculty assume a shared understanding when there is none, they run the risk of creating tension from at least two important perspectives. First, Lattuca and Stark (2009) asserted faculty will often argue

from different assumptions about curriculum in curriculum development committees, resulting in strain, arguments, and stymied progress. Second, Tagg (2003) noted faculty often make teaching-related decisions in their classes that affect how curriculum is perceived by students. He asserted a curriculum is disjointed when it spins “in an infinite variety of non-intersecting circles” (p. 326) and the importance of curriculum relates to how classes fit together to enhance students’ understandings of the scope of their academic program. The danger I referred to above is situated in a lack of robust empirical research about faculty beliefs which, if known, could help mitigate tension in curriculum development committees and may help faculty work together to create a more seamless curricular experience for their students.

From a review of the literature, curriculum is often studied from development, assessment, or process standpoints. Faculty beliefs of curriculum have not often been studied, yet faculty often make curriculum-related decisions in their daily practice. What is not known, is what do faculty base their decisions on? Put another way, faculty are routinely making choices about curriculum, but given that we have not often studied their beliefs, we do not fully know what beliefs underpin their choices. This study is situated to address, in part, this gap in the higher education curriculum literature. The purpose of this study is to investigate faculty beliefs of curriculum and the contexts in which they act on those beliefs.

Research Question

To gain insight into faculty beliefs of curriculum and an understanding of the contexts in which they act on their beliefs, this study investigated one central research question. This question was: What are faculty beliefs of curriculum and in what contexts do they act on those beliefs?

Definition of Terms

Curriculum

The word curriculum can be misunderstood in the sense that it can be easy to assume a shared understanding where none is actually present. For the purposes of this study, my definition of curriculum aligns with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) use of an academic plan model (Figure 1). In their model, they highlight the following eight elements of an academic plan that are important benchmarks for all curricula, regardless of discipline, context, setting, or population: Purposes, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources, evaluation, and adjustment. I define curriculum by the processes that are needed to enact a plan of study. I include the course/program purpose and the planning, teaching, and evaluation as central aspects of the definition of curriculum.

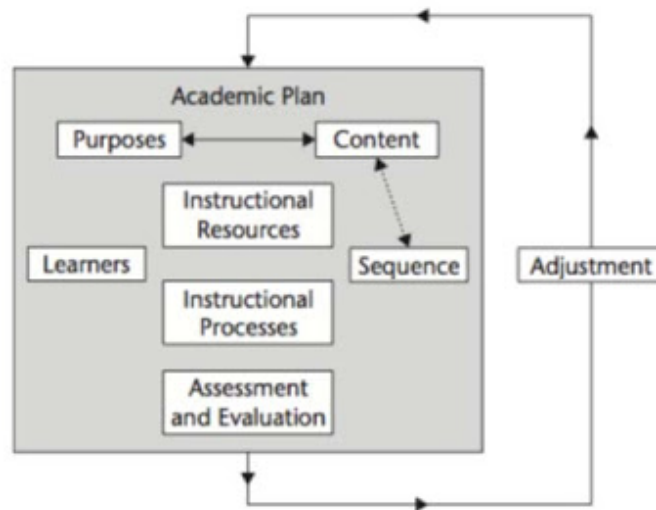


Figure 1.1

©Lattuca & Stark, 2009. *ELEMENTS OF ACADEMIC PLANS* (p. 7)

Academic Plan

Lattuca and Stark (2009) posited “[a]n academic plan can be constructed for a single lesson, for a single course, for aggregations of courses (for example, a program or major), for broader organizational groupings of majors (such as schools or colleges), and for a college or university as a whole” (p. 5). Lattuca and Stark’s (2009) academic plan model can be described as a pathway students must follow. In theory, if academic plans are constructed in this manner, students will understand the building blocks of one lesson, to move on to the next; of one class to move on to the next, etc. Since their model can be applied from a single lesson plan to an entire college or university curriculum, it offers a mechanism for faculty to use for lesson planning and course content selection at the single-class level to over-arching learning outcomes and competencies at the program (major) level. Lattuca and Stark’s (2009) model is derived after decades of empirical research and is unique in scalability. Most definitions of curriculum offered by scholars are not so universally applicable.

Curriculum-Related Work

Faculty regularly make curriculum-related decisions in their daily practice of teaching. This view is based on two threads in higher education literature. The first thread relates to how recent scholars discuss teaching in higher education. Tagg (2003), Weimer (2013), and Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) all discussed the importance of changing and challenging existing paradigms and creating classes that are learner centered. Changing the dominant paradigm, which Tagg (2013) called the *instruction paradigm*, involves re-conceptualizing not only what content is covered in classes, but *how* that content will be covered. The second thread stems from common curriculum definitions in scholarly literature. Many scholars including Hubbell and Gold (2007), Ratcliffe (1997), and Tagg (2013) believe curriculum is comprised of the learning

that happens in the classroom. Since faculty make decisions about what will be included in their courses to facilitate student learning (including readings, assignment structure, attendance, group work, online expectations, and how tests and quizzes are administered), I associate the choices faculty make in the classroom with their beliefs about curriculum. Curriculum-related work refers to tasks faculty complete as a part of their role that include: instructional design choices, course design choices (online, in-person, hybrid), individual course development or revision, program development or revision, formal affiliation with a curriculum development committee, informal conversations about curriculum with fellow faculty and administrators, and curriculum assessment and evaluation.

Tenure-track and Tenured Faculty

This study is situated at a large midwestern land-grant institution, referred to here as Midwestern University (MU). At MU, faculty who are hired on the tenure-track are typically given the title of assistant professor or associate professor, depending on their years of experience when they are hired by the institution. The ‘tenure-track’ refers to the timeframe that faculty spend working while striving for tenure status.

Tenure status is granted at MU based on an extensive application process by a tenure-track faculty member. In the application they discuss their work associated with a triumvirate of teaching, research, and service expectations. At MU, granting tenure means the faculty member is indefinitely appointed, with no contract end date. The typical timeline for most faculty to spend on the tenure-track to be granted tenure is seven years according to the MU faculty handbook for tenure and promotion.

Fixed-term Faculty, Instructors and Academic Staff

There are several terms used to describe faculty members who are not on the tenure track including, non-tenure track, contingent, adjunct, part-time, and fixed term (Finkelstein, et al., 2016). In this study, I use the term fixed-term faculty. These faculty members typically have a 100% appointment, but they are not on the tenure track. Their contracts may be renewed by the semester, or they may be on a one-year, three-year continuing employment system depending on their role and appointment type at MU.

Several participants in this study use the term ‘instructor’ to refer to a fixed-term member with a 100% teaching appointment.

MU also has a fixed-term designation called ‘academic staff’ which is a faculty designation, but could also include academic advising, community engagement/outreach, research, or curriculum development responsibilities.

Academic Program

I use this term to describe an academic major or program of study.

General Education

MU has a set of courses all students must complete regardless of major or college. These courses are commonly referred to as general education courses and are intended to ensure students have a well-rounded education in addition to the specific focus of their academic program or major. Courses in arts, humanities, biological and physical sciences, writing, English, and social sciences are all requirements in MU’s general education program.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites are courses that must be taken in a sequential order to allow for knowledge to build. For example, a math major must take algebra before trigonometry, trigonometry before

calculus, and calculus before differential equations. Prerequisites serve as the building blocks of highly structured curriculums often found in engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education programs.

Corequisites

Like prerequisites, some curriculums are structured to allow students to take several requirements together to allow for quicker progression through their academic program. These requirements still follow a sequential order, and typically must be taken before the next level of courses. For example, a computer science student may need to take a software design course, but that course can have several prerequisites including programming and discrete structures, which could be taken at the same time to reduce time to degree.

Significance of the Study

Understanding faculty beliefs about curriculum is significant considering faculty often have the responsibility for developing curriculum in various contexts. Whether acting as a member of a curriculum development committee, designing a new course, or selecting specific instructional methods to deliver their chosen content, faculty often make curriculum-related decisions in practice. Scholars have long noted both the diversity of beliefs about curriculum and the ambiguity and difficulty in applying definitions of curriculum, especially considering faculty have different institutional and disciplinary factors to attend to, yet faculty beliefs of curriculum have rarely been studied (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Phan, et al., 2016). Cornbleth (1990) explained, “[h]ow we conceive of curriculum and curriculum making is important because our conceptions and ways of reasoning about curriculum reflect and shape how we see, think and talk about, study and act on the education made available to our students” (p. 12). These authors point out the importance of understanding the beliefs faculty have of

curriculum, as faculty make key decisions that impact the ways in which students academically experience college. Faculty decide the content, assignment structure, and grading rubrics of their classes, and they are often asked to create (or re-create in the case of a formal curriculum development process) curricula, in conjunction with other faculty, deciding the sequences of classes and the academic experiences that comprise an academic program.

The power faculty have in the realm of curriculum is immense. Knowing faculty often make these key decisions regarding curriculum, it is important to investigate what they believe curriculum is and how they use their beliefs of curriculum in practice. As such, the findings from this study may be applied to several curriculum development contexts. For instance, curriculum development committees could benefit from understanding faculty beliefs as a way to ground their work and minimize unnecessary conflict. If academic departments place an emphasis on understanding faculty beliefs of curriculum, they can increase the cohesiveness of their curriculum, creating more seamless transitions for students across their academic programs. For example, the themes that emerge from this study could help faculty engage in a series of self-reflective exercises to understand their own values regarding curriculum. These values can extend to the choices they make in the classroom, the teaching methods they employ, or the way they tie a series of courses together. They could then apply these values to their curriculum-related work in more purposeful ways, and perhaps even ease the contested nature of creating curriculum in faculty committees.

In this chapter, I introduced the robust but often confusing nature of curriculum definitions outlined in higher education literature. I then discussed the purpose of this study, the research question that guides this study, as well as several key terms. The chapter ended with a

discussion on the significance of this study. The next chapter reviews the relevant curriculum literature in higher education.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Once upon a time, so legend goes, all was harmony in the American curriculum, a time of accepted values, practices, texts; it was a golden age. This legend is simply wrong. More accurately—and to shift the metaphorical ground—the present condition of curriculum in American higher education resembles that of a fault system still heaving and buckling with aftershocks of an earlier, larger rupture. (Camochan, 1993, p. 1)

This study sought to understand the beliefs faculty hold of curriculum. This chapter centers on a review of scholarly literature related to the central research question guiding this study. This question was: What are faculty beliefs of curriculum and in what contexts do they act on those beliefs?

In this chapter, I review relevant scholarly literature to provide insights on four main topics informed by the research question outlined above. First, I discuss how the diversity of beliefs of curriculum contributes to a lack of a shared understanding regarding curriculum. Second, I examine curriculum beliefs informed by both academic discipline and teaching and learning. Third, I analyze literature concerning the curriculum development process and finally, I outline and critique two recent studies centered on faculty beliefs of curriculum. After the sections outlined, I also discuss the gap in the literature where I situate this study.

Lack of Shared Understanding

Asking “what is curriculum?” is akin to asking: what is knowledge? Or what does it mean to know? To learn? The topic of curriculum in higher education is vast and scholarly literature is comprised of many topics including: curriculum development, revision, and delivery; curriculum assessment; inclusive curricula; curriculum as a vehicle for growth or social change;

curriculum contexts in teaching and learning; hidden or invisible curriculum; and competency-based curricula. Scholars conducting research in these areas often outline their own beliefs of curriculum guiding their study, which point to the diversity of beliefs that exist about curriculum in higher education. Scholars focusing on curriculum development often try to provide definitional frameworks of curriculum to be of assistance for development committees (Lattuca and Stark's 2009 academic plan model is one example). In this section, I present several definitions, often with competing priorities, aims, and methods to demonstrate how a lack of shared understanding is contributing to the conundrum around faculty beliefs.

In the broad landscape of curriculum-related literature in higher education contexts, scholars have long noted the challenging nature of curriculum definitions (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Grundy, 1987; Lattuca & Stark, 2011). Scholars often attempt to define curriculum to outline the scope of a specific study, or more commonly, to be helpful to curriculum development committees tasked with creating or updating curricula. Curriculum scholars also frequently ascribe words like “ambiguous,” “shadowy,” “hidden,” “elusive,” and “invisible,” to describe the ways in which conceptualizations of curriculum, both in theory and in practice, are problematic in application for individual faculty, curriculum development committees and eventually, to students. Modern definitions of curriculum commonly include mention of: the syllabus, lesson plans or academic documents, an academic plan or course of study, learning in or outside of the classroom, experiential learning, online learning, competencies to be developed for workforce, teaching styles or content strategies, the betterment of society, and/or philosophical ideas related to the nature of knowledge and teaching (Kridel, 2010).

Several common tendencies in curriculum definitions exist in the scholarly literature. For example, Ratcliff (1997) defined curriculum as “[t]he formal academic experience of students pursuing baccalaureate and less than baccalaureate degrees. Such a curriculum is formalized into courses or programs of study including workshops, seminars, colloquia, lecture series, laboratory work, internships, and field experiences” (p. 6), while Barnett (2009) asserted “curriculum in higher education is understood to be an educational vehicle to promote a student's development” (p. 429). Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) defined curriculum development as a process that “encompasses how a curriculum is planned, implemented and evaluated, as well as what people, processes and procedures are involved” (p.15). Barnett, Parry, and Coate (2001) posited “[a]t all levels of curriculum formation—course team, department, institution, national policy—curricula should be understood as embracing the three domains of knowledge, action, and self” (p. 448). Like Ratcliff (1997), Hubbell and Gold (2007) asserted their understanding of curriculum to be “a coherent program of study that is responsive to the needs and circumstances of the pedagogical context and is carefully designed to develop students’ knowledge, abilities, and skills through multiple integrated and progressively challenging course learning experiences” (p.7), whereas, Bernstein (1975) took a more philosophical approach stating, “curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge” (p. 85). Gumpert (2017) posited curriculum is culturally constructed, and she named curriculum broadly to include all ‘academic knowledge,’ where, through the process of curriculum making and revision, faculty are always in the process of creating and recreating knowledge. Tagg (2003) outlined two definitions of curriculum. The first represents the *instructional paradigm*, the idea that colleges and universities exist to instruct and deliver content. Tagg (2003) noted curriculum under the instructional paradigm “means a list of classes, a basket of instructional bricks, to be stacked” (p. 25). His second definition of

curriculum falls under the *learning paradigm*, the idea that institutions of higher education should produce learning, through varied instructional methods. He asserted “the curriculum should be the institution’s systemic plan for what and how students will learn” (p. 327).

As seen in the above paragraph, scholars take several common approaches to defining curriculum. Some scholars take a detailed approach, specifically laying out what they believe curriculum is and thereby, what curriculum is not. Other definitions offer more philosophical perspectives, expounding on what curriculum should strive to be. Each definition of curriculum is carefully crafted, including elements the author deems essential. While these elements of curriculum are not necessarily contradictory, to include all elements into a working definitional framework may be too broad to be helpful in practice for faculty involved in curriculum-related work. To select some elements, and not others, may be too narrow or limiting for specific contexts.

In framing the problem of diverse definitions of curriculum, it is easy to wonder: Why does a uniform definition of curriculum matter? One could assume institutional, disciplinary, academic, and career contexts are constantly evolving, rendering one unified or agreed upon definition of curriculum inappropriate for most curriculum development circumstances. Most scholars are not attempting to impose one view of curriculum, rather they use the existing vague and ambiguous definitions of curriculum to illustrate an important point. The word “curriculum” has such a ubiquitous presence across the academy that faculty, staff, and administrators can easily assume a shared understanding of curriculum where no mutual understanding is actually present (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Lattuca & Stark, 2011). Further, as stated above, the lack of a shared understanding of curriculum does not stop university presidents, academic deans, faculty, and administrators from frequently making decisions,

changes or policies about or around curricula. Lattuca and Stark (2011) asserted “these individuals talk about ‘curriculum’ with the untested assumption that they are speaking a shared language” (p. 3). These untested assumptions of a shared understanding of curriculum are dangerous and can cause inconsistencies in structure or approach, confusion for students, and a lack of cohesion for student learning.

Why then, do faculty, staff, and administrators lack a shared understanding of curriculum, but assume one? Breault and Marshall (2010) noted an important transition in curriculum-related scholarship in recent decades. They observed “although earlier published articles focus more on curriculum theory, those appearing since the late 1980s focus largely on application with little to no attention given to substantive principles and theory” (p.180). Breault and Marshall’s (2010), assessment of the last thirty years of curriculum scholarship speaks to the ways faculty currently understand curriculum, especially considering most curriculum scholarship during this time focused more on process-oriented approaches such as how to get curriculum-related work done and how to assess that work. Scholarship focused less on theoretical or philosophical approaches related to the substance of the curriculum and how students experience the curriculum. The result is a body of curriculum scholarship, while well-intentioned and robust, that generally leaves out theoretical or philosophical insights and promotes a process-orientated approach.

Further, while scholars often note either the problem with curriculum definitions or the lack of shared understanding of curriculum, these concerns are often not a central component to their study. Scholars typically mention a lack of shared understanding as a concept that emerged from their study, or as a part of a framework to develop their own definition. In the field of curriculum studies, we know very little about what faculty believe curriculum to be or how they use their ideas in practice. This study is situated, in part, to address this gap.

This section outlined the curriculum definitions in the literature and the ways in which an assumed understanding of curriculum is problematic. Much of the research about curriculum in higher education contexts are studied from a “process” viewpoint, which can be helpful for individual faculty and curriculum committees, but also presents a myopic viewpoint as much of the literature is focused on this one perspective.

Curriculum Beliefs: Informed by Academic Discipline

In the following sections, I outline two elements that frame and inform faculty beliefs of curriculum. What faculty believe about curriculum may vary based on their unique educational contexts including disciplinary as well as teaching and learning experiences.

Phan, Lupton, and Watters (2016) posited “[c]urriculum cannot be isolated from its context, and research about curriculum understandings needs to acknowledge contextual settings” (p. 1256). One of these contexts is academic discipline. Biglan’s (1973a) study investigated the differences in and relationships between academic disciplines in a study of faculty members at two institutional types: a large research university and a small liberal arts college. From his research, he identified a classification system which outlined the differences between “pure” and “applied” disciplines by using the categories of “hard pure” (e.g., natural sciences), “soft pure” (e.g., humanities or social sciences), “hard applied” (e.g., engineering), and “soft applied” (e.g., education). He also used the descriptor of “life” (e.g., biology) and “non-life” (e.g., astronomy) to describe disciplines either concerned with life systems or not concerned with life-systems.

Biglan used his classification system to examine the relationships between disciplines and to study both the structure and outputs of academic departments in a subsequent article (Biglan, 1973b). He found similarities and differences between disciplines in the “pure” and

“applied” dimensions, in the areas of social connectedness, commitment, scholarly input, and scholarly output. For example, he posited scholars working in applied disciplines enjoy working with others on teaching more than those in pure disciplines, while scholars in pure disciplines enjoy research activities more than those in applied disciplines (Biglan, 1973b). Biglan stated,

[d]epending on the characteristics of their area, scholars differed in (a) the degree to which they were socially connected to others, (b) their commitment to teaching, research, and service, (c) the number of journal articles, monographs, and technical reports that they published, and (d) the number of dissertations that they sponsored. (Biglan, 1973b, p. 204)

As faculty are trained and ‘grow up’ in their academic discipline, each of the items Biglan (1973b) listed above could impact their beliefs of curriculum. From collaboration with other faculty on teaching and research, to the extent of the social connections they feel with their colleagues, Biglan’s (1973a, 1973b) work established that faculty in certain disciplines may have similar perspectives.

Curriculum Beliefs: Extensions of Teaching and Learning

Faculty may frame their beliefs of curriculum in ways that relate to their teaching. The beliefs faculty have of curriculum could include commentary on why and how they design their individual courses, statements about teaching and learning, or how they work with other faculty to create a cohesive experience for students in a series of courses. The choices of instructional design include course readings, assignments, tests, planned dialogues, class activities, teaching technologies, course expectations, and interaction among students. Each of these course components are usually under the purview of the instructor. Faculty may also specify class size, room location, and the days and times their courses are offered—especially if these are important

factors in delivering course pedagogy. For example, a particular teaching approach may require moveable tables and chairs for a predetermined group size. From this perspective, curriculum and teaching are intertwined. Higher education curriculum scholars often discuss student learning from varying pedagogical perspectives including intentional instructional design choices that impact student learning (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014), learning goals and student motivation (Ambrose et.al, 2010), conceptions of power in the classroom and learner-centered approaches (Weimer, 2013), and critical thinking (Brookfield, 2013). While discussing the choices that faculty make in their course design and teaching is common, what is less common among higher education and curriculum scholars is attributing these decisions to faculty beliefs about the curriculum.

For instance, in an exploratory study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) faculty, Oleson and Hora (2014) investigated faculty decision-making and the roles their prior experiences played in their decisions on how and what to teach. Oleson and Hora (2014) found faculty used their experiences as learners, teachers, and researchers in addition to other faculty and non-academic factors to ground their choices in course and instructional design. Using a mixed method approach, they interviewed 53 faculty at three different research institutions. Since faculty often do not receive formal training in teaching, they sought to test the maxim: “faculty teach the way they were taught.” They discovered a wide range of beliefs and experiences served as the foundation of course and lesson planning for the faculty members in their study, yet neither the participants nor the researchers seemed to associate these beliefs with curriculum or curriculum development. Faculty members frequently make curriculum-related decisions in their work, yet the scholarly research in this area, if

dedicated to faculty beliefs at all, tends to focus on elements of teaching and learning rather than beliefs about curriculum.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum literature outlines various approaches as standard frameworks to use when developing new curricula or changing existing curricula. These approaches include the use of academic plans or models (Lattuca & Stark, 2009), course evaluation and learning outcomes (Hubball & Gold, 2007), theory to practice design (O'Neill, 2015), a focus on student development (Barnett, 2009), and the importance of stakeholder collaboration in the curriculum development process (Oliver & Hyun, 2011). While there is some agreement among experts regarding best practices, Bridges (2000) pointed out the arena of curriculum development and implementation is still “highly contested” (p. 53) as colleges and universities are encouraged to do more for increasingly diverse student bodies in the 21st century. Thus, faculty and other actors in the curriculum development process may have difficulty arriving at a consensus and these disagreements in the development process can cause tension. In this section, I present several different approaches and practices as examples of the ways that attention to the curriculum development process has dominated the discussion in curriculum-related literature. Viewing curriculum as a process is steeped in practicality and offers a guide to faculty who formally design individual courses and curriculum at the program level. Yet as this section will demonstrate, much of the literature about curriculum fails to study the beliefs of those involved in these processes.

Curriculum as “Process”

Many scholars concur that curriculum development (or curriculum-related work) can be viewed as a *process* (Kahn & Law, 2015; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Oliver & Hyun, 2011; Ornstein

& Hunkins, 2009; Tierney, 1989), where the planning method is systematic resulting in intentionally developed and evaluated student learning experiences. From this perspective, a curriculum-as-process approach is applicable for both the inputs (curriculum development committees or individual faculty developing curricula) of the curriculum development stage, as well as the outputs such as the assignment structure, course sequence, and the arrangement of courses in the program. This view of curriculum-as-process dominates much of the recent scholarly literature regarding curriculum development (Kridel, 2010).

Lattuca and Stark's (2009) work on curriculum development as an academic plan is one of the most comprehensive examples of the curriculum-as-process philosophy. Their model focuses on the academic plan as a "blueprint for action" (p.4), where each segment of the plan can be initiated and used for any curriculum development, regardless of discipline, institution, or number of students. Their aim in developing this plan is to offer a guidebook for faculty who engage in curriculum development to help make the process easier.

In addition to Lattuca and Stark (2009), several other scholars have written guidebooks using a process approach for curriculum development and assessment. Diamond (2011) indicated that faculty commonly recognize aspects of their courses or program curricula as being problematic, "but their efforts to change are hampered by uncertainty about how to make orderly changes, where to begin, what outcomes to target, and what roles faculty, curriculum committees, and administrators should play" (p.10). Thus, they turn to guidebooks to facilitate the process. These guidebooks are prevalent in curriculum-related literature and offer a pathway for faculty to engage in curriculum-related work. Some recent examples of curriculum guidebooks include: *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses* (Fink, 2013), *Designing and assessing courses and curricula: A*

practical guide (Diamond, 2011), and *The course syllabus: A learning-centered approach* (O'Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2009). Each of these titles uses intentionally selected words like “integrated approach,” “practical guide,” and “learner-centered approach” to help the reader understand the nature of the curriculum design approach. While these guides are helpful, they generally do not leave room for faculty to consider their own beliefs about curriculum before they engage in a development process.

Faculty Beliefs of Curriculum: Two Recent Studies

In this section, I describe two studies that investigated faculty beliefs of curriculum. First, Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) conducted a phenomenographic study to investigate faculty conceptions of curriculum at an Australian university. They focused on faculty conceptions of curriculum by trying to access the beliefs faculty hold that underpin their conceptions (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006). They defined conceptions as “both what academics perceive to be the curriculum, and their understandings and experiences of this curriculum” (p. 271). They interviewed 25 faculty at different levels (lecturers and associate professors with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 30 years) from various academic disciplines. Interviews were semi-structured and included open-ended questions relating to faculty understandings and experiences with curriculum. In their analysis, they found participants discussed beliefs of curriculum that fell within four distinct categories:

- Category A: The structure and content of a unit (subject);
- Category B: The structure and content of a [program] of study;
- Category C: The students’ experience of learning;
- Category D: A dynamic and interactive process of teaching and learning.

According to Fraser and Bosanquet (2006), faculty who conceptualize curriculum as categories A and B think of curriculum as a concept that “can be defined and recorded on paper” (p. 272). Faculty whose beliefs align with category C conceptualized curriculum as a vehicle that enables student learning, where the development of predetermined content takes a secondary role. Faculty who believe curriculum falls into category D conceived of curriculum as a “dynamic, emergent and collaborative process of learning for both student and teacher” (p. 272). In this case, the structure and content of a course or unit is not predetermined, but rather the faculty and students co-construct the curriculum together. Academics whose conceptions of curriculum fall into category D reject the notions that curriculum 1) can be determined before the course starts, 2) should be determined *for* students without their input, 3) should be the same for all iterations of a certain class, and 4) can be accurately represented on paper.

Fraser and Bosanquet’s (2006) findings illustrate four distinct categories their participants used to describe their conceptions of curriculum. From a philosophical standpoint, the categories are linear and progressively move from simple to more abstract and conceptual ideas. Clearly, categories A and B are drastically different from category C and category D, demonstrating the wide range of beliefs their participants held about curriculum. While Fraser and Bosanquet’s (2006) study is unique and enlightening, their study did not account for academic discipline as a factor in their participant selection, thus they found no trend in their data where faculty from similar disciplines held comparable conceptions of curriculum.

Fraser and Bosanquet’s (2006) study inspired Phan, Lupton, and Watters’ (2016) study of faculty beliefs of curriculum in Vietnam. Their study, set three years after the transition from central governmental oversight of curriculum to complete university autonomy of curriculum and its development, offers another unique context to investigate faculty beliefs of curriculum.

Their study focused on faculty, academic staff, and students' understandings of curriculum from the same discipline at a medium size university in Vietnam. The study included faculty (n=15), students (n=21), and academic administrators (n=3) (Phan, et al., 2016). They conducted individual interviews with faculty and administrators and focus groups with students. Faculty in this study believed curriculum to be "the structure and content of a course, the structure and content of a unit (or a subject), textbooks and the content of textbooks, teaching experience [and] learning experience" (p. 1261). These findings appear to support the conclusions drawn by Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) by noting the wide range of faculty beliefs of curriculum. Additionally, Phan, Lupton, and Watters' (2016) study also highlighted similar faculty beliefs as those outlined in categories A, B, C, and D by Fraser and Bosanquet (2006). When examining the study methodology, Phan, Lupton, and Watters (2016) focused on a single discipline, while Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) interviewed faculty from several different disciplines. Neither of these studies set out to investigate whether academic discipline was a factor in how faculty form their beliefs.

In this section, I identified two studies that investigated faculty beliefs of curriculum. Both studies used qualitative methods, but varied in approach, site selection, and participant section. Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) study, located in Australia, featured faculty from a variety of academic disciplines, while Phan, Lupton, and Watters' (2016) study interviewed faculty, academic administrators, and students from a single discipline in Vietnam. The limited amount of research on this topic suggests a gap in the literature. This study proposes to fill that gap and to situate academic discipline as a key factor in how faculty develop their beliefs about the curriculum.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell (2013) describes a conceptual framework as “a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories” (p. 39) that will support and inform a researcher’s study. For this study, I used Shirley Grundy’s (1987) book, *Curriculum: Product or Praxis*, to develop the conceptual framework for this study. In this book, she built upon the work of philosopher and sociologist, Jürgen Habermas’s theory of knowledge-constitutive interests (1972). Habermas (1972) outlined three domains of human knowledge: technical knowledge, practical knowledge, and emancipatory knowledge. According to Habermas (1972), knowledge is socially and culturally constructed, and each area of knowledge helps people understand themselves and the world around them. Grundy (1987) viewed Habermas’ (1972) theory of knowledge-constitutive interests through a curricular lens and applied each of the domains to curricular perspectives.

Grundy (1987), a K-12 education and curriculum scholar based out of Australia, outlined the significance of her work by expressing, “‘Curriculum’ is often written and spoken about in an idealistic sense as if there is a perfect ‘idea’ (*eidos*) of a curriculum in which all individual curricula are more or less imperfect limitations” (p. 5). She later went on to assert, “Curriculum, however, is not a concept; it is a cultural construction. That is, it is not an abstract concept which has some existence outside and prior to human experience” (p. 5). Grundy (1987) used Habermas’ (1972) domains to help her make meaning of curriculum practices and asserted curriculum is informed by and constructed from three perspectives: curriculum as *product* (technical knowledge), curriculum as *practice* (practical knowledge), and curriculum as *praxis* (emancipatory knowledge). Curriculum as *product* refers to curriculum from a technical perspective, including the planning, application, delivery, documents, and assessment of

curriculum. Curriculum as *practice* refers to the learning that takes place in the classroom guided by the interactions and discussions of the students and teachers. Curriculum as *praxis* serves as an extension of the curriculum as *practice* model. Curriculum as *praxis* serves an emancipatory purpose, pushing students and teachers to engage in the subject as committed, reflective, critical thinkers (Grundy, 1987). Grundy's (1987) ideas of curriculum as *product*, curriculum as *practice*, and curriculum as *praxis* guided the creation of the interview protocol used for this study, helped create an understanding of how faculty described their beliefs, and aided in the identification of the contexts in which faculty enacted their beliefs about curriculum in practice.

While Grundy (1987) viewed curriculum through a K-12 lens in Australia, I am intentionally applying it to a higher education context in the United States in this study. There are several reasons why I selected a K-12 curriculum theory as a conceptual framework for this study. First, Grundy's (1987) work is one of the few frameworks in education literature that serves as a guidepost for understanding and evaluating teacher beliefs of curriculum. In the landscape of higher education curriculum literature, there are few studies that have investigated faculty beliefs of curriculum, so my choice in using Grundy (1987) as a critical framework is a purposeful one. Next, it is worth pointing out that Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) study made heavy use of Grundy's (1987) theory. Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) four categories align closely with Grundy's (1987). Specifically, categories A and B align with curriculum as *product*, category C aligns with curriculum as *practice*, and category D aligns with curriculum as *praxis*. Last, as stated above, Phan, Lupton, and Watters' (2016) study used Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) to organize their literature review, and while they did not specifically state a critical or theoretical framework in their study, it is clear that Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) work guided their design.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I discussed the work of Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) and Phan, Lupton, and Watters (2016). These studies employed qualitative methods to investigate faculty beliefs and conceptualizations of curriculum in Australia and Vietnam, respectively. These studies offered insights into how faculty conceive of curriculum, however, the social, governmental, organizational, and national contexts limit the application of their findings to other contexts. Specifically, Phan, Lupton, and Watters' (2016) study was framed as a response to a recent shift in political and governmental oversight of curriculum, which limits the applicability of their findings. While both studies provide insight from an international perspective, this study shifts the focus to an institution within the United States. In this chapter, I outline the rationale for selecting a qualitative design as the most suitable framework for conducting this study. I also discuss my constructivist epistemological perspective and summarize my site and participant selection process, data collection, data analysis, and the ways I ensured confidentiality and trustworthiness.

This study was guided by the following research question: What are faculty beliefs of curriculum and in what contexts do they act on those beliefs?

Qualitative Research Design

In this study, I sought to understand the beliefs faculty hold of curriculum and the contexts in which faculty enacted their beliefs about curriculum. A qualitative design offered the best methodological fit for this study, in part due to the broad nature of the research question, and in part, due to the focus on individual faculty beliefs. In regard to qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2014) posited, "those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of

rendering the complexity of a situation” (p. 4). Remler and Van Ryzin (2010) identified qualitative methods as a type of analysis that “provides a unique window into the thoughts, experiences, and motivations of others” (p. 61). They also asserted the qualitative researcher’s ability to engage in intersubjectivity—or the capability to stand in someone else’s shoes and view the world from their perspective—is an essential element of a qualitative study (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2010). Given that the goal of this study was to investigate the beliefs faculty have of curriculum, a qualitative methodological design allowed participants to speak of their individual beliefs and contexts in which they enacted those beliefs about curriculum.

Epistemology

This qualitative study utilized a constructivist paradigm to examine the beliefs faculty hold of curriculum and to understand how they use their beliefs in their work. Creswell (2014) identified a constructivist worldview as one where “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” and these understandings are “varied and multiple” (p. 8). Constructivists believe there is not one universally known truth, but rather, individuals construct their own meanings of the world (Glesne, 2011). Creswell (2014) also explained that constructivists place importance on the everyday meanings people ascribe to their lived experiences. As a researcher, a constructivist epistemology allowed me to help interpret the espoused beliefs of curriculum my participants hold, appreciating that each participant has a unique view of curriculum. As a qualitative researcher with a constructivist worldview, I was not seeking to find a universal truth in the data that emerged from this study. Rather, I sought multiple truths and found multiple meanings as well as similarities in the myriad of beliefs shared by the participants.

Site Selection

I situated this study at a large research-oriented land-grant institution in the Midwest United States, which will be identified from here on as Midwestern University (MU). Using Biglan's classification system (1973a) as a guide, I recruited faculty from different academic disciplines at MU that fell into the "soft-pure" category. Examples of the "soft-pure" category include academic disciplines in social sciences and arts and humanities. As discussed in the previous chapter, Biglan's (1973a) study offered a classification system of academic disciplines based on the beliefs of faculty members in each discipline.

Since this study sought to understand faculty beliefs of curriculum, the choices I made using the "soft-pure" quadrant as a lens was purposeful, especially knowing that academic disciplines in either the "hard applied" or the "soft applied" quadrants at MU could have additional external accreditation bodies (as is typical in engineering and business) or have more robust governmental/state regulations (as is the case in teacher education and nursing). I limited the scope of this study to the "soft-pure" quadrants because I believed additional oversights of curriculum, whether an accreditation body or state regulations, could have impacted the choices faculty have available to them in these academic disciplines. Faculty in the "soft-pure" quadrant may have more opportunities to engage with curriculum development than those in academic disciplines with additional oversights. Finally, I positioned this study away from my scope of work, and I discuss this choice in the trustworthiness section below. Following these guidelines, I selected two colleges at MU to recruit participants from: The College of Social Science and the College of Arts and Letters.

Participant Selection

This qualitative study followed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendices A and B) with faculty who have participated in some form of curriculum-related work in the past, including at least two years of teaching at the collegiate level. Maxwell (2013) stated participant “selection decisions will require considerable knowledge of the setting of the study” (p. 99). Since I completed a pilot study at MU, I have knowledge of the overall structure, size, leadership, and organization of MU. As I was looking for a variety of beliefs among my participants, I opened this study to faculty with different appointment types, including tenured, tenure-track, and fixed-term faculty, as well as academic staff who have at least two years of teaching experience at the collegiate level. Selecting faculty at different levels of teaching was an important part of accounting for some of the limitations of this study, as I did not want to focus on just one appointment type at MU (e.g., tenured, tenure-track, or fixed-term faculty) or beginning, mid, or end of career faculty. Thus, to ensure my final participant list was as diverse as possible, I recruited a diversity of faculty in terms of academic discipline, appointment type, and years of teaching experience.

MU is a large research-based land grant institution with approximately 12,000 faculty members, and my initial search revealed more than 650 faculty in the “soft-pure” academic departments at MU. Participants were identified using faculty staff lists found on MU’s website for each department. I sent over 500 e-mails (Appendices C and D) to faculty who met the above criteria and received 42 responses to my Qualtrics interest survey. In the interest survey, I asked for basic contact information, appointment designation, affiliated college, number of years of teaching experience, and number of years at MU. After reviewing all responses to my interest survey, I worked to form a group of possible participants where there were not too many

overlaps in years of teaching experience, faculty appointment types, or affiliated college/department. From this smaller group, I selected sixteen faculty members and requested their participation via e-mail. Eleven of the sixteen scheduled interviews with me using an online calendar (Table 4.1 below includes all participants and their associated colleges, years of experience, and appointment type). For the time and energy they invested in the interview process, participants received a \$15 digital Amazon card, sent via e-mail at the conclusion of the interview.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected between November 2020 and January 2021, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. All interviews were conducted virtually over Zoom to ensure the highest possible levels of safety for myself and the participants. These Zoom interviews were audio recorded and were focused on uncovering the beliefs of each participant by asking them to reflect on their values and viewpoints on several curriculum-related topics including: their definition of curriculum, individual course development, curriculum at the program level, personal teaching and learning philosophies, connecting teaching and learning to curriculum, individual class and academic program pedagogies, curriculum related to academic discipline, and their personal experiences regarding curriculum development or curriculum-related work (Appendices A and B include the interview protocols). It is important to note, prior to implementing this study, I completed several pilot interviews with faculty members at MU who were not located in “soft-pure” departments. From these pilot interviews I learned that several faculty in “hard-soft” and hard-pure” disciplines often felt they had fewer curricular choices as they had to meet various accreditation standards. They relayed having a difficult time thinking of their beliefs of curriculum since they had to prove their curriculum, at the individual course and

the academic program levels, met these standards. The pilot interviews also guided the creation of the interview protocol by helping me develop questions and examples to use when faculty struggled to speak about their curriculum beliefs.

Each first-round interview lasted between 60-90 minutes and while conducting the individual interviews, I paid special attention to all “I” statements (e.g., I believe, I think, I want, I try to, etc.) and all statements of personal beliefs or values that are stated as fact. For example, Sakari, a faculty participant said, “curriculum is political.” This was a belief stated as fact in the context of our conversation. I also kept a log of my own observations as a researcher and a log of any additional questions I asked that varied between participants. At the beginning of each interview, it was common for faculty members to need additional probing questions to help them either access their beliefs or understand my questions. I used examples and additional questions to help my participants open-up and dive deeper into their espoused beliefs. For instance, I used phrases like; *please say more about that, why is this important? can you provide an example? and how did that make you feel?* (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2010). After each interview, the audio file was downloaded immediately, saved on a central computer and backed-up on a password protected *iCloud* and *Dropbox*. The interviews were transcribed shortly after each interview by a transcription service. The transcription files were saved in the same protocol outlined above.

Confidentiality

Ensuring the ethical treatment of my participants and keeping the data from their interviews secure were important considerations to ensure confidentiality in this study. I practiced several mitigating strategies to ensure participants were protected. First, I provided participants with an informed consent document (Appendix C) that recorded their agreement to participate and provided them with information on how their data would be stored. Participants

were aware they could stop the interview at any point. Second, during the data analysis phase, participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Each participant was asked to select their own pseudonym, and all but two asked me to pick for them. Third, data were stored on a central computer, but backed up using a password protected *Dropbox* and a password protected *iCloud* to prevent tampering by any outside party, and to protect against any technology issues that could result in data loss. Next, I hired a transcriber who was located outside of the MU community to ensure the transcriber was not familiar with any of my participants.

As mentioned above, I am currently employed by an institution like MU. I selected the soft-pure disciplines using Biglan (1972) as a guide, but I also purposefully selected this quadrant because it included academic disciplines that are not located in or associated with any disciplines that I work with at my own institution. MU is a large, research-focused, land-grant institution with over 200 academic programs and over 50,000 students. Since I had previously conducted a pilot study at MU, I made sure to select academic disciplines away from those involved in the pilot study. I ensured I had no professional relationships with any faculty in any of the soft-pure disciplines at MU. This purposeful site selection allowed me to seek an environment where I am not a known entity.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the data from the interviews by first reading the transcriptions of each interview to check for errors. While I did not transcribe the interviews, I used a transcriptionist who sent each file to me within seven days of the interview date. This quick turn-around allowed the conversation to still be fresh in my memory when I was searching for possible errors. When I found errors in the transcription, I went back to the original audio and video recordings to ensure

the transcripts were corrected to capture the participants exact words. After each transcript was corrected for any errors and doubled-checked, I saved each file on a central computer as well as on *Dropbox* and *iCloud*. I then uploaded each interview file to *Dedoose*, a qualitative data analysis software package available online. I used this software to help me engage in a descriptive coding and a thematic analysis process. Specifically, *Dedoose* allows the user to highlight passages and assign codes, while also offering search/sort features across all files. Using this software, I was able to see quotes both in and out of context, count how many times a certain code was used, as well as assign ‘parent’ and ‘child’ codes which allowed me to map my code piles visually. Saldaña (2015) described a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/ or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). According to Saldaña (2015), a code serves as a researcher-generated concept that interprets or summarizes the data. After the data were uploaded in *Dedoose*, I read through each transcript twice. On the third read, I began to highlight passages to assign summary codes to small sections or paragraphs. I repeated this process for each transcript. After reviewing all transcripts, I used the options in *Dedoose* to assign ‘parent codes’ for broad themes and ‘sub-codes’ for ideas that fit under those themes (Appendix F). After this process, I went back through each transcript again, starting with blank transcripts each time, with a list of my parent and sub-codes to engage in a second round of coding. I read through each parent code, along with the sub-codes under them to continue to correlate, categorize, and refine to see the broad themes that emerged from this study.

Saldaña (2015) asserted coding is not just labeling. Rather, he likened coding to “linking” in that codes help link back to other data and to related codes. He posited that coding is not a linear process, rather a cyclical one. Thus, after the first round of descriptive coding, I went

through several more rounds of coding and refining. These additional coding cycles enhanced the trustworthiness of this study. I also used Grundy's (1987) ideas of curriculum as *product*, curriculum as *practice*, and curriculum as *praxis*, as a lens during the data analysis process, to better understand if the data that emerged from this study connected to or diverged from these themes.

Researcher Positionality

I selected a topic area that I was personally and professionally interested in. I believe curriculum is a critically important foundation that underpins student learning and engagement in higher education from individual classes and academic programs to entire university-wide academic curricula such as general education. In my Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degree programs, I have seen the immense power faculty have on curriculum in higher education and I have experienced the positive and negative effects from the choices that faculty made regarding curriculum. Since students experience the curriculum as faculty have designed and enacted it and knowing faculty members own and execute the power in making choices about their curriculum, I believed it was imperative to study faculty beliefs about curriculum. While this study is a personal passion project, I also have a professional role at an institution like MU where I am frequently involved in curriculum-related work. Professionally, I have served on several curriculum revision and curriculum development committees in the college I am employed by. However, I am not a faculty member. I am a student affairs professional and the director of our college's centralized undergraduate advising center. I have a unique perspective in my college as someone who experiences the curriculum through our students, and I have strong opinions of what I believe a curriculum should be and what it should not be. Generally, I bring the "student voice" to these committees as I am not a content expert in the disciplines. Thus, my involvement

on any curriculum committee limits my voice to “big picture” topics like structure, graduation requirements, feasibility, credits, and overall administration.

Trustworthiness

Two forms of researcher bias exist in this study. First, my professional identity as a scholar-practitioner who regularly engages in curriculum development work could have influenced the interview protocol, the interview process, and the data analysis. My identity as a scholar, but not a faculty member, could have implicitly or explicitly informed my conclusions. Second, this possible researcher bias could have also contributed to issues in reactivity in interviews with faculty. Because I share an identity as someone who regularly engages in curriculum-related work—both in and out of the classroom—I wanted to be careful that I did not unintentionally influence responses in the interviews (Maxwell, 2013), in either verbal or nonverbal ways.

As I prepared for my interviews with the participants of this study, I knew it would be important to engage in mitigating strategies to protect trustworthiness. First, regarding my identity as a scholar-practitioner who specializes in curriculum work, I practiced purposeful site selection (Maxwell, 2013). I am employed by an institution like MU and I did not want to endanger the study by situating it in academic disciplines I am familiar with that may increase researcher bias, so I selected academic disciplines areas that are outside my professional scope. Situating this study outside of my professional life was also important for me in formulating my identity as a researcher and allowed me to distance myself from people who see me as a “knowledge holder” in this area. I also employed an audit trail where I plotted my research question next to the prompts in my interview protocol which visually linked the connections between my research question and the interview protocol. This audit trail helped ensure

dependability (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) and I consulted this audit in the data analysis process.

Second, I practiced two forms of member checks, or conversations to address respondent verification (Maxwell, 2013). In each interview, I took time to verify and repeat beliefs back to my participants, so I could be sure I shared an understanding with the faculty member, to also clarify that understanding for the audio recording. For instance, I used phrases like, *I want to make sure I understand, you believe that... or is it safe to say that you feel...?* I also engaged in a second round of interviews based on the large themes that emerged from the first round of interviews. I completed second-round interviews with six of the eleven participants, and this was based solely on their availability to meet with me again. These member checks were important for mitigating data misinterpretation and identifying any instances of researcher bias or misunderstandings that happened in the interview process (Maxwell, 2013). In addition to member checks, I also shared my initial thematic analysis, the codes that emerged, and select transcripts with a qualified peer reviewer who does not study curriculum in higher education contexts. This peer reviewer assisted me in ensuring the themes that arose from the study were in line with the views of my participants. Nowell et al. (2017) asserted a peer reviewer can provide an “external check on the research process, which may therefore increase credibility, as well as examining referential adequacy as a means to check preliminary findings and interpretations against the raw data” (p.3). This peer reviewer assisted both by supporting the initial thematic analysis and codes, as well as pointing out potential themes I may have missed.

After my discussions with a peer reviewer, I engaged in a final round of thematic analysis and coding to further refine the themes that emerged from the study. During this second round of analysis, I completed a data triangulation process where I went back to my fieldnotes and audio

recordings of each interview to ensure the conclusions were valid and appropriate contextually. Last, since I feel passionately about curriculum, I was careful to keep my thoughts and feelings to myself during the interviews.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the qualitative methodological approach to answer the research question. Since I am seeking to understand the beliefs of curriculum faculty in “soft-pure” disciplines at MU hold, using a qualitative approach with individual interviews allowed me to see the world from their perspective (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2010). I also discussed my constructivist epistemological perspective as well as the site selection, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and the ways I plan to ensure confidentiality and enhance trustworthiness.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

This chapter includes a brief profile of each participant in the study as well as an outline of MU's general education structure for undergraduate students. It is important to incorporate this information prior to outlining the findings of this study for several reasons. First, as I began analyzing the data from the first round of interviews, it became clear that each participant expressed thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about curriculum that were exclusive to them and were shaped by their unique experiences as students, educators, citizens, as well as the salient identities they held. In short, each participant had a distinctive viewpoint of curriculum due to the values they held and their life experiences. Before moving to the findings of this study in Chapter 5, it is important to learn about the participants, and their unique values and experiences.

I also include information regarding MU's general education requirements for undergraduate students since many of the participants in this study taught courses that fulfill general education requirements. At MU, these courses are specifically designed to be integrated experiences and include several requirements in the arts and humanities and social sciences. Since I recruited participants in these two colleges at MU, several of the faculty members in this study teach both discipline-specific courses, as well as courses that help students meet these general education requirements.

MU's General Education Structure

All undergraduate students, regardless of major or college, must take a series of courses to fulfill MU's general education requirement. These requirements include a course in writing, two courses in mathematics, three courses in the biological and physical sciences, two courses in the arts and humanities, and two courses in the social sciences. While all students must take the same 100-level writing course entitled WRT120, for all other courses, students may select from a

list of classes that fulfill each area. The purpose of the general education requirement at MU is to instill critical thinking skills and an appreciation of diversity early in the undergraduate experience. MU also has a tier-two level writing requirement that is fulfilled by a course in each major to act as a bookend to the writing experience. This course is generally a capstone or other 400-level experience that students typically take in their last year. Since MU is a large research-oriented institution, the general education courses also provide first- and second-year students with a smaller classroom experience. Typically, these classes allow only 25 to 45 students per section. Since I situated this study in the arts and humanities and social science disciplines at MU, many of the participants teach general education courses as well as courses for their academic department.

Participant Profiles

Eleven faculty from the social science and arts and humanities disciplines participated in this study. At the time of the interviews, each of these faculty members were employed at MU with a 50%-time teaching appointment or higher. The chart below highlights the associated college and academic department each participant worked within as well as their appointment type, any additional administrative roles, and their years of teaching experience. Each of these faculty members had at least two years teaching experience at the college/university level at the time of the interview (at MU or at another institution). Table 4.1 includes their educational and career history, as well as a brief description of their teaching experiences/roles on campus. I have either changed or left out any details that may make the participants identifiable. For instance, specific courses and the name of MU's general education program has been changed to protect confidentiality.

Name	College	Academic Department(s)	Appointment Type	Years of Teaching Experience
Isa	Arts & Letters	Writing	Fixed Term	6-15
Mark	Arts & Letters	Theatre Arts, Cultural Management, and Museum Studies	Fixed Term	2-5
Aavi	Arts & Letters	Art, Art History, and Design	Tenure track	2-5
Sakari	Arts & Letters	Religious Studies, Indian American and Indigenous Studies	Fixed Term	6-15
Stephanie	Social Science	Human Development and Family Studies	Tenured	6-15
Diana	Arts & Letters	Art, Art History, and Design	Tenured	25+
Slone	Social Science	Anthropology	Tenure track, Associate Chairperson, Director MU Campus Archeology	6-15
Richard	Social Science	Sociology	Tenured, Former chairperson	25+
Emilee	Social Science	History	Tenured and Faculty Advisor	25+
Peter	Social Science	School of Social Work	Fixed Term and Faculty Advisor	2-5
Oliver	Social Science	Center for Integrative Studies/Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Sciences	Fixed Term	6-15

Table 4. 1: Participant Information

Isa

Isa has taught at the college level for approximately 15 years, and has been employed at MU in the Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures Department for the last three years. She has a master's degree in medieval studies and a PhD in English literature. After completing her PhD, she initially wanted to pursue a career as a tenure-track faculty member teaching medieval studies, but she found the job market lacking in opportunities. Instead, she found freelance work as an editor for a press that publishes medieval work. She gained considerable experience working with authors as she assisted them in the writing process while preparing their work for

print. She applied for the position at MU based on her experience at the medieval press as well as her academic training in English and medieval literature.

Isa is a fixed-term faculty member and previously taught courses in the arts and humanities area for MU's general education requirement. She currently teaches three sections of WRT120 each semester. All students at MU must take this writing course, so her sections are largely comprised of first-year students from a variety of different colleges and majors. Isa teaches three sections of this course per semester.

The Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures Department at MU has a set design for WRT120 which is guided by several first-year writing program directors. The reason for this structure and oversight of the WRT120 curriculum is to ensure that each student taking the course has a similar baseline experience. Each instructor for WRT120 may make only a few approved changes to the curriculum each semester. Isa's views of curriculum center around this course. Knowing she cannot make many changes to the set curriculum, she makes decisions in the classroom based on skillsets she wants students to learn in the course and her values on how writing classes should be taught. For example, Isa greatly values reflection in the writing process, so when lesson planning, she uses small group work, discussion, sharing, and reflective exercises in the classroom as her "pedagogical toolkit." Isa explained she strives to bolster analytical and critical thinking skills while instilling self-confidence and self-direction in her students.

Mark

Mark is a fixed-term faculty member with three years of teaching experience at MU. He was a spousal hire and was recruited by several academic departments after his wife was offered a tenure-track position elsewhere on campus. Mark has 15 years of professional experience in

theater productions, as well as previous full-time roles at various museums. Prior to entering higher education, his professional roles focused on theatre performance, digital engagement, and learning programs for patrons. Mark has an undergraduate degree in Performing Arts and a master's degrees in Business Administration and Museum Studies.

Mark's appointment at MU is shared by the Theatre, Museum Studies, and Digital Humanities departments. He teaches several courses each semester including theatre production, introduction of arts and cultural management, and learning in museums. While many of his previous professional roles involved teaching and learning via interactive and digital designs, his role as a faculty member at MU was his first experience teaching at the college-level and in the classroom.

Mark views curriculum from multiple viewpoints, given the varied teaching and administrative responsibilities he has across several departments at MU. He is engaged in curriculum development work at the class level, as well as at the department level. He is also experienced in academic program design and implementation, serving as the coordinator for a new program at MU, the Digital Humanities Program. He tends to focus on his individual classes, and he also considers the whole academic program students traverse through. For example, he often consults with other faculty members to discuss the content in their classes to ensure the content is not overlapping and to ensure the department avoids any gaps in program design. These conversations are often informal, but they do allow Mark to be responsive to the needs of students and the changing needs of the industry. Mark genuinely wants to help his students succeed in the museum and/or theatre industries and he uses curriculum as a vehicle to provide as many experiential learning and networking opportunities in the classroom as possible.

Aavi

Aavi is a tenure-track faculty member in the Art, Art History, and Design Department, however, the majority of his educational and professional background is in engineering and technology. He has an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering and a master's degree in Artificial Intelligence. After he completed his master's degree, he spent several years working professionally doing start-up tech work in Silicon Valley. He worked for several start-ups but became bored with the daily grind. Aavi ultimately wanted to explore how innovations in technology could be used for the good of all people, but he was quickly dissatisfied with the capitalistic focus of the start-up culture. While he was working in Silicon Valley, he became connected with an artist space and he was inspired to start working with artists in using technology as creative mediums. Aavi changed trajectories again and started to pursue a PhD in interaction design. It was during his time in a PhD program that he realized he wanted "to be an artist rather than study it," so he left his PhD, and completed an MFA.

While Aavi's journey to become a faculty member in the Art, Art History, and Design Department was unconventional, he gained several years teaching experience while he was initially pursuing his PhD, then later while he completed his MFA. At MU, Aavi teaches electronic art (this course teaches students how to use the computer as a tool to make art), physical computing (this course teaches students to use electronics for creative projects), and creative coding (this course focuses on the aesthetics of programming). Each of these courses are upper-level and geared towards juniors and seniors.

Aavi believes strongly in the concept of *thinking through making*. He values practical applications of concepts *and* the process of reflective discovery. Since he has both technical and artistic training, he has a unique view of the world and he wants his students to become engaged

citizens and develop critical thinking skills through the creative process. Aavi also strives to involve his students in the construction of their own curriculum. He values innovation and discovery and involves each class in the curriculum design process by asking them to design a project that they will complete by the end of the course. He described this process as being "...all about the community. It is about students coming together and building a relationship throughout the semester with each other and with myself as well."

Sakari

Sakari is a fixed-term faculty member who has an appointment in the Religious Studies Department at MU. She has approximately 12 years of experience teaching at the college level, both at MU and at another institution. Sakari has an undergraduate degree in Religious Studies, a master's degree in Theological Studies, and a PhD in Religion in the Americas. She teaches several classes at MU including a 100-level exploring religion course, a 200-level religion in the United States course, a 300-level Native American religions course, and a 200-level integrative studies course which focuses on religion and race in America. Her research is focused on the commodification of a health and wellness practice in America, particularly when viewed from gender, race, class, and decolonizing perspectives.

Sakari has strong views about the influence curriculum can have on students. She said, "Curriculum is political. Curriculum has the opportunity to be transformative and to work towards redistributing power, but more often than not, curriculum tends to reify power." Her viewpoint that *curriculum is political* is a guiding principle to how she approaches curriculum development and reorganization. She tries to be cognizant of the pedagogical choices she makes as she understands curriculum decisions often reinforce the status quo. For example, Sakari strives to infuse each of her classes with books and authors that are not from a white majority

perspective as she wants to avoid being a part of an educational system that perpetuates white supremacy. Through her instructional design choices, she also strives to confront systematic racism head on. She tells students it is important to be knowledgeable of systems of oppression, so they do not become perpetrators of those systems. She wants her students to learn to “sit with discomfort” and creates assignments and discussions that are reflective, yet action oriented.

Of all of the participants in this study, Sakari held some of the strongest values on how curriculum can be used as a tool *for good*, particularly from a social justice perspective. She understood her views could be considered “leftist,” and thus, unpopular to some while embraced by others. She feels compelled, however, to continue to live out her values as an educator. Sakari did indicate that she receives overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, and she feels supported by her discipline and academic department to continue challenging the status quo. She also indicated that her freedom to focus on teaching and research equally at a large research-orientated institution was due to her fixed-term status, knowing a tenure-track appointment would require her to focus on research above teaching.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a tenured faculty member in the Human Development and Family Studies Department at MU. She has an undergraduate degree in elementary and special education, an English as a second language certificate, a master’s degree in special education and assistive technology, and a PhD in special education. Stephanie initially started her professional career as a special education teacher in the K-12 system for students with a variety of disabilities, but she never felt properly prepared enough to teach them and truly meet their needs. She was driven to pursue her master’s degree and her PhD so she could improve the overall practices for future

special education teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and other providers who engage with children with disabilities.

Stephanie has been teaching at the college-level for several years, but prior to transitioning to higher education, she taught in the K-12 system. She teaches several classes at MU, including a 300-level undergraduate assessment course, a 400-level children with special needs course, and an 800-level families with special needs children course. She also has a very active research agenda with a lengthy list of publications. In addition to her publications, she also directs an autism research lab, which includes faculty, graduate, and undergraduate researchers. The lab is dedicated to making an impact in the daily lives of children with disabilities.

Stephanie has years of experience in developing and revising curriculum at both the K-12 and college levels. Her process of developing or revising courses is to reflect on what she wants her students to learn and she considers curriculum to be the cycle of what she wants students to learn, how she will go about teaching that content, and how she will assess whether students learned the content. Across each of her classes, Stephanie strives to impart important skillsets student must have in working with children with disabilities including person-first and identity-first language, active listening strategies, and a knowledge of appropriate terms to use with children and their families.

Stephanie also has experience in larger-scale curriculum development work done at the academic department level. Since many of her students go on to be providers in the field working with children with disabilities, Stephanie believed it was important to be involved when her department went through a curriculum revision process. During that process, her goal was to consider what was the “most critical for individuals to have when they graduate, for their future career paths” and reverse engineer those outcomes as content in her courses.

Diana

Diana is a tenured faculty member in the Art, Art History, and Design Department. She has taught at the collegiate level for more than 30 years at MU and several other institutions. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) where she focused on textile design, painting, and print making, and a Master of Fine Arts (MFA), where she studied painting and print making. At MU, she teaches primarily painting courses to students in BFA programs.

Diana discovered a love of teaching when she was in her MFA program. She had the opportunity to teach a few courses and it became a passion for her. After her MFA, she applied to as many teaching positions as she could, working at various institutional types until she eventually made her way to MU. Diana considers curriculum from several perspectives, and she tends to separate out important messages she wants to impart to her students by thinking in terms of the *practical* (i.e., the act of painting) and the *philosophical* (i.e., what does this work of art mean?). In fact, Diana considers herself a bit of an outlier from other faculty in her department in terms of teaching approach and course content. She strives to push students to think differently, using curriculum as a tool to do so. For instance, in one of her courses which focuses on color and design, she does not allow her students to submit work that is representational (e.g., the work cannot represent a banana as the way it looks in real life). While all other faculty in her department allow students to submit representation work, Diana does not. She believes artistic growth happens when students are asked to look at an assignment from a new perspective. Diana noted she is also the only faculty member in her department that asks students in a skill-based course to read articles and reflect upon what they read. She believes writing and communication are vitally important skills for her students.

Diana is also passionate about ensuring her students learn inclusive art history, not a socially constructed version made up from a white, colonist, European viewpoint. She strives to teach her students to deeply question and push back against a dominant paradigm, particularly when that paradigm is one-sided. She hopes to empower students to not only understand different ways of viewing the world, but to be aware of and acknowledge their own worldview and the ways in which that worldview can grow and change.

Slone

Slone is a tenure-track faculty member and the Associate Chairperson in the Anthropology Department. She has an undergraduate degree in anthropology and English and a PhD in cultural and social anthropology. Slone also serves as the director for the campus archaeology program at MU. She leads a team of PhD students and they monitor all construction projects on campus to ensure any historic or prehistoric sites are mitigated properly.

In addition to her time at MU, she has 15 years of teaching experiences at several different institutional types, including a different land-grant institution, a community college, and a teaching-focused state university. She teaches two courses including a 200-level introduction to archaeology course and a 400-level laboratory methods in archaeology capstone course. She also works with graduate students during their internship experiences. Slone is a historical archaeologist, and her research focuses on immigration and immigrant experiences in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States.

Slone considers curriculum to be a cyclical process where her lectures, assignments, and readings all interact to build off of and inform the others. She has several learning goals for each of her classes including the ability to date, identify, and interpret historical objects, as well as ethics, especially with working with community members, indigenous peoples, descendant

groups, and the value of archeology in general. Slone likes to reinforce these learning goals through her instructional design choices. For example, in her capstone course, students are asked to present a portfolio to demonstrate how their assignments from the last four years align with department goals.

In addition to her teaching and administrative responsibilities as Associate Chairperson, Slone also serves on a large-scale curriculum committee within her department and she leads a small taskforce to conduct an equity audit of the entire curriculum, across each of the four subgroups in the department (forensic anthropology, cultural anthropology, physical anthropology, and archeology). The taskforce is pursuing new ways to assess learning outside of papers and exams, as well as seeking to diversify content in each course. Specifically, she wants to help her colleagues diversify their syllabi to include work that offer non-white perspectives that are not traditionally presented to students. Slone also places a high importance on including videos, books, and other forms of media from Indigenous and descendant communities.

Richard

Richard is a tenured faculty member in the Sociology Department with more than 35 years of teaching experience. He has an undergraduate degree in political science and music, a master's degree in political science, and a PhD in development sociology. During his master's degree, he took a break from his program to join the Peace Corps as a volunteer in West Africa. After he completed his PhD, Richard spent 24 years at a state university on the West Coast until he was recruited to MU to be the Chairperson of the Sociology Department.

After his chairperson appointment ended, he elected to return to a faculty role in the department. Richard's long career in higher education includes years of research and fieldwork as well as different opportunities to teach internationally. His research focuses on rural

sociology, with an emphasis on mixed methods approaches to farming. At MU, Richard teaches several courses including a 100-level introduction to sociology course, a 300-level general studies course in the social sciences, as well as 200-level and a 400-level research methods courses. He's also served on numerous graduate and doctoral level committees.

Richard views curriculum as the teaching and learning that happens across programs or majors as well as within individual classes. He believes attention to the learning process, including the learning outcomes for the course, the learning activities selected, and how to assess if the learning outcomes have been achieved, are the fundamental components for all curriculum decisions. He explained, "I think of pedagogy as the *how* and the curriculum as the *what*." In addition to developing and implementing curriculum for new courses, Richard also has years of experience engaging in curriculum development committees. He expressed a concern regarding curriculum development committees in that they often do not delve deep enough under the surface to discuss key elements of course content. He believes this lack of depth can result in a lack of cohesion between classes, and students may struggle to understand or interpret the skillsets they gained to potential employers or graduate school programs.

Emilee

Emilee is a tenured faculty member in the History Department at MU. Her specialty is medieval history with an emphasis on legal history in France and England in the 11th and 12th centuries. She has always been drawn to history and always knew she was going to be a historian. She has been employed at MU for 44 years and teaching at the college level for close to 50 years. Emilee teaches several courses for the History Department at MU, including a 200-level course on historical methods and skills, a 200-level course on ancient and medieval history, 300-level course on medieval Europe, and a 300-level course on England and culture to 1700.

Emilee has a structured way of thinking about curriculum and designing her courses. She credits these views to her academic discipline as courses are often taught in a linear manner to account for certain chronological points in the past (e.g., world history to 1500 and world history since 1500). She pointed out that unlike other academic disciplines, like medicine or engineering, there are far fewer new developments in medieval history. Like other participants, Emilee considers curriculum and pedagogy as intertwined, but she indicated that she views curriculum from a primarily pedagogical lens. She spends the most time during course development on the “how” versus the “what.” She also shared that even if her students are not interested in becoming historians, she strives to instill analytical and critical thinking skills, research skills, and the ability to make a well-formed argument as important takeaways for students.

Of all the participants interviewed for this study, Emilee has the longest career, both at MU and in sheer number of years teaching. In her time at MU, she has taught through several social movements, wars, administration changes, a recession, and a shift to online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic. She also holds several administrative positions in her department as the Associate Chairperson and a faculty advisor, as well as a position on a university-level curriculum approval committee. Over the span of her career, she has amassed a large amount of experience in curriculum design and implementation.

Peter

Peter is an alumnus of MU, holding an undergraduate degree in psychology and a master’s degree in social work. After graduating with his MSW, he went to work for a community mental health organization and conducted family therapy for several years before being hired as a fixed-term faculty member in the School of Social Work. Peter teaches primarily master’s level courses, including an 800-level clinical assessment and diagnosis course, an 800-

level individual and group therapy course, and an 800-level family and couple's therapy course. He also teaches a 400-level undergraduate course on suicide intervention. In addition to his role as a fixed-term faculty member, Peter also serves as an academic advisor and recruiter for his department.

From a faculty lens, Peter views curriculum as the content of what is taught in a course. From an advisor and recruiter lens, he views curriculum more broadly, to encompass the whole academic program students will travel through to graduation. He also expressed that his views of curriculum evolved over time since he had no prior teaching experience. He prioritized "learning to teach" over changing the courses he inherited. He stated, "I still think of curriculum as being a part of what we teach, but it's also what students are hoping to learn or gain from the skills, knowledge, reflective abilities..." Peter focuses on applied skillsets for students as well as content because the MSW is a terminal degree in his field, and he strives to help students become the "best social workers they can be."

During his time at MU, Peter had the opportunity to engage in large-scale curriculum development work. He served on a curriculum evaluation committee in his department where he mapped out the entire major from beginning to end, evaluating pre-requisites, corequisites, and overall requirements. The committee also spent time reviewing syllabi from each class to better understand what was being taught in the classroom and to coordinate content to ensure there were fewer gaps in their program.

Oliver

Oliver is fixed-term faculty member in Interdisciplinary Studies in the Social Sciences Department. He holds a BA in history and political science and a PhD in history. Prior to arriving at MU as a spousal hire, Oliver taught courses for several institutions, including two

different state colleges and a private college. In total, he has been teaching for approximately eight years at the college-level. At MU, Oliver teaches several sections of a capstone course geared towards seniors, which also fulfills their tier two writing requirement. He also has experience teaching history and integrative studies courses.

Oliver shared that when he taught in interdisciplinary studies, he often did not feel in charge of the curriculum for his courses. Like WRT120, these courses are a part of the general education program at MU, and thousands of students enroll each semester to complete these requirements. He indicated that he has only a small role in defining or creating the curriculum. Rather, the curriculum was dictated by others, even down to the learning goals, to ensure students had a similar experience regardless of instructor. He was able to make some decisions about implementation, but not many. Oliver also experienced a fair amount of student apathy in these courses, explaining that students often viewed them as something they needed to “get through” to graduate. Oliver did indicate that he has more voice in what is taught in his capstone classes.

While he has not engaged in many large-scale curriculum development efforts, Oliver does approach each class with a set of skills and learning outcomes he wants students to leave the course with. Chiefly, he strives to bring a social justice perspective into his courses by highlighting marginalized voices and teaching for activism. He also hopes students will enhance their writing abilities, broaden and shift their worldview (to a non-U.S.-centric view), increase empathy, and learn applicable communication skills.

Summary of Participant Profiles

The eleven faculty from the social science and arts and humanities disciplines who participated in this study discussed a multitude of beliefs of curriculum over the interview

process. They shared their deepest thoughts on curriculum and discussed the contexts in which they enacted their beliefs about curriculum in their daily work. They frequently discussed their passion for their role as educators, well as their fears and challenges connected to curriculum-related work. These profiles are intended to offer a brief introduction to each participant. In the next chapter, I will discuss the broad findings of this study and will delve deeper into each participant's beliefs.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The data analysis process involved several rounds of thematic coding using *Dedoose*, a qualitative data analysis software package available online. After careful analysis of the data, I identified several ways in which faculty describe their beliefs of curriculum. Six contexts emerged about how faculty enact their beliefs in their daily work. In this chapter, I begin with highlighting faculty beliefs of curriculum, then I will discuss the following six themes: curriculum development work, pedagogical approaches in the classroom, teaching, academic discipline, academic freedom, and faculty appointment type. The first section of this chapter centers on the data from these six themes, while the second section will address how these data align with my research question of: what are faculty beliefs of curriculum and in what contexts do they act on those beliefs?

Faculty Beliefs of Curriculum

Faculty Descriptions of Beliefs

When faculty spoke about their curriculum beliefs, they often used stories, metaphors, and imagery (e.g., comparing curriculum to a pathway or journey). It was not always easy for them to identify their beliefs, or a belief structure, and many participants remarked that they had not often considered *what* they believe as much as they thought about more action-oriented choices like *how* and *why* when considering curriculum. It is important to note that faculty did not hold just one view of curriculum, but many. Their beliefs were impacted by their faculty appointment type, additional administrative assignments, and the different courses they teach. This section will outline several subcategories that emerged when faculty discussed their beliefs of curriculum. These subcategories are: curriculum as individual courses, curriculum as courses

in an academic program/major, curriculum as the process of teaching/learning, and curriculum as transformative.

Curriculum as Individual Courses

Most participants considered their own courses first when asked about their beliefs of curriculum. Specifically, they discussed decisions about course content, what they wanted students to learn, and how they teach the selected content. The data relating to the contexts faculty enacted their curriculum-related beliefs will come later in this chapter, but it is important to acknowledge that most participants thought about what is in their own locus of control first. As such, the most common context faculty spoke from was their everyday experiences with curriculum in their own courses. For example, Stephanie, a tenured faculty member in the Human Development and Family Studies Department said,

Well, first I think about what it is I want my students to learn. Then the curriculum is how I'm going to go about teaching them that content. Both the content itself, but also the methodology I might use to present that content. Then this is actually something I talk about a lot in my assessment course. It's kind of the cycle of teaching.

Slone, a tenure track faculty member in the Anthropology Department, offers a parallel viewpoint when asked about her beliefs of curriculum. She stated, "I think about how the assignments and the lectures and the readings all interact with each other and inform each other. To me, that's probably the most important part." Slone went on to clarify her goal is for students to understand, "the concepts are overlapping in everything they hear and see and do." Diana, a tenured faculty member in the Art, Art History and Design Department, offered a comparable perspective to Slone's,

On a very practical level, it's the skills that I impart to the student, but on a more philosophic level, it's an understanding of what it is to be a visual person, what it is to be a thinking person, and a critical person. Way beyond, you know, how you—I'm in teaching Painting I right now—how you get paint on the canvas. As important to me as the skill level is that they understand how, how the arts work and that they don't disrespect [the arts].

Stephanie, Slone, and Diana, as well as several other participants, discuss their beliefs of curriculum within the scope of their own classes, but in doing so, also offer a glimpse of the values they hold that underpin their beliefs. It was common for participants to respond to the question "how do you define curriculum?" with an answer that includes their goals for their courses and their values of curriculum.

When speaking of his beliefs, Oliver, a fixed-term faculty member in the Center for Integrated Studies in the Social Sciences Department said,

When I'm trying to figure out, especially as a historian, by training, a lot of our sort of curriculum is like what regions of the world get taught and what the timeframes are and things like that. I'll take that stuff into consideration. I don't always buy into it totally or use them completely, but I'll take that into consideration when I first create a class. But oftentimes, once I'm in the room, it's kind of like you just shut the door and do what you're gonna do. I don't really, I think, worry too much about does this fit in with the larger curriculum progress goals of the department or university.

Richard, a former chairperson in the Sociology Department indicated that he views curriculum from many contexts with one of them being the individual or "the curriculum within a particular class." He later discussed his academic department and offered, "at least amongst colleagues and

in the department, we don't talk much about what I would call internal curriculum. That's really left up to individuals." He concluded by discussing how this relates to academic freedom and in his experience, his department culture helped nurture an individual class viewpoint. He added,

Academic freedom can mean different things and it certainly means different things in different departments, but in sociology and certain other disciplines, it's also come to mean I even get to decide all the substance of the class, rather than it being more of a negotiation where these are the things the students are expected to learn. I'll make sure I cover those, but then I do this, and of course, how I do it is, that's my business. In sociology, at least in this department and many others, there's this notion that each professor really has much more control of that internal curriculum. Even having those discussions, can be a challenge in sociology.

Like Richard and Oliver, Stephanie offered a similar view,

This might sound terrible. I guess I don't think of the overall university view very frequently. I think my focus is much more practical in some sense in what are these individuals going to need when they go into whatever career is sort of guided by the curriculum that they're taking.

Oliver and Stephanie both noted their focus on their own classes while acknowledging they do not often think of curriculum more broadly, while Richard spoke about his experiences with his department from an administrator perspective. This viewpoint was common, even when faculty were not expressly stating it. Overall, seven of the eleven participants indicated in some way they closely associate their beliefs of curriculum with their own courses, as evidenced by the way they discussed their initial thoughts when I first asked about their beliefs. The fact that so many faculty elected to respond within this context is not particularly surprising, however, it is worth

noting these perspectives serve as the contextual foundation for how faculty think and eventually enact their beliefs about curriculum.

Curriculum as Courses in an Academic Program/Major

While most faculty considered their own classes first when discussing their beliefs about curriculum, many – especially those with additional administrative or advising roles – viewed curriculum from a broader viewpoint to include their own classes, with an added focus on the academic program or major. For example, Emilee, a tenured faculty member in the History Department, who also serves as the Associate Chairperson, and has a 50%-time academic advisor appointment, said “we want our programs to be intellectually coherent and helpful to our students.” She later referred to her own growth in viewing curriculum from different perspectives due to her varying roles in the department. She relayed,

I thought about the content of my classes, but not much about the bigger picture. As I’ve more or less moved up in the world or at least moved to situations where I wasn’t just told what I would be teaching, I’ve inevitably started to look more at larger pictures, like what is the design of the courses in the department, what is the design of the curriculum at the college level and, indeed, what is the design of the curriculum at the university level.

Richard indicated his role as a department chairperson helped to shape his view of curriculum and he relayed his frustration with urging the faculty in his department to consider curriculum at the program level rather than in their individual silos. He said,

The idea of saying, well, what do we want our students to learn throughout all our classes and what are our learning goals? I’ve had some training in that. That’s, it’s almost

nonexistent. The idea of trying to understand what's in each class and how it all comes together as part of an overall learning program for students, that's very absent.

Isa, a fixed-term faculty member in the Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures Department shared a similar perspective. Isa is an instructor for WRT120, the only course at MU that every student must take to meet graduation requirements. She stated,

It can be a struggle because we all want to have this kind of independence and ability to determine what it is I'm going to do day to day...When I was teaching previously, I did a lot of that. Now, being in this department, it is much more you're thinking what are the goals of the group and what are the goals of the department.

Mark, a fixed-term faculty member in the Theatre and Museum Studies Department, shared a similar viewpoint about the importance of a major curriculum that offers a cohesive experience across all of the individual classes. He said, "It's really just about making that cohesive experience, so students get what they need to know to go into the workforce or to go into the sector." He later followed up with,

My concern is that in the program largely, that we're not teaching the same thing or repeating things that students are coming in to one class and getting the same thing in another. We did go over that and we figured that out and figured out that, no, we're not really intersecting at all, which is great, so it really kinda builds. That's more my concern because I think if it was that, then I would change something in my course to make sure that I wasn't being duplicative within the program.

Emilee, Isa, Richard, and Mark all shared viewpoints of curriculum that included their own courses, but also frequently referred to the overall goals and learning outcomes of their academic programs. It was common for faculty to quickly jump to their goals and values of their individual

curriculums when asked about their beliefs, but fewer participants included a departmental perspective. Emilee, an Associate Chairperson and Richard, a former Chairperson, were the only two participants in the study to include the academic unit in their reflections when first asked about their beliefs.

Curriculum as the Process of Teaching and Learning

The most common contexts faculty used to describe their beliefs of curriculum were their individual classes and their academic programs. Faculty also discussed curriculum more abstractly, often framing their views and goals in the context of teaching and learning that happens in the classroom and outside of it. For example, Richard explained his thoughts on curriculum from a teaching and learning perspective from a broad view. He said, “In a very general sense, it’s how do you shape the learning process and what goals, I guess I should add what goals are you trying to achieve in the learning process.” He later went on to explain,

I view curriculum in the context of teaching and learning. I think learning is an interactive process. I think the curriculum is how you shape, in very general terms, how you shape the learning activities that take place in a classroom or in a learning situation, and then how you connect those to make sure there’s some, there’s a good process of learning that goes on.

Aavi, a tenure-track faculty member in the Art, Art History and Design Department shared a similar view regarding the importance of a teaching and learning perspective. He always seeks to create a “collaborative learning environment” or a “community of learning” in his classroom where his students have a safe place to explore. He remarked,

Yeah, so I was thinking, you can learn all this online but what am I offering that’s different?...It’s that critical thinking. It’s that community. It’s about collaboration. It’s

about being able to know how to think, how to find a solution. It's not, to me, I don't care if the students aren't able to find the right answer. That to me is secondary. It's actually how to go be able to go find that answer, that is probably most important.

As an art instructor, Aavi teaches several studio classes. He shared, "a studio class, is all about the community. It is about students coming together and building a relationship throughout the semester with each other and with myself as well." He also strives for students to learn through *practice*. He said, "For me, it's thinking through making. That's how I talk about it. We can talk about these ideas abstractly, but the point of an art practice is to actually do it." Like Aavi, Isa strives to create reflective community in her writing courses by "developing a community and a culture within each writing class." She indicated her teaching centers on being student focused and allowing self-discovery. She later added,

It is really getting the students to think about what kind of expertise and knowledge they already have. How can they build on that? How can they draw from that as they're building skills for writing and research for their future academic career? I mean, those are kind of broad, broad swaths, or broad strokes, I think, in which to paint the curriculum, but we are all moving in those directions and trying to satisfy those objectives.

Richard, Aavi, and Isa all discussed ways in which they approach student learning in their classes as teachers, in particular, creating a "community" in the classroom was important to Aavi and Isa. Some participants, like Stephanie, provided more specific examples of how she operationalizes a teaching and learning perspective in her classes. Stephanie tries to alter the content of her course each semester to fit the individuals who are enrolled and their career aspirations. She spends time at the beginning of each semester trying to get to know who they are, what they hope to gain from her course, and what their goals/career objectives are. She said,

My curriculum is gonna stay the same for the most part cuz you're not gonna change that after you find out who's in your course. Your syllabus is already set, but what can I do to make this course most relevant? When I have examples, I find out, oh, wow, I have three people in this course this semester who want to be speech language pathologists. I'm gonna make sure I provide examples that are relevant to them specifically, whereas normally, maybe I'd provide more examples that are relevant to early childhood educators or something of that nature.

Stephanie's goal is to impact the student learning that takes place in her class by providing relevant examples so students can make easier connections to their future work. Stephanie's experience provides one example of how participants change their teaching to ensure student learning. More data regarding the context of teaching will be detailed later in this chapter.

Curriculum as Transformative

Two faculty members in this study discussed their beliefs of curriculum from contexts that went beyond their individual classes, academic programs, and/or teaching and learning perspectives. Sakari and Oliver both identified the power curriculum has to shape students – their minds, goals, beliefs, ethics, career aspirations – as a way to bring about social awareness, activism, and global citizenship. They each relayed the power of the curriculum to either maintain or change the status quo. Sakari, a fixed-term faculty member in the Religious Studies Department questioned,

But more in the sense of are we trying to reinforce the status quo? Or are we trying to question the status quo? Oftentimes, when I look at some of our curriculums, I think to myself that we are reinforcing certain parts of white supremacy culture, whether it's through the authors and the subjects we choose to teach, or oftentimes, I think it's who's

left, who's left out of the conversation. Curriculum is political. Curriculum has the opportunity to be transformative and to work towards redistributing power, but more often than not, curriculum tends to reify power. I think that it would be really great if we took the opportunity to really kinda shake things up using curriculum, but we don't.

Sakari went on to explain she uses reflective papers as a mechanism for students to examine the history they were taught in their K-12 schools. She said,

Yeah, there's certain things I want to hit in terms of topics, just because, or content, just because I know they haven't gotten it in their K-12. The inevitable question when they do reflections and stuff is why didn't I learn about this before? It's like, well, that's because education is political. People make decisions and so these are the decisions I'm making.

Oliver, a trained historian, offers similar viewpoints as Sakari. He views traditional history courses as being dominated by a Western worldview, one that is particularly limiting because these courses typically focus on the last 1000 years and use certain common start and end dates to drive course content (e.g., World History to 1500, and World History since 1500). He offered this example,

We would talk about well, why is it that we focus so heavily on this last, you know, 1000 years basically of... why don't we tell this other bigger story? What if we thought about geography differently? Thought about how maps have influenced the way we think about the world or connections between places. I would have quite a lot of those discussions in those classes about, well, why are we starting here? Why are we including these places, and should we be doing that? Oftentimes, we didn't.

He went on to conclude,

...it's always kind of the Western world who's leading it that way. I've also heard people argue in the past that, to some extent, the way that universities frame intro level classes are kind of in service of the sciences. We tell the story of here's modern history and it starts at this particular moment and progresses forward. It's largely the story of, you know, scientific and political and etc. advancements and it dovetails nicely with what the chemists and the physicists and all those people want to do about how science can make the world so much better. I used to have kind of discussions with students about why do we start here and not some other time? Why do we include these places and not others? How would it shift if we thought about the world differently?

Sakari and Oliver both identified the power curriculum has in the academy to transform student's worldview and they both used reflection – Sakari with reflection papers and Oliver with reflective group discussions – to kickstart students into thinking about religion and history from new viewpoints. While Oliver's approach is more philosophical, Sakari's was more action oriented. She hopes her classes will become the catalyst for students to question and eventually help dismantle systematic racism and white supremacy.

In this section, I summarized the data concerning how faculty presented their initial beliefs of curriculum. Each of the participants framed their beliefs about curriculum from certain viewpoints including their individual classes and academic programs. Some faculty also discussed their beliefs from more philosophical viewpoints including teaching and learning contexts and the transformational power of the curriculum. In the following sections I dive deeper into both faculty beliefs of curriculum as well as contexts in which they enacted their beliefs about curriculum.

Curriculum Beliefs: Goals and Skillsets

This section explores the ways in which faculty spoke about their goals for curriculum, specifically what they wanted students to take away from their courses and programs. Unlike sharing their beliefs, all faculty in this study discussed their goals for curriculum with ease. They knew exactly what they were trying to accomplish with their curriculums and could easily trace their goals of curriculum to how they enact those goals via instructional design, course modalities, choices in content, tests and assignments, and assessment methods. Faculty spoke about skillsets from the context of their individual classes, as well as the curricular “story” of their academic program. These skillsets fell into two distinct categories, career preparation and life skills/preparation, both of which are outlined below.

Career Preparation

Most faculty noted their goal to prepare students for their eventual careers, regardless of whether or not students intended to pursue a career related to their course. For example, Mark discussed his aim to prepare students for a career in museums and the performing arts. He seeks to bring a “big picture” understanding of these sectors by helping students understand how many different roles exist in these organizations. He framed his course development as being guided by these questions,

[w]hat are these management structures? What do they look like in museums and in performing arts organizations? How are they similar? How are they different? What does the nonprofit sector look like? What are the challenges that they’re dealing with? It’s more sector wide look. Cuz that’s an intro course. It’s intro to these things. A lot of people think when they see a museum, they’re like, oh, yeah, curators. They look at performing arts, oh, a director and actors. Yeah, but there’s marketing and PR and

finances and development, and all this other stuff that makes that happen. That are common to both of those organizations. That's what that class is about.

Mark strives to combat a common assumption among his students and educate them about their career options across the entire sector of museums and performing arts broadly, so that they do not take a narrow focus upon leaving college. He went on to explain that he also deeply values experiential learning, even when it is done via connections to guest speakers. He shared,

I'm a big believer in having a lot of guest lecturers in my courses. In both the, actually, in every course I've taught so far, I've had guest lecturers for, even the five-week course that I had, I've had two guest lecturers in that five-week course. Any way to connect students to professionals in the field doing the work during an in-class situation I think is really great.

Mark's use of guest speakers to share their professional experiences in museums and performing arts spaces speak to his goal of preparing students for their career. He wants to show students the varied career options in the industry, and by using a series of guest speakers he strives to demonstrate to students, "if you're looking to understand how a career, either in exhibitions or in learning programs, that's what this looks like."

Emily also shared her goal to help prepare students for their future careers. She expounded,

I very frequently will actually comment at the end of a piece, not only on the contents of the writing but also on the style. I think it's very important. The kinds of careers that students in my classes are going to go onto. In fact, for that matter, the kind of careers that anybody at [MU] is likely to go onto, they really have to be able to write clearly.

While different in approach and delivery, both Emilee and Mark strive to prepare students for their future careers by providing them with valuable learning experiences.

Marketability

Several participants noted they hoped to impart skillsets that would help make their students more marketable in their chosen careers. Slone explained that she wanted to provide students with marketable skills that would make them obvious choices for archeology jobs. She explained,

[m]y lab class next semester is a very, I don't know, pragmatic class in that you need to be able to identify and date historic artifacts. That has now come because that is directly transferrable to a job. Someone who's gonna hire an archeologist wants someone who can identify historic artifacts, date them, and then interpret them. Any work that the students do in that class is geared towards that.

Slone also shared a story about her curriculum development efforts. When leading a curriculum revision committee in her department, she strove to create a curriculum that would help make her students marketable for their future careers as archaeologists. She shared, "I feel like students are getting what they need, but also getting what will make them marketable. Before, I felt like there was maybe a push to what makes them marketable." She summed up her thoughts regarding the goals of the curriculum revisions by noting,

Our most urgent thing that we really felt like needed to be addressed is our students [were] not graduating with the kind of statistical and methodological knowledge that we feel like is required for the positions we want them to go for. Let's deal with that. Now, I really feel like, wow, some of my students are graduating. I'm like, dang. I would not want to be on the job market with them

Richard held a similar viewpoint and shared an example of how he changed his class materials to help students become more marketable by incorporating Microsoft Excel in his research methods course. He said,

One of the things I changed this year was to have students use Excel rather than Stata...I felt like, geez, how many employers are gonna ask students, do you know anything about Stata or SPSS? Zero. How many are gonna say do you know how to manage, do some stuff in Excel? I felt like that needed to be done.

Like Slone and Richard, Stephanie strives to help students understand what a career working with children with disabilities is really like. She said,

Now I'm working with tech natives, so to speak. They don't need that, but there's other things that they might need. Hey, this is how you have a conversation with a parent, face to face. I know you're used to just texting your friends, but this career is going to require that you have really hard conversations with humans, face to face. Here's how that looks and here's how you can prepare yourself for those conversations. Here's strategies you can use so you don't look foolish in those conversations.

Stephanie hopes she can provide her students with strategies for success in working with children with disabilities and their parents., She works diligently to create a low-risk learning environment for students to make mistakes in and learn from. She shared the following story,

I help [students] recognize and understand how to have those conversations with families and individuals. How to speak and use terminology that is relevant and appropriate and non-offensive in today's world. Terms that were okay 20 years ago are no longer okay for people with disabilities today. I teach them of all that. I model that in class. I also correct them when they make errors. I tell them straight from the get-go, look, you're gonna

make errors in this class. You're gonna say things that are not the right way to say it, but I'd rather correct you here in a place that's safe than have you put your foot in your mouth when you're working with those individuals directly. How terrible would you feel later if you're like, I didn't know I wasn't supposed to say that. I can teach you that now in an environment in which no one's hearing your mistake except for your peers. I can just say, you know, I understand why you said it that way, but this is the way that would be better.

All the participants in this study shared the desire to prepare students for future careers. Many of the faculty had spoken to, or were interested in speaking to, future employers to learn more about the skillsets they are looking for in recent graduates. Some participants like Mark, who came to his faculty role from years of experience in museum and theatre professional roles, knew the skillsets he wanted to impart to students based on his experiences. Some participants like Richard, who took a more traditional pathway to a tenured position in academia, looked to his professional organizations, committees, and discussions with employers to gather insights on what to build into his courses.

Life Skills

In addition to a career focus, faculty in this study also shared 15 different skillsets they identified as goals in their courses and academic programs. The full list of skillsets faculty discussed are: Working with others in a team, active listening, dialogue, critical thinking, information literacy, learning to write well, learning to make an argument, reflection, research skills, ethics, self-direction, time management, an appreciation for lifelong learning, and global citizenship. Most of these skillsets are also applicable to careers, so they serve a dual purpose, but many faculty framed their goals as being inherently valuable for life in general. In the next

section, a few of the most cited skillsets are explained. The section concludes with the importance of providing students the opportunity to practice these skills.

Critical Thinking. The most frequently cited skillsets faculty wished to impart to students were critical thinking or analytical skills. Almost all faculty mentioned one of these as being an important lifelong skill they strive to build into their classes. For example, Emilee shared, “I’m most interested in having my students learn, in the long run, those analytical skills that the university’s always talking about...I hope I design my lectures so that they raise issues that the students can then consider on their own.” She later said, “Basically, that will help them no matter what they’re gonna go on to do in their lives.” Diana discussed a similar opinion. She hopes to impart “The analytic skills. I try to tell them, developing an idea is no different if you’re a lawyer than it is in your studio...you need to do the same thing in visual art.” Mark shared, “I think the way that I approach what I do gets to those critical thinking skills.” Richard shared similar aims and stated, “we do a lot of work on critical thinking.” Isa indicated she “definitely wants [students] to increase their analytical abilities.” Aavi wants students to be critical of the technology they rely on, as well as learn important technical skills in his studio art courses. He noted, “I want students maybe to come in where they have a tangible skillset that they learn, but they also have the opportunity to think about it critically.” Finally, Sakari relayed, “I think about that in terms of, you know, how do I teach the students to think beyond themselves about the world in a critical way?” Each of these faculty members described critical thinking and/or increased analytical and reasoning skills as important goals for their courses and most mentioned them first, as one of the most important things they hope students learn in their courses.

Reflection. Another common skillset mentioned by faculty is reflection. For instance, Isa explained one of her main learning outcomes for her classes is, “really about reflection.” She

expanded that thought and added, “It’s a class of practice and if you do the work, and if you participate and if you reflect and show some thought, you’re going to succeed because we start from this idea that they already have, they already have most of the skills that they need to succeed.” Sakari outlined a parallel perspective, “I wanna give them the space to think slowly and carefully and thoughtfully about white supremacy. I guess one of the skillsets is that I’m giving them permission to think through things slowly.” She later explained, “I wanna take that stress away from them and I wanna take that stress away from me and create an environment where they can really reflect.” Mark explained one of his central learning goals for his classes is reflection and he asks his students to conduct “Twitter reflections” weekly to keep up with the changes in industry. Aavi uses the writing process to help students reflect on their work in his courses. He noted, “all my projects... the student is required to write a conceptual statement. One or two pager, where you made an amazing work. Now, write about it. Tell me what’s your thought process. Exactly, that reflective practice...” Each of these faculty members value reflection enough to focus on it in their course design, building it into assignments and class time so students can practice this skill.

Writing. Many faculty shared the importance of learning to write well as the basis for strong communication skills in the workplace and beyond. Diana shared, “I’m the only painting faculty that makes [students] read art articles and write about them...I think it’s really important that students, even if they are artists, are able to speak and write well.” Oliver explained his focus on writing as being essential to communication development. He focuses on, “trying to encourage writing skills and writing ability” as a way to learn the content and develop an important lifelong skill. Richard shared a story from the curriculum revision committee he once served on at a previous institution. He explained the committee interviewed potential employers

asking them what kinds of skills they wanted from recent college graduates. He indicated the takeaways from those conversations were employers want, “people who can write...The [discipline] specific skills are maybe not as important for employers as sometimes we think.” As a writing faculty, it is important for Isa to help her students learn to write well, but she also situated writing as a lifelong skillset. She urges her students to,

[T]hink about yourself as a lifelong writer and not just this class as a, as giving you the skills that you’ll need for the next four years. Actually, thinking about how we write in different ways, for different audiences and at different points in our lives.

Sakari also strives to help her students develop their writing skills. “I think the ability to just write 300 words on a topic is a really important skillset to have moving forward. How do you, how do you write about this in a quick, succinct, thoughtful, nuanced way? That’s a skillset.”

Practice. One of the most common examples faculty shared about lifelong skills was the importance of allowing students opportunities to “practice” the skill in their courses. For instance, Slone uses her assignments to impart critical research skills. She said, “I try to come up with projects that allow them to critically think, allow them to gather data independently, and then allow them to analyze data.” Aavi insisted, “the point of art practice is the doing, it’s the practice.” Emily said, “[n]obody’s born knowing how to write well. It’s a skill you need to practice.” While Isa explained she uses assignments that scaffold to help students understand both writing structure and narrative writing styles. She remarked,

I definitely want them to increase their analytical abilities. It’s interesting because the first couple of projects we have them do, we really focus on narrative writing, but for me, I mean, I’m finding that any place where I can get them to practice analysis, practice

breaking things down and thinking about what they mean and blending that with that narrative is something that's really important to me.

She later when on to add that she tells students, “[y]ou need to learn and practice and explore different ways to construct your sentences or construct your paragraphs. Know that you’ll need to write differently and think differently for different situations in and outside of university.”

Emilee gives assignments in one of her classes that involve the research process using sources from the medieval time period. She stated,

As I say to them, I want to see their brains working, not merely that they can memorize.

In the undergraduate seminar, the purpose is for them to produce an original piece of research based on actual sources from the time so that they’re learning research skills in an advanced way.

She later expanded, “we want them to have experience of actually being historians rather than just learning what other historians did. Basically, they’re doing individual research, based on original sources, so they are functioning as historians.” Oliver held a similar viewpoint. He said,

I try to, I think that all students should get experience with communication skills and that’s a big reason why I do group work and active learning. I think there’s often an assumption among, being diplomatic, more traditional faculty members that you learn how to be a good communicator just by watching other people who can talk really well. I don’t think that’s the case

Stephanie spoke of her decision-making process when designing her courses. She shared,

[S]ome of those other decisions go back to thinking about Bloom’s taxonomy. What is it that they just need to know? What is it they need to be competent? And what is it that they need to be able to apply in a variety of circumstances? I think about, okay, if I want

them to be able to take data and make databased decisions, I have to show them what that looks like in the classroom. I have to give them chances to apply it. Even if I can't apply it in a lab setting...can I apply it to case examples? Can I show them a video and have them make those decisions based on that video data that we've gathered?

This section outlined how faculty discussed their goals for curriculum, specifically how they wanted to impart important skillsets to students that would be useful in their future careers and lives in general. Every faculty member outlined several goals for their students from both career and life skills perspectives. The skills extended beyond simply learning the content of the course. Faculty named many skillsets as learning outcomes, including working with others in a team, active listening, dialogue, critical thinking, information literacy, learning to write well, learning to make an argument, reflection, research skills, ethics, self-direction, time management, an appreciation for lifelong learning, and global citizenship. The three most commonly cited skillsets were critical thinking, reflection, and writing. Faculty members discussed the important of creating time and space in their course designs for students to practice these skills.

Curriculum Beliefs: Skillsets and General Education/Elective Courses

Several participants taught both discipline specific courses as well as courses for MU's general education program. Other faculty taught discipline specific courses that often served as popular electives for students to take as they completed their coursework. MU's general education coursework includes arts, humanities, social sciences, biological and physical sciences, writing, and mathematics requirements. All students must take courses from each of these areas in order to graduate, but they have several choices in each area to select from. Their college and major will dictate some of their selections, but generally, students can choose from eight to ten

options in each category. Also depending on college, major, and minor, approximately 20-30% of a student's coursework at MU will fall into an elective category. Since MU is such a sizable institution with thousands of courses offered, students have hundreds of choices when it comes to fulfilling their electives in their degree programs. Some faculty members, like Diana, Mark, Slone, and Aavi largely teach discipline specific courses to groups of students who are in majors within their department with pipelines to careers in those industries. Mark, for example, teaches several courses in museum studies for students who intend to work in museums. These faculty often have the same students in sequential courses over their time at MU, while other faculty members including Sakari, Emilee, Oliver, Stephanie, and Richard, teach courses either in general education or courses that serve as electives. These faculty members discussed how they shaped their goals and skillsets around the varied students who take their courses. For example, Sakari reviewed the typical composition of students in her exploring religion course. She explained,

I would say in each of my classes, maybe we have 5 to 10% religious studies majors.

Then pretty much everyone else, too. I have pre-med students. I have pre-vet students.

Engineering, anthropology. People who are taking the class from the honors college.

Also, American Indian and Indigenous Studies minors, program majors.

Sakari also noted her dedication to examining, "things like citizenship, diversity...[and] anti-racism very, very seriously in all my syllabi." She later explained, "[F]or religious studies, I feel like it means really trying to actively put yourself in the shoes of someone else. I really try to bring that into all of my classes." While Sakari does note her lens for developing courses is typically from a critical race perspective, she did clarify how deeply intertwined religion and race are in the United States. In structuring her courses from this perspective, she hopes students

take away important diversity, equity, and inclusion frameworks that are applicable in their daily lives. This is especially important for her since she may only have students in her classes once during their time at MU.

Emilee shared a similar view to Sakari. She spoke about the importance of several skillsets for her students, including critical thinking, writing, and self-direction, knowing that most of them would not have careers as historians upon graduation. She said,

I don't assume that most of the students in my lecture courses are...actually history majors...most of our majors don't go on to be professional historians when they graduate. I think in fact, except for those relatively few. I'll say, I don't care if a year from now you can remember who Charlemagne was, but you should improve your skills.

Like Emilee, Oliver understood that most of his students would not go on to careers in history. He shared, "I want there to be some love or way of viewing the world that sticks with you, even if you never do this again." While Stephanie's students often go on to work with children with disabilities, she knew their career options were varied and her course served as a foundation for students in several different majors. She noted, "I know in my course, they're not gonna learn everything. The point of my course is to help them be better at their craft, that they'll learn in their specific disciplines, with people with disabilities and their families."

Due to his role as Chairperson, Richard's viewpoints of discipline-specific faculty teaching general education courses differs slightly from Emilee, Sakari, and Oliver's perspectives. While Richard has taught general education classes in the past, he shared how difficult it is to get faculty 'specialists' to teach these courses. He relayed,

The big issue is most tenure stream faculty don't wanna teach [general education] classes because they're not connected. I mean, sociologists can teach them...but it's not really a

sociology course. Especially for certain tenure stream faculty who view themselves as a specialist in let's say sociology of health or sociology of the environment, that's not what they do and they don't wanna teach it...now what does that say about curriculum development?

He later went on to add,

There certainly is no overall curriculum [in general education]. There's a list of classes and then it's whatever people teach. That's an extreme example of people teach what they wanna teach and it's mostly taught by instructors cuz people in departments, at least our department, the tenure stream don't wanna teach it. That's not a good situation.

That's a really not good situation.

Richard's concerns primarily center on general education courses as he later noted they serve several thousand students a year in their introduction and intermediary sociology courses at MU. However, he brings an important perspective to the administrative difficulties department chairpersons face convincing faculty to teach these classes.

Sakari, Emilee, Oliver, and Stephanie understood many of the students they teach on a daily basis would not go on to pursue careers in their disciplines. They also knew they might only see the students once during their time at MU, so they had a strong focus on skillsets as a part of their syllabus learning outcomes and goals. Interestingly, these faculty members were also among those that had some of the strongest beliefs of curriculum and about the importance of skillsets as takeaways for students.

Curriculum Beliefs: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Many participants discussed their desire to create or revise curriculum to be inclusive of diverse perspectives and social change movements. Many faculty also wanted to highlight the

previously invisible work of women and scholars of color. For several participants, the focus on bringing diversity, equity, and inclusion into their courses is a foundational belief, one they use no matter which type of course they teach (general education or discipline specific). For instance, when speaking about his beliefs of curriculum, Oliver stated,

In terms of core beliefs, one kinda main core belief that's become more core over time is a belief that all my classes should be somewhat social justice informed. I think even when I was teaching history, that was the case. Attempts to kinda bring in marginalized voices and experiences to sorta teach for empathy and teach for activism.

He also shared the following example,

We would talk about well, why is it that we focus so heavily on this last, you know, 1000 years basically of... why don't we tell this other bigger story? What if we thought about geography differently? Thought about how maps have influenced the way we think about the world or connections between places.

Oliver also spoke about how he engages students while trying to expand their worldview.

Let's go with what they are engaged with. If that means that they're really into learning about Aztec and Inca ballgames or something, let's do that. Let's talk about sports.

Or ...we would have this long discussion sometimes about fraternities and how they're these examples of homosocial spaces and the way that they interact. That wasn't always fitting into the curriculum that much, but it was something they were responding to. I was like, maybe this is something they take away from this, a way of viewing the world.

Mark holds a parallel belief to Oliver regarding a social justice perspective in his Learning in Museums course. He shared the following framework that he uses during his first class each semester,

[F]or the Learning in Museums course, I really center that at the very beginning from a social justice perspective. Talking about the history of these things but reading about...these historical writings about museum education, that are, though they're from the early 20th century, they're still pretty radical in what they talk about. But then also talking about the, what is the history of these organizations. It's not pretty. To get to a point that if these people are going to be doing museum education, they have to account for that long and awful history, because that's what they're fighting against. They're not fighting against ignorance. They're fighting against this history that is not good. Then where are we sort of reifying the patriarchy basically in the process of doing that museum work and how that's happened over time, and how that's the thing that we still have to fight against. I sort of weave that through the whole thing. I start that class with a land acknowledgement. Talking about how we're on land that was stolen from people. We're a university that was funded by other land that was stolen from people. There's a lot to unpack there, right? That's really where I start that class.

Sakari is dedicated to teaching her students about racial privilege and oppression, institutionalized, structural and societal racism, as well as how they can be activists for change. She shared the following story about why she structures her courses around these beliefs and what she hopes her students, especially her white students, take away from her courses,

I don't want the majority of students to become religion professors. This is an unsustainable field. I don't know where it's going in the future. I want to give them the skills to be able to think critically in the world about, about religion, about race, and when they're raising their children, especially if they're white students, maybe talking to their children about race so that we can start to move forward. My generation, we, my

white friends are just starting to think about, okay, yeah, I should talk to my children about race cuz they were never talked to. My parents talked to me about race, from a very real... I was aware of my brownness from a very young age in ways that my best friend who's also in the field of religious studies was not aware of her whiteness til she was 20 something

Like Sakari, Diana shared several personal experiences during her art education that informed her beliefs of creating diverse and inclusive curriculums for her students and her desire to highlight the artistic contributions of women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color. She said,

As we look to have a more inclusive curriculum, and you look back at who were your teachers. Like did I have women? Did I have people of color? I did not know Frida Kahlo, right? Until I was like in graduate school. Now, how could I know about Diego Rivera without knowing about Frida Kahlo? Because my professor didn't think she was important. Or what she did was important.

She later explained how she wants her students to question the viewpoints of curators in the art industry. She relayed,

Students understand how the art world works because, you know, I tell them you're at an R1 institution, so we're preparing you to be at the top of the heap. I want them to understand how the art world runs and that it's still run by most of the curators. Most of the people making decisions are male, white, and focused on a European trail of history. I want them to continually question that.

Diana discussed how she constructs her curriculum and why she pushes her students to deeply evaluate and question who has opportunity in the art world. She said,

I mean, we've gotta learn about acids, how to go through the process of actually preparing, how you grind down a stone, which you have to use a hydraulic lift to move around. We focus a lot on that but, always with me, I'm interested that they understand the difference between skill and concept. That skill is something...I always say to them, if you're gonna write a novel in French, gotta learn how to speak French. If you're going to be an artist, yes, you need to learn how to draw, but being able to put, make something look three dimensional on a flat piece of paper is just a language. What are you gonna do with that? How do you see the world? And why are value decisions, how are value decisions made in the art world?

Oliver, Mark, Sakari, and Diana all discussed the ways in which their beliefs about curriculum and diversity, equity, and inclusion intersect in the classes they teach. Other participants, like Stephanie and Slone also noted the importance of creating inclusive curriculums at the academic program level. Stephanie spoke about her work on a graduate-level curriculum revision process and noted,

Some of those conversations have been things like providing research that represents diverse groups. Having them read research that is produced by those who are from diverse backgrounds, instead of just that kind of white, Anglo-Saxon sort of representation that we often get in graduate level programs.

She went on to add,

We've talked to students who are currently in the department and what they think about the different opportunities they're being given, what they feel they lack. We've also talked to students who represent diverse groups to try to understand how we can be

supporting them better and what gaps in our curriculum kind of speak to our lack of understanding about diversity. I think that was a really important piece.

Like Stephanie, Slone serves on a curriculum development taskforce in her department, and she shared her guiding principles as the chairperson of an equity audit. She relayed the following story as an illustration of her experience,

I'm leading a small taskforce to do this equity audit, to look at a variety of things.

Assignments, are they biased to certain types of students that have been enculturated in a certain way, to perform a certain way? If so, how can we provide different kinds of options for assignments, not just a test or an exam. What are different ways of knowing something and showing your knowledge? And assessing that knowledge. Another thing that we've been talking about is diversifying the syllabus...anthropologists already sort of deal with this but how do we diversify it even further when we know that in certain subfields, there aren't a lot of people of color...Given the dearth of people in our field that are people of color, what are other sorts of information we can share? We usually stick with traditional articles or books, but there's other stuff out there. Videos, YouTube videos from descendant community members. That's another way we're trying to think about our syllabi. How do we diversify so it's not just like these stereotypical academic publications?

Several beliefs related to diversity, equity, and inclusion emerged in this study. Many faculty shared a strong drive to teach students to dismantle systematic racism, to question the status quo, to include the contributions of previously unacknowledged scholars and artists in their curriculums, and to get students to think about worldviews that are different from the ones they grew up with. Not all faculty in this study mentioned having a social justice perspective, or

a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens guiding their curriculum-related work. Those that did, however, discussed these beliefs with a fierce passion. It was clear these beliefs were deeply rooted and mattered a great deal to Oliver, Mark, Sakari, Stephanie, Diana, and Slone.

Curriculum Development Work

From a focus on their individual courses, to serving on curriculum development committees, faculty engage in curriculum development work frequently both on their own and in groups. Below, I outline several subthemes that surfaced from the interviews that highlight the ways faculty engage in curriculum development work. These subthemes include individual course development, curriculum development committees, and curriculum development challenges.

Curriculum Development: Individual Courses

Similar to the way in which faculty considered their individual courses first when asked about their beliefs of curriculum, most faculty in this study spoke of their efforts to create, develop, tweak, or reimagine the curriculum in their own courses. Many faculty framed their efforts around curriculum *development* as actually curriculum *refinement*, citing the value of constant evolution. For example, Richard shared his perspective as a faculty member and chairperson. He said, “a curriculum is always in flux. It has to be.” Mark relayed a parallel outlook, “every single year, every single class, I’m doing something different. Sometimes big structural change. Sometimes just a few updates content wise. Sometimes the strategy changes a little bit. Sometimes I rethink the whole way I’m doing the course.” When developing a new course, Mark went on to explain that each course has a period of adjustment. He shared the following example about a course he developed that needed immediate changes mid-semester,

I realized then, in the middle of the course, I was like, oh, yeah, you guys are guinea pigs, so sorry about this. I'll just change the due date on that. I tried something and now I know, I know now, in the middle of the semester, what I needed to do for the course really. Like I said, I'm constantly looking to change things so it's not, it's a long way of saying it's not surprising to me at all...Because it's every time I build a syllabus for a class, there's some sort of change.

Slone shared a similar viewpoint, pointing out she spends a great deal of time each semester evaluating and reflecting on the course that just ended to better that course for the next semester. She stated,

I know some faculty who have like the same syllabus for their whole career. That is like not me ever. I feel like it's every year that I look at my classes as an opportunity to do better, to update some of it, and to change it based off some of the literature out there talking about how people learn things.

She summarized the following example of what this process looks like for her,

There have been times where I thought that I could get through a lot of content and a lot of reading. Then I run the class and realize that I couldn't even get through the reading [laughs]. If I can't get through it, my students certainly can't. I've adjusted, I think, every syllabus I've done in my whole career because I take notes at the end of my class, too, every semester, like what I didn't like, what deadlines didn't work, what just didn't work overall in the class. Then I revised it for the next semester. I feel like it's just a constantly evolving process.

Aavi shared a similar approach to Mark and Slone. He relayed his approach to constantly evolving his curriculum and his surprise that some faculty in his department urged him to get his courses ‘set.’ He said,

I know that everything is not gonna work out just the way I plan it out to be.... I’ve been told this by advanced faculty. Once you have the class syllabus done, then it sorta runs itself kinda thing, which I find very interesting. Maybe I’m naïve again because I’m new. Things might change a couple years from now. I always find it valuable to go back and reassess and look at projects that work, get rid of things. They’re obviously things that I find interesting sometimes. I’m trying to push as an agenda in my classes, but if it’s not clicking, then I have to be the bigger person, be like we’re not gonna talk about this.

We’ll bring something else in.

Stephanie also believes the curriculum in her courses should constantly evolve. She relayed, “I think curriculum design and development is ongoing and is always going to be morphing to some extent. Our world changes, so we need to know how to meet the needs of students in those changes.” When speaking about her colleagues, she said, curriculum “should be ever evolving, and I know people talk about that. They’re like, oh, I revamped my syllabus. It’s like did you really revamp it? Or did you change the rubric for one assignment?”

While Richard, Mark, Aavi, and Slone discussed their focus on constantly updating their curriculum, Emilee and Stephanie shared slightly different perspectives. As a medieval historian, Emilee relayed that she changed more of the *how* versus that *what* during her teaching career. She said, “I think I’ve changed a good deal in terms, well, somewhat, not tremendously, in the way that I approach teaching.... I don’t think it’s really changed my idea of what should be taught.” Given her 25-year long career, it is not surprising to learn that Emilee has settled on the

content in her courses, but updates how she teaches the content. In addition, there may be fewer developments in medieval history compared to other disciplines. While Stephanie does believe her courses should continue to evolve from a curriculum standpoint, she touched on the immense pressure tenure-track faculty feel to produce quality research as a part of the tenure process. She expressed,

I don't want to say I was able to put my teaching on cruise control, but there was a ton of emphasis around research. To be able to kind of feel like you've mastered and have a really good grasp on how you want, what you want to do when you're teaching, I think helped me when I then had to switch to most of my time was thinking about research. I could go back to teaching and be much more efficient and automatic in the decisions I was making.

I discuss how appointment type impacted faculty beliefs of curriculum later in this chapter.

Curriculum Development Committees

Several participants discussed their service on department-level or college-level curriculum committees as one of the ways in which they engage in curriculum development work. Oliver mentioned the perspectives he keeps in mind when working with his colleagues on a program review,

Starting last year when I moved into the position, and kinda continuing now, we're in a sorta program review. We have been having discussions about what is it we're trying to do in these classes? What are the linkages and similarities between the capstone class and this earlier course? How can we have one lead to the other better? What should we be trying to sort of supplement or fix in what they're getting in other departments' classes?

Stephanie outlined the goals she keeps in mind when working with colleagues on curriculum revision. She relayed,

Basically, what we were doing was trying to map on our goals for the program, what it is that we wanted our students to be able to do by the time they left the program and how we were going to achieve those specific goals. Through what coursework, through what experiences, through what benchmarks?

She later discussed her philosophy in approaching this committee with her colleagues,

Are we truly thinking about and gaining data from our students to figure out if we're doing the best work that we can and we're preparing them in the best way and we're meeting their goals and their needs the way that they need to be met? If the answer to any of those is no, then we should always constantly be changing. My guess is that it will be no, multiple times, because the students will change and evolve. Their understanding will change and evolve.

Mark also brings his perspective on curriculum to the committee he serves on. He comes prepared with "big-picture ideas" about what classes are needed for the new major he is developing. He said,

You need something like that to orient the people to what the kind of work is. Then you need to explore these different, larger areas, like learning which includes programs but also exhibitions. The collections management, you need that. Most museums are collections-based organizations. Not all but most. You need to know that. You should know about some of the management structures. You should know about, I mean, there's a law and policy class that is part of it, that's gonna be something that people need to do. Leadership, there's another leadership course.

Slone acts as the Associate Chairperson in her department and she is charged with completing an equity audit and curriculum revision as the leader of their curriculum development committee. She views her role on the curriculum development committees in her department through multiple administrative and teaching lenses. She relayed,

I'm in charge of redoing all of our curriculum with my colleagues. Our main concern is can we staff the upper division courses that we develop that are like boutique courses with another person. With a similar knowledge set. It doesn't have to be temporally similar. It just has to be one person focused on migration in the contemporary world. The other one focuses on ancient past. We can both cover that at some point. The students will just get a different focus with whoever's teaching it. We're not really deeply wedded to anything.

More than any other participant in this study, Emilee has the most experience with departmental and university-wide committees. She dedicates a great deal of her time to the university-level curriculum committee that serves as the undergraduate curricular arm of faculty senate as the representative from her college. This committee reviews and approves all formal curriculum development changes, additions, the creation of new academic programs, and current programs going on a moratorium, disbandment status. Emilee relies on her considerable curriculum development experience to engage in curriculum-related work at the individual course, department, and university level.

Curriculum Challenges

As faculty discussed their processes for developing and updating their curriculums, they also shared some of the challenges they experience. Many faculty commented on their under preparedness to teach (which will be discussed later in this chapter), but several also noted they

were underprepared to develop curriculum. For instance, Richard compared education and training in curriculum development and teaching to the K-12 system. He stated, “I don’t think university faculty get enough training in the curriculum development early on in their careers.” Later, he described the differences between the training of K-12 teachers in comparison to faculty at the university level. He noted, “it’s not an even pace and it’s certainly more self-directed...It’s not like K-12 people who have to get recertified every so many years.” Richard’s sentiments align with other participants in the study who relayed faculty in higher education are unprepared or underprepared to teach and felt research was more important.

Several faculty noted how lost they felt when taking over a previously developed course taught by another faculty member, especially if they were on a fixed-term appointment and hired right before the course started. Mark shared,

I had less than a week to build this course and put it in [MU’s course management system] and have it ready for students. I had no idea and I basically just took the syllabus that a colleague did for the same course, and then just sorta did that. That was the, that was the reason why it was kinda like not built right cuz it was her course and the way she did it.

What was right for the other faculty member, did not feel right for Mark, and he spent a great deal of time over the next several semesters ‘fixing’ the course to make it his own, to the point where the course did not resemble the previous version. Slone relayed a similar view and stated, “Honestly, the only thing that I really wish is that people talked more about curriculum and pedagogy. That was the component that was missing in my graduate education, that I actively had to seek out as a PhD student.” She later shared how underprepared she felt in developing curriculum in conjunction with her other duties. She relayed,

I think one of the frustrations I've just had as a faculty member is that it does sometimes feel like you're really alone in developing this. I don't know how to change that. I remember just starting at my old university and feeling kind of alone about the process. It's just, you write your dissertation, you write articles and book chapters, but the syllabus is a totally different product. Yeah, I remember the first year I taught, I had, I think, four new preps and I was pregnant, and I was finishing my dissertation. It just felt like really, really challenging. It was really, really hard. I was very thankful for my job, but it was a totally different way of thinking about everything that I had never been asked to do as a grad student. I never had to teach that much as a grad student, so was like, wait, I'm supposed to teach and write and keep a lab? How do you do this? [laughs] No one prepares you. I felt like I was not prepared for the level of work that it entails.

Slone shared the following story about how she inherited teaching and curriculum materials from her advisor and slowly made the courses her own over several semesters. She explained,

I was very lucky that my dissertation adviser was like here, you can have my lectures. You can have my syllabi. I think that other people do this, from what I've heard. And take what you want so that you can survive this first year, four different classes. At that point, there wasn't the space to do a pedagogical approach. I just followed what she had done. But then as I had more time, you do a class, multiple iterations, it should get better. You should add new literature. It should change.

Mark and Slone discussed how underprepared they were to engage in curriculum development, especially when they inherited a class last minute and had very little time to prepare before the class started. They both outlined a delay in finding their own voice when it came to designing their curriculum due to this lack of preparation. Isa also struggled to find her way in navigating

WRT120's prescribed curriculum. Since WRT120 is a mandatory course for all MU students, the curriculum is standardized across 100 sections each semester. While Isa does not have many curriculum development responsibilities, she did relay difficulties in enacting the prescribed curriculum developed by her academic department, especially when it came to course size. She said,

I'm aware that my students are in these other very large lecture classes when they are in person. But of course, as writing instructors, one of the things that a lot of us tend to think is that 27 students, it's so big. You want to give feedback on every single draft, and you can't when you've got a class that big, which is funny to think that this is one of the smaller classes that they're going to take.

Several participants, in addition to Isa, noted they could not always enact their best ideas about curriculum because their classes were large. As Isa illustrates, even 27 students can be considered large for a writing class when each student requires in-depth feedback on several drafts each semester.

Slone, Oliver, Richard, and Isa also discussed the overall administrative structure of MU to be a challenge when developing curriculum. Specifically, Slone described the bureaucracy involved at the university level and the administrative burden at the department level that comes with an official curriculum change. She shared,

[T]he way the academic structure works at [MU] is very hierarchical. It's a big institute. If you wanna make a change in curriculum, you gotta think two years out sometimes. Right now, if you wanted to make a change for next year, you couldn't. You could introduce a new class next year but then next year, you gotta be on the ball in the fall to produce a syllabus and then submit it to your department curriculum committee that will

review it. Then they have to submit it to the college curriculum committee who reviews it. Then they may reject... It could be a multiple year process.

Slone wishes the process for an official curriculum change would be more agile, but she did mention she understood why MU wants to protect the academic integrity of the curriculum by filtering department plans through a formal review committee situated at the institutional level. She stated,,

I think a lot of it has to do with department ownership over classes and competition for students. It kinda feels like a free-market economy situation to be honest. Yeah, it's frustrating. I don't know if there's a better way to do it but it's frustrating.

Oliver described a similar viewpoint to Slone, sharing his belief that academic institutions are slow to change. He said,

Universities have been around for 800 plus years. How much have they changed in that time? They've maybe become more democratic in how many people they bring in, but I don't know that they're all that much more democratic in the way that they approach education necessarily.

Richard discussed a possible new funding model that MU is considering as "worrisome." He explained,

[T]hey're talking now in the university, about going to what I would call enrollment-based budgeting. I went through that in [previous institution]. We tried that for about five years, and it made things worse...It doesn't mean it can't work sometimes but it failed there. But one of the fallacies is that somehow, if you do this, departments are gonna be more responsive to curriculum. And they're not. They're gonna be more responsive to how do we get more seats in the class. It should be, oh, we can do that by improving our

curriculum, but it doesn't necessarily work that way. There are other tricks to seat people. Put people in seats. Until the university finds a mechanism. First, the will, I'm not sure it has the will because research drives it, but until it has a will and a mechanism that says if you improve the quality of your program, you will be rewarded somehow. Then you're dependent on the goodwill of people. Or like I said, in some cases, then the departments, for them, the pressure comes from stakeholders

Isa described her desire to be create a flexible and agile curriculum. When given the opportunity to sit on a curriculum development committee, she struggled with the slow pace of change. She relayed a story about serving on a curriculum committee as a graduate student at a previous institution. At the time, she had strong beliefs tied to what her program needed and she pushed hard in the committee setting for a more rigid curriculum. Yet, as she grew as a teacher, her perspective changed. She said,

[W]e tend to want to cling to the way that things have always been done. These sort of conservative, conventional, historical ways of presenting a major or a program. I think that I would tend to be much more open minded now and say we need to be flexible. We need to be, provide students with opportunities. We need to be aware of what, what the values of our, of an English program or writing program is, but at the same time, be aware that we are preparing students not only for academic lives and writing lives, but also for the workforce. I think that requires a kind of flexibility and a willingness to consider why students are attending an institution like this one, and it may not be the reasons that I chose to attend my much smaller university, or the reason that I chose to pursue a PhD. I think that's probably what I've taken from it, just a bit more flexibility and open mindedness.

Slone, Oliver, and Isa craved more openness and flexibility in MU's formal curriculum development policies. As a large, public, land grant institution, however, MU has a heavy dose of bureaucratic and administrative procedures tied to the curriculum review and creation processes. Mandatory meetings, multiple committee approvals, and the provost's sign-off can delay the final approval. As such, the entire bureaucratic process may take around ten months to complete. Curriculum committees often meet for a year, or longer, before the approval and justification process even begin. An entire curriculum development process can take two years or more.

Richard spoke about the importance of "buy-in" from faculty members on the committee to avoid unnecessary tension in the development process. For instance, Richard described conversations in the Sociology Department about sharing ideas and bridging content across courses. He explained that the participants in the conversations, "are either responsible for some of the core courses or movers and shakers or something like that. At the same time, if it's only one or two people, it isn't gonna happen." He stated,

[T]he projects that work well, it's because people have a recognition, boy, we've got an unsolvable problem here. The old way of looking at it isn't working. We have to get together. Then it works well. I think curriculum is the same way. If you have some issues or maybe it's pressure from the university or you find out your students aren't getting jobs or something like that, and people say, hey, we've gotta do something. If people buy into it, then I think the curriculum development can go really well.

Yet, even with buy-in from faculty, several participants discussed tensions in the development process. As a faculty member with a joint appointment between two departments, Mark sat on a

curriculum development committee in one department but had knowledge of the progress in his second department. He outlined two very different curriculum committee environments.

I'm fortunate enough to be on that committee with people who, we have varying ideas about things, but we're all pretty focused on that how, how are we making this better.

That sort of just seems like everybody's really adhering to that goal. There's not really a lot of that antagonism. We might discuss ideas, maybe it's better to do this, maybe it's better to do that, but nobody has any, in this matter, nobody has any personal things.

Whereas I know in the other department, there was contention between some faculty where one faculty member who really wanted to teach all this stuff this particular way and these other faculty saying that's not what these students need to know.

Diana outlined some difficult experiences with faculty members in her department and she considered herself an outsider due to her views. She said, "there's a lotta tension with my colleagues" and later clarified her dissatisfaction with the curriculum, even though she sat on the committee that created it. She said, "I was pretty much overruled. My curriculum is very different...I'm deeply ambivalent about the shared curriculum. In fact, I'm an outlier." Emilee also noted an instance where she disagreed with the final result of a curriculum process. While she did not experience any tension with her colleagues, she still had to follow the curriculum regardless of her beliefs. She shared the following circumstances:

Normally, the majority rules in the department. Just for example, cuz this is one where I lost, when we designed...the history minor, I thought that we should require that the minor have some kind of coherence to it, that is, it couldn't just be any old set of history courses. I was overruled by the department as a whole. Our minor is a very flexible one,

to put it mildly. I'm still not entirely happy with that decision, but that's the way the department decided to do it, so that's the way it is.

Emilee and Diana had very different experiences on curriculum development committees, perhaps due to their different work environments overall. Diana's view is that her department is, "particularly toxic," while Emilee described her department as "a very collegial place." The tensions with colleagues or with the outcomes of curriculum development do not exist in a vacuum. If a faculty member is on the 'losing' side of majority rules, they still have to support a curriculum that they may feel is lacking. Richard also pointed out, the tension may not be with other colleagues or the outcome. Rather, it could be with the process itself. He explained, "[p]eople buy into it and you can accomplish something, but if people aren't brought in, in essence, unwillingly, that ain't gonna happen. That just ain't gonna happen." Stephanie also discussed some tension in the curriculum development process. She said,

There's always gonna be some of that tension going on. Just helping people come to that consensus can take time, but certainly, the more that you sort of deal with that in the beginning, the less challenges. When you really think about, okay, what is it that students need to know, across the board and then leave flexibility for the things that make each student sort of unique in their path, in their eventual career trajectory. I think if you can deal with that early, you have fewer issues later on in the process.

While Stephanie does mention elements of tension with her colleagues, she focuses far more on relationship building, consensus making, and compromise as keys to a positive and productive experience.

In this section, I reviewed how faculty engage in curriculum development work, both on their own and with other faculty. I outlined several subthemes including individual course

development, curriculum development committees, and curriculum development challenges. The next section discusses how faculty enacted their curriculum beliefs through their pedagogical approaches in the classroom.

Pedagogical Approaches

Faculty used multiple pedagogical approaches to translate their beliefs into decisions about curriculum and/or course design. Faculty discussed several subthemes that impacted their decision-making including, identity as a learner/learning styles, what has worked (or not) in the past, teaching the way they were taught, and curriculum scaffolding.

Identity as a Learner/Learning Styles

Several faculty mentioned that learning styles are an important consideration when revising an existing course or building a new course. Rather than a formal assessment of learning styles, several participants suggested that they make assumptions about student learning styles based on the course discipline. For example, when speaking of how she designs her painting courses, Diana said, “I assume my students are visual. So on top of writing things down...I will try to visually give them more examples. And I have recently made them reference other artists and imitate what they see.” Emilee offered a similar viewpoint from her discipline of medieval history. She relayed,

I’m a reader. I think I tend to design courses where the principal source of information is reading and secondarily, of course, lectures. I’ve never done much with, never done probably nearly as much as I should with alternate styles of learning and so on. I think I probably just assumed anybody who’s in a history course is basically the same kind of learner as I am.

While Diana and Emilee made assumptions about how their students would learn best, Slone and Isa focused more on the learning styles of their students and how to accommodate those learning styles. When considering how other faculty teach their courses, Slone said, “I wish that people really thought about why they taught and what they want to get out of it and how students learn because that’s our mission as professors is to teach.” Slone also shared that one of her passions is teaching. Thus, working with students and attending to their learning styles, is a natural extension of that passion. Isa shared a similar point about her own evolution related to learning styles. When she first started teaching, she was not always as cognizant of student learning styles. She explained,

[Now] I try to be more sensitive that my learning style is not the only learning style and it may in fact be in the minority among my students. Trying to figure out what would, what would have resonated with me as a student but also what will help to reach students who are not suited to discussion or not suited really to lecture or who may have a learning, who may be differently abled or have a learning disability. That is, that’s part of the calculus now. That is something that is a constant. It’s a learning process for me, figuring out what those new strategies might be.

Isa and Slone’s focus on designing their courses to fit students’ learning styles and not their own is somewhat opposite of Emilee and Diana’s approach, where both assumed their students all shared the same learning style because of their academic discipline. An understanding of or attention to learning styles is one factor that may impact the design or refinement of the curriculum.

What Worked in the Past

In addition to designing courses with learning styles in mind, faculty also indicated they make pedagogical decisions based on trial and error. For example, Aavi elaborated,

For me, every, every class, there's always, at the end of the semester, I think back, what worked, what did not work. I always treat it as an experiment. I know that everything is not gonna work out just the way I plan it out to be.

Aavi later added that he takes notes on new instructional elements in order to remember to go back and make changes at the end of the course for the next iteration. He also shared his process for understanding what did and did not work. He said,

I leave room at the end of the semester for once the classes are done, to go back and see what can I change, what can I update? I save all my student projects from all my classes. I've never deleted anything. All the syllabi, everything, I keep sort of a record of that. I can always go, even the reading list from everything that I've given, I always go back and change things.

Mark offered a similar point of view. He shared an example of what he does to assess how the class went for students and to understand if he needs to make changes to the next version. He said, "I'm always looking to see if something works, and something doesn't. Something that works well, something that doesn't." He further clarified,

Case in point, for the class I'm teaching right now, I have a portion of their assignments is to use Twitter because it's a learning in museums course. The people who do museum education and museum social media and museum technology, they, there's a big community of those people on Twitter. My experience going to the museum technology conferences has been at those...Twitter explodes during the conference. Then beyond

that, the conversations tend to happen throughout the year there. It was, it's a way for me to connect students to those professionals. The last, when I did it last spring, I had a couple grad students in the class and we sent a survey to all the students to say, okay, what did you like about this? What worked and what didn't? What can we do better? Interesting, kind of the main thing that I was gonna change was I had them doing little Twitter reflections after every class. They said that was too much. A lotta people said that. I was like, okay, I'll make it one day a week.

Slone pointed out that she often considers the level of work that is involved for her when considering what worked or not in the past. She elaborated,

I've made the error a couple times of thinking I could do more than I could. I can be unrealistic with some of my teaching goals because I like to teach so much and I want to do all these, I want to be a good teacher. Sometimes I set myself up for failure in that regard. I don't think I've ever, well, I've probably had a couple classes where it was just like an absolute failure. Yeah, nowadays, I know a little bit better. You don't assign three new books in a class that you've been teaching. Three different books. It's just unrealistic for your time.

Slone also shared how she started constructing her syllabi when she first started teaching, "I asked people and colleagues what was working, who were senior and teaching, what's working, what's not." She took ideas from other faculty members who taught similar courses, to get an idea of instructional methods that worked, and did not, as a place to start.

Related to course modifications, Isa also considers the level of work involved for both her and the students. She said, "what's worked in the past and this is hard...but figuring out how much work is this gonna be, is it worth it for the amount of work it's gonna require of the

students and of me.” Like other faculty, Isa shared that she is always refining her instructional design, however, she stressed the need to find a good balance of work for her and her students. She wants her students to be academically successful, but she also needs to attend to how much work a particular instructional choice will be for her, knowing she instructs several writing-intensive classes each semester.

Teaching How They Were Taught

When discussing pedagogical choices, several faculty noted that they made instructional design decisions based on their own experiences as students. Essentially, they are teaching the way they were taught. Oliver shared several examples of this perspective, and noted he often frames teaching in this way for graduate students who are soon to enter teaching roles in the academy. He said,

Even when I talk to people about teaching, like my grad students, I always tell them the vast majority of faculty, and myself included for a very long time, we just teach the way we were taught and we do it because, well, we were successful at it, which is why we’re here. But of course, we’re not every student. There were probably alotta students sitting in the backrows of the class who were not being nearly successful at it. I think that’s probably true of curriculum [development], too, for the most part.

Oliver further elaborated,

We’re all still products of the way that we learned to teach and learn, so every college class I have in mind, other than the ones I’ve taught, are ones I’ve taken. Which were the product of people’s decisions 50 years ago, to some extent. Even if we then go and say, okay, well, we wanna change the way that we teach world history, you know, we still have to convince other people that it’s a viable approach, so we’re gonna have to look at

what other universities are doing, peer institutions and stuff. Well, their material is based on these decisions from before. When we think of how we're gonna reframe world history, we're probably gonna start by looking at the course description of old world history courses and all the syllabi that people have already used and say what are we doing? What are we doing well? I think to some extent, nobody starts from scratch.

Like several other participants, Aavi seeks to improve his courses each semester, and he discussed how he reflects upon his own education as the basis for his pedagogical choices. He views his time as a student in high school and college as experiences that helped him form his identity as a scholar and teacher. He said, "I leverage my experience in terms of looking back at undergrad and even sometimes, even high school. What were things that worked? What did I find frustrating as a student? I think about that quite a bit." Like Oliver and Aavi, Stephanie rooted her pedagogical choices in her experiences as a student. She relayed,

Always, to some extent, go back to my own experiences. Certainly, I'm not making my decisions solely on those experiences, but I'm always, that's always in the back of my mind. What is it that I wish I would've known? What is it that I wish I would've done better? That definitely remains.

Stephanie shifted from a K-12 setting to higher education. She was motivated, in part, to shift careers because she believed students were not adequately prepared to work with children with disabilities and their families. As such, Stephanie sought to avoid the 'teaching the way I was taught' mentality.

Faculty offered different views of how 'teaching what they were taught' is enacted, or avoided, in practice. Oliver's beliefs seemed to focus more on the *what* (the content of a class),

while Aavi's and Stephanie's beliefs seemed to focus more on the *how* (how the classes were taught).

Curriculum Scaffolding

The last subtheme faculty mentioned when discussing pedagogical approaches in the classroom is curriculum scaffolding, or the idea of structuring topics that build upon one another over time in an individual class, a major curriculum, or an entire academic program. Mark, Slone, and Isa each spoke of how they intentionally develop their curriculum to act as a scaffold for future knowledge, either in their course, or as a connection to other courses in their academic program. Mark shared an example of how he made changes to his curriculum to allow for more scaffolding to mirror the museum industry. He relayed,

Like with last semester, the big structural change that I made was that I was already making a change to the class because I had met with somebody to look at my syllabus. They were like, oh, you should do these assignments right after they cover the content. Then the way the content was being covered, it was like backwards from what they were doing as building their final assignment, where they were planning to do, plan for a year. It's an intro to arts and cultural management class, so they're planning for a year of running an organization. It was teaching it, so all the finances were up front and all the picking your season and all that was after that. That's not how that goes. You have to figure out what you're gonna do and then figure out how you're gonna pay for it and figure out what your budget is.

Isa also believes in scaffolding her curriculum. She wants students to be able to see the whole picture of their learning, and certainly the progress in their writing. She articulated,

I think in general, the kinds of projects and the kinds of activities that we have the students do, they do fit together very well and by the time the students come to the end of the course, for the most part, they do, in their reflections, they are saying, yeah, I'm actually a much stronger writer than I thought I was. I've never done projects like these before.

Slone shared a similar viewpoint to Mark and Isa. She spoke about the importance of topics in her curriculum that connect, build, and inform each other. She said,

I would think about how the assignments and the lectures and the readings all interact with each other and inform each other. To me, that's probably the most important part of my pedagogy is making sure that the concepts are overlapping in everything they hear and see and do.

Slone also mentioned her desire to help students make connections to other courses they have taken in their academic program and reinforce student learning. She relayed, "one thing I like to do is I like to connect what I'm teaching to what students are learning in the cultural anthropology course, or the theory course, whatever, so that it solidifies their learning from other classes."

This section explained certain pedagogical approaches in curriculum/course design. Participants' curricular decision-making processes were influenced by their identity as a learner/learning styles, what has worked (or not) in the past, teaching the way they were taught, and intentional efforts to scaffold the curriculum. The next section discusses how faculty in this study spoke about their curriculum beliefs in concert with their teaching responsibilities.

Teaching

Faculty often referred to their thoughts on teaching when discussing their curriculum beliefs, especially related to the challenges they experience when their curriculum responsibilities and teaching expectations intersect. This section outlines the subthemes that emerged when faculty spoke about teaching in concert with their beliefs of curriculum. These subthemes include a passion for teaching, under-preparedness to teach, and tension between teaching, research, and service.

Passion for Teaching

A few faculty members mentioned their passion for teaching as they discussed how they enact their beliefs of curriculum. While not all participants framed their thoughts on teaching from this lens, it is important to include these thoughts as several participants who indicated they are passionate about teaching also indicated they were underprepared to do so. Diana, Slone, Stephanie, and Aavi all shared their love for teaching. Diana said, “I went back to graduate school and found out I had to teach. I adored it. I just loved teaching, and I think it’s really important.” Slone shared a similar viewpoint to Diana. She relayed, “I really do care about—I love teaching. I would be happy at a teaching-heavy institute. I love my job here. I always tell everyone I have the coolest job on campus. It’s a blast.” Stephanie’s passion for teaching underpinned her career choices. She said, “I like teaching. I always loved teaching. That’s why I wanted to be a professor.” Aavi also indicated his passion for teaching. He stated, “I’ve always been a good teacher. I’ve always loved, I love teaching and learning. I’ve always enjoyed working in groups and in teams.” Although not a part of the interview protocol, each of these participants shared their passion for teaching. While both love teaching, Slone and Diana also shared that they were underprepared to teach at the collegiate level when they first started.

Under-preparedness to Teach

From curriculum development and creating a syllabus to the sheer amount of work involved in teaching, several faculty members indicated they were underprepared to teach at the collegiate level. For example, Mark had industry experience and some transferrable skills in lesson planning, but he had never taught in any educational setting prior to his teaching role at MU. He shared, “I started at the university and had to teach within like two weeks of being here.” He further expanded,

I had never taught in higher education. I did have teaching experience. I used to be a teaching artist for an artist in education organization where I would go into New York City schools and teach the full day of acting classes to kids in these schools. But I was a teaching artist. I wasn’t the classroom teacher. I’ve done stuff with lesson planning, and I’ve spoken for classes and stuff like that, but I’ve never been the one responsible for my own, for the student outcomes of my own course. Yeah. It was a rough start.

Emilee also revealed she had a difficult start to teaching. She said, “They don’t teach how to teach insofar as we do now. Certainly not back in the dark ages when I started teaching...I had a couple of difficult years, right, sort of finding my feet as a teacher.”

Several faculty members pinpointed their training in graduate school as a potential cause of their lack of preparation to teach. For example, Richard said, “graduate training, there may be exceptions out there, but graduate training is still not that oriented towards pedagogy. It’s still much more oriented towards research.” He also believes MU does not do enough to help prepare and support faculty in their teaching-related work. He later shared, “I don’t think university faculty get enough training in curriculum development early on in their careers.” Richard points out faculty are both underprepared to teach when they are hired and under-supported in teaching

generally in higher education settings. Diana also believed she was not properly trained for her teaching roles. She relayed,

Personally, I believe, and maybe this has been being around an art education department, that just because you're a good artist doesn't make you a good teacher. I wish that teaching would include how to teach courses. Educational courses, like they study before you can teach in a high school or 7th grade. I just got thrown into it.

Slone also had a similar thought process. She went out of her way to find teaching experiences while she was in graduate school to fill in these gaps.

When I was at [previous institution], I actively sought out teaching opportunities...which was discouraged at the time because time to degree there is very important. Everyone that goes there is fully funded. Daycare is provided. Books are provided. Anything you could ever imagine is handed to you when I was there. My husband and I lived on campus for three years and that was subsidized. It's, I don't even know how to describe it. It's a utopia/dystopia place. They really want you to be a top tier researcher and get a job at an R1, so teaching was de-emphasized.

Even with the additional teaching experiences that she sought out, Slone shared she struggled at her first faculty position right after she completed her PhD, "I didn't have guidance per se when I was at the [previous institution] but there was the expectation that you knew what you were doing, and faculty really struggled." She later added,

I did not feel prepared for the workload of teaching, of prepping a lecture. The first time I taught, I spent like 72 hours straight, prepping, and I had no clue... I over prepped. Now, I know how, like read an article, grab the pertinent information and just get it in the slide,

really, and memorize that. At the beginning, I didn't know how to like prep a lecture effectively.

Each of these participants noted their lack of teaching preparation as impacting how they executed their curriculum plans, especially in their first several years of teaching. The tenure-track faculty members discussed the lack of preparation for teaching in their PhD programs. A focus on research took precedent. Next, I will discuss the unique pressures tenure-track faculty feel as they navigate responsibilities in teaching, research, and service.

Tension between Teaching, Research, and Service

Many tenure-track faculty members mentioned the difficulties in balancing the triumvirate expectations of teaching, research, and service at a research-intensive institution. As a large, public, land-grant university, MU has a robust research presence in the academy and tenure and promotion is granted with a heavy focus on research and publications. Richard framed the pressure tenure-track faculty face by situating the issue with how little faculty are rewarded for their work in non-research areas. He said,

Everybody in an R1 wants to be AAU [Association of American Universities], right?

Almost all of the metrics are research oriented. Even the metrics that aren't research oriented, certainly have nothing to do with curriculum and more with staffing levels.

How many professors per student on average...but none of those metrics have, talk about reward structures, nothing to do, or virtually nothing to do with curriculum.

As Richard pointed out, faculty are not given an incentive for focusing on their teaching or curriculum-related work. He even offered an example of how he guided new tenure-track faculty members in their decision-making when they had conflicting opportunities. He shared,

When I was chair, if one of the assistant professors came up to me and said, should I do this workshop? They're not paying me any money...Meanwhile, I can be working on a paper. What am I supposed to tell them? I think a lot of the workshops, first of all, there may be a bias toward tenure stream and that's a problem. I also think they don't understand the workload of the university. I think, and the incentives...The one thing they're not willing to address is the incentive structure. That's what really drives everything. Right now, the incentive structure just isn't there. That's reflected in what's offered. Oh, instead of saying we're gonna have something, I don't know, twice a month for an hour that you could sit in and learn something from, it's like, oh, yeah, come back the third week of May instead of going out to do your fieldwork. Really?

Richard also offered an account of how he believes the culture of research institutions has changed over the span of his long career. He relayed,

I come from a tradition which you don't see much anymore. That doing good research, doing good teaching, doing good outreach are enhanced when they're connected. We've entered an era where... we have instructors, they can specialize in the teaching. The researchers, they can specialize in the research. And the people who do outreach.

As Richard expressed, MU does have several different faculty appointment types, including a designation called 'academic staff,' that is typically a faculty member with 100% teaching or outreach responsibilities, but cannot be granted tenure. Academic staff who teach, typically instruct four classes a semester. A tenure-track faculty member, in comparison, typically instructs two classes a semester and has other research-related expectations. Mark, Oliver, Isa, and Sakari are all examples of fixed-term faculty members in this study who are also academic staff.

Slone and Stephanie discussed the unique pressures they feel as tenure-track and tenured faculty members to prioritize their research agenda above all else. Slone expressed that she is never able to give any one responsibility her full attention for fear of falling behind in another. She said,

Teaching is a really hard job and it's a full-time job if you're trying to do it right. I feel like all the faculty who teach a lot of students, like this year, for me, I've got 232 this semester. There's just decisions I make about curriculum that I feel like are not in the best interest of my students. Again, they probably don't think that or care, but at this point, I know what I would like to do. I did the ideal last semester, got very excellent teaching reviews, but I can't do that with 218 students this fall in the intro, or this spring in the intro. That's a struggle...I feel like I'm always choosing between making these decisions that don't quite feel right. I'm not being the best teacher because I gotta do my research. Sometimes it's vice versa, that the research suffers because I'm throwing myself into this class. I don't know. That's the hardest part of being a faculty member is trying to figure out how to balance those things.

Stephanie shared a similar viewpoint when describing the messages she received from fellow faculty members when she was still on the tenure-track. She relayed,

I hear this all the time to me. Don't worry about the class. Have the TA do the work. That's not gonna count for full. I have tenure here but I wanna make full professor. I hear that all the time. Don't worry. It's fine. Focus on your research. Focus on your grant. That's been the hardest thing for me. We finally just started having conversations about how we teach the last couple of years in the department. It was partially because two of

us were pushing for that. Hey, how do we think about our teaching? What are people actually walking away with in our classes?

Stephanie also described an example of how she frames teaching in the academy for her PhD students. She said,

One thing I've tried to tell my students who are working on doctorates, when they have teaching opportunities, is it's difficult for students to tell the difference cuz the primary way that we're evaluated is through student evaluations, right? It's pretty difficult for a student to tell the difference between an excellent instructor and a great instructor or a good instructor. They're gonna kinda rank those all pretty similar. There might be some students that can sort of tell the difference. You have to make decisions based on how are the students gonna learn this long term? Your activity might be amazing but if it's only gonna give you a really tiny uptick and the effort is so much more and the students aren't really going to appreciate it, is that the best use of your time when you have other demands? Is it something that you can implement, like a little bit at a time over the course of many years? Or it's like, okay, I'm gonna try this just in one lecture and implement it in one lecture...But other things that have to be implemented take a lot more time and effort from the instructor. I do think you have to sort of, you have to weigh that and recognize how much, how much greater is the learning gonna be from this. If it's not that much greater, then it may not really be a cost benefit.

Like Slone, Stephanie had to make difficult decisions in the classroom to prioritize her time for research. Like Richard, she is aware of how her graduate students will be evaluated, especially in the prioritization of their research versus their teaching.

This section outlined factors that emerged related to teaching and beliefs about curriculum. These factors included a passion for teaching, under-preparedness to teach, and tension between teaching, research, and service. The next section discusses how faculty connected their academic discipline to their beliefs of curriculum.

Academic Discipline

Faculty spoke about their academic discipline when referring to their curriculum beliefs. In particular, tenure-track and tenured faculty members or those that came to their faculty roles via a graduate program rather than industry training, spoke often of their academic discipline. Some faculty felt stronger ties to their academic discipline than others, and some faculty teach in a different discipline than the one they were trained in (e.g., Oliver has a PhD in History, but teaches in Interdisciplinary Studies). Nevertheless, academic discipline was driving certain curricular beliefs and the ways in which those beliefs are enacted in the classroom. Three main subthemes related to academic discipline emerged: curricular approaches, interdisciplinary approaches, and professional organizations.

Curricular Approaches

Many faculty framed academic discipline as critical to how they approach what they teach, how they teach, and how they create or revise curriculum. Slone described the importance of her relationships with her archeology colleagues – at MU, other institutions, or in the field – to staying connected with industry professionals and what other archeologists teach in their classes. She relayed,

[W]hat other people are teaching in the field is very important. What technologies and what texts they're teaching. I think about my students who wanna go on for master's degrees and PhDs, what they're expected to know when they get into this program. If

they go into the industry...I talked to a lot of industry professionals and said what technologies should I be training my students in in the field so that when they leave, they can come to your firm and know how to use them. That's really important too for me.

As a practitioner, Slone also relayed the importance of staying current in industry technology as well, so she can provide those learning experiences in the classroom.

Richard's academic discipline of sociology impacts the content of his courses, specifically the introduction level courses. He said, "Sociology as a whole hasn't come up with this is what we think students should learn in soc 100. There are a couple of major textbooks out there and by default, those textbooks define what should be taught." He later went on to explain, "That's because the discipline and the people who specialize in writing these texts have developed a general sense of what is, what belongs in a sociology textbook...If I took textbooks now and look at the soc 100 textbook I had when I was a sophomore, there's some things that remain the same and some things that have changed. That's the changing nature of the discipline but at any point of time X, the discipline has a general sense of where it is. Certainly, the discipline affects the curriculum through textbooks in sociology."

Like Slone and Richard, Emilee also relies on history as a discipline to help her decide on the content of her courses and especially when she navigates a curriculum creation or revision process. She stated,

[I]t certainly impacts my views of what the curriculum should be in history...or when we design or redesign a major, we obviously think about issues...what kinds of history our students should be exposed to, what kinds of experiences as historians, as budding historians should they be given and so on.

Oliver was also formally trained in history, and like Emilee he draws upon his training to inform his practice as an educator. Though he most recently instructs interdisciplinary courses, he used to teach for the History Department at MU, so he drew on both experiences in our interview. Oliver indicated he often brings in historical concepts, viewpoints, and common history course structures into his interdisciplinary courses. As such, his training in history centers his approach to teaching. He expanded,

A lotta times, historians will teach thematic classes...That's when you're teaching history of war or history of political thought...Where your, the logic behind the course might not be just chronological or regional, and you might be basing it sort of thematically around particular questions. Most of my classes are sorta set up that way, where they are sort of thematic in organization...and often they're kinda based around case studies. I'll have a unit and they'll be like, okay, what I really wanna talk about in this war and revolution class, I wanna talk about rioting and collective action or something. The way I'm gonna do that though is we're gonna look at the 1992 riots in LA, and then we'll look at Ferguson. We're gonna take case studies and see how that works. A lot of times, those case studies are historical....I think I kinda borrowed that to some extent from history and a lot of those do tend to be historical, but I'm not necessarily approaching those like a historian would.

Oliver later shared that when he taught history courses, he would push back against the timelines for courses common in history (e.g., European History to 1500). He wanted students to question who was being "left out" because of the timelines. He relayed his process,

I would have kind of explicit conversations or an explicit kind of lecture/lesson with students about the sort of curricular assumptions behind the way that we teach world

history. Before that, I used to do the same thing with European history, too. Like I said, with history, there tends to be a lot of emphasis on like starting dates and ending dates on regions of the world that get included or not included. There's been quite a lotta pushback, I think, over the years against some of these assumptions about what should be studied in these kinds of courses. To some extent, I think that they're really based in a logic of, I guess, maybe like the 60s and 70s or something, of this kind of progressivism. History, as an academic discipline, informs Oliver's curricular approach to his coursework, though he often pushes back against some dogma in the discipline. He also uses his training as a historian to guide his course structure in Interdisciplinary Studies. Slone, Richard, and Emilee also described how their academic disciplines informed their different curricular approaches.

Interdisciplinary Approaches

While Slone, Richard, Emilee, and Oliver were formally trained with doctorate degrees in their disciplinary 'homes,' other participants view academic discipline differently. Mark offers a unique perspective, as an industry professional who was recruited into the faculty role as a spousal hire. He reports to three different departments at MU. As such, Mark considers his disciplinary 'home' to be broader than other participants to include the humanities as a whole. He explained,

My positions are humanities based. I think that definitely impacts how I think about things from that humanist perspective...It's theaters and museums. And digital humanities. It's all humanities work. Yeah, it's interesting because you might say, oh, that's sort of limiting or that suggests a certain thing, but it's actually kinda freeing because like you're saying, there is no right or wrong in those situations. It's really digging into ethics. It's digging into reasons I wanna do things and critical thought and

making decisions about things, even though you don't know if it's the right one or the wrong one. You just have to make it and see how it goes and live with it. Manage the rest of it. Yeah. I would definitely say that my disciplinary home is certainly, centers my approach to curriculum.

Like Mark, Aavi has had a unique career trajectory that included a science and engineering undergraduate experience, professional roles in Silicon Valley, and the start of a doctorate program in philosophy before switching gears to complete his MFA. Aavi's beliefs are less tied to a disciplinary 'home' and more inclusive of interdisciplinary approaches. He said,

I think about art as applied philosophy. It's about thinking but actually applying it in a tangible way. I think some disciplines, especially at the college level, it's either all practice or all theory. For me, art really brings it together to critically engage with these ideas. The class, my intro to electronic art class, that's a big focus. We do a lot of reading. We really think, we read McLuhan and media theory and things like that. Then how do we use that in a creative way? For me, art in specific, and even design to some extent, is uniquely positioned where you can engage with these things in a very interesting way. I think about, in the idea of research and knowledge production, I think of science and the arts is almost like the same side of the coin, but again, they come at it very differently. One is more of an aesthetic experience, embodied, the sort of visceral thing. I think it can add to knowledge equally, the way I think the traditional sciences can't.

Both Mark and Aavi had less traditional pathways to their careers as fixed-term faculty members. Perhaps because of their pathways, both described more interdisciplinary approaches,

in comparison to tenure-track and tenured faculty members who teach in the same discipline they were trained in.

Stephanie presented a slightly different view. She feels less tied to a disciplinary 'home' and more dedicated to using an interdisciplinary approach to best train her students for their careers. She said,

My beliefs and my philosophy sort of emerged from several different approaches. I think that's a representation also of like the way that I was trained was interdisciplinary to some extent. Even in my graduate training, or my undergraduate degree was in elementary and special education. Those are very two different pedagogical approaches. One is very constructivist, one is very behaviorist. How do those come together? I mean, I made it work. I think I took the best of both worlds and tried to understand where both were coming from to make good decisions for my own teaching and learning for my students.

Stephanie also shared her thoughts on faculty who are too deeply tied to their academic discipline. She asserted,

I think I take all those pieces and I kinda meld them together to make something sort of beautiful that I think really resonates with people coming from any discipline. I think one of the challenges that you face when you stay very discipline specific is when people who need to get that information from outside your discipline come, they can be kind of turned off. Like what? No, it can't just be that way. It's not just my way or the highway. It can feel that way sometimes. I think I'm able to see things from different perspectives and bridge the best of those to make interventions that really work, both because of the evidence base that's coming from a behavioral side, but because of the human side,

where I can help motivate people because they're seeing what they're doing with the individual that they're working with is working. They're motivated by that and they want to do more.

Stephanie was trained in elementary and special education. She worked in the K-12 system after her master's degree, prior to completing her doctorate. Throughout our interview she clearly tied her curriculum beliefs to learning outcomes that will help her students acquire practical skillsets they can translate to working with children with disabilities and their families. As she described, she takes what she believes to be the most useful pieces from the disciplinary approaches she was trained in to meet her curriculum goals in the classroom.

Professional Organizations

Several faculty mentioned their ties to professional organizations as important to (re)connect them to their academic discipline and to share or receive resources and knowledge. As a fixed-term faculty member who has a PhD in Religious Studies, Sakari currently teaches in multiple academic disciplines, including Religious Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, and American Studies. She shared,

I'm pretty active in the American Academy of Religion. I was a big part of the membership, of the leadership for a while. I sat on something called their program committee. For the last ten years or so plus, I've been in some leadership position. Right now, I'm the co-chair of the intersectional Hinduism studies group. Intersectional feminists, I forget what we're calling it. Yeah, so I try to stay pretty active in that. I'm less active in American studies but I try to go to as many conferences as possible

Like Sakari, Slone has strong ties to a professional organization in archaeology. She indicated the culture of sharing resources, lectures, opportunities, and general information for students is vital to keep her syllabus current. She explained,

One great thing, my professional organization did is they had a database of all the syllabi that faculty submitted, that could be shared publicly. I was looking at what are the people teaching. Some of those faculty, one of whom became a good mentor to me and sadly passed a few years ago, pretty young, he put all of his content online from classes. I'm forever grateful because it would've been a lot harder to teach without that content.

She later shared,

So many of my friends are like, hey, I'm doing this really interesting archeology of taboos and curses lecture for my intro course. Since I have to record it, you wanna watch it or show it to your class? That has been the conversation the whole summer leading up to this fall for those of us who are working remote across the country. It's like how can we share content so that we're not overburdened.

Like Sakari and Slone, Richard also discussed the role of professional organizations and how they may impact curricular and pedagogical approaches in the classroom. He described the American Sociological Association (ASA) as the main professional organization most sociology faculty belong to. Yet, he framed the ASA's annual conference as having less impact on curricular approaches and more impact in providing networking opportunities for faculty. He shared,

The organization that runs the American Sociological Association, they try at the annual meetings to have pedagogical curriculum tracks but if you go, there are very, very few people who are, let's say from research universities attend those. You might have some

instructors or people who work at smaller colleges or so on and so forth. But you'll never see anybody from Big 10, Ivy League, whatever. Maybe occasionally, but that's not why they go to those meetings. The organization tries to do things. To the extent that, and they do put out educational materials and so on. Every once in a while, a department may say let's look at what ASA has in terms of what should be taught in these things.

Richard later indicated that the one-on-one conversations that happen at conferences, and the opportunity to meet other colleagues across the country and the world, have an impact on curricular and pedagogical approaches. Richard's thoughts mirror Slone's. Both believe that professional organizations create formal and informal pathways for faculty to engage with one another through resources sharing and networking.

This section outlined how faculty discussed their academic discipline as a context for how they enacted their beliefs in practice. The factors faculty outlined fit into three main themes of curricular approaches, interdisciplinary approaches, and professional organizations. The next section explains the ways in which faculty discussed academic freedom when speaking of their beliefs of curriculum.

Academic Freedom

Several faculty discussed their views on academic freedom when speaking about their beliefs of curriculum or how they enact those beliefs in their work. Participants outlined a range of perspectives and viewpoints when discussing academic freedom. For instance, Emilee framed her perspective on academic freedom in the classroom as something she does not worry about too often. She relayed,

I feel very protected, I have to say, from issues of that kind because I teach stuff that ends in 1500 in one course and 1688 in the other. Chances that something is going to come up

that's contentious in the modern world are slim and none. In that sense, I don't really have to worry about it very much, so I don't.

She added that other faculty in her department may hold different views based on their different areas of expertise. She explained,

Well, I'm sure our 20th century, especially our 20th century American historians but to a lesser extent our 20th century historians or 21st century historians across the globe do have to worry about it a lot more... I'm the Associate Chair of my department. I would assume that my colleagues are sensitive to different views and allow students to express their views, presumably within certain parameters, but I frankly don't know of an instance in which students have gone outside those parameters. I certainly don't know of an instance in which my colleagues have, you know, seriously offended students' sensibilities by saying something they shouldn't've ought to have said. Again, it's for me a more theoretical issue than it is a practical one.

Richard spoke of his views on academic freedom from his role as a former department chairperson. He connected what faculty teach in their individual classes to their attempts at curricular reform. He said,

Academic freedom can mean different things and it certainly means different things in different departments, but in sociology and certain other disciplines, it's also come to mean I even get to decide all the substance of the class, rather than it being more of a negotiation where these are the things the students are expected to learn. I'll make sure I cover those, but then I do this, and of course, how I do it is, that's my business. In sociology, at least in this department and many others, there's this notion that each

professor really has much more control of that internal curriculum. Even having those discussions is, can be a challenge in sociology.

Richard also offered the following example to illustrate his thoughts,

[T]he methods class I teach, in principle, there was an agreement in principle that's supposed to be a foundation for taking other things. Whether or not what I'm teaching actually applies to other classes or other classes try to connect to that? We never had those discussions, or rarely have. I shouldn't say never, but rarely. That's in part because for some people, for some people, how dare you tell me what I should be teaching in my class. I am the expert. Therefore, leave me alone.

While Emilee and Richard brought their administrative *and* teaching roles into their perspectives, other participants focused more on how academic freedom impacts what and how they teach.

Diana offered her views on why academic freedom is an essential part of the academy, particularly for faculty to have control over what they teach. She stated,

Academic freedom is incredibly important. Without it, all you do is just churn out institutionally the same product. I feel like lately, it's under fire...I think it's really important that, that academic freedom be maintained so that students get all different kinds of perspectives, and we don't have just one agreed upon way of doing things. Otherwise, how are they gonna exist in the world, in the workplace, and deal with different kinds of situations?

Like Diana, Stephanie discussed academic freedom from a teaching perspective. She discussed the balance she attempts to strike between challenging students, yet not triggering or harming them. She shared,

I think the concept of academic freedom has changed a lot over time at the university level. Sure, like I have the freedom to determine kind of how I'm going to teach curriculum to some extent. How I'm going to illustrate ideas but there are a lot more restrictions. I think those kinds of things do weigh on my mind. How am I gonna teach this concept, not that I would intentionally do anything that would be controversial, but I think people have to think about those things a lot more. It feels like there's less freedom, I think, than may have been in the past. Maybe that's healthy. We don't want students to be exposed to ideas that are damaging or harmful to the way they see themselves. But at the same time, there always does feel like there's some level of criticism that could come from any little thing you might do in the classroom, either from the students' side or even from higher administration.

She later went on to discuss how academic freedom in the classroom has impacted her career decisions. She argued,

I don't necessarily feel full academic freedom. I can make decisions about kind of how I go about things, but there are definitely certain things that wouldn't happen. Actually, at one point in my career, I was being recruited to teach at a religious school, which I'm kind of sort of affiliated through my religion. One of the main reasons why I did not want to go there is they, there would be some pushback or some view that things like a child should have access to... to language in a communication system, for example. The kids that I work with, many of them are using computers to communicate. A lot of very conservative people think, well, they shouldn't have access to the F word because that's inappropriate. We wouldn't want someone who has a disability to say something inappropriate. I could just see like in that class, I'd be like you should give them access to

every word that every human has access to. They should be able to say the F word if they want. I know that would've been very controversial, along with things like people with developmental disabilities have the right to have sex. They would be like, what? What if they're not married? Just, it was very conservative viewpoints. So I'm like, I think depending on where you are, but even at a university where there's very liberal thinking, if you then discuss topics that are more conservative in nature.

Like Stephanie, Slone also discussed the changing nature of academic freedom. She explained how times have changed since she was an undergraduate student, particularly in regard to what faculty share in the classroom or on social media. She stated,

Maybe I'm wrong, but having taught in a very conservative state, even though it was a land grant institution, you start to feel like you don't have a lot of academic freedom in the classroom. You censor a lot of the things you might say in a different context, I think. You have to be very careful about how you frame everything. It's so funny because students always say, and I find this so hard to believe, but they can't tell my political orientation when I teach. Now, if you went on Twitter, you'd clearly see I'm a Democrat. Where I went undergrad, my professors would say anything they wanted. But once I became kind of a public servant, I felt like I had to be really careful. I feel like it's curtailed, where I teach has curtailed the kinds of things I feel comfortable sharing about myself and also about my feelings on anything. My discipline is left leaning, but there's conservative people in the industry who are pro fracking, pro oil, because that's what they do. That's how they get their job. They monitor when that's happening for archeological sites. I guess I went into the academy thinking, because of the places I went undergrad and grad that I had a lot of freedom to choose curriculum, to teach what I

wanted...I do feel like it's being encroached upon but not by the institution itself, by the culture. I'm nervous about it, as a female and I would imagine women of color, people of color would be even more nervous about this issue.

Both Slone and Stephanie mentioned different institutional types and locations as being impactful on how they think about academic freedom in concert with their curriculum beliefs. Both discussed some features of popular culture, like social media, as an element that has changed how faculty cautiously consider what they teach. Slone extended this hesitancy to her role in the community as an archaeologist as well. While not every participant discussed their thoughts on academic freedom, Emilee, Richard, Diana, Stephanie, and Slone each offered unique views on how they think about academic freedom in concert with their curriculum beliefs.

Faculty Appointment Type

Several faculty members discussed their thoughts on the impact faculty appointment types have on their access to be involved in making larger-scale curriculum-related decisions at the academic program level. A significant body of literature exists in higher education that revolves around issues of power and access that stem from tenure-track/tenured faculty and fixed-term faculty appointment types. This study included four tenured faculty, two tenure-track faculty (who are on a continuing appointment at MU), and five fixed-term faculty (who are on a year-to-year contract at MU) and adds to this body of literature.

Mark, a fixed-term faculty member, outlined how much his department relies on him when it comes to curriculum development and revision. He relayed,

[w]here I teach most of what I teach, I'm on the curriculum committee. I have a lot of influence in [the curriculum]. It's also a function of the fact that I have experience both in

performing arts and in museums, and I'm not the only person in the world who has that experience but I'm the only person in [the state] who does, as far as I know. Or at MU at least, who does. I'm the only faculty member in that entire program, I'm the only one that has experience in both areas. There's a bunch of people who have experience in performing arts and other people have experience in museums. I'm kinda that unicorn that the director of the program looks to me for like does this work for all of this.

Isa is also a fixed-term faculty member, yet she discussed a different experience from what Mark shared. She explained,

I haven't really felt that that's, it's something that personally, that I have a lot of input or power to do. I mean, I certainly, in our department, if they're going to change the program or if they're going to change a major or add a major, it is an issue for discussion and for voting. It's not something that I've been very involved in as of yet. As I've said, the curriculum is determined by the program directors, and then we implement it. There's not, I don't feel like there's a lot of agency that I individually would have in changing the larger curriculum. It does tend to be fairly well determined by the directors.

Sakari shared similar thoughts to Isa. She stated,

I think being a, what do you say? A fixed term professor, you kind of are just kinda told what to do and you take it and you run with it in the ways that you feel like you responsibly can while still following the guidelines of your department. I understand why it's tenure track faculty that get the power in that, just because of the way the university is structured, and they have the longevity. I feel like I might be asked [to help with curriculum development], but I don't necessarily think that I would be given any real power just because it's not a permanent position that I'm in. It's a year-to-year

contract...I mean, I think I would be asked because especially when it comes to race, I'm pretty much the authority on race, I would say, in the department, but I don't know the broader kinda curricular implications of that.

Oliver is also a fixed-term faculty member, He took a more historical approach and questioned who actually creates or owns any curriculum in the academy. He said,

[T]he faculty own it, but I'm not sure that these faculty own it. I think probably the faculty from 30 years ago own it. Again, being a historian, I would say this may be a relic of the past in some ways. I think, like I said, we're all living with the consequences of their decisions. Why is it structured this way? At maybe a private university or a smaller university, we'd be in a better position to change those things more frequently or to revise more quickly. I think in a big place like [MU], that becomes harder over time. Some of the stuff becomes kind of calcified. Even I think when you do make changes to the curriculum, you're also still kind of living with the past in the sense that what do you start with. Almost nobody ever recreates it wholesale.

While Mark, Isa, Sakari, and Oliver are all fixed-term faculty members with unique experiences, they each shared how their appointment type impacts their power to make lasting curriculum-related decisions.

Tenured and tenure-track faculty members in this study also spoke about who has the power to impact curriculum-related decisions on a larger scale. Emilee situated her thoughts with the faculty structure of MU and tied the longevity of the tenure-track system to who traditionally has the power to be on curriculum development committees. She relayed,

[B]y and large, fixed term faculty are people who are more likely to just to be told what they teach, what they're gonna teach rather than to have much discretion. In history, we

try to, even with the fixed terms, to let them teach what they wanna teach, but I don't think that's true everywhere. Yeah, no, I think that's probably true. You have to, you essentially have to be at least in the tenure stream to be on curricular committees, certainly above the department level and I think in our department, even at the department level. If you're fixed term, you're not gonna have much say.

Like Emilee, Stephanie also tied the longevity of the tenure-track to curricular consistency due to the revolving nature of fixed-term positions. She said,

when I was in a fixed term position, the curriculum was much more [pre]scribed. I do think that there's a really good reason for that because generally, there's more turnover in a fixed term position. As students, as faculty leave those positions, we need there to be this consistency over time in what the students are getting.

Stephanie also supported Emilee's thoughts regarding who is normally involved in making curriculum-related decisions as the program/major level. She framed her perspective based on the contract for fixed-term faculty. At MU, it is typical for a fixed-term faculty member to have a 100% teaching appointment, with no other service-related responsibilities in the contract. She explained,

[W]hen I first arrived, there was some feeling from fixed-term faculty that they didn't, they didn't have as many, as much say in decision making. We had like all these conversations as a department over and over. It's not in your contract that you have to take on these service roles. We don't wanna give them to you but if you want them, like if you wanna be involved, we want your help. But we don't want you to feel like you have to do it. There's this kind of, also with the way that their contracts are, there's sort of this gray area. Yes, we want them to be involved but if it's not in their contract, we

can't require that. We can't say you have to do this. I think for ease, in many places, it's just kinda been like, here, this is how we do it. Here's all the information from the person who taught this the last two years. If you wanna make some changes, that's cool. Just let us know so that we make sure that it's still within the... I think that feels a lot different than, hey, we have a topic of a course we'd like you to teach. Create your syllabus.

Although curriculum development is not part of a fixed-term faculty member's contract, Stephanie did point out that fixed-term faculty in her department tend to be looked at as the "teaching experts." She explained,

They have a lot of tips on pedagogy...we did a teaching seminar, two different teaching lectures from both our adjunct and fixed-term and tenure-track faculties this year, just to talk about what's working and what isn't on digital classroom. Generally, the people who were teaching the most students would kinda have the best perspective on that. I would say, yeah, definitely. I think that's a problem with adjuncts everywhere.

Richard also provided insight into differences between fixed-term and tenure-track faculty. He said, "even in academic meetings, there's ASA [American Sociological Association] has sections on teaching but the people who go are almost all instructors. Tenure stream faculty don't go there." During our interview, I clarified with Richard that when he uses the term 'instructor' he was referring to fixed-term faculty members. He later went on to describe a class dynamic between tenure-track and fixed-term faculty. He stated,

As we move more and more to using instructors, I mean, there is a class dynamic here. Particularly in sociology, we like to think we're above that. Everybody is equitable and inclusive and stuff. Come on, there's a class dynamic. You have the tenure-stream faculty and the instructors. The instructors tend to be people who are more engaged in

pedagogical issues. They still don't have as much training as, say, a high school teacher does but they're more engaged in that. But the power to control the curriculum rests with the tenured faculty, not with the instructors.

Like Sakari and Emilee, Richard situated tenure-track faculty with the power to change curriculum at the academic program level, while fixed-term faculty only hold power in their own classes.

This section outlined the experiences of fixed-term, tenured, and tenure-track faculty. The participants spoke of their power, or lack thereof, to contribute to curriculum-related decisions at the academic program or major level. Each faculty member detailed their own unique experiences, which was not consistent along fixed-term or tenure-stream appointment types, but rather seemed to be tied to their department culture. Generally, fixed-term faculty indicated they had power and control over the content of their individual courses and little opportunity to be a part of larger-scale curriculum revisions. Most tenure-track faculty validated fixed-term faculty experiences by focusing on the longevity of the tenure process and situating fixed-term faculty in teaching only roles – which is typically what their contracts dictate. Many faculty, tenure stream and fixed-term, who spoke about their experiences with curriculum development mentioned issues of power, control, access, and faculty 'class' as byproducts of these different appointment types. I will discuss these issues more in-depth in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the data from the qualitative interviews with faculty in the social sciences and arts and humanities academic disciplines at MU. I outlined several perspectives on their beliefs of curriculum, including the ways in which they use their individual classes as well as an academic program to form the foundation of their curriculum beliefs. I then

outlined how faculty framed other curriculum beliefs including curriculum as the process of teaching and learning, curriculum as a transformative experience, curriculum focused on goals and marketable skillsets for students, and finally, an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion in curriculum. After I presented the data connected to faculty beliefs of curriculum, I expanded upon six themes there were connected to how the participants enacted their beliefs in their daily work. Those six themes were: curriculum development work, pedagogical approaches in the classroom, teaching, academic discipline, academic freedom, and faculty appointment type. In the next chapter, I will discuss these data, starting with the connections between my theoretical framework as well as implications for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

My interviews with faculty at MU centered on their beliefs of curriculum and the contexts in which faculty enacted their beliefs about curriculum. As outlined in Chapter 5, faculty relayed a multitude of beliefs when considering curriculum. The findings of this study illustrate those beliefs were formed by their own unique personal and professional experiences. Their beliefs were informed by their educational experiences, their faculty appointment type, their research, and/or their academic discipline. Some faculty articulated their beliefs freely and had clearly given thought to considering what they believe and why. Others indicated they had not often thought about their beliefs of curriculum yet went on to share whole ‘belief’ structures. They had simply not ascribed those beliefs to curriculum. Some faculty positioned certain aspects of their role or certain beliefs as paramount, then intentionally built a belief structure around those ideas. Other faculty took a more structured administrative view and discussed curriculum from broader leadership perspectives. The findings have broad implications for curriculum and who decides what is taught, how it is taught, and how students experience curriculum. In short, the conversations I had with faculty participants of this study reveal the immense power that, particularly for tenure-track and tenured, faculty hold when creating and revising curriculum at MU.

I begin Chapter 6 with a discussion of how the conceptual framework that guided this study, Shirley Grundy’s (1987) book, *Curriculum: Product or Praxis*, relates to my findings. I then turn to a broader discussion of my findings including implications for future research and practice. Since the data for this study were collected in November and December 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic, I also discuss the pandemic, its impact on how the

faculty in this study viewed curriculum, and the ways in which they used curriculum to respond to changing course modalities from in-person to virtual learning in March 2020.

Revisiting Grundy (1987) and the Importance of Context

Shirley Grundy's (1987) book, *Curriculum: Product or Praxis*, served as the conceptual framework for this study. Grundy (1987) asserted curriculum can be viewed and constructed from three perspectives: curriculum as *product*, curriculum as *practice*, and curriculum as *praxis*. She used Jürgen Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests as the framework for her model. Habermas (1972) defined three domains of human knowledge: technical knowledge (curriculum as product), practical knowledge (curriculum as practice), and emancipatory knowledge (curriculum as praxis). Grundy (1987) built upon those theories and asserted curriculum was a conceptual, cultural, and social construction. She illustrated, "[i]f we scratch the surface of educational practice, and that implies organizational as well as teaching and learning practices, we find, not universal natural laws, but beliefs and values" (p.7). I used Grundy's (1987) model as a guide when creating the interview questions (Appendices A and B), and this study focused heavily on those beliefs and values. In this section, I discuss the ways in which the findings of this study relate to Grundy's (1987) views of curriculum as *product*, curriculum as *practice*, and curriculum as *praxis*.

To review, Grundy (1987) asserted:

- Curriculum as *product*: curriculum from a technical perspective, including the planning, application, delivery, documents, and assessment of curriculum.
- Curriculum as *practice*: curriculum from a practical perspective, which includes the learning that takes place in the classroom directed by the interactions and discussions between students and teachers.

- Curriculum as *praxis*: curriculum from an emancipatory perspective, which involves students and teachers engaging in the subject as committed, reflective, critical thinkers (Grundy, 1987).

Grundy (1987) said, “it is not on the teacher’s shelf that one looks for curriculum, but in the actions of the people that engage in education” (p.6). A great deal of the curriculum-related literature in higher education currently centers on a ‘how-to’ approach, including how to create, structure, and assess curriculum. It is not surprising that most participants discussed their initial beliefs of curriculum from a curriculum as *product* lens. They spoke of the application of their beliefs in practice, the documents they create, their syllabi, and how they deliver curriculum to students in the classroom. As the interviews continued, most faculty transitioned to speaking of how they create curriculum to facilitate learning, to include a curriculum as *practice* lens. This lens was evidenced by discussion of the learning goals they have for their students, how those goals are connected to careers or important lifelong skillsets, and how they facilitate discussions and collaborative environments with students. Every faculty member in this study held both curriculum as *product* and curriculum as *practice* viewpoints. Sakari was the only participant to discuss her beliefs from a curriculum as *praxis* lens. At the beginning of the interview, she articulated that “curriculum is political.” She described how her beliefs of curriculum and how she enacted those beliefs in the classroom were intended to push students to deeply reflect about their roles in society and their privileges, to open their eyes to structures of systematic racism present all around them, to identify and question existing structures of power, and to engage in thoughtful discussions to help students become agents of change. Sakari viewed curriculum from a practical lens, but she also considered curriculum to be a philosophical, reflective, and embodied experience. She was so dedicated to a curriculum as *praxis* mindset that she sought out

a fixed-term role at MU that would enable her to spend more time on curriculum development and teaching.

As a conceptual framework, Grundy (1987) was useful in the formation of this study and in the creation of the interview protocol. Yet, I found the applicability of Grundy's (1987) categories to be slightly limiting when evaluating the findings due to the highly philosophical nature of her work, which sharply contrasted the practical ways in which participants discussed their beliefs. When considering future research and practice, Grundy's (1987) work was a useful starting point, but because the curriculum as *product*, curriculum as *practice*, and curriculum as *praxis* were such broad philosophical categories, Grundy's (1987) work was somewhat limiting during data analysis.

However, Grundy's (1987) views on curriculum did help highlight an important finding that emerged from this study; when faculty reflect on their beliefs of curriculum, context matters. It was apparent in my conversations with faculty their views on curriculum were intersectional and layered, and their responses to my questions mostly flowed between curriculum as *product* and curriculum as *practice* viewpoints. It was clear they did not hold just one belief, but many interconnected beliefs. For example, one of the contexts that emerged from the data was teaching. Faculty spoke at length about their goals for teaching, and they spoke about teaching from *product*, *practice*, and *sometimes* curriculum as *praxis* lenses. The ways in which they spoke about teaching changed as their perspective or our conversation shifted. Each participant discussed teaching from *multiple* viewpoints. They were able to shift in and out of *product*, *practice*, and *praxis* beliefs as our conversation evolved or their perspective shifted. In short, context matters in terms of how faculty discussed their beliefs, and this is critical when trying to

understand faculty beliefs of curriculum. In the next sections, I discuss implications for future research and suggestions for practice based on the findings of this study.

Implications for Future Research

Few studies in the higher education literature focus on faculty beliefs of curriculum in the United States. This study intended to partially address this gap. This study, however, cannot be universally applied to all faculty, institutions, or academic disciplines. In this section, I discuss several ideas for future research guided by my findings. These topics include expanding the scope of this study, considering accreditation processes, further examining the focus on career and lifelong skillsets, and investigating how faculty appointment type impacts curriculum beliefs.

Expanding Scope

This study is limited in scope and thus, limited in applicability. Future research could expand on the small framework of this study and include more faculty members either from similar academic disciplines or include different disciplines. Future research could also include different institutional types. Knowing that MU is a large, research-oriented land-grant institution with over 45,000 students, faculty at MU may hold similar or different beliefs of curriculum in comparison to faculty at vocational schools, community colleges, private colleges, liberal arts colleges, smaller public universities, online institutions, or historically black colleges and universities. Questions for future studies include, does institutional type impact faculty beliefs of curriculum? If so, how, and why? Do faculty members at smaller institutions have more time to update and create new curriculum due to smaller class sizes?

Future research can build on the findings from this study by focusing exclusively on the lived experiences of faculty members and delve into *how* and *what* helped form their beliefs. For

example, how do the identities faculty hold as people, scholars, or community members, impact their beliefs of curriculum? Researchers could explore in more depth the ways in which educational background and prior experience help form faculty beliefs of curriculum.

A longitudinal approach could also further illuminate the findings of this study. Following the same faculty members throughout their careers for several years would allow for the exploration of the ways in which faculty beliefs grow and change over time. A specific line of inquiry that would benefit from longitudinal data relates to beliefs about teaching. How does preparation for teaching, experience in the classroom, and years of teaching experience inform faculty curriculum beliefs and change how those beliefs are enacted in practice? How do beliefs of curriculum grow and change over time, if at all?

Accreditation

When considering the structure of this study, I purposefully focused on faculty at MU that did not have an additional accreditation body guiding their curriculum choices. During the interview process, I met Peter, a fixed-term faculty member in the School of Social Work at MU. Peter teaches mostly graduate students, has an academic advisor role, and serves on a curriculum committee in his department. He came to his role after several years working professionally as a family therapist in the community. When Peter and I scheduled our interview, I was initially unaware that Social Work had an external accreditor, but during our discussion, it became clear that the program did have to adhere to an accreditation process, so I excluded him from the broader findings of this study. I include his thoughts here as an illustration of why more research is needed about faculty beliefs of curriculum, especially when considering how faculty enact their beliefs in concert with accreditation requirements. Peter described the accreditation body as giving his department certain metrics to meet. For example, he shared, “they give us the

competencies and what they look like. As long as we're following them at a minimum level, they're okay with it." He went on to share that the accreditation body dictates the topics and that it is up to faculty to select the content, the method of delivery, and evaluate the students learning. For example, when evaluating students in his clinical practice course, Peter shared,

What I'm finding is as long as we're delivering the same evaluation of [a topic prescribed by the accrediting body], the format for that evaluation doesn't matter. A lot of our assignments are done by papers, which students are happy with that cuz they're not taking a test. But it doesn't allow for students who really aren't great writers but may be strong speakers. I really started adapting to allow for presentations or oral discussions instead. Finding that students really appreciate that flexibility and choices.

Peter had many of the same instructional choices as the other faculty in this study without accreditation standards, but not many of the same choices in creating or revising curriculum. He was able to be flexible, accommodate different learning styles, and make changes to his curriculum as needed. He selected the content and instructional methods, including grading rubrics and course projects. It was also clear that accreditation requirements did not stop Peter from changing and evolving his syllabi over time. He shared that he receives feedback from students at the end of each semester and works to evolve his course as needed, learning from how student experience his courses and making changes in future semesters to accommodate their learning needs. He indicated that as long as he stuck to the broad metrics outlined by accreditation standards, he was free to make these decisions without worrying that it would affect the certification of his academic program. In the context of this study, there was very little that set Peter's experience apart from the other faculty I spoke to, except for an external accrediting body that mandated certain learning goals, curriculum structure, and course topics.

Future research could focus on faculty from academic departments who have external accreditation bodies. For example, researchers could examine faculty beliefs in disciplines with accreditation standards (e.g., mechanical engineering programs at similarly sized institutions) or programs where students must take and pass certification tests to be eligible to work in the industry (e.g., nursing or teacher education programs). Future research could also explore how faculty feel about the accreditation standards their curriculum is held to by posing questions such as: Do faculty beliefs align or diverge from these standards? How do faculty enact their curriculum beliefs in their daily work when the curriculum is dictated by accreditation standards? In addition, researchers may opt to examine how faculty create curriculum to meet accreditation standards and prepare students to take professional licensing exams.

Career/Lifelong Skill Focus

Faculty stressed the importance of career and lifelong skillsets as one of the most important takeaways for students, beyond the content of their courses or academic programs. Many faculty relayed these career and lifelong skillsets were among the *most* critical lessons they teach. These skillsets included working with others in a team, critical thinking/analytical skills, developing ethics, self-direction, time management, forming an argument, writing, and many more. Reflected in the conversations was a strong motivation to help prepare students for life after MU, whether it be for specific career preparation (Stephanie, Mark, and Slone), engaged citizenship (Sakari, Diana, Oliver, and Mark), or for important life skills (Isa and Emilee). As I spoke with faculty, some over the course of two interviews, the desire to impart certain skillsets became one of the principal findings in this study. Each faculty member described a belief in preparing their students for ‘the real world,’ some from a career preparation focus, others from a lifelong skillset focus, and some from both.

As an example, Emilee directed many of her assignments to developing analytical, research, and writing skills for the purpose of helping students learn to form and defend an argument from facts. She deemed these to be essential lifelong skillsets. She focused on helping students develop analytical skills because she knows most of the students in her courses will not graduate to move on to careers in medieval history, but all careers require analytical skills. She outlined this perspective when describing her curriculum development process for the seminar course. For Emilee, it seems that the topic of her course, medieval history, is a vehicle for students to learn these important skillsets. Certainly, she expects students to take away disciplinary knowledge, yet she framed her course development to include the fact that she believes these skillsets are also important learning outcomes for her students.

Stephanie is another example of a faculty member who described a focus on helping students prepare for life after MU. Unlike Emilee's students in medieval history however, Stephanie knows she is likely preparing students for careers working with children with disabilities and their families, yet there is a great deal of career variation in this area. At the beginning of each class, Stephanie relayed she tries to learn as much as she can from her students so she can tailor specific learning experiences relevant to their careers. She described her process as asking students to respond to important 'get to know you' type questions on the first day of class. Stephanie then outlined her process for making simple changes to her course either in structure or assignments to assist students in developing the skillsets she believes they will need in their future careers. She also described her classroom as a 'lab-like' experience. She wants students to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes in a safe environment, so they avoid missteps in a clinical setting in the future.

Emilee and Stephanie provide examples of how faculty described their curriculum beliefs related to goals and skillsets, especially when asked how they enact those beliefs in their work. They both explained the importance of students developing career and/or lifelong skillsets in their courses. Each faculty member in this study expressed similar ideas, but within their unique contexts. Certainly, each faculty member had different goals and approaches, yet they all articulated these goals clearly and easily, and described how their course plans included elements for students to develop and practice these skills through writing assignments, group work, in-class sessions, and practical experiences outside of the classroom.

Dede and Richards (2020), editors of the book, *The 60-Year Curriculum: New Models for Lifelong Learning in the Digital Economy*, described a need for higher education to adjust to the modern digital knowledge economy, estimating that most recent graduates will be employed for 60 years or more post college. The idea of the 60-year curriculum is to prepare students for careers that do not exist yet by helping them develop the critical skillsets needed to thrive in the workforce of the future. Dede and Richards (2020) stated,

[t]he educational emphasis in college shifts to acquisition of competencies (skills, knowledge, and abilities) rather than disciplinary topics and knowledge communication—the student’s goal is to develop a suite of skills and strategic attitudes to make a difference in the world rather than just attaining formal academic certification to meet the immediate requirements of a particular occupational role. (p.4)

Building off the idea of the 60-year curriculum, future research in this area can delve into why and how faculty make the decisions they do when considering the career/lifelong skillsets they want students to develop. In this study, I focused on the beliefs that faculty had already developed, but I did not focus on how they arrived at those beliefs or what educational,

professional, and personal experiences helped to develop and inform those beliefs. Future research can investigate these connections further to help us understand curriculum as a concept, but also as an embodied experience deeply connected to the faculty member that delivers it. Future research can also center specifically on career-related skillsets, either in certain academic disciplines and industries or on careers in general to have situational applicability for curriculum revisions or strategic planning.

Future research could also bring in perspectives from employers, students, and parents. Specifically, what skillsets do employers believe are needed to be successful in an ever-changing workforce and do students and their parents value skillset development in the same ways faculty do?

Faculty Appointment Type and Department Culture

Scholars have long noted the tension in access, opportunity, compensation, and power between full-time fixed-term faculty and tenured or tenure-track faculty. Recent scholarship has continued to focus on the disparities between these two groups, particularly for fixed-term faculty struggling with agency and feelings of invisibility (Drake et al, 2019) and fewer opportunities for recognition as experts in their field (Haviland, et al., 2017). Fixed-term faculty members in this study outlined issues of access to large-scale curriculum committees (Sakari) and the lack of power to alter their own curriculum (Isa). Several tenured and tenure-track faculty members situated fixed-term faculty as having less power and access than those on the tenure track to department level curriculum-related decisions (Richard, Emilee, Stephanie). Both fixed-term and tenure-track faculty in this study described department culture as being impactful in feeling either included or excluded in these processes.

For example, Mark's experience was unique in that he felt included in processes. He described feeling welcomed by his tenured and tenure-track colleagues and given enormous oversight of a curriculum restructure within a year of being hired. He described feeling valued by his department and had "a lot of influence" in the overall curriculum. He attributed his experience to his unique professional skills as someone who has both museum and performing arts experience and described himself as a "unicorn" in that regard. He also voiced that his academic department *gave* him this power.

Tenured and tenure-track faculty also mentioned department culture as either inclusive or exclusive of fixed-term faculty participating in curriculum development committees. For example, as a newly tenured faculty member, Stephanie described listening to fixed-term faculty in her department who indicated they wanted a voice in curriculum matters and inviting them to participate if they wanted to. Yet, she also described a reluctance in asking them for unpaid work. Slone described fixed-term faculty as teaching experts who had a lot of tips on pedagogy to share in their curriculum revision process. Each of these participants described a department culture that was open, collegial, and one that valued fixed-term faculty and their expertise and experiences. It is important to acknowledge that Mark is a fixed-term faculty member, and Stephanie and Slone are tenured and tenure-track respectively.

Richard and Emilee offered a more traditional viewpoint and centered tenure-track and tenured faculty as the sole owners of the department curriculum. Richard indicated there was a "class dynamic" in his department, where tenure-track faculty vote, create, and approve the curriculum, while the fixed-term faculty teach it. Emilee offered a similar view indicating fixed-term faculty could not serve on departmental curriculum committees, but that their perspectives were still valued.

When considering future research, addressing these tension points in access and power is important. For instance, future research can examine the departmental dynamic of tenure-track faculty who ‘own’ a curriculum that is mostly taught by fixed-term faculty who have little job security, but make independent decisions in the classroom. Other research topics include: How do academic departments ensure their curriculum goals are met with a structure where tenure-track faculty create curriculum, but fixed-term faculty instruct it? How does department culture impact curriculum decisions, particularly considering power and access to these discussions? How do fixed-term and tenure-track faculty ‘experience’ culture in an academic department?

COVID-19 Pandemic

Data for this study were collected between November 2020 and January 2021, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all classes at MU were offered online only, either synchronously or asynchronously. There were mask mandates, restrictions on access to campus, two-week quarantines for those who came into contact with a COVID-positive person or who tested positive, and almost all offices were closed to the public, with services provided online only. COVID-19 changed everything about teaching and learning at MU during this time. Even well into 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic, the politicization of vaccines, and MU’s vaccine and mask mandates are daily topics of conversation among faculty, staff, and students at MU. Life is not yet back to ‘normal.’ Many participants in this study highlighted a high level of burnout, stress, and exhaustion, especially if they had young children at home with no daycare. For tenure-track faculty, these feelings were magnified by the pressure to sustain research productivity.

At the time I conducted these interviews, MU was nine months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty often described how they enacted their curriculum beliefs situated in ‘before

COVID' language. The following are some examples of how faculty described the challenges and/or changes they made to their curriculum during this time:

- Diana reassessed her entire curriculum at the start of the pandemic and took advantage of the opportunities COVID provided to go back to the beginning. She said, "I feel like a beginning teacher again, COVID has been great for that."
- Sakari removed all exams from her classes to reduce student stress and create an environment for reflection. She relayed, "I very, very intentionally took out all exams. I don't find them pedagogically useful, especially in an asynchronous setting. I think a lotta professors are more concerned with cheating than with learning."
- Slone struggled to meet her own expectations of student engagement but discovered that her virtual office hours were very popular. She indicated, "That's been the struggle for me curriculum-wise is recognizing that I've never, one, taught 152 people online. Two, I have these very high expectations for myself as an instructor that I engage with every single student in my class."
- Stephanie described pushing her colleagues to see the opportunities in changing modalities and to not lower expectations of student learning. She said, "Many teachers are probably feeling like I am not getting my students where I want them to be. But I would argue that we can get students to where they need to be, regardless of the modality." Further, she explained, "We have to be creative in our approaches. I think that we really need to be willing and flexible. It behooves us as professors, especially, our syllabus should not stay stagnant. It should be ever evolving."

- Isa worked to find new ways to help create community in her small classes where the majority of work was done in-person in small groups pre-pandemic. She said, “I think that the pandemic has definitely made it much harder to create that kind of community of writers that’s essential in our particular class. It’s not impossible, but it is harder.”

Future research regarding how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted curriculum should be multifaceted. First, examining the opportunities presented in changing course modalities can provide useful pathways for faculty who teach online courses. Future research questions could include: What technologies were necessary and impactful in delivering courses? How did faculty keep courses equitable, especially knowing not all students had access to a computer or phone? How did faculty and students experience the digital classroom environment? What best practices have emerged in helping students meet learning outcomes in an online course modality? Stephanie urged her colleagues to see opportunities in this pandemic. What are these opportunities and how can MU and higher education, as an industry, capitalize on what was learned from the COVID-19 pandemic related to curriculum and curriculum development? MU, along with many other academic institutions, instituted a satisfactory/not satisfactory grading system option during this time. Did these options have the intended impacts on student engagement and stress?

Second, it is important to study the challenges or barriers to success for faculty and students in online courses. Questions for exploration include: How did students experience curriculum during the pandemic? How did faculty respond to student feedback, concerns, or course engagement? How did faculty and students collaborate to create positive class environments? What best practices emerged and what suggestions can we give faculty that

enable them to alter curriculum quickly in case the COVID-19 pandemic, or something like it, returns? What can our institutions learn from how curriculum was delivered during this time? Did faculty beliefs of curriculum change due to the limitations of course modality during the pandemic? If so, are those changes long lasting?

This section discussed several ideas for future research. These research topics include: expanding the scope of this study, considering accreditation requirements, additional investigation into career and lifelong skillsets, further examining how faculty appointment type and department culture impact curriculum beliefs, and exploring how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted curriculum. The next section discusses implications for practice, expanding on central themes that emerged from this study.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study point to several recommendations for faculty, department chairpersons, and administrators. These recommendations are broken down into the following areas: individual curriculum development work, reflecting on beliefs, curriculum development committees, and access to large-scale curriculum development work.

Individual Curriculum Development Work

Faculty in this study reflected on their own courses first when considering curriculum. In fact, faculty often shared grandiose goals for their curriculum, but rarely discussed how their courses fit into the department-level or university-level curriculum. It is understandable that faculty think of their own courses first. They have the most power over and knowledge of their own courses. They have power to make changes and adjustments to their course curriculum or even engage in a large curriculum overhaul of a course. Faculty, however, must also consider how students experience their curriculum across all courses in their academic programs,

especially if a curriculum is designed to be sequential, where one course builds upon the last. For example, an economics major at MU must take and pass *Introduction to Microeconomics*, then they must take and pass *Intermediate Microeconomics* before enrolling in *Introduction to Econometric Methods*. While not all curriculums are as highly sequential as economics, many academic programs at MU offer some tiered progression. The focus on individual courses, by the faculty in this study, may create a curriculum of disconnected courses that do not “add up” to an integrated, cohesive curriculum.

Many faculty described their beliefs about curriculum with passion, but the experiences with curriculum work was siloed and isolated for some. Few faculty, apart from Slone, described environments where they were encouraged to share curriculum updates, new initiatives, or changes with their colleagues. Their stories often invoked a ‘captain of my own ship’ image. Natural consequences of siloed curriculum work may include missed opportunities for collaboration, possible content overlap between courses, and a curriculum that can possibly drift away from the initial intent, despite the best efforts from dedicated faculty. It is critical department chairs and academic departments address this siloed nature of curriculum. Individual faculty and department chairpersons can lead a yearly review of curriculum, collect recent syllabi, and encourage their faculty to share resources, collaborate, and speak to one another about their learning outcomes and goals for students. The culture of sharing resources is not always present in academic departments, yet this is a critical step in ensuring siloed curriculums are brought together. This type of review would be particularly impactful for sequential courses to ensure that students experience a seamless transition between topics. Faculty can also conduct regular reviews of their curriculum, beyond just teaching evaluations, to address gaps in content and skills. Recent graduates who have moved on to graduate school or their first professional

positions can also provide valuable feedback to academic departments that can inform and enhance course and program learning outcomes. Every faculty member in this study discussed the desire to help prepare students for their careers, yet few of them apart from Slone and Stephanie discussed any collaboration with industry professionals to fully understand what knowledge and skillsets are required to be successful. It is important that faculty and departments include feedback from industry professionals, so they understand how to best educate students on important competencies, skillsets, and technologies.

Additionally, many faculty, both fixed-term and tenure-track, pointed out an urgent need for training in curriculum development. Institutions and academic departments must provide more resources for faculty to learn how to develop, update, or revise their own curriculum. For newly hired faculty, these needs are magnified. As an example, Mark indicated that he had only a few days to fully develop his first course and get the syllabus ready before the class started. He described feeling unsure about his course plans and worried about getting “things right,” since he was adjusting to teaching in a collegiate environment. Mark indicated it took several *years* for him to feel secure in his abilities as a curriculum designer and teacher. Mark is just one example, but several other faculty also indicated they were underprepared for both their teaching responsibilities and curriculum development work. They desired more resources, collaboration, and support from their department chairpersons or MU, because they felt adrift in their new role. The faculty onboarding process needs to include the time and space for faculty to learn and engage in curriculum-related work, particularly for fixed-term faculty who are often hired closer to the course start date. Additionally, several faculty in this study relayed their desire to become better teachers, discussed their lack of formal teacher training, and referenced how many years it took for them to feel comfortable teaching. Having ample time to spend on curriculum before

teaching responsibilities start may have a positive impact on teaching skills and readiness to teach.

Reflecting on Beliefs

Some faculty had a very difficult time articulating their beliefs. Not every participant could easily identify their belief structures or how they enact those beliefs in practice. Other faculty could readily discuss their beliefs, including how and why those beliefs were formed. Some faculty could easily point to their curriculum and course plans to provide evidence of their beliefs in action. Yet, the faculty that initially struggled to discuss their beliefs simply needed more time to access them. In the interview setting, some faculty took long pauses before answering, asked clarifying questions, looked momentarily confused, or indicated they did not have firm beliefs. By the end of the interview, however, all faculty were able to express their beliefs. Peter, Stephanie, Sakari, and Isa each noted how unexpectedly valuable the conversation was to them. For example, Peter said, “I want to thank you, this conversation has been excellent, and it has given me things to think about that I’m not sure I’ve thought about before.” In a similar vein, Sakari expressed,

I really appreciate you asking me these things because sometimes you think that you’re just kind of flailing in the ocean, but I guess what this conversation has made me realize is that I do have a boat. You kind of build that boat with what’s around you and what you think is important. So, thank you for making me realize that.

The interview questions were intended to be reflective in nature, yet for several participants, it took less than an hour of conversation and reflection to make connections they were not able to make at the beginning of the interview. Many stated they did not have overarching beliefs of curriculum but were surprised later in the interview to understand they actually did; they had just

never made the connections. This is another example of the importance of context when engaging in curriculum reflection. Those faculty who told me they didn't have strong beliefs, just needed me to provide contextual prompts, then they were easy able to access and describe their beliefs.

In practice, engaging in reflective exercises at the individual level or in groups of faculty will be impactful when faculty engage in curriculum-related work. In particular, reflective exercises at the onset of larger-scale curriculum development work would benefit individuals and departments. Lattuca and Stark (2011) placed a high value on the “process of engaging in reflection and analysis” (p.140) during the course design process to continually develop effective course content and instructional methods, and to also connect to the varied learning styles of students. As faculty spend more time teaching and engaging in curriculum-related work, they are likely already reflecting on their curricula. When serving on a large-scale curriculum development committee, reflection exercises will help bring to light faculty beliefs of curriculum that can be shared and discussed as a group. The more faculty understand the connections between how their beliefs of curriculum inform the actions of curriculum work, the more they can support the student experience in their own classrooms and on curriculum committees. They will also be in a better position to advocate for curriculum revision when needed.

Curriculum Development Committees

The curriculum development process can be difficult due to the strong opinions, feelings, and emotions faculty have of curriculum. As such, curriculum development literature in higher education is dominated with ‘how-to’ approaches and process-oriented books that help faculty get the work done (e.g, Fink, 2013 and O’Brien, Millis, and Cohen, 2009). When speaking to the participants of this study about their beliefs of curriculum and how they enacted those beliefs in

their daily work, they often mentioned participating in curriculum development committees at the department level. Some (Slone, Mark, Stephanie, and Emilee) even indicated they held leadership roles in their department and were charged with either serving on or chairing curriculum development/revision committees. When discussing their work on curriculum development committees, faculty outlined very different experiences. Mark mentioned that his curriculum committee was full of colleagues who had disparate ideas, but who all believed in creating the best possible experience for students. He said, “there’s not really a lot of antagonism” and believed they put their personal goals aside to serve the greater good. He also outlined how different that experience was from what he knew about another curriculum revision process happening in the other academic department where he is jointly appointed. He outlined that process as being fraught with tension stemming from disagreements on what faculty believed students needed to know. When discussing a new minor in her academic department, Emilee relayed that she was not entirely happy with the structure of the new minor, but said, “these things work by consensus.” Diana outlined a difficult process, one where she felt like an outsider for her beliefs and said, “I have a lot of tension with my colleagues” due in part to differences of opinion on what students should learn.

To complicate curriculum development processes, there are several organizational and structural issues at MU that impacted curriculum work. First, a few fixed-term faculty members (Sakari and Isa) indicated that they did not have access in their departments to serve on curriculum development committees. Even if they believed they had excellent ideas to share, they did not have the power at MU to help create or revise curriculum beyond their individual courses. Second, Stephanie and Richard pointed out that tenure-track faculty are not rewarded for engaging in large-scale curriculum development work, which tends to be time intensive.

While it may fulfill the ‘service’ component of the teaching, research, and service triumvirate, they relayed that research productivity is considered the most important aspect for reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions. As such, faculty need to make difficult decisions to protect the time needed to conduct research. Oliver pointed out that faculty from decades ago “own” our current curriculum and “nobody ever recreates it wholesale.” Oliver’s comment suggests that academic departments are more often in positions to simply revise their current curriculum versus starting over with new ideas and concepts.

To address some of the challenges of committee work, it is important to utilize faculty (regardless of appointment type) who have a passion for teaching and curriculum work and compensate them for their time and effort. While this may be a structural change for some academic departments, it is time to move beyond the idea that faculty who have a tenure/tenure-track designation are the only people in the academy that can engage in large-scale curriculum work. Second, all faculty, regardless of appointment type, should be rewarded for their work and engagement on curriculum committees in their yearly evaluations and in the reappointment, tenure, and promotion process. Tenure-track faculty have important, valid, and entrepreneurial ideas/beliefs when considering curriculum, but they feel especially torn about participating on curriculum committees due to time constraints and the focus on research, especially at research universities like MU. Fixed-term faculty have a wealth of teaching experience and they also have important ideas and concepts to bring to large-scale curriculum work – if only they were invited to participate. Overall, it is important to situate curriculum as one of the key strengths of the academy by placing value on curriculum work in the tenure and promotion process for tenure-track faculty and in yearly evaluations for fixed-term faculty.

To address the working environment of curriculum committees, department and committee chairs can ask participants to come to meetings having completed the reflective work discussed above. The more faculty understand about themselves and their own beliefs and goals for students, the more they will be able to give voice to their beliefs in a committee setting. Committee chairpersons can also start the process focusing on big picture questions to get all participants on the same page. For example, questions like, what does our current curriculum ‘say’ about our faculty, program, department? What do we want it to say? What experiences are important to us, to students, to industry? How do our students currently experience our curriculum? What assessment work have we done to know this change is needed? Curriculum committees can also conduct regular check-ins with committee members to ensure they are feeling validated and heard in their roles as well as actively working through disagreements as a group when they arise.

This section provided practical recommendations that faculty, department chairpersons, and administrators can implement in their curriculum-related work. These suggestions were broken down into the following areas: individual curriculum development work, beliefs and actions, and curriculum development committees. The findings of this study indicate that faculty engage in curriculum development work frequently, at several different levels, alone and with groups. Elevating curriculum work, giving faculty access to engage in this work, and situating it as a central component of the reappointment, promotion, and tenure process, as well as the annual evaluation process for fixed-term faculty, are all examples of some of the practical applications of the findings from this study.

Conclusion

Curriculum is the backbone of the academy as teaching and learning are at the heart of each higher education institution. Individual faculty, academic departments, and colleges and universities are continually engaging in curriculum creation, development, and/or revision processes. Whether it be developing or revising a course, or reviewing an entire academic program, faculty often make curriculum-related decisions in their daily work. This study sought to fill a gap in the literature by examining faculty beliefs of curriculum. These beliefs underpin curriculum decisions. The findings lend insight into curriculum as a concept and curriculum in action. The findings of this study suggest many areas for future research on faculty beliefs of curriculum. In addition, the findings of this study lead specific actionable recommendations for faculty, administrators, and chairpersons to consider when engaging in curriculum development work.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview One Protocol

1. Why did you become a faculty member in X discipline? Why MU?
2. How do you define curriculum? What does it mean to you?
3. In what contexts do you commonly use the word “curriculum”? Please give some examples
4. You make all kinds of decisions when designing your courses. What are these decisions based on?
5. Tell me how you think about curriculum in the context of your work. What about in the context of your academic program/major?
6. Where do you see, or where can you point to, your beliefs about curriculum in your interactions with students, your syllabi, instructional design choices, etc.?
7. What experiences, if any, do you have in curriculum development at the program (major) level?
8. In what ways do you feel the discipline of X impacts your beliefs of curriculum?
9. In what ways, if any, do you view teaching as an extension of your beliefs about curriculum? In what ways, if any, are teaching and curriculum connected?
10. (Please use one-word/or short phrases as answers) In your view, a X discipline curriculum should be:
11. Is there anything I haven’t asked you that you believe is relevant to our conversation today?

APPENDIX B: Interview Two Protocol

1. Many faculty mentioned their definitions/ideas of curriculum evolved over time as they spent more years teaching. In what ways does this connect to your thinking?
2. When you first started teaching at the college/university level, how prepared were you to teach? Can you outline what you did to prepare to teach your first course(s)?
3. Faculty define or think about curriculum within the scope of their own classes first (i.e., as their academic plan for the course), then at the program/major level, then university level. Does this resonate with your views? why or why not? How do your thoughts about this compare to when you first started teaching?
 - a. *(If needed)* Many faculty noted they felt underprepared to teach when they started and relied on colleagues and previous syllabi to design their first courses. Given that many faculty also noted their ideas of curriculum evolved over time, do you believe there are any connections between these two ideas? If so, how?
4. Faculty often indicated they make pedagogical choices to enact their curriculum plans that relate to 1) what's worked (or not) in the past, 2) their own identities as learners, and 3) level of work involved. How does this resonate with you?
5. Many faculty connected their beliefs about curriculum to specific learning outcomes they want their students to gain. While some of these outcomes are discipline or career specific, many fall into a "life-skill" category (e.g., critical thinking, making an argument, etc). How would you think about this?
6. Academic freedom was mentioned by many faculty as connected to their beliefs of curriculum and how they enact those beliefs in their work. What thoughts do you have on how academic freedom and your views of curriculum are connected, if at all?
7. Faculty noted they have access to curriculum-related work at the program/university level based on their appointment type. For example, some fixed term faculty note an inability to impact curriculum decisions at the program/university level. What thoughts do you have about this?

APPENDIX C: Research Participant Information and Consent Form

1. EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH and WHAT YOU WILL DO:

- You are being asked to participate in a research study intended to help me better understand the beliefs faculty hold of curriculum
- Your participation will be one interview that will last approximately 60-90 minutes. If you agree to participate, the Zoom interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The recordings and transcriptions will be stored on a central computer and password protected. Backups will be stored in a personal Dropbox and iCloud which will also be password protected. Observations will be recorded using fieldnotes. You will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your anonymity.

2. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW:

- Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. At any time of the interview or during observations, you may ask the interviewer to stop the recording or leave the room, in order to keep particular details off the record.

3. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY:

- Beyond your time and energy, there are no costs involved in participating in this study.
- Participants will receive a \$15 Amazon gift card for participating in this study.

4. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS:

- If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher: Kari Schueller Lopez (schuell8@msu.edu)
- If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Road, Ste. 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

5. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT:

- You indicate your voluntary participation in this study by beginning this interview.

APPENDIX D: Initial Recruitment E-mail

Dear _____,

My name is Kari Schueller Lopez, and I am currently a PhD candidate in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education program at Michigan State University. I am seeking faculty participants from the social science and arts and humanities disciplines for a research study regarding faculty beliefs of curriculum. You are receiving this message because you are a faculty member at [MU] in one of these disciplines.

Using academic discipline as a lens, the purpose of this study is to identify what beliefs faculty hold of curriculum and to understand how faculty enact those beliefs in their daily work. Participation will include one Zoom interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes at a time of your choosing. Any information you provide during the interview will be anonymous. For participating in this study, you will receive a \$15 Amazon Gift card.

Study design: To meet the criteria of this qualitative study you must:

- 1) Be a faculty member (this includes tenure, non-tenure, visiting, fixed-term and professors of practice) at [MU] in a social science or arts and humanities academic discipline
- 2) Have at least two years teaching at the college-level completed at the time of this interview

If you meet these criteria and are interested in participating in this study, please click [here](#) to complete a very short questionnaire and provide preferences about how to contact you. Please feel free forward this email to others you think might also be interested in participating in this study.

I am happy to talk further about this project over the phone or via email if you have questions about the study or your participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [email]or [phone]. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Best,
Kari

APPENDIX E: Follow-up Recruitment E-mail

Dear _____,

I am following up on a previous email inviting you to participate in my dissertation study. My name is Kari Schueller Lopez, and I am currently a PhD candidate in the Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education program at Michigan State University. I am seeking faculty participants from the social science and arts and humanities departments for a research study regarding faculty beliefs of curriculum. You are receiving this message because you are a faculty member at [MU] in one of these disciplines.

Using academic discipline as a lens, the purpose of this study is to identify what beliefs faculty hold of curriculum and to understand how faculty enact those beliefs in their daily work. Participation will include one Zoom interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes at a time of your choosing. Any information you provide during the interview will be anonymous. For participating in this study, you will receive a \$15 Amazon Gift card.

Study design: To meet the criteria of this qualitative study you must:

- 3) Be a faculty member (this includes tenure, non-tenure, visiting, fixed-term and professors of practice) at [MU] in a social science or arts and humanities academic discipline
- 4) Have at least two years teaching at the college-level completed at the time of this interview

If you meet these criteria and are interested in participating in this study, please click [here](#) to complete a very short questionnaire and provide preferences about how to contact you. Please feel free forward this email to others you think might also be interested in participating in this study.

I am happy to talk further about this project over the phone or via email if you have questions about the study or your participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at[email]or [phone]. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Best,
Kari

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