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# Authentic Purposeful Design Within Moral Spaces of Teaching at BYU

Thomas Lane Ferrin  
*Brigham Young University*

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Authentic Purposeful Design Within Moral Spaces of Teaching at BYU

Thomas Lane Ferrin

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

Stephen C. Yanchar, Chair  
Alan L. Wilkins  
Royce Kimmons

Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology  
Brigham Young University

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## ABSTRACT

### Authentic Purposeful Design Within Moral Spaces of Teaching at BYU

Thomas Lane Ferrin

Department of Instructional Psychology and Technology, BYU

Master of Science

This thesis is an exploration of the role of a new course design method in the teaching practice of faculty at Brigham Young University (BYU). This method, used by teaching and learning consultants at BYU, is termed authentic purposeful design. It encourages faculty to succinctly define what their course will help students become, use principles of backward design to align all course elements to that purpose, and teach the course with its core purpose in mind. The course design and teaching methods of 3 faculty members who used authentic purposeful design were studied using a qualitative research approach. Themes emerged regarding various values and forces involved as teachers strive for excellence, as well as the roles and dynamics that authentic purposeful design can have in relation to those efforts. The study also revealed ways that the formulation and use of authentic purposeful design could be altered for greater utility by consultants at BYU and other institutions of higher education.

Keywords: higher education, educational objectives, student development, moral realism, course design, authenticity

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## CHAPTER 1

### **Introduction**

I imagine every reader of this thesis has observed that some teachers really engage students in learning and inspire them to be good people, while other teachers seem only to inspire students to get a grade or pass an exam. Every college graduate can hopefully name at least a few professors who were really influential in students' lives because they taught with passion and purpose and invited students to be actively involved in their learning and become better people in the process. I will refer to these professors as excellent professors, because in a way they are an embodied commentary on what higher education is about: to them, it is not just about helping students gain the information a discipline offers but helping them become people who will make this world a better place because of the abilities, insights, and values they have gained through their educational experiences. The pedagogical vision of these professors surpasses mere goals of imparting information and adds the goal of inspiring personal growth.

Based on my experience with university faculty, it seems clear that the ability to give students these kinds of inspiring, enabling, and character-building learning experiences does not come naturally to many people. Most new faculty have had little (if any) formal teaching training, and with their graduate studies being so focused on learning their disciplines it is unlikely that anyone ever asked them to reflect on what they want their own students to become and how they will achieve that goal. The result is that many professors teach courses with mostly lower-level (as described by Krathwohl, 2002) intended learning outcomes and extend few invitations for students to grow in character. Designing effective, learning-centered courses that help students to learn deeply and become better people is a skill few faculty gain before being hired.

To help faculty gain this skill, BYU has a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) with teaching and learning consultants who work directly with faculty to develop their pedagogical knowledge and practice. In the years prior to this thesis, Richard Swan—the lead consultant and an associate director of the CTL—had been developing a new approach to faculty development and course design that encouraged faculty to reflect on and define the overall purpose of their course and then align all course elements to that purpose. Around the time I began my thesis work, the CTL adopted this method as their chosen method of faculty development and course design—not as a tightly specified process, but as a general approach. From anecdotal evidence, it appeared to be improving professors' teaching quality and helping them address the moral dimensions of teaching.

I interviewed Dr. Swan about the theory of the design method and attended a retreat where new faculty were taught to use it. Based on those data sources and other conversations with CTL consultants, I created a formalized document outlining the theory and process of the approach (see Appendix), which I called authentic purposeful design (hereafter, APD). I shared this document at a meeting with the CTL consultants, but they gave me minimal feedback about its accuracy; I sensed that in general, they agreed with how I had characterized the theory and process of the approach.

To me, APD seemed to address two crucial aspects of higher education that are often lacking: students' moral development and good course design and pedagogy. Excited that APD might increase teachers' effectiveness in these two areas, but not knowing how it was actually being practiced or what its outcomes were, I commenced this thesis as an attempt to explore the role APD played in the teaching practices and experiences of BYU faculty. It was my intent that the resulting qualitative analysis would provide the reader with a more complete understanding

of this new approach and its relationship to professors' striving toward excellent teaching. In particular, my purpose was to explore and describe how APD helped (or did not help) BYU professors clarify and move toward their own views of the excellent BYU professor. As the following paragraphs discuss, this inquiry would thus involve professors' moral stances and moral spaces.

Every university, and indeed department, probably has a slightly different vision of the excellent professor, with different ideas of what is important in teaching—based on its mission, culture, and historical practices—and thus takes a particular moral stand within (or is an embodied commentary on) the broader moral space of higher education. (For a more full account of moral spaces and stands, see Brinkmann, 2004; Yanchar, 2016). However, it is safe to say that the moral stand of many schools and departments regarding teaching includes a striving toward goals of good course design, good pedagogy, and a moral dimension to education—though the exact nature of this stand may vary between colleges or departments. Further, moral spaces within each institution have unique configurations formed by the institution's stances regarding teaching, its stances on other issues within broader moral spaces (in higher education, society, etc.), and the moral stances of its departments and faculty.

The moral stance of BYU within broader moral space is partially outlined in its mission statement (BYU, 1981) and its four aims regarding the development of students' intellect, spiritual strength, character, and progress toward lifelong learning and service (BYU, n.d.-a). There are also many other aspects of BYU's unique internal moral space that likely vary between and within sub-organizations and (obviously) cannot be exhaustively catalogued. The moral space surrounding each professor's practice has a unique configuration depending on the moral reference points, moral goods, and stances of people and organizations surrounding his or her

practice. My purpose in this thesis is merely to look at the moral spaces surrounding three BYU faculty as they teach and use APD and to explore the dynamics between APD and those moral spaces. My focus, then, using a qualitative approach and the framework of hermeneutic moral realist inquiry (Yanchar & Slife, 2016), is to answer two questions: (a) how does APD, as a practice, fit within moral spaces of teaching at BYU, and (b) what is revealed about APD and teaching at BYU when studied from this moral realist perspective?

### **A Word on Philosophical Assumptions**

Patently, stating my research questions in this manner presupposes some philosophical assumptions. Every inquiry is based on some set of philosophical assumptions, and these both enable and delimit the insights that will be gained from the inquiry. That is, “methods inevitably invoke a type of circularity that predetermines the nature of results” (Yanchar & Williams, 2006, p. 4); a method’s underlying assumptions “collectively constitute a mechanism for investigation that produces or reflects not neutral descriptions and explanations, but interpretations framed in its own terms” (p. 4).

My research questions were informed by, and stated in terms of, moral realist inquiry (Yanchar & Slife, 2016), which I will explain. I anticipated that this approach would enable new types of data analysis and reveal previously obscured aspects of practice, as well as leave obscured other possible insights into practice that would require other methods to reveal. For example, a humanistic inquiry into APD may reveal things about whether APD helps professors toward self-actualization, while a narrative inquiry may reveal how APD fits into professors’ life stories; moral realist inquiry is not formulated to reveal such insights. Of most interest to me were insights related to how APD mattered to professors, particularly in light of their teaching practice at BYU. Revealing insights about the meaningfulness of this phenomenon within the

moral (and religious) space of professors' teaching practice required that I use a method that was formulated to reveal the moral qualities of professors' practices within their context—in particular, within the moral spaces in which they work. My purpose was not to describe the entire moral space of teaching at BYU; rather, as I endeavored to reveal the fit of APD within the moral space in which each professor was situated, I explicated moral phenomena that were relevant within the particular configuration of moral space surrounding each professor's practice and were connected to the broader moral space of the institution.

### **A Word on Human Being and Moral Realism**

In this research I assume a particular view of humanness explicated in various ways by multiple hermeneutic-leaning authors (Brinkmann, 2004; Gantt & Williams, 2014; Sugarman, 2005; Yanchar, 2011a; Yanchar, 2016; Yanchar & Spackman, 2013). In particular, this includes an assumption that humans are moral agents whose comportment is characterized by meaningful (or concerned; see Heidegger, 1962; Yanchar, 2011a) involvement in the world—that is, “Life itself, and the myriad details of everyday living, matter in that they make a difference to people” (Yanchar, 2011a, p. 280), whether explicitly or tacitly. It also assumes that a human life is best understood as an unfolding event (or happening) that occurs across the lifespan—that is, as a type of narrative—rather than as a string of necessary causes and effects (Guignon, 2012; Heidegger, 1962). Further, what people do is primary in understanding them and is more fruitful an enterprise than seeking to know their essential makeup, as “humans are not fundamentally objects with static properties . . . , but self-interpreting beings . . . in a dynamic state of unfolding experience and identity development—what might be referred to as a *continuous moral becoming*” (emphasis in original; Yanchar, 2016, p. 507). Identity, in this view, is a never-ending process of self-interpretation—of taking stands in moral space via one's “fully embodied, in-the-

world, concerned involvement” (p. 505). What I am describing here is an expressivist (rather than substance; see Guignon, 2012) ontology of human being—that a person’s identity is not based on underlying variables or essences, but on one’s “projecting and pressing forward into possibilities” (p. 504) or “comportment within contextual circumstances” (p. 503). This view of humanness—with practices and comportment as primary—forms the assumptive background for my inquiry, with its hermeneutic moral realist framing.

Because I have framed my study in the terms of moral realism, an interpretive and methodological framework that is not widely utilized in education scholarship, I will explain those terms before embarking on my review of the relevant literature. The major theoretical terms that I will be using in the literature review are moral ecology, moral space, moral stand (described above), moral good, and moral reference point. Building on the works of (among others) Martin Heidegger, Charles Taylor, and Svend Brinkmann, Yanchar and Slife (2016) have articulated a vision of moral realist inquiry into human practices that rejects the widely-accepted “detached, objective stance” (Brinkmann, 2004, p. 58) toward scientific inquiry, based on a “rigid fact–value distinction” (p. 63) view of the world. Instead, “the human world is . . . conceived of as a moral ecology, that is, as a meaningful world that presents us with genuine moral demands and moral reasons for action” (p. 59). In moral realism, the word *moral* refers generally to these values, commitments, standards, or oughts that are inherent in everyday human practices and orient participants toward the good that the practice offers or hopes to achieve, rather than referring to “the ethical deliberation of traditional moral theory” (Yanchar & Slife, 2016, p. 152), which focuses more narrowly on, for instance, stages of moral development. More specifically, the meaningfulness and morality of a human practice manifests as an

“orienting sense regarding the forms of competence or excellence it requires as its [participants] pursue the good that it offers” (p. 3).

Any practice will be informed by values, or . . . moral reference points, . . . often implicit, that lay claim upon those who engage in a given practice; they are inescapable in that they give meaning and purpose to a practice by indicating how one ought to participate and what one stands for [in doing] so; they indicate what is of worth and what should matter to those engaged in the practice; and they provide a vision of what one might develop into through continued involvement. Thus, to engage in practice, from this perspective, is to participate in a practical but also moral endeavor made possible by these normative reference points. (p. 3)

In this sense, all human practices “refer to morally-acceptable ways of doing things informed by . . . value-laden reference points” (Yanchar & Slife, 2016, p. 148) that lead the participant toward the practice’s moral goods. These goods are neither metaphysical, abstract virtues nor socially constructed values. Rather, they inhere in sociocultural practices that are grounded in the embodied realities of human living (see Brinkmann, 2004; Slife, 2016; Yanchar & Slife, 2016). For example, being a doctor is a human practice based in the reality that humans want to avoid death and suffering and (to varying degrees, admittedly) live healthy lives. This sociocultural practice is thus oriented toward the moral goods of human vitality and reduction of suffering. By taking up the practice of doctoring, doctors are therefore guided by moral reference points that inhere in doctor-ness, such as promoting health, healing the sick, acting for the sake of the patient, and doing no harm. Prescribing best medications, teaching a patient about nutrition, or washing one’s hands before entering a patient’s room are practices that are valued because they follow the moral guides, or reference points, that show the way to achieving



the moral goods toward which doctoring is oriented by definition. These moral reference points and goods are part of the moral space of being a doctor. Different groups or individuals may have varying views about the relative importance of these moral reference points (their own moral stands), and different types or situations of doctoring may add or amplify certain reference points, but the basic moral goods and reference points of doctoring remain definitional to the practice. That is, they constitute the warp and woof of the moral tapestry of doctoring; they are guiding realities—human realities—that orient our human involvement in the world, much like gravity and friction (among other principles of physics) are guiding realities—physical realities—that orient our physical involvement in the world.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

Similarly, there are values inherent to being a professor of higher education. Two possible such moral reference points are (a) trying to help students to become morally better people and (b) using best practices of course design and pedagogy. As Stephenson (2001, p. xxiv) noted, “An ultimate goal of master teachers is that students develop their full potential to become honorable and productive members of society.” This includes teaching values, attitudes, and standards of responsible citizenship, as well as knowledge of the field and problem-solving skills (p. xxvi). Master teachers also “know what to teach, how to teach, and how to improve” (p. xix). These points may be unseen or ignored by some faculty and heeded and followed by others, but definitions of competent or excellent teaching are not completely arbitrary. Contrast between an incompetent teacher and a master teacher can readily be seen by even a lay observer, because there are inherent criteria (moral reference points) for judging the practice of teaching.

The present study explores an innovative approach to faculty development and course design (APD) that appears to offer promise in helping professors aim their teaching to follow these two moral reference points. My initial experience with APD indicated that its effectiveness came from its focus on helping faculty reflect on their personal, moral, and academic values (to varying extents, depending on the professor) and articulate an authentically personal purpose for teaching their course. This purpose then guided a backward design process (see Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) that organically facilitated both excellent course design pedagogy and student moral growth.

In this literature review, I will show that using best practices of course design and pedagogy and helping students become better people are valid moral reference points for

university professors, and I will review existing literature outlining efforts to achieve them. Next, I will review what others have said about the importance of authenticity in teaching and the power of defining purpose. Finally, I will show that no one has yet connected authentic purpose with faculty development and course design and will then theorize about how doing so (via APD) may greatly enhance the quality of course designs, teaching, and students' moral becoming.

### **Learning Best Practices of Course Design and Pedagogy**

Institutions of higher education are staffed with faculty members who—for the most part—have two things in common: they are required to teach classes, and they have little or no training in teaching or course design. And yet much scholarship indicates a common moral stance that being a professor means having a responsibility to teach one's students well, because the sole purpose of teaching is to help students learn (Cross, 1988, as cited by Nilson, 2003, p. 17). Doing so deliberately seems to require both creating a well-designed course and developing one's teaching practice. As one educational researcher put it, "Improved teaching and student learning is as dependent upon faculty developing a pedagogically informed and deliberate approach to curriculum planning as it is to sound classroom practice" (Hora, 2014, p.1). These statements imply that student learning is the moral good toward which teaching (and by implication, higher education) is oriented. Thus each aspect of one's teaching should (ideally) lead to improved student learning, including using both sound pedagogy and careful course design. There are many principles of course design and pedagogy that tend to improve the quality of students' learning and therefore enable teachers to better fulfill the moral reference points of teaching. These include, but are not limited to, having a personal philosophy of teaching and learning, having clearly articulated higher-order learning goals, aligning

assessments with those goals, using sound evaluation criteria for student performance, using learner-centered pedagogical approaches, and encouraging active, collaborative, and/or problem-based learning (Bergom, Wright, Brown, & Brooks, 2011; Biggs, 2003; Blumberg, 2009; Fink, 2003; Grunert O'Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2008). There is wide variety in how well faculty understand or use these principles, and little is known about how faculty learn to teach or how they go about designing their courses, except that it is not as simple as “teaching the way they were taught” (Oleson & Hora, 2014, p. 29). Most professors plan their course around the content to be covered, hoping to help students accumulate knowledge and skills, but “this emphasis on content coverage may not help the students understand the content, why they need to know it, and how to use it in the future” (Blumberg, 2009, p. 73).

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to help faculty understand and implement the pedagogical principles that could greatly enhance their teaching practice. Blumberg (2009) summarized the normal state of affairs:

Instructors are resistant to changing their instructional methods. Many disciplines are content-rich, and there is a perception that content coverage is very important. Some instructors believe that they cover less material if they use learner-centered approaches. Other instructors also feel that they do not have control over what material they must cover in their courses because their content or courses are prerequisites for more advanced courses. Further pressures for professional program accreditation lead many instructors to believe that they need to continue to use traditional teaching methods. (p. 4)

A traditional focus on covering content, structures that limit possibilities for curricular change, or pressure for accreditation can all make professors wary of trying new ways of teaching. Another

potential hindrance to faculty accepting and adopting better pedagogical practices is the terminology that comes with those practices (Blumberg, 2009). In any graduate course on course design or pedagogy there is a lot of jargon to learn: alignment, culminating assessment, authentic assessment, active learning, learner-centered, constructivism, and so on. The list goes on and on. Further, even when faculty accept a new pedagogical approach, it can be difficult for them to use it. In one study of faculty practices following professional development, almost all of the faculty said that they had made a change to their teaching practice, but observation of their teaching revealed that only one quarter of the faculty had actually implemented the new learner-centered approach (Ebert-May et al., 2011). With a tradition of instructor-centered teaching, professors' resistance to change, and the jargon of new practices, it can be difficult to help professors adopt better course design and teaching practices.

### **Helping Students Grow Morally**

In addition to helping students learn academically, professors should facilitate the moral and inner development of their students. This has long been a major goal of U.S. higher education (McNeel, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Many authors express how important it is for institutions of higher education to help students grow not only in intellect and ability, but in moral character, vision, and spirituality (e.g., Bonfiglio, 2009; Collins, 2008; Peacock, 1994; State University of New York, 1977; Whiteley, 1985). At the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of UCLA, researchers were concerned that higher education had “come to neglect its students’ ‘inner’ development—the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality, and self-understanding” (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011, p. 2). They conducted a seven-year national study of students’ spiritual development. For these researchers,

*How* students define[d] their spirituality or what particular meaning they [made] of their lives [was] not the issue. Rather, [the researchers'] concern [was] that the relative amount of attention that colleges and universities devote to the 'inner' and 'outer' aspects of [their] students' lives [had] gotten way out of balance. (p. 2)

They found that most freshman college students did want this kind of development as part of their education; they hoped their institution would help them “find [their] purpose in life,” “develop [their] personal values,” and/or “enhance [their] self-understanding” (p. 3). The authors of this study summarized their findings as follows:

Our study reveals that most students are searching for deeper meaning in their lives, looking for ways to cultivate their inner selves, seeking to be compassionate and charitable, and clarifying how they feel about the many issues confronting their society and the global community. (pp. 3-4)

And yet students reported not having the kind of morally or spiritually enriching educational experiences they were seeking. More than half of the students in Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's study said that their professors “never provide opportunities to discuss the meaning and purpose of life” or “encourage discussion of spiritual or religious matters” (2006, p.1).

The responsibility of faculty to help students not only with academic development but with moral or “inner” development should be especially clear at Christian universities (De Jong, 2009; Wells, 2016), and this is decidedly clear at BYU, which is “founded, supported, and guided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Brigham Young University [BYU], 1981). The mission of BYU includes expected outcomes of—in addition to intellectual growth—spiritual strength, character building, and lifelong learning and service (BYU, n.d., para. 2, 4). Its faculty have a responsibility to foster students' academic development, but they

must also help students with their “inner needs . . . and help them understand their relationship to others and to God” (Wilkinson, 1996, p. 33). Its students also want this aspect of their education; in one study at BYU, 90% of students agreed or agreed strongly with the statement “Every course should be both spiritually strengthening and intellectually enlarging” (Wilkins & Birch, 2011, p. 2). And although faculty were meeting this need to a moderate extent, students said they still wanted more integration of the spiritual into their classes than they were currently getting.

At other religiously affiliated schools, the situation may be even bleaker. Dianne Scouller (2012) observed the goings-on in two Christian K-12 schools in New Zealand and found,

Despite biblical vision and mission statements and declarations of pedagogy built on biblical foundations, actual classroom practice frequently differed little from that in secular schools. Teachers could clearly articulate their respective school’s vision and goals but all except one teacher struggled to identify how these impacted their own pedagogy. (p. 61)

Although Scouller’s study was not conducted in the context of higher education, this same phenomenon also happens on the campuses of religiously affiliated universities. As Edwards (2008) noted,

Reticence about one’s religious or spiritual convictions is the default mode today for most scholars . . . even in some church-related institutions. . . . We may have been motivated by our religious or spiritual convictions in selecting our field or in choosing our research topics. . . . [These] convictions may urge on us the requisite self-denial, diligence, and honesty needed to do such activities well. But we commonly spend the bulk of our time . . . on technical disciplinary activities. . . . Our explicitly religious concerns are not . . . directly relevant. (p. 81)

It appears that to a significant extent, faculty in institutions of higher education—even those with explicit religious affiliations and moral missions—are struggling to foster the moral or inner development of their students. If a moral good of higher education is the moral development of students, and if this is something that students themselves want, why is it not happening more? The answer may come, in part, from the training that faculty receive prior to being hired. We saw already that faculty come to their faculty appointments with little formal training in pedagogy. However, what they do come with is a disciplinary identity—and this often seems to have been separated artificially from their moral and/or religious identity, as I will explain.

As students progress through undergraduate and then graduate school, they undergo “academic professional formation” (Edwards, 2008, p. 86) and come to adopt their discipline’s attitudes and values, forming an identity as a chemist, sociologist, and so on, thus coming to see the world through that lens. Edwards (2008) relates,

The disciplinary communities we are part of as academic professionals represent powerful and coherent, if not necessarily always complete, ways of construing ourselves and our world. In this, the disciplines are very much like religious traditions and because of that we feel tension between the two. . . . Religion extends us beyond our spheres of expertise . . . [and] presents itself as an alternative that is potentially in competition with our disciplinary identity. (p. 88)

What many professors do in response to this *disciplinization* (p. 86), it seems, is wear identity hats: at home, at church, in the community, and so on, they wear a personal-moral-religious hat, while at work they wear a disciplinary hat. They keep their personal, moral, and religious identity, understandings, and values separate (at least mostly) from their disciplinary identity,



understandings, and values. This phenomenon mirrors the objective-subjective split that is such a significant part of the modernization and secularization of academia (see Rice, 2008, p. 104). These changes to the world of higher education have pushed faculty to become more focused on research in their own fields and less concerned about issues of morality and human values (Morrill, 1980, as cited by Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

This leads to a state of affairs where many professors who have moral and religious desires are unsure how they ought to go about influencing the students' own moral, religious, or inner development. These professors are not a small group; in Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's (2006) national study, 80% of professors considered themselves to be spiritual, and 70% wanted to develop "a meaningful philosophy of life" (p. 3, Table 1).

However, even when professors have moral and/or religious convictions and have desires for their students to progress in similar ways, the way forward is unclear. In 1985, Bowling Green State University—a public research university—held a symposium to discuss what institutions can do to contribute to students' moral growth. In the forward to the symposium, James Litwin (1985, p. 3) stated,

The moral and ethical development of college students is a worrisome concept for many colleges and universities. Most administrators and faculty members feel some such development (however vaguely defined) ought to occur; that is, colleges and universities should probably contribute to students' understanding of right and wrong, or at least how to consider such questions. However, faculty and staff members are often unsure how to approach the topic, or exactly how far their explicit association with it should go.

It appears that despite personal connections with their subject matter (Neumann, 2009) and spiritual and meaningful identities (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2006), and even though some

academics may be growing more comfortable with revealing their religious and spiritual selves in educational contexts (Edwards, 2008), the separation of professors' disciplinary and moral/religious identities often keeps their moral stances and resources from impacting their students' lives to the extent that students desire.

### **Looking Forward**

Thus far I have described some of the factors that make it difficult for faculty to use best practices in course design and teaching and to foster students' moral and inner development, including a tradition of instructor-centered teaching, a lack in pedagogical training, professors' hesitance to try new teaching approaches, the amount of new jargon and ideas associated with instructional design, the fragmentation of professors' identities, and the secularization of academia. Anecdotal evidence from practitioners of APD has shown that it has the potential to help professors with these difficulties: It can help professors integrate their disciplinary and moral identities and help them to organically understand and want to use good principles of learner-centered course design and pedagogy. The apparent strength of this new approach, it seems to me, comes from two interrelated factors that form the basis of APD: authenticity and purpose. Despite my extensive search of the relevant academic literature, I was unable to find any author who had put these together as a form of faculty development or course design. However, there is evidence in the literature to show how both authenticity and purpose have potential to enhance course design, teaching, and efforts for student moral development.

**Authenticity.** The first word in APD is *authentic*. In theory, the reflective process of APD leads a professor to create a course purpose that is authentic, or congruent with her whole self; it flows out of both her disciplinary and moral identities. The integration of these two identities allows the professor to bring both personal/moral and disciplinary values and

commitments into the classroom, to benefit both the intellectual and moral development of the students.

At this point I remind the reader what I mean by *identity*. The definition of identity that I find most useful—comportment or self-interpretation (Yanchar, 2016)—is spoken of by Taylor (1989, p. 27) as “an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand” (as cited in Brinkmann, 2008, p. 405). In other words, “my identity is determined by what matters to me, by what I find valuable, by my commitments” (Brinkmann, 2008, p. 405). Using this definition, the separation of a professor’s moral and disciplinary identities means that the professor considers and includes disciplinary values and commitments in his teaching, while his personal, moral commitments are rarely, if ever, included. That is not to say that they are in conflict (though they may be): They merely do not touch. In the professor’s “implicit grasp of [the] social space” (Taylor, 2004, p. 26, as cited in Brinkmann, 2008, p. 406) of his disciplinary activities, he sees himself and his work in a coherent, powerful, and yet incomplete way (Edwards, 2008). This implicit grasp of his disciplinary practice is one that is focused on what is of crucial importance to his disciplinary practice, which (depending on his training) may preclude any inclusion of personal, explicitly moral, or religious elements.

And yet, as Schweingruber (1985) argued, these moral elements must be present in the classroom if professors are “to promote and facilitate [students’] moral development” (p.22).

For that to happen, he said,

Faculty and staff must feel free to share their values with students, and they should be encouraged to do so. Values should not be imposed, but we also should not give the

appearance of being “valueless” people. If we are to be authentic, we must share our opinions, values, and beliefs. (p. 22)

Rice (2008, p. 110) said that faculty sharing their moral selves with students might include things such as

relat[ing] one’s own field of specialization to larger questions, . . . articulating the spiritual and religious assumptions that inform one’s own approach to teaching and learning . . . in a way that does not impose one’s own values on students, . . . [and] sharing one’s doubts and deeper questions.

Authenticity in teaching has been defined in a variety of ways (e.g., in Bialystok, 2015; Cranton, 2006; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Heidegger, 1962; Su, 2010; and as “the undivided life” by Palmer, 1998). It may refer to one or more of the following: “being genuine, showing consistency between values and actions, relating to others in such a way as to encourage their authenticity, [or] living a critical life” (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 7). However, I will define it simply as purposively (and selectively) bringing one's personal background, desires, and values into one's teaching practice. I have good reason for choosing this definition, but to elucidate those reasons it will be beneficial first to review arguments regarding authenticity and teaching.

The connection between faculty authenticity and improved classroom teaching practices is not as clear as many researchers may assume. In 2015, Bialystok reviewed research and theorizing related to authenticity and teaching practice and gave a strong argument that no existing definition of authentic teaching held clear promise that it would lead invariably to better teaching practices. I will outline her argument here to show the inadequacy of contemporary

conceptions of authenticity in teaching and why I have formulated my definition in the way that I have.

Bialystok (2015) shared four main ways that authenticity can be defined, and explored how each might connect to teaching. First, authenticity can be defined as it is for inanimate objects: “something that is authentic, is aligned in its identity; . . . it is what it says it is” (p. 314). For example, an authentic diamond is actually made of carbon, as opposed to an inauthentic diamond, which is made of a material that merely resembles a diamond. Using this definition, an authentic teacher is one who has received training and/or licensure to teach. This means that “virtually all teachers in the formal education system are automatically authentic,” which both “renders the question of who may be an authentic teacher philosophically uninteresting” (p. 316) and makes authenticity an unhelpful concept for improving teaching.

Second, Bialystok mentioned the expressivist definition of authenticity. Guignon (2012) said that this definition “involves resolutely taking responsibility for one’s actions and knitting those actions together into a meaningful whole that one can stand up for and own” (p. 102). Unconvinced about the value of such a conception, Bialystok turned to another, related version as explored by Charles Taylor. She said that in Taylor’s (1991) account, authenticity is a kind of self-actualization that moves away from relativistic morality and takes into account “the context of self-transcending goods, or ‘horizons of significance’” (as cited in Bialystok, 2015, p. 314). She never returned, however, to answer how “resolutely taking responsibility for one’s actions” (Guignon, 2012, p. 102) toward “self-transcending goods” (Bialystok, 2015, p. 314) may or may not make better teachers. I will take up this question in a moment.

Third, authenticity could mean being truthful with students about oneself. In illustration, Bialystok discussed a professor who came out to her students as being lesbian. This act was an

authentic (if so defined) act, but Bialystok said that “it is not at all clear whether, or how, her coming out at work made her a better or a more ‘authentic’ teacher” (p. 315). The simple act of sharing one’s true self with students is no foolproof way to improve teaching.

Last, Bialystok provided her own definition of authenticity:

To be authentic is to live in alignment with whatever is most essential in one’s identity – to be, as it were, the ‘most me’ I could be. There will be no guaranteed method of verifying what that is, but in some cases, we can at least make comparative judgments: this is more essential to me than that, or I feel more comfortable with myself here than I do there. (p. 316)

However, she asserted, “authenticity so described does not have any obvious relationship to being a good teacher” (p. 316).

Bialystok concluded by listing what being an authentic teacher cannot mean: a person with a teaching certification, a teacher who uses authentic pedagogical approaches (e.g., authentic assessment), or an authentic person who happens to also teach. The only viable conception she could see was that an authentic teacher is one “for whom teaching is essentially related to her true self” (p. 317); for such a person, it may be inauthentic not to teach. This definition may not be very helpful, however: although an authentic teacher (so defined) would likely try to excel pedagogically, “this is not a reason to exhort teachers to be authentic; it would be more direct to simply exhort them to take their jobs seriously” (p. 319). There are also circumstances in which this definition of an authentic teacher proves problematic. For example, Hare (1996) wrote about Jim Keegstra, an anti-semitic teacher in Canada who endeavored to teach racist ideals to his students (as cited in Bialystok, 2015). Bialystok noted that it appeared that “his racist views . . . were part of his identity. . . . It is equally possible that he felt that

teaching was part of his identity” (p. 321). There is also the case of Mr. Holland, the main character in the 1995 film *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, who saw teaching as a departure from his true identity and yet became an excellent teacher. Although this story is fictional, it illustrates a second plausible situation in which this definition of being an authentic teacher is unhelpful.

Bialystok summed up her argument with two important statements. First, “claims about the value of teacher authenticity are two-part claims about personal authenticity and what it means to be a good teacher, and these types of claims are often confounded.” And second, “most of the virtues that describe good teachers can be described without any reference to authenticity” (p. 322). I agree with both of these statements, but I think there is an alternative way of conceiving authenticity that does a better job of showing its value for teaching.

I return now to a thread that Bialystok never followed through on, which is how “resolutely taking responsibility for one’s actions” (Guignon, 2012, p. 102) toward “self-transcending goods” (Bialystok, 2015, p. 314) can make a teacher better. I believe it is this definition of authenticity, coupled with authenticity as sharing one’s true self with one’s students, that puts a teacher in a position to effectively invite his students’ moral development. Although Bialystok warns that teaching with authenticity is only valuable to students’ moral development insofar as the professors’ whole person (values, etc.) is aligned morally with the moral mission of the university (i.e., a corrupt professor’s authenticity would actually be harmful), having professors who teach with authenticity may always be valuable because it allows administrators to see the professors’ true values and thus make adjustments as necessary to preserve the positive moral influence of the university (R. Swan, personal communication, October 6, 2016). This is why I have chosen my definition thus: to teach authentically is to (a) purposefully act toward

certain self-transcending goods and to (b) make those valuations visible and seminal in one's teaching.

It will not suffice, however, if professors only take into consideration their personal moral commitments related to their discipline. We must remember the widely-shared stand that the purpose of higher education includes helping students to grow morally (e.g., by Bonfiglio, 2009; Collins, 2008; McNeel, 1992; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Peacock, 1994; State University of New York, 1977; Whiteley, 1985), especially at Christian universities (De Jong, 2009; Wells, 2016). This moral growth should not be limited to disciplinary ethics, either; students report wanting far more "opportunities to discuss the meaning and purpose of life" (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2006, p. 1) than they are receiving. Students want more than a discussion of disciplinary morals in their class; they want to learn greater compassion, to clarify their moral stances, and to gain deeper meaning in their lives (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, 2011). It seems clear, then, that teaching authentically as I have defined it will have little effect on students' moral development if professors only bring into the classroom those moral commitments that are inherent to their discipline; this will mainly invite students to grow in ways directed by the ethics or morals inherent in the discipline. If, instead, professors purposively bring more of their moral commitments into their classroom, and if students are allowed to see a more whole, integrated version of their professor, there will be more opportunities for meaningful discussions about morality related not only to the discipline, but to broader aspects of life. When the professor's personal, moral, and disciplinary commitments and values are more visible in classroom practice, students may be given more of those opportunities they are looking for, and thereby professors might do more to accomplish the complete purpose of higher education.



Having authenticity—having an integrated moral/disciplinary identity that shows up in one’s practice—holds promise in helping professors to contribute more to their students’ moral development, but it may also be just as valuable in course design. Osguthorpe, Osguthorpe, Jacob, and Davies (2003) said that

instructional designers need to draw more on who they are as individuals. Such a stance argues for . . . making sure that designers can draw upon their own unique strengths, talents, and interests . . . [and] have ways of sharing who they are and how their own desires, goals, and experiences relate to the topic being learned. (p. 22)

From this perspective, then, as professors allow their instructional designs and teaching to be informed by both their disciplinary and moral identities and commitments, students will be more able to explore and develop their own disciplinary and moral identities in relationship with one another.

**Purpose.** The second word in APD is *purposeful*. As I searched for literature about designing or teaching a course with a deliberate purpose in mind, I was unable to find anything that talked about using purpose in the way or to the degree that it is used in APD. There were admonitions to create a “well-grounded rationale for your course” (Grunert O’Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2008, p. 15), “curriculum objectives” (Biggs, 2003, p. 43) or “ultimate or end-of-the-course learning objectives” (Nilson, 2003, p. 23), or to use a backward design process oriented toward “learning goals” (Fink, 2003, p. 63). In fact, Nilson (2003) even emphasized

ask[ing] yourself what you are trying to accomplish . . . [and] starting the course design process with what you want your students to be able to do by the end of the course. . . .

“Course design by objectives” guarantees a high level of student engagement because the process steers you towards student-active teaching strategies. (p. 17)

Other authors proposed having a more long-range approach to instructional goals. Jaworski (2001) said, “When thinking about what to teach and how to teach it, I try to envision the students going about their daily lives five years after graduation” (p. 145). Fink (2003) echoed, “What is it I hope students will have learned, that will still be there and have value, several years after the course is over?” (p. 63). Multiple authors also discussed the importance of sharing with students the purpose of a course (Grunert O’Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2008; Knowles, 1950; Lowther, Stark, & Martens, 1989; Poth, Riedel, & Luth, 2015).

Having a course rationale, using backward design, asking about what will be of lasting value to the students, and sharing the course purpose with students are all important parts of APD. However, no author(s) put all of these pieces together. Another important part of APD is that faculty take their authentic desires for students’ long-term development and simplify them into a single statement of purpose. I was unable to find any author who advocated refining the purpose of a course into a single sentence stating what was most essential for students. Even the exemplary syllabi provided by Fink have (with few exceptions) course purposes that were either plural or in paragraph form (“Examples,” n.d.). Although a paragraph-long course purpose may be well thought out, it runs the risk of making the professor’s attention “so splintered among different priorities that his [purpose for teaching] risk[s] becoming a muddled paragraph” (Pink, 2011, p. 154). A paragraph-long purpose makes course design decisions less clear. Imagine trying to revise one’s course objectives using such a course purpose as the evaluation criterion: “Does it meet the course purpose? Well, it kind of meets this part of it.” This amounts to having almost no purpose at all and merely using several course objectives without any overall guide for alignment among them. Conversely, if a professor’s course purpose is a single (and simple)

sentence, course design (and teaching) decisions become crystal clear: They are advisable to the degree that they lead students to the course purpose.

Thus by identifying what is most essential (McKeown, 2014) for students, a course purpose can be the key criterion upon which all decisions are based, from designing assessments to choosing classroom teaching methods. If professors will use a single, simple course purpose in this way, the result will be a course that has objectives, assessments, learning activities, and teaching practices that all work in harmony to lead students to achieve the purpose of the course. Furthermore, the course outcomes for students will be best—both intellectually and morally—if the professor’s purpose flows out of the values and commitments of an integrated identity, including what matters most to him in his personal, religious, moral, and disciplinary life.

**Authentic purposeful design.** Making efforts toward students’ moral development, being an authentic teacher, and having purpose(s) for teaching a course were all recommended in the literature, but no one combined them in the way that was envisioned by Swan at BYU. According to my conversations with him, the innovativeness of APD was not in advocating that professors be authentic or formulate course objectives; rather, it came in having them reflect on their authentic desires for students’ growth, craft those desires into a single statement of purpose for the course, and then use backward design principles to design a course that would help students accomplish that purpose. The experiences of CTL consultants using APD showed that as professors reflected on their true desires for students’ becoming and then honed that desire into a single statement of purpose, three main things could happen. First, the moral and disciplinary identities of the professor sometimes could come into greater contact, meaning that the outcome envisioned for students could have a greater element of moral development. This would not come about through an explicit discussion about professors’ identities; rather, by

asking professors to describe their ideal student, consultants invited them to abandon their culturally accumulated assumptions about the role of a teacher and re-envision teaching to include elements beyond course content (R. Swan, personal communication, November 14, 2016). Second, the professor would often gain a greater excitement about the course and start to see (even without learning any new instructional science jargon) the value of learner centered teaching practices. Third, as the consultant led the professor through backward design (Fink, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), the statement of purpose became a touchstone that helped faculty design an aligned, learner-centered, and relevant course-long learning experience without need for the technical jargon of instructional design.

This all depended, of course, on the way that consultants implemented APD; my conception of it (including its expected outcomes; see Appendix) was based heavily on Swan’s presentations and my conversations with him about “course purpose” design, and was only informed somewhat by a few observations of consultants’ actual implementation of APD or faculty members’ experiences with it. Each consultant approached it a little differently, and Swan’s own implementation of it continued to evolve. Thus the foregoing discussion about APD and its description in the Appendix—especially regarding its connections to authenticity and students' moral development—were based more in theory than in consistent practice and observation. Nevertheless, Swan said that in his experience and that of other consultants, using APD with faculty seemed to be changing the way that professors both saw and practiced pedagogy; multiple professors had remarked to CTL consultants that “I just can’t teach the same way anymore!” (R. Swan, personal communication, October 6, 2016). Anecdotally, faculty who engaged with CTL consultants in APD tended to have courses that did more to promote students’ moral development and were more likely to use good principles of course design and pedagogy.

The aim of this thesis, then, is to explore and describe how APD as a practice fits with respect to the moral goods and reference points of being an excellent BYU professor, including (but not limited to) using sound principles of course design and pedagogy and aiming to contribute to students' moral development. A secondary and related aim is to document what I learn about APD and BYU teaching along the way. My research questions, framed using the philosophy and theory of hermeneutic moral realism (Brinkmann, 2004; Slife, 2016; Yanchar & Slife, 2016), are (a) How does APD as a practice fit within moral spaces of teaching at BYU? and (b) what is revealed about APD and these moral spaces of teaching at BYU when studied from this moral realist perspective? I will be looking at these questions specifically within the contexts or moral spaces of three professors' teaching practice.

## CHAPTER 3

### Method

To answer these questions, I performed a qualitative investigation based on hermeneutic concepts (such as an emphasis on practical involvement, mattering, and part-whole relations; e.g., Heidegger, 1962; Taylor, 1985) in conjunction with an interpretive frame based on hermeneutic moral realism (Brinkmann, 2008; Slife, 2016; Sugarman, 2005; Taylor, 1989; Yanchar & Slife, 2016; Zhao & Biesta, 2012). I employed certain hermeneutic concepts depending on their fit with the overall nature of this project and their potential to reveal insights regarding the phenomenon under investigation (more on this below). The purpose of this hermeneutic inquiry approach, as I devised it, was to study human activity in actual contexts of practice and to produce an account that reflected the meanings and moral dynamics that were central to participation in that practice: in this case, the use of APD in a higher education setting. The result of this type of inquiry, then, is a set of interrelated insights regarding activity in the moral space of practice, and more specifically, insights regarding APD and how it fit into the moral spaces of my participants' teaching at BYU.

### Interpretive Frame

Throughout this study, I used the hermeneutic moral realist interpretive frame offered by Yanchar and Slife (2016), which entails looking at practices and reflections on practice in order to understand their “moral significance” (p. 12), the “moral reference points” (p. 13) that orient practice within moral space, the “moral becoming” (p. 15) of professors as they “adjust [or] improve . . . toward or away from moral goods and reference points intrinsic to practices” (p. 15), and “moral-practical complexities that seem inevitable in the lived reality of participation in moral space” (p. 15). This interpretive frame allowed me to foreground the moral realist

phenomena that are central to this study. Although I introduced hermeneutic moral realism earlier, it is necessary now to elaborate on some of the moral phenomena entailed in a moral realist approach to inquiry. I will discuss three phenomena involved in this type of inquiry: moral significance, moral phenomena, and moral complexities.

**Moral significance.** One main purpose of hermeneutic moral realist inquiry is to bring into relief the moral significance of a phenomenon (in this case, APD) as part of an individual's everyday participation in practices. This means looking at “how that phenomenon matters, the functions it performs, how it facilitates or hinders participation in practice, the unique dynamics it creates for the people involved, and its implications for related issues” (Yanchar & Slife, 2016, p. 159). The moral significance of that phenomenon is whatever makes it “relevant to people’s moral-practical trajectories and how it fits with other phenomena, or perhaps is an expression of moral goods and reference points, within a broader moral ecology” (p. 13). For example, the use of pop quizzes (a phenomenon) may be very important to a professor whose stance in moral space includes a focus on helping students take responsibility for their learning. The moral significance of pop quizzes in the context of this professor’s practice may be that they enable the professor to remind students to study consistently and effectively.

**Moral phenomena.** The “moral goods and reference points” (p. 13) listed above are examples of moral phenomena that are explored in a moral realist approach to inquiry, along with others such as moral perception, distinctions of worth, evaluations, moral stances, moral sources, and moral becoming. These are all various ways of looking at what participants are striving toward in their everyday practical involvement and the decisions they make regarding the worth of those goals (strong evaluations) and ways to achieve them (weak evaluations; Taylor, 1989). This may include what participants

find to be of worth in their experience with [a practice], the distinctions they draw among ways of participating [in practices], the forms of [practice] they actually engage in, the rationales they use for those kinds of engagements, the ways they do and do not live up to expectations (regarding [a practice]) formed by certain moral reference points, and possibly the rationalizations they offer if they do not. (Yanchar & Slife, 2016, p. 160)

By explicating these moral phenomena, the researcher begins to illuminate the moral stance of the participant, from which one can infer aspects of the moral space of the practice and the fit of certain phenomena within that space. In other words, this is an exploration of moral goods and reference points that orient participants' actions; connections between those moral reference points and participants' evaluations, actions, and thoughts regarding what is valuable in various aspects of their practice; and the experience of participants regarding dynamics that arise between a given phenomenon and the broader practice of which it is part.

**Moral complexities.** The many moral phenomena involved in a rich web of practices and contexts do not always work in perfect harmony. There are often tensions, binds, dilemmas, ironies, and paradoxes that can come into play between various practical and moral considerations. For example, a professor who strives to always be available for his students and also values teaching his students to be self-reliant in their learning may run into difficulties when a student relies too much on coming to office hours for help. In balancing the moral goods toward which they strive, professors will encounter dilemmas. These dilemmas are a crucial part of the moral spaces of teaching at BYU, as are moral phenomena (moral reference points, distinctions of worth, etc.) and the moral significance of practices. Yanchar and Slife (2016) note that these complexities are sometimes hidden or subtle and may require “detached reflection



guided by skillful interviewing” as well as “queries into artifacts and observations during interviews” (p. 16) to be brought to light.

### **Study Participants**

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how APD fits within three moral spaces of teaching at BYU. The broader moral space of BYU, because it encompasses the practices and moral phenomena of a range of people, positions, and disciplines, is much too large and complex to be understood in a single study—or perhaps at all. The present study is therefore limited in scope, seeking to understand how the APD practices of a small number of professors fit within the localized, uniquely configured moral spaces in which they teach.

While studying a large number of professors and contexts would have increased the breadth of my data about APD and the moral spaces of teaching at BYU, it was my goal to deeply understand professors’ varying experiences with APD and teaching. Authentic purposeful design is a complex practice; it involves meeting with a CTL consultant (often multiple times), designing a course, and teaching. To get a full picture of what APD looked like for each faculty member, I needed a small enough sample to allow me to collect a significant amount of qualitative data in each of those stages and go deeply enough to understand each participant’s experience with APD and teaching at BYU. To find participants from whom I could gain such a deep understanding, I used “criterion sampling” (Patton, p. 243). As criteria, I sought participants who (a) had had significant and recent (or current) experience with all three stages of APD; (b) were able and willing to reflect on and articulate their practice, experiences, and values; and (c) were teaching in the current semester the course they had designed with their CTL consultant.

To find participants, I asked each CTL consultant who had used APD with faculty to recommend three to five faculty they had worked with who they felt met my selection criteria. I received a list of 21 potential faculty to screen, 13 of whom agreed for me to contact them about participation. I sent emails to these faculty, in conjunction with their assigned CTL consultants, sharing my selection criteria and asking if they were willing to have a brief interview and possibly be selected for a more intensive study. After removing three who were not tenure-track professors and two who told me via email that they did not meet the criteria, I was left with eight initial participants.

During screening interviews with these eight, I got a feel for how willing each person was to participate in the full study, how well they fit my selection criteria, and how well I could establish rapport with them. Given my desire for significant depth and moderate breadth, I also used purposeful sampling criteria, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend for enhanced transferability. Transfer would be best, I surmised, if I presented a small number of rich cases that represented (as far as possible) the disciplinary diversity of the university. So I tried to select professors who were as different from one another as possible in the following ways: (a) teaching experience—length, positions, and institutions, (b) academic discipline, (c) demographics—gender, age, race, etc., and (d) ease of implementing APD in their own practice. At the conclusion of these interviews I chose three participants who met the selection criteria, who were diverse according to my purposeful sampling criteria, and who I felt would be most able to provide a rich case for the study. Relevant information about each participant is displayed in Table 1. (I have used pseudonyms to protect their identities). All final participants were Caucasian tenure-track professors at BYU.

Table 1

*Participant Information*

Name	Teaching experience prior to BYU	Discipline	Ease of implementing APD	Gender	Time at BYU
Jed	One online course	Health science	Some difficulty	Male	<5 years
Angela	A few years at a junior high school	Mathematics	Several challenges	Female	15+ years
Frank	10+ years at a different university	Theatre	Little difficulty	Male	New hire

Because participating in my study would place an extra burden on already busy faculty, I considered how my participants could benefit from the study. I hoped that the reflections they articulated in interviews would be valuable for their personal growth as professors, as well as for their course designs and teaching. I also got funding from the BYU Faculty Center to provide each of the three final participants with a \$50 gift card to Amazon.com as a token of my appreciation.

**Data Collection and Interview Procedure**

My purpose in collecting data was to find any source of evidence that told of a faculty member's experience with APD (specifically) and teaching at BYU (generally). The main stages of APD are (a) formulating an authentic purpose and (b) designing and teaching the course using that authentic purpose (see Appendix). To gather data regarding both stages, I planned to (a) obtain from faculty the notes they took during their meetings with consultants, (b) get copies of their syllabus iterations and teaching plans, (c) observe and video record their teaching, and (d) discuss each of these experiences with them in semi-structured interviews. As anticipated, the kinds and amount of artifacts I gathered from participants varied, depending on how much

documentation they had maintained (whether they had kept syllabus iterations, notes from CTL consultations, etc.) and how much documentation they desired to share with me. However, in each case I was able to get an adequate understanding of each participant's usage of APD and experience with it.

In semi-structured conversational interviews, I invited participants to share stories about their practice and experiences, including their practices, views, goals, impediments, successes, and growth. I discussed with them what mattered to them, and why, with respect to APD and teaching at BYU. In these interviews, I attempted to position myself as neither a detached observer nor an advocate, but as an interested listener. Each participant's experience was different, and I wanted to get information that was relevant to the participant, so I did not employ a set of "traditional data gathering" (Agrey, 2014, p. 400) questions. Instead, I used a few open-ended questions and guided a conversation in "everyday language" (Yanchar, 2011b, p. 182), which I hoped would "provide deeper (shared) understandings and practical as well as theoretical insights, but not attempt to explain away or depart conceptually from the practical involvement and practical discourse that was the source of the data" (p. 184). In this way interviews resulted in neither pure emic descriptions of subjective participant experience nor theoretical abstracted (etic) interpretations of participant experience, but insights that resulted from a shared conversation and were relevant to both the researcher's theoretical questions and the participant's concrete experience (Yanchar, 2011b).

Interviews were my principal data source; the purpose of other data sources was to inform interview questions and triangulate data insights from the interviews. Initially I had planned to conduct one interview with each participant about each part of APD—defining purpose, designing, and teaching—resulting in three interviews per participant (after screening

interviews). However, while the research method I was using—moral realist inquiry—had been theorized by Yanchar and Slife (2006), it had not been formalized into steps for data collection or analysis. Thus my earliest data collection and analysis methods were guided by a general phenomenological mindset and a brief conceptual description of the method. As I proceeded with the study, however, I met regularly with my thesis chair to discuss the method, clarify its process, and improve its documentation. New and improved iterations of the method helped me continually improve my interviews and data analysis methods as the study progressed, so that while my earlier efforts matched the current method documentation least, my final interviews and analysis matched them very closely.

In preparing for my first round of full-hour interviews with my final participants, I had some difficulty knowing what kinds of questions to ask. I was trying to reconcile my interest in the participants' experience of APD's three stages with my research questions about the moral space of teaching (initially defined as "the moral ecology of teaching at BYU," but later changed to more localized "moral spaces") and the fit of APD within that space. I created a diagram showing how those things might fit together as a way of outlining the questions I could ask in that first round of interviews (see Figure 1). I added a list of related questions, conducted a pilot interview with a CTL consultant who had used APD in his own teaching practice, and then refined my approach.

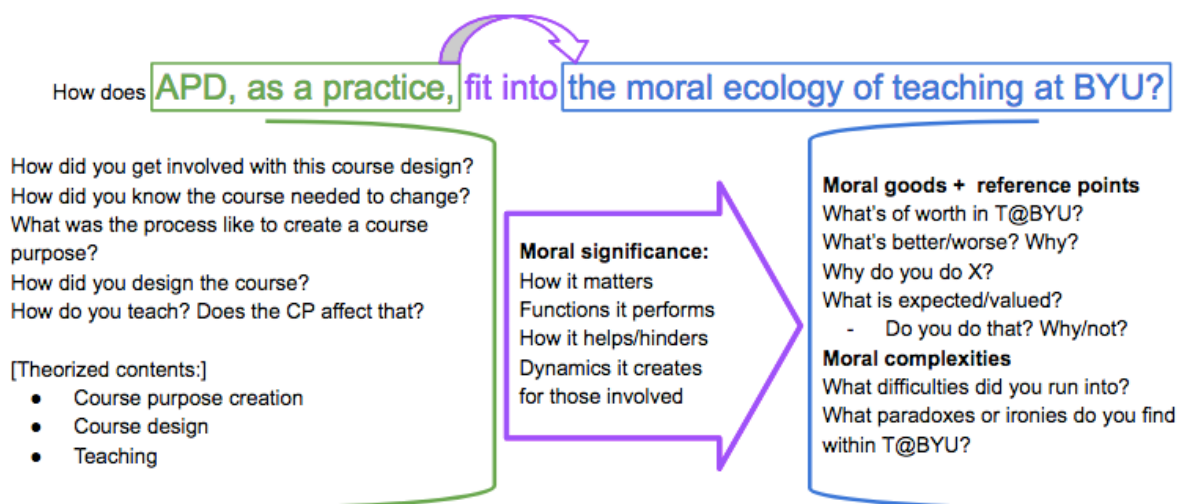


Figure 1. Diagram for first interviews.

I used this first interview protocol loosely for my first round of interviews. Following these, I created narratives outlining what I knew thus far about the participants' experience with APD as part of teaching at BYU, and then I created a unique second protocol for each participant based on the holes that remained in my understanding of the individual's narrative, experience of APD, and fit within the moral space of teaching at BYU. In doing this I used the newly created interviewing guide that had been added to the method documentation. After a second round of interviews and after videotaping each participant's teaching in two separate course sessions, I refined and augmented the narrative for each participant and began an initial round of data analysis. This initial data analysis had a protracted timeline, with many alterations in method aided by iterations of the constantly improving data analysis method documentation and many discussions with my thesis chair to clarify my thinking about the methods and purpose of the research. As I analyzed the data, I came up with a set of initial themes that I could ask the participants to discuss in final interviews. In the final round of interviews I asked questions from a final interview protocol (based on the current iteration of method documentation), having

participants respond to my initial themes and insights that came from other participants' final interviews. During the process of interviewing the participants four times (including screening interviews), I also collected artifacts from them related to their experience with APD and teaching at BYU.

### **Data Analysis**

As noted above, my data analysis process involved a continual clarifying of method as I worked with my thesis chair to turn hermeneutic moral realist inquiry theory (Brinkmann, 2004; Taylor, 1989; Yanchar & Slife, 2016) into practice. My final data analysis methods, however, followed the analysis steps outlined in the most current version of the methods documentation. This method resulted in a three-fold set of findings: (a) *case narratives*, in which data from interviews and artifacts was used to construct a case narrative for each participant, detailing in lay terms their practice and experience with APD and its relationship to teaching at BYU; (b) a *thematic structure* composed of themes regarding the moral space of teaching at BYU, the significance of APD within that moral space, and related complexities; and (c) a *commentary on cases and practice* showing how the thematic structure revealed new insights about both APD and the moral space of teaching at BYU. This commentary can be found in the discussion section.

After the first round of interviews I began to draft a case narrative for each participant, which I expanded, edited, and clarified based on successive interviews, observations, and participants' documentation of their use of APD. In these case narratives, I used the language of the participants as much as possible to describe the many activities, experiences, and factors that were part of their participation in the practice of teaching at BYU, with APD as the main focus.

As I gathered and analyzed data, I became increasingly familiar with each case and with the data set as a whole. I looked at each participant's case through the lens of hermeneutic moral realism, paying particular attention to the moral significance of phenomena (their roles, functions, or the difference they made), moral realist phenomena (moral reference points, moral perception, distinctions of worth, evaluations, moral stances, moral sources, moral goods, moral becoming, etc.), and complexities (dilemmas, tensions, binds, ironies, etc.). During this process I drafted and continuously refined themes related to how APD fit within moral spaces of teaching at BYU. The purpose of this exercise was not to create or reveal the entire configuration of the moral space of teaching at BYU or the fit of APD within that space—as if there were a coherent monolithic space—but to describe elements of the local moral space of each participant's practice. This was done by inferring themes from my data sources about various roles of APD in relation to participants' moral spaces and stands, based on their experiences. I then placed these themes into a thematic structure, organized according to inferred moral reference points of teaching within these spaces at BYU and the moral significance of APD with regard to those particular reference points. Because the thematic structure was created using data from all participants, its formulation was similar in some respects to a cross-case analysis, such as is common in multiple case study research (e.g., Stake, 2006).

After formulating this thematic structure, I used insights from my data analysis to reflect on the case narratives, the practice of APD, and the moral space of teaching at BYU. This resulted in new insights about the participants' cases; the moral significance, formulation, and utility of APD; and additional moral reference points of teaching at BYU beyond the university's mission and aims.



## Trustworthiness

As with any scientific research, inquiry within the moral space of practice requires checks that help ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) widely-used recommendations for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry, I engaged in the following practices during the course of my research:

- **Member checking.** After completing data analysis and my final write-up, I invited participants to review my case narratives, thematic structure, and commentary and to provide feedback about how well it fit with their experience. One participant completed member checking and had no concerns; one was not able to complete it, but had no concerns; and one (Angela) completed member checking and had no major concerns, but made suggested changes to the thesis document and met with me in person to provide clarifications to her narrative and share with me her view of the results. Angela's suggestions led to changes in my description of her case, and her thoughts about the relationship between APD and authenticity helped enrich my commentary on that topic.
- **Peer debriefing.** I talked with Dr. Yanchar, Dr. Wilkins, and a fellow student about my thinking and methods along the way. They helped me think critically about and improve my data collection and analysis methods.
- **Triangulation.** I obtained multiple data sources (interviews, artifacts, and observation) to corroborate and challenge my interpretations of moral phenomena.
- **Audit trail and reflective journal.** I kept all raw data, data analysis notes, and other data collection and analysis documentation. I also maintained a chronological document showing my data collection and analysis schedule, steps, and rationale, as well as my reflections along the way.

- Thick description. In both case narratives and moral configuration accounts, I tried to provide enough detailed description of practices and contexts to enable readers to transfer insights into their own contexts.
- Negative case analysis. During data collection and analysis, I sought data from participants, transcripts, and artifacts that might run contrary to my developing themes. This helped me to create a thematic structure that robustly accounted for all relevant data, including those that were inconsistent with my initial formulations.
- Minimal intervention approach. I recognized the possibility that my interviews with professors could, like interventions, provide occasion for participants to change their views and practices regarding APD. To reduce this possibility, I tried to select participants who had sufficient notes from and recollections of the first two stages of APD (including their meetings with CTL consultants) to help them reconstruct their pre-interview experiences, thoughts, goals, and so on regarding APD in a way that would be as true to their earlier experiences as possible. I also asked participants (as part of member checking) how much my interviewing had influenced their teaching and design practices and thinking. Jed made no comment on this, but Angela said, “It’s made me think a lot. . . . It’s been really nice to have somebody to talk with about this, and it’s been a growing experience for me.” And Frank said, “It is likely that the interviews solidified my ideas and kept purposeful course design in my thoughts. I can’t quantify it, but I believe our conversations strengthened my learning.”

### **Researcher Positionality**

As a qualitative researcher, I recognize that my biases, values, and context impacted the way I planned and carried out this study, as well as the findings I produced. I cannot enumerate

every factor that may have biased this study, but I can provide here a brief sketch of my context, history, and values to give the reader an idea of the researcher behind this work. I am a white, middle-class Christian male. I have attended college only at BYU, where I received a bachelor's degree in psychology. I disliked the deterministic assumptions and supposed value-free approach of mainstream psychology, and I focused my studies instead on questions of human agency and moral influence. This led me to a student research assistant job at the BYU Faculty Center, where we conducted internal research about faculty teaching practices that combined students' intellectual learning with character building and spiritual growth. As a master's student, I remained at the Faculty Center and continued my study of moral agency, turning my attention to the context of higher education. This thesis was thus heavily influenced by my educational pursuits and my work at the BYU Faculty Center. I hoped that by studying how professors used APD, I could bring to light insights that might assist the CTL and the Faculty Center as they tried to help faculty teach in a way that furthers the university's moral mission, which I believe to be divinely inspired. Despite being in such a position, I did not see APD as a BYU-centric practice, and I have attempted to produce results that are as transferable as possible to people of various institutions, creeds, contexts, and cultures, while still being valuable to the unique BYU community.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

The results of this study are presented in two parts: my findings (a case narrative for each participant and a thematic structure) and a discussion of insights into APD, participants' cases, and moral spaces of teaching at BYU. The case narratives describe in laypersons' terms the participants' stories prior to and at BYU, focusing on their experience with using APD. The thematic structure then explores the moral reference points I inferred from interviews, artifacts, and observations, and the role of APD in connection with each moral reference point. In this exploration I frequently describe separately the experience of each participant. When I do, I talk about participants in the same order in which the case narratives are presented: first Jed, then Angela, then Frank.

#### Case Narratives

This section describes the experiences of the participants as they tried to use APD in their course designs and teaching. Explicit usage of moral realist language is absent from these accounts, but will be used in the thematic structure and later in my commentary on each case.

**Case narrative 1: Jed.** I chose Jed as a participant in part because he had very little teaching experience before becoming a faculty member at BYU. As the reader will see, though, Jed embraced his responsibility to teach and design his courses for effective learning.

***Experience before BYU.*** In college, Jed's initial interest in biology became focused on neuroscience and gerontology. His work at a nursing home for people with Alzheimer's disease inspired him to work on understanding and solving chronic health issues that affect older people. He received degrees in neuroscience and epidemiology from BYU and other institutions and worked in epidemiological research prior to being hired by BYU.

***First teaching assignment at BYU.*** Jed joined the Health Sciences Department at BYU and was assigned to teach one course (HLTH X) in his first semester, which was a required core class for all public health majors. He attended new faculty seminars and met with CTL consultants, where he learned about APD and saw its value. However, official communications from BYU and his department were never about APD; their focus was on learning outcomes. Faculty members were being asked to tie “sections of a course being taught by different instructors . . . together by a common set of learning outcomes,” align those outcomes with program-level outcomes, and put them on a new website BYU had created to organize the university’s learning outcomes. So while Jed felt he ought to write a course purpose statement for his HLTH X course, his more immediate concern was coordinating with the other professor who taught the course (Dr. Rivera) to establish a shared set of learning outcomes.

Before seeing Dr. Rivera’s syllabus for HLTH X, Jed wrote down some goals he might have for the course. Then he got Dr. Rivera’s syllabus and found that he and she were “reasonably close to being on the same page with some broad overall goals” (Jed Notes, p. 1). In Dr. Rivera’s syllabus there was a course description and then a lengthy section describing the program learning outcomes, the course’s contributions to them, and the course learning outcomes. Jed was dissatisfied with his understanding of the learning outcomes as they were written and wanted to make them more succinct and organize them in a way that would enable him to clearly tell students what skill(s) they should master. He drafted some succinct learning outcomes, Dr. Rivera agreed to them, and Jed put them on the learning outcome website.

As Jed crafted his syllabus, he borrowed elements from Dr. Rivera’s syllabus and changed them to better fit his own goals for the course. Although he tried to write a course purpose statement, he was not sure how to differentiate it from the learning outcomes. He felt

that the purpose of the course was for students to accomplish the learning outcomes, so he tried listing them in his statement. This was far from succinct and not satisfactory to him, so in his first semester, he taught HLTH X without a course purpose statement.

***Challenges in the first and second semesters of teaching.*** As Jed was teaching HLTH X and trying to figure out how to improve it, he was also designing a new course from scratch (HLTH Y) that he would teach in his second semester. He had less difficulty crafting a course purpose statement for this course. He then followed the prescribed methods of APD to create a culminating assessment, learning outcomes, etc.

In addition to teaching HLTH X, designing HLTH Y, and getting accustomed to his many university responsibilities, Jed was trying to figure out “how the learning outcomes [for HLTH X] were connected with each other.” He wanted something “that would make it easy for me . . . [and] the students to remember and . . . refer to the learning outcomes repeatedly during the semester.” He liked to organize ideas visually, so he created a diagram to explore how the learning outcomes were interconnected. However, he still could not see how to articulate the course purpose without listing the learning outcomes. He saw value in having a course purpose statement, though, so he wrote one that would suffice for the next semester, though it did not reflect Jed’s essential intent very well.

As Jed taught HLTH X a second time, he started using the learning outcome diagram he had created, emphasizing the diagram over the course purpose. He also taught HLTH Y for the first time and found that in that course, the course purpose statement framed the purpose of the class well and helped him stay focused on helping the students gain skills for their future work.

***A course purpose for HLTH X.*** After teaching HLTH X twice, Jed decided to use it for his course development project (required of all new faculty at BYU), because he felt a need to

improve what he was doing. He still did not have a clear sense of the course's purpose and felt like he was "winging it," basing his approach on that of Dr. Rivera. He wanted to raise the bar for his students and communicate to them in a fairly succinct way exactly what he wanted them to get good at doing, while still emphasizing the learning outcomes. So in the spring following his second semester, Jed met with his CTL consultants to work on improving the course. He made some improvements to the learning outcome diagram and realized that what he wanted was for students to "get really good at understanding and using this particular framework." This helped him write a better course purpose statement, which described how the students would use the framework to analyze and talk about chronic disease issues. The function of the course purpose statement was essentially to point students to the framework; by getting good at using this framework, in the future when they were "faced with needing to work on a new disease," they would be able to gather current information about it from a public health perspective.

Jed used this course purpose statement for two semesters, frequently showing students the framework and encouraging them to use it. In the following summer, he met again with a CTL consultant and revised the statement to be more succinct and place more emphasis on gaining skill in using the framework. Since that time, the course purpose statement has remained unchanged. Jed continues to tell students to use the framework "as their primary lens through which they view chronic disease." He tells them,

If you understand this framework, . . . long after you have forgotten all the detailed information that you learned about diseases in this course, . . . you'll know what to do when . . . you need to learn about and work on any chronic disease. This framework gives you the tools that you need to be able to do that.

***Backward design for HLTH X.*** Over the next year and a half, as Jed taught HLTH X three more times, he worked on backward designing the course to align all of the its elements and improve how well the learning activities helped the students become proficient at using the framework. This was difficult because as he was designing the course a semester would start, and he would have to plan and implement learning activities and then align the assessments to those learning activities, rather than the other way around. Assessments thus changed a lot between semesters, but each semester they got a little closer to being backward designed. Throughout this process, Jed responded to feedback from students about increasing the course rigor and improving the learning activities.

**Case narrative 2: Angela.** While Jed used APD as part of his process of learning how to design a course and teach for the first time, Angela’s use of APD came after years of experience as a teacher and was part of her effort to make significant changes to her pedagogy.

***Experience before BYU.*** As a child Angela had a gift for mathematics, enjoyed athletics, and struggled with social anxiety. These all continued into college, where she majored in math and physics. Being cut from an athletic team challenged her paradigm that she could do anything through hard work, so she added to her double major a teacher training program which eventually resulted in two teaching certifications: one in secondary education and the other in special education. These helped her to overcome her fear of “the thing that scared me the most, which would be standing in front of a group of people and speaking,” and with a lot of hard work she became “halfway decent” at teaching. She taught junior high math and science for a few years, returned to college for graduate degrees in mathematics, and was later hired as BYU faculty.



***A major course redesign project.*** Three years after being hired, Angela was assigned to redesign a pair of poorly performing courses (MATH A and B) that were taught by the math department, but were part of the curriculum of a different college within the university. She coordinated with that college to define the courses' content, create a robust and uniform course structure, and form an agreement that any changes to the course would be done through collaboration with the serviced college. This robust structure made it easier for professors—even those with less pedagogical training—to consistently achieve a certain level of student success, and the two courses quickly went from the worst-rated to the best-rated courses in the math department, at least for the first several years. Angela served as the main coordinator for these courses for the majority of the next 15 years and taught them regularly.

***A shift in teaching paradigms.*** A few years after this course redesign project, a family member's experience prompted Angela to start learning about organizational dynamics and leadership. This new interest opened up a whole new world of knowledge to Angela, and for the next few years she learned about many related topics, including organizational psychology, the growth mindset, and accountability—and she saw that these ideas in organizational leadership were also relevant to improving her teaching. Then one day, after Angela gave a presentation on accountability, two CTL consultants introduced her to APD and decision-based learning, and she soon started to apply both to her teaching. Angela recognized APD as an application of accountability in her teaching, which was exciting to her. She worked with the CTL consultants to create a course purpose statement for a calculus class; this statement was centered on students becoming good problem solvers and leaders—“things that are going to apply to every math course I teach.” Because it was not really specific to any one course, this statement became her

“teaching purpose,” and she applied it, with varying degrees of success, to all of her teaching from that point forward, rather than craft a separate purpose statement for each course.

After writing her teaching purpose, Angela kept learning about instructional psychology from the CTL consultants and other sources, always seeking ways to bring her teaching practice closer to accomplishing the “lofty vision” of her teaching purpose. In each course she taught, she tried to teach the content in a way that helped students develop in the ways specified in her teaching purpose.

**Challenges.** As Angela’s vision of good teaching changed, she wanted to implement new things in her classroom, but four factors made that difficult: (a) her need to learn new teaching skills and habits, (b) a lack of pedagogical flexibility in her courses (due to a need for consistency in MATH A and B and imposed constraints on other courses through department-adopted content-heavy learning outcomes), (c) her field’s pedagogical traditions, and (d) dysfunction in her department which did not facilitate reflexivity or growth in the practices of teaching and learning.

The balance between inter-course consistency and teacher agency was different in different courses. One course (MATH Z) had five class sessions scheduled for each week: three days were for lecture, but the use of other two class sessions could be decided by the professor. This gave Angela a fair amount of room to design her course section to her liking and incorporate problem solving and leadership development. She was able to use principles of decision-based learning to teach problem solving approaches, have students write personal mission statements, and set up a real-world applied math project for the students to work on. In contrast, the fixed and agreed-upon structure of MATH A and B left Angela less room to make improvements to the course based on her teaching purpose. She could make use of some

decision-based learning principles and share brief inspirational thoughts, but the course was still focused mainly on content coverage. In an interview with me, she talked about her vision for how these courses could be improved using APD and then lamented, “I have these lofty ideas that I'm telling you, and then you go down to my class and, well, we're just barely getting off the ground.”

As the coordinator for MATH A and B, Angela had helped to create and maintain their fixed structure, but she was also responsible for improving them through a collaborative process with the coordinating college. Her contact for that process—the associate dean of that college—was amenable to redesigning the courses, and he started putting her in touch with instructors with whom she could collaborate on the course design. However, within her own department there were several impediments to the redesign process. First, Angela said, her department had a strong tendency to address problems by changing perceptions rather than practices, and even simple questions about department goals and purposes were usually shut down. This created a general resistance to authentic growth. Second, the department had established a practice of frequently assigning temporary and/or problem instructors to teach MATH A and B, because the structure of the courses tended to mitigate some of the negative impact on the students. Therefore, she needed to facilitate instructor development for those instructors in order to get their buy-in on the new design and thus be able to effect real change. Moreover, there was resistance to making any improvements to MATH A and B due to political forces within the department. Just when Angela had begun to make some progress in facilitating teacher development and laying the groundwork for the collaborative process of course improvement, department leadership removed her from the assignment as course coordinator.

In another course (MATH X), Angela had another challenge that made it difficult to accomplish her teaching purpose: Some students were well prepared for the course content, while others needed a good deal of prerequisite material. This, Angela said, was in part because the department culture had been encouraging students to take advanced classes without sufficiently ensuring the students' readiness.

In Angela's eyes, these problems were to a large extent due to her department's resistance to change and general lack of reflexive practice—her requests to have department discussions about the goals and directions of the department, which would be a precursor to discussions about pedagogical improvement, were met with rejection. She said that as a department, or “even as the field of mathematics, I think that we're really not doing the best that we could be doing.” She described an experience that illustrated the field's lack of reflexivity:

I go to our student research conference, and I'll ask the math students, "What's the [reason] that you're working on this problem? . . . Why is it of interest to you?" And they [say], “Well, it's of interest to my advisor.” And there's really no understanding past that. . . . In math, that's actually the norm. . . . And unfortunately, the professor has adopted their professor's project in the same way—I mean, this has been going on for quite some time. . . . I really feel like as a field, to a large extent, we've lost our way in terms of knowing why we're doing what we're doing.

Angela said the field had probably stayed in that non-reflexive rut for so long partially because “people don't really understand that there is something that they can jump out *to*” (emphasis hers); she said that in her experience, most mathematicians taught using an acquisition model—as if students were machines that merely required discipline and programming. “And then there are the amazing [math teachers]. And . . . people think, ‘They were just born with this innate

understanding. . . . We don't really understand that skill; we don't have the vision to get out [of the rut].” Angela’s introduction to organizational leadership literature and her conversations with CTL consultants had helped her see pedagogical possibilities outside of the rut.

However, having taught math in a content driven way for many years with few examples of reflexive teaching practice, Angela struggled to get out of the rut of her own teaching habits and accomplish her teaching purpose, sometimes reverting to her previous default purpose: “get through the material.” Another teaching habit that she had to overcome was related social anxiety—being overly self-conscious. She had, however, through continued practice and taking advantage of many professional development opportunities, begun to get out of those habits and better fit her practice to her purpose.

**Case narrative 3: Frank.** Like Angela, Frank already had significant teaching experience before he was introduced to APD. Unlike Angela, his use of APD seemed to have prompted slight improvements rather than radical change. Further, compared to Angela he also experienced far fewer difficulties in implementing his pedagogical purposes.

*Experience before BYU.* Frank had an interest in theatre early in life that led him to pursue BFA and MFA degrees in the field of theatre. He then taught for several years at a small Christian liberal arts school before coming to teach at BYU, where his experience as a student had been “life-changing.”

*Course design retreat for new faculty.* Before his first semester of teaching at BYU, Frank attended a CTL-hosted course design retreat for new faculty. During this retreat there were presentations about the purposes of teaching, use of a course purpose in course design, and the mission of BYU. Creating a course purpose statement was new for Frank; he had used “course intent” paragraphs in the syllabi of classes he had taught previously, but he had never

used a single-sentence course purpose as described at the retreat. He had been assigned to teach TMA B, a second-semester acting course, in the coming semester, but although he was able to look up the course's expected learning outcomes, he was not able to discuss them with his new theatre colleagues during the retreat. This made it somewhat difficult for him to write a course purpose statement that he "had some passion behind" that also met the department's intentions. As he looked at the skills covered in the course and wrote about what was important in theatre and at BYU, he went through a few iterations of a course purpose statement, settling on one that summarized the course's fundamental skill set in a "clear and inspirational" statement of what students would become and how. He then spent some time brainstorming learning activities for the students and drafting a rubric by which he could see if students were achieving the course purpose.

***Return to BYU.*** When Frank returned from the retreat and had opportunities to talk to his colleagues, he found that his ideas about what was important for the students were very much in harmony with those of his colleagues. As he designed his course, he would often "return to the course purpose to say, 'Does this support that course purpose? Does this activity lead to that purpose either directly or indirectly?'" The elements of his colleagues' syllabi all seemed to lend themselves to achieving his course purpose in more or less effective ways, so he incorporated parts of their course designs into his own course. The resulting course was similar in some ways to how he had taught previously, but everything in the course pointed toward his course purpose. He also found out that most acting courses were audition-only, and that the rubric his colleagues used to rate students' performances would work well for measuring students' fulfillment of his course purpose, so he began using it in his teaching. Overall, his vision for his students' education was very well aligned with the vision of his colleagues and department.

**Teaching approach.** After his first semester at BYU, Frank used the course purpose approach any time he had an opportunity to make significant changes to a course design. He said it affected his teaching mainly by affecting the course design. Day to day he rarely thought about the course purpose explicitly, focusing instead on the day's learning activities, perhaps because "the purpose is a broad statement, and daily activities are more focused on smaller skillsets." However, during a summer term course when he had few other responsibilities, he thought about the course purpose for that course almost daily and even shared it with the students on a few occasions to orient them to what they as a class were trying to accomplish.

In all of Frank's teaching, he tried to prepare students to be the kind of actors who could find regular work, build relationships in the field, and support their families, and to be actors whose work inspires people to be better. He wanted to help students have a life-changing experience in the acting program just as he had as a student.

### **Thematic Structure**

As I analyzed interviews, observations, and artifacts, my participants' practices, experiences, and reflections revealed certain moral reference points that guided their practice or with which they had to cope. I grouped these reference points thematically into a structure that showed five larger inferred moral reference points (IMRPs). Each theme below describes one of these larger moral reference points (inferred from the data) and explores the relationship between that moral reference point and each participants' use of APD, including defining a course's purpose and designing and teaching the course with that purpose in mind. Using relevant quotations and examples, each theme is a partial answer to the question "How does APD fit within moral spaces of teaching at BYU?"

**IMRP 1: Using good course design and pedagogy.** The first moral reference point of teaching at BYU that I inferred from my participants' experience should come as no surprise to the reader: Excellent teaching at BYU includes using good course design and pedagogy practices.

*Summary of what constitutes good course design and pedagogy.* Participants talked about several aspects of good teaching at BYU that were related to course design and pedagogy. Regarding course design, participants said that it was important to improve their courses, but it was also important to align their course designs with their colleagues' courses and with the major or program of which their courses were part. As will be shown later, these two guiding values were sometimes in harmony and at other times in tension. Regarding pedagogy, participants mentioned many things that contribute to good teaching; foremost among these was the importance of teaching in a way that is student centered, including helping students understand course goals and making changes in response to students' feedback.

*Role of APD in improving course design quality.* Participants agreed that APD helped them design better courses, though its function varied somewhat among participants and courses. Jed said that APD improved his course designs in at least three ways: it reminded him of the *why* behind course goals, it helped him unify the learning outcomes, and it helped him create better learning activities and assessments. He said that having a statement of course purpose was helpful because it kept him "focused on why we're doing what we're doing." He said he preferred using a course purpose instead of a course description, because "a course *description* is just what are you going to do. The course *purpose* is more about 'Why are you going to do that?' I find that idea very helpful." He said that the course purpose statement for HLTH Y was particularly helpful because it kept him "grounded in . . . what I want [students] to become."



In addition to reminding him of the *why* behind his course goals, Jed mentioned, “The course purpose plays a role of . . . unifying the learning outcomes.” However, this was truer in HLTH Y than in HLTH X. Prior to writing a course purpose statement for HLTH X, Jed had already created a visual framework to show how the learning outcomes were interrelated and worked together. He “used that entire framework every day” in class to orient students to a particular way of studying issues of disease, and he wanted them to get really good at using it for that purpose. The course purpose statement in that class merely made explicit a goal that was already very clear in Jed’s mind; he said that in HLTH X, “If I never had stated the course purpose and I just had the [framework] of learning outcomes, it would be enough.” He contrasted this with HLTH Y, in which the learning outcomes “do not represent a framework for how to think about something,” but are “a little bit more like a checklist” of concepts, theories, and methods. Absent a course purpose, Jed said, students would “go through the checklist . . . [and say,] ‘I learned all this stuff, but what do you want me to do with it? What am I supposed to be able to do in the future?’” As Jed was designing HLTH Y, he started with the course purpose, which tells students the kind of work they should be able to do by the end of the course. As he was choosing learning outcomes for the course, the course purpose gave Jed “guidance as to [answering the question] ‘Of all the possible learning outcomes you could state for this course, what are the ones that matter?’” After stating the course purpose, Jed was able to choose learning outcomes that would be most useful for his students to learn.

Jed said, “For my two courses [the statement of course purpose] definitely functions differently.” While students in HLTH X used a visual framework of the course learning outcomes every day, each class session in HLTH Y was focused on a different learning outcome and how it fit into the overall task defined in the course purpose. The question for students in

HLTH X was how to use the framework to study a disease or issue; the question in HLTH Y was “Here’s . . . [a] problem that you’re going to solve. . . . You’ve got a whole slew of concepts and methods at your disposal; . . . which concepts and methods do you need?” Thus the course purpose was more crucial in HLTH Y to tie the learning outcomes together into an overall task for students to master; the framework in HLTH X seemed to do that by itself.

Although the course purpose did not appear to be crucial to the design of HLTH X, another component of APD—backward design—helped Jed align all of the course elements and be able to tell students the reasoning behind each element. I did not ask him about the role of backward design for HLTH Y. Overall, although a statement of course purpose was not crucial to HLTH X, APD helped Jed’s courses as it unified the learning outcomes, focused on the *why* behind them, and aligned all of the course elements.

Angela’s experience with using APD to design courses was different. She was not able to fully redesign any course—all of the courses she taught had set content that she was required to cover, and this often left little room for her to make changes to course assignments or activities. Despite this difficulty, she tried to teach each course in a way that accomplished her “teaching purpose” as much as possible, and where she had some room to alter the design of a course, her teaching purpose guided her efforts to do so. Since she was frequently unable to use her teaching purpose to radically change a course’s actual design, she tried to incorporate it into her teaching practice, which had its own challenges (to be considered later). When she did have some wiggle room to design some course elements, she said, “I kind of design the content with my teaching purpose in sight.”

Angela had the most freedom to use her teaching purpose to change the course design in MATH Z. It helped her choose learning activities and a collaborative class project that would

help students become better at problem solving with “application kinds of problems” and help her do some “building a community, as much as I can.” In this and other courses, where she had been asked to cover a lot of content (and where application questions were rarely covered), she used her teaching purpose to guide her “effort to . . . pare down . . . and to manage the content in a way that hopefully will be meaningful for the students” and help them “become better problem solvers.” Although she did not have complete control over the content, she started to find ways to not “talk about everything, but . . . talk about key ideas . . . in a way that accomplishes my teaching purpose.” Authentic purposeful design thus helped her define her purpose as a teacher and then design (or alter) her courses in ways that accomplished her purpose better than she could have by just covering course content. She was not able to complete a full backward design of any course, but she was able to use her teaching purpose to improve some elements of some courses.

Frank’s experience with APD was more like Jed’s experience, in that it helped him define the purpose of a single course and design the course elements to meet that purpose. He wrote his first course purpose statement while at a retreat for new faculty. He said that APD helped him give “full consideration” to what would be “meaningful, . . . valuable; . . . the essential and most important focal point” for TMA B, and he was able to clarify not only what kind of actor students would need to become, but what essential skill set students would gain in TMA B that would prepare them to be that kind of actor. After the retreat, he used the course purpose to design the course. For each course element, he would “return to the course purpose and say, ‘Does this activity lead to that purpose, either directly or indirectly?’” As a result, he said, everything in the course “add[ed] up toward them being” the kind of person specified in the course purpose. He said that his earlier careful thinking about the essential purpose of TMA B

made his statement of course purpose something he could trust as he designed the course, allowing him to trust the course design to have framed the course sufficiently for him to later teach it without referring explicitly to the course purpose as he taught. After that semester he used APD any time he had an opportunity to make significant changes to a course. Authentic purposeful design helped Frank clarify what would be most valuable for his students and align course elements to that essential purpose.

***Dynamics between APD and alignment with colleagues and program.*** Participants all agreed that aligning their courses with both their colleagues' courses and their program or major was part of good teaching, but the dynamics between that guiding principle and APD were different for each participant. Jed experienced no tension coordinating APD with his colleagues or program. As previously discussed, the course purpose for HLTH X (which was aligned to several program-level learning outcomes) was not crucial to its design. However, Jed said that HLTH Y was "the only course that addresses a program level learning outcome," and thus he connected the course purpose directly to that outcome, so in this case "the statement of course purpose [was] really important." He then created learning outcomes that were all tied to the course purpose. For this course, APD enabled Jed to more easily align his course design with the program goals that the course was meant to support.

Angela experienced many tensions between trying to improve her courses and working within her program structures and with her colleagues' mindsets. After learning about APD, she wanted to make changes to MATH A and B, for which she was the course coordinator ("the primary person that's responsible for insuring the courses are being run properly"). However, there were two impediments to this. First, she had originally designed the courses in conjunction with the serviced college, and they had agreed that the courses would have a fixed syllabus and

shared exams and that any future significant changes to the courses would have to be done in collaboration with that college. Second, when Angela started holding weekly meetings with her fellow instructors to try to get them involved with making APD-guided changes, progress was “really slow” because she was “working with people from vastly different backgrounds and values” whose pedagogical ideas were initially very different from her vision for what the courses could become. Two CTL consultants facilitated those meetings and were able to help the instructors see a different approach to pedagogy, and by the end of a semester of meetings the instructors were open to the idea of redesigning the courses using APD. Angela did not feel that the other instructors were “quite invested in it enough that they would commit . . . significant time and effort to build it,” but she thought that if she met with the CTL consultants to get a new course design “framework built into place, and then [went] to the group and [said], . . . ‘How are we going to make this really work?’” the instructors “would feel comfortable” to contribute to the design and commit to it. Angela also needed to get the coordinating college on board with any significant changes, but she had “already talked to [the associate dean] about some of these ideas” and could tell that he would “plug into it really quickly.” There did not seem to be much resistance from the serviced college regarding Angela’s efforts to redesign the courses.

In the math department, however, Angela’s efforts to have faculty discussions about department goals and directions were always rejected by those in positions of influence, precluding any hope of an open discussion about pedagogical improvement. Because of this lack of collaboration around pedagogical improvement, Angela found it “really difficult to make any kind of progress.” A compulsory alignment between courses and with the overall program, combined with the field’s pedagogical traditions, her department’s resistance to change, and

challenges from her colleagues, greatly restricted the amount of freedom Angela had to redesign her courses using APD.

In contrast to Angela’s situation, Frank’s efforts to use APD to design his courses were not in conflict with the need to align his courses with his colleagues’ courses and with the overall program. The rubric and syllabus elements his colleagues were already using fit well with what Frank was trying to accomplish with APD. He also said that, in terms of aligning his course with his colleagues’ courses,

that has been a goal, and I don’t feel like that has hindered my ability to improve the course. . . . In my meetings with my colleagues, if there are things that we need to change, or if I’ve had questions, . . . I’ve been able to address with them with colleagues’ input . . . [and] get their feedback so that I am keeping in alignment. But it has always felt like we’re doing this together. . . . I’m not teaching a course where I feel like “Boy, we could really reach much higher.”

Frank said that he and his colleagues talk “about making adaptations to our process and trying to become more efficient, more effective, clearer—just in terms of perpetual improvement as we go along,” and that over time, they might work together to “reevaluate the curriculum as a whole.” In Frank’s case, using APD was not hindered by the need for alignment with colleagues and program; instead, it fit quite well within those relationships of alignment.

***Role of APD in improving pedagogy.*** All participants said that APD helped them to teach better. Jed said that using APD helped him be more student-centered:

The course purpose helps me try to view my teaching as something that's not teacher centered, but student centered. It helps me keep that mindset of “This is an experience that's supposed to be about your learning, not about my teaching.” [This is] because the

course purpose and learning outcomes are stated in a way that's relevant to the student, not relevant to me as the instructor.

In addition to helping Jed keep a student-focused mindset in his teaching, using APD to design the course made clear to him and the students the purpose of each course element. He said,

I can now tell my students exactly what I want them to achieve—it's very clear in my mind what I want. If I weren't able to do that, then I would probably make different decisions about what to ask them to spend their time doing.

Although Jed considered his course purpose statement more essential in HLTH Y than in HLTH X, in both courses, the course purpose statement “provided the initial guidance for ‘what do we need to be doing and why are we doing it?’” He said that although the course purpose statements acted as “an organizing principle” for course activities, active or student-centered learning strategies were “not embedded” in the statements themselves, but were “more a function of just who [Jed is].” It appears that the course purpose statements and resulting course designs were student-centered in part because of the student-centered nature of APD and in part because of Jed’s own approach to teaching.

Angela, it should be remembered, crafted a teaching purpose rather than a course purpose. Prior to that, her “default course purpose was just ‘get through the material.’” Her teaching purpose was “kind of the north star” for her teaching, describing what she wanted her students to become by virtue of her teaching. It had helped her improve the way she worked one-on-one with her research students (such as by handing a whiteboard marker back to a student instead of finishing a problem herself), but in her classes she felt that there was still a good deal of separation “between my course purpose and what I actually do.”

Two barriers kept her from teaching in the student-centered way that her teaching purpose spelled out. First, there was “a separation between . . . learning outcomes and how [she wanted] to interact with students, . . . because [the courses were] content heavy.” Although Angela wanted time in her courses “to interact more with [students] . . . [by] having discussions, that kind of thing,” she was “under an obligation to make an effort of coverage.” It took a good deal of work to figure out how to manage that and “talk about key ideas and . . . do it more in a way that accomplishe[d] [her] teaching purpose.” Second, there was a separation between her teaching purpose and her actual practice as a teacher because she had to work at “getting out of habits” and learn “new skills to be able to accomplish [her] teaching purpose.” Her teaching purpose gave her “some direction in what [she wanted] to do,” but it would take a good amount of work to become the kind of teacher she envisioned. She took advantage of personal study and professional development opportunities to figure out how to change her mindset and practices to better accomplish her teaching purpose, and at the time of her last interview with me she had recently had a breakthrough where she was able to take a teaching situation where she had been “getting really anxious” about students’ lack of basic knowledge and change her approach to be more focused on “just helping them” and being able to “find joy with whoever the student is in the moment.”

She described writing her teaching purpose as “the first step in accountability—it’s defining what you want.” However, she said, “it’s not just the writing itself” that would improve her teaching, but “the fact that it’s the first step in the accountability process.” In order to accomplish her teaching purpose, she would need to “follow up with the other steps,” which include making a plan and evaluating its effectiveness. Ultimately, she said, her teaching purpose spurred her to ask herself questions to improve her teaching: “What is really going on



here? What is it that I need to do to get better aligned with my course purpose?” Her teaching purpose itself may not have made her teaching more student centered, but it gave her a student centered vision toward which to grow.

For Frank, the main way that APD helped him be student focused in his teaching was by helping him “to be clearer” about his goals for students. He said that “it probably has the strongest effect when I’m developing the syllabus.” As he developed a syllabus, he said, the course purpose became “like a guiding principle” that would help him evaluate each aspect of the course and ask “How does this portion of the course point at that course purpose?” Day to day, he said, the course purpose rarely came to mind; instead, he trusted that his work in developing the syllabus had already framed the course activities to achieve the course purpose. However, in a particularly calm semester, he had few responsibilities other than teaching a single course. In that course, which had a course purpose, he “regularly returned to that, even . . . with the students there, saying, ‘Now, remember that this is what we’re doing—this is our goal, and so this is why what we’re doing today lands on that goal.’” In general, though, his numerous university responsibilities made him too busy to reflect each day on the purpose of each course. Rather, his course purpose statements helped him teach better by framing the course in a way that would be helpful for students’ learning.

***Summary of dynamics between APD and good course design and pedagogy.*** There were many ways that APD helped these faculty improve their course designs and pedagogy, but there were also tensions and binds that limited that effect. It appears that for all three faculty, APD helped them clarify and stay focused on why they were teaching a course, in terms of what it would help students do and become after the course. It also helped them unify and align the elements of the course design—or in Angela’s case, pare down the course content and focus on

key ideas in a way that emphasized problem solving instead of rote memorization and simple application. The way the Jed and Frank were able to frame their course using APD made their day-to-day activities with students more focused on accomplishing the course purpose, even without explicitly refocusing on the course purpose statement each day. Using APD also helped Jed align a course with its program-level outcome, focus on student learning instead of teaching, and be clear about his desires for students' learning. For both Jed and Frank, their colleagues' pedagogical ideas seemed to allow or reinforce their use of APD. Although Angela was able to use APD to improve her course designs and teaching to some extent, she was unable to use it fully. It seems that this was due in large part to her field's traditions and her department's resistance to reflective practices and pedagogical innovation, which resulted in content-heavy courses, little allowance for course design changes, and a sense that discussing pedagogical or course alterations was not a priority. Even with this configuration of the moral space of Angela's department, however, defining her teaching purpose helped her make her pedagogy more student centered and change the way she taught course content to focus more on developing students' problem solving and personal leadership capabilities. Authentic purposeful design helped these faculty improve their course designs and pedagogy, making it a tool that worked in harmony with two aspects of good teaching at BYU: good course design and pedagogy.

**IMRP 2: Teaching the whole student authentically.** Thus far I have discussed the role of APD in participants' efforts to use good course design and teaching methods to help students learn course content and skills. All three participants also said they hoped to influence students in ways not directly related to their course content. They each mentioned goals they had for the development of students as whole people, talked about how their personal values affected their

teaching, and shared the role that APD played in their desires and efforts to affect students' development.

*Summary of what teaching the whole student authentically means at BYU.* As I interviewed participants and watched them teach, it was clear that each recognized and valued the opportunity they had to impact students' lives outside of class. Jed spoke about this most succinctly. He said that faculty had “an opportunity . . . to just have an influence on [students'] lives,” which was made easier “here at BYU, where we're explicit about our spiritual identity as part of what connects us.” Jed said that students want to know if their professor cares about them. “They want mentorship, they want encouragement, they want someone to care about their success.” He does care about his students and puts extra time and effort into his one-on-one interactions. In these interactions he often has opportunities to share uplifting quotations and personal experiences with students who are experiencing severe discouragement or other difficult personal trials, and students' feedback is that these interactions are important to them. He also makes occasional efforts in class to share spiritual insights with students.

Angela said that in teaching, “it's not really the particular subject matter that should be the focus; it should be developing students—that should be the focus.” Her desire as a math teacher was

to approach my students with an understanding of who they really are—as whole people, who they're going to become—and to help them grow in their confidence and their abilities—and . . . [become] leaders . . . [who] help other people grow in their abilities as well.

She wanted to help students “see how [math] fit into the context of their lives.” Being a mathematician had helped her learn in other subjects as well, and she wanted to give her students

that same “confidence and ability to . . . branch out and learn the other things that they're going to need to learn in life.”

Frank said that as a student at BYU, he “had multiple life changing experiences” that made him “a better person” and helped him improve his relationships with other people. Part of his motivation for teaching at BYU was to give students similar “opportunities to grow and learn and feel inspired to improve their lives and . . . the lives of others.” That desire “informs everything” that he does at BYU. He wants students to have life-changing experiences, such as “emotional breakthroughs,” that help them “become authentic, committed, [and] truthful” in ways that contribute to good acting, as well as the development of the students as whole people. He also wants to teach them to love and serve their collaborators. Because Frank has been in their shoes, he said, “That builds a bond, . . . and I want them all to be happy and lead successful, . . . stable, balanced, happy lives.” He understands that the job market is difficult for actors, so he tries to help students develop in ways that will be “somebody who people want to work with again and again” so that they can “have regular employment . . . [and] have less stress in their lives, . . . raise a family, . . . serve others effectively, . . . [and build] loving relationships with family members, and so on.” Each participant in this study had a desire not only to teach their students their subject, but to help them be successful and happy in their current and future lives. These are aspects of teaching at BYU that are valued both institutionally (to be discussed later) and by many professors, including the three participants in this study.

***The role of APD in teaching the whole student authentically.*** The relationship between APD and using one’s personal values to teach whole students was different for each participant. For Jed APD was not a way to infuse his personal values (outside of disciplinary values) into a course purpose or design. He said it was important to him to “have a relationship during [the]

semester that [was] positive and beneficial for [students],” but that “[did not] really influence my statement of the course purpose and the learning outcomes.” However, there were times when he wanted to add something extra to a course that was more connected to the development of the whole student; in those times, he said, “the course purpose helps me know whether including certain stuff is appropriate for the course.” For example, Jed had an idea one day to add to HLTH X a class session about addiction,

frame it as a chronic spiritual disease, . . . [and] tie into students’ interest in spiritual health. . . . And I realized that fits within the purpose of the course, and it fits particularly well in teaching this course at BYU, where we can look at addictions in a way that’s congruent with our values as a university. So it's not that the course purpose prompted me to include that—it's that when I had the idea to include it, the course purpose told me, “Yeah, that would be appropriate to include. It fits within what you want to do in the course and so you should go for it.”

In this way, the course purpose filtered if and how Jed included in his courses his authentic desires for students’ personal development. He also said that APD helped him be able to talk to students about the role course activities will have in their work in health professions, which enables them to look beyond the course content to how they can help people in the future. This may be somewhat connected to their development as whole people.

Authentic purposeful design helped Angela teach whole students authentically primarily by helping her define and distill her purpose as a teacher into a single-sentence ideal toward which she felt she “should really grow.” This statement of teaching purpose included elements of whole student growth that came authentically from her personal values, including students being able to “incorporate personal influence leadership” as they sought success in “academic,

professional, and life endeavors.” This statement guided her efforts to seek professional development and become a better teacher, as well as the choices she made as she figured out how to teach course content in a way that intentionally invites students to grow personally.

Frank did not see APD as a tool that helped him develop whole students or teach authentically. For him, his course purpose statement and its resulting course design were focused on the essential skills necessary for the course, rather than being infused with his personal desires for students’ spiritual, emotional, or social growth. He did not consciously try to make his course purpose accomplish those things. However, he said, “I can’t say that it’s divorced from [those] things. . . . The link is me—I’m the teacher, I’m the one developing it, and so I guess it has to be there.”

***Summary of the role of APD in teaching the whole student authentically.*** It is clear that creating a course purpose—or a teaching purpose, rather—helped Angela infuse her approach to course design with her personal values and desires for students’ development as whole people. However, she had already been pondering and trying to accomplish those things when she sat down to write her teaching purpose; it merely formalized them into a sentence to which she could refer and aim her teaching and professional development. Jed and Frank’s course purpose statements, on the contrary, were focused on the essential skills and disciplinary values that students would need to succeed in their field. Like Angela, they had desires for students to grow as whole people—spiritually, emotionally, etc.—and those things were visible in the ways that they interacted with students inside and outside the classroom. They were not explicit in their course purpose statements or course designs, with the exception of Jed’s added class section on addictions as spiritual chronic diseases, which his course purpose told him was appropriate for the course.

**IMRP 3: Connecting to the mission of the university.** Each participant talked about the mission of BYU in positive ways and wanted to accomplish the aims of education stated therein. Each also talked about how APD was—or could be—a tool to help them connect their courses to those aims.

*Summary of the mission of BYU.* If we are to discuss connecting APD to the mission of the university, it seems appropriate to summarize it here. The university’s mission, briefly stated, is “to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life.” Thus education at BYU is to pursue “the full realization of human potential”—every part of the BYU experience should contribute to “the balanced development of the total person” and prepare students to face challenges and “bring strength to others in . . . home and family life, social relationships, civic duty, and service to mankind.” The university environment should reflect the “moral virtues . . . of the Son of God.” Further, BYU students should learn “the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” learn to think broadly and clearly and communicate effectively and with integrity, and become “capable of competing with the best in their fields” (see BYU, 1981). It is expected that students’ education at BYU “should be (1) spiritually strengthening, (2) intellectually enlarging, and (3) character building, leading to (4) lifelong learning and service” (see BYU, n.d.-a).

*Participants’ words regarding the mission and aims of BYU.* Jed was acutely aware of the mission and aims of BYU; he said they were the “big picture goal that I’m shooting for,” and he was able to describe what aspects of HLTH X could be linked to aims of a BYU education. He said that BYU faculty were told frequently,

Good teaching at BYU is supposed to fit squarely within the mission and aims of the university; . . . that means that when we are thinking about our courses and our

interactions with our students, . . . we want to make sure that we are giving them something that is simultaneously intellectually enlarging and spiritually strengthening. He said that good teaching should give students “a stronger capability to do some good in the world than they came in with.”

Angela felt strongly that the mission of BYU was more than “just nice words.” In her efforts to become more deliberate in her teaching, she had realized that math was “a small branch in something that’s a lot bigger”—part of a larger endeavor to grow in the “different types of knowledge” that BYU students should learn, which included “knowledge of the physical world,” the social world, and our relationship with God. She said her training in math had “enhanced [her] ability to operate in these other areas as well,” and she wanted her math teaching to help students learn in some of those areas, rather than just “teach[ing] some math skills and send[ing] people on their way.” She wanted to prepare students use math to “do God’s work” by looking at how their math “fits into the broader picture and how it might bless the lives of others.” She wanted them to learn how to make “decisions about where . . . to spend [their] time and energy . . . with the guidance of the Spirit” so they could choose “worthy goals” and avoid being enlisted in doing work that serves “off-centered or self-serving agendas.”

Frank likewise valued the mission of BYU and tried to incorporate its elements into his teaching. He endeavored to give his students the technical skills and creativity to be “able to compete with the best in their field” while also helping them develop “moral beauty” and “commitment to Christ.” He felt like part of his job is to help students develop “generous” and “loving” relationships with their fellow students and collaborators, not only because they were “disciples of Christ,” but to help them “develop their future collaborations and . . . professional



relationships.” His said his desire to “contribute to the education of the students” in these ways influenced everything he did as a teacher.

*The role of APD in connecting the course to the mission of the university.* The four aims of a BYU education—intellectual enlargement, spiritual strengthening, character building, and lifelong learning and service—include many elements addressed in the two previous inferred moral reference point explorations. Many of the authentic desires of the faculty to influence their students’ development as people can be seen in the mission of BYU, and their efforts to design their courses and improve their pedagogy can clearly be linked to trying to give students an “intellectually enlarging” experience. My observations about the dynamics between APD and these moral reference points are thus related to the role of APD in the strivings of participants to accomplish the mission of BYU in their teaching. For both moral reference points APD played a positive (though varying) role, and I will attempt to bring all of these dynamics together in summary form in the later discussion section. But to avoid redundancy, this section will focus on the reflections of participants regarding the direct effect of APD on their ability to link their courses to the mission and aims of BYU.

Although Jed was able to express how his course contributed to the aims of a BYU education, APD did not appear to be a game changer in this regard. It did help him (at least in HLTH Y) to improve the overall course design, which can be linked to the “intellectually enlarging” BYU aim, and he said that creating a course purpose statement helped him be able to tell students how they would use the course content in the future, which can be linked to the “lifelong learning and service” aim. As mentioned previously, his course purpose in HLTH X was also a filter to help him know whether spiritual things were appropriate for inclusion in the course, linking to the “spiritually strengthening” aim. While APD may have had a small positive

effect on Jed's ability to connect his course explicitly to BYU's mission, this did not appear to be a central function of APD in his case.

Angela's teaching purpose, as has been discussed, was tied more explicitly to whole-person outcomes than Jed's and Frank's course purposes. In contrast, it was less explicitly tied to her course designs. She said that APD helped link her teaching to the mission of BYU because it helped define her purpose, which was "the very first step in the exercise of accountability." She said that without a defined purpose, a teacher is "not getting anywhere." She also said that decision based learning was "a really powerful tool in helping figure out . . . questions about . . . what we should be doing," and her teaching purpose seemed to help her use decision based learning as a way to help students "develop the ability to see the big picture so they can make evaluations" about how to "further the field in positive ways that . . . [can] bless people's lives." The role of APD in Angela's efforts to achieve BYU's mission seems to have been twofold: first, it prompted her to define her purpose as a teacher and thereby be more deliberate and accountable in trying to accomplish the mission, and second, it helped her use appropriate tools to develop her students in those ways defined in her teaching purpose.

Like Jed, Frank said he used his course purpose as a filter for what to include in the course, which by implication could theoretically help him connect courses to BYU's mission. He also said that his desire to give students the kind of life-changing BYU experience he had received as a student influenced all of his teaching efforts, so there were probably implicit connections between his use of APD and his contributions to fulfilling BYU's mission. Frank's notes from the "course purpose" retreat he attended reveal that he put significant thought into connecting his teaching to spiritual elements in BYU's mission, and that connection was clear as I observed him teaching. However, it was absent in his course purpose and course design; if I

remember correctly from the CTL retreat, it is likely that he (or his CTL consultant) defined “course purpose” with a more narrow focus on the discipline-specific skills and knowledge to be gained from the course. This would help explain why his course purpose did not contain any of the spiritual aims that are part of the BYU mission and that Frank hoped to achieve.

In summary, APD contributed to guiding the participants’ efforts to put their authentic desires to fulfill BYU’s mission into their course designs and teaching. For Angela, it also helped her by prompting her to define her teaching purpose and be more accountable in how she was trying to realize the mission and aims. The reflective process surrounding writing a course purpose also helped Frank consider how to connect his teaching to the university mission. Each participant’s moral stand included wanting to connect their teaching to the mission of BYU, but there is little evidence that creating or using a course purpose statement automatically infused their desires to do so into their course design practices. This may be due to how “course purpose” (or “teaching purpose”) was defined by the faculty and consultants in each case.

**IMRP 4: Connecting one’s teaching to one’s discipline.** Each participant made it clear that a central purpose of teaching at BYU was to prepare students to work in their discipline in a way that makes a positive difference. They each described the kind of work their students would likely do after graduation and what excellence would look like in that work.

*What excellence in the discipline requires.* Jed said that when his students graduated, many of them would go into graduate programs and “careers where they [would be] trying to identify and solve problems about health in the society.” To be successful and influential in this work, students would need to “become curious question askers” who can “identify problems that exist in public health,” choose “problems that would make sense to try to solve,” and “ask questions that will take them down interesting paths.” They would be prepared with “the tools

that they need to . . . study [a] disease” and the experience to “know how to think about addressing” the problems they had identified. In short, successful graduates would be able to effectively identify and solve problems to improve the health of the public.

Angela said that in mathematics, making progress in the field hinged on one thing: “solving problems that nobody solved before.” Unfortunately, though, Angela felt that the field had to a large extent “lost [their] way in terms knowing *why* we’re doing what we’re doing;” there had been a pattern “for quite some time” of students “jump[ing] on their professor’s project” without any understanding of why—and whether—the math problems they were working on were valuable. This problem may have been compounded by the fact that often “what happens in mathematics” is that “mathematical concepts will be developed maybe 100 years in advance” of when “other people can utilize [them] to . . . bless people’s lives.” This adds complexity to assessing which problems are most valuable to work on. Angela’s goal was for students to become “participants in the field of mathematics,” who try to identify mathematical “problems that really would benefit people” and then make wise “decisions about where . . . to spend [their] time and energy.” She said that because “choosing worthy goals” was difficult, and people “might not even understand why a certain goal should be worked on,” it was important that students seek “the guidance of the Spirit” in choosing problems to work on so that they could “do God’s work” and “bless people’s lives,” rather than “servicing people that have . . . more self-serving agendas.” Success in math, according to Angela, required “understanding what it is that you’re doing, and how it fits into the broader picture, and how it might bless the lives of others, or how it might bring understanding,” being able to solve new problems, and “shar[ing] ideas” with the math community to multiply other people’s capabilities.

Frank said that in the field of acting, “the amount of money for the vast majority of the roles is so pitiful” that an actor can’t make a living off of it, “and there are countless people who still will do it.” This makes it very important for an actor to have strong acting skills and “be a good collaborator,” so she continues to get acting jobs, because in acting, “your last gig gets you your next gig, and so forth.” Further, income in acting is dictated by audience size and ticket prices, and “the people who are doing the avant-garde work typically get small audiences” because it requires “a certain amount of taste for it”; most people are “interested in the traditional forms.” Therefore, although the field of acting is sometimes furthered by new art forms, for most actors, being influential in the field will be less about pushing boundaries and more about mastering the “most popular forms [of acting] . . . [that] haven’t changed for many, many years.” Students will further the field most often by writing or performing new plays, rather than by devising new methods or forms. To get consistent employment (and be able to support their families, etc.), students will also need to be able to build strong relationships with their collaborators and others in their field. Frank also said that every time he acts in or directs a play, he hopes that it will be “a transformative experience not only for the actors, but also for the audience,” and that ideally, a “really great production” will enhance their “capacity to love others in [their] daily [lives].” To be successful and influential in their field, students would need to be aware of new forms of theatre, have mastered the traditional forms of acting, become the kind of collaborator that people want to work with again and again, and learned to choose productions and portray roles in ways that invite other people to better their lives.

***How APD connects teaching to the discipline.*** All participants said that APD helped them clarify and stay focused on the knowledge, skills, and/or attributes that would be most beneficial to students to help them succeed in their future work in their respective disciplines.

As noted above, Jed said that succeeding and making a difference in public health meant effectively identifying and solving problems to improve the health of the public. Writing course purpose statements helped him focus his teaching on preparing his students to “work effectively in a job in public health.” In HLTH X, he said, the course purpose was for students to “get really good” at using the learning framework to study diseases. The course purpose and learning outcome framework helped Jed focus on fostering students’ curiosity and helping them ask questions and seek answers about “how do our bodies work, and . . . why are we healthy and why are we sick?” as well as identify problems in public health and consider possible solutions to those problems, using the framework to guide their thinking. In HLTH Y, the course purpose was “a statement to the students of ‘this is what you need to be able to do in the future.’” In this course, the job-relevant skill they needed to acquire was not asking questions, but understanding a paradigm and effectively using an established process and methods to answer questions already asked. Creating the course purpose helped Jed select and unify learning outcomes in a way that would prepare students to succeed in jobs that analyze and answer public health questions. In both courses, the course purpose statement kept Jed focused on helping students learn what they needed to succeed in future careers in public health. In HLTH X the learning outcome framework was a tool to teach students the kind of thinking they would need to do to analyze and solve problems in public health.

Angela said that success and positive influence in math meant choosing worthwhile problems to work on, being able to effectively work toward solving those problems, and doing so in a charitable way. Angela’s teaching purpose helped her approach her students differently and focus more on developing their problem solving ability and inspiring them to become leaders who continue “to grow in their own abilities and help other people grow in their abilities as

well.” It changed the questions she was asking her students to focus more on helping them learn to solve problems. It guided the way that she used decision based learning to help students get better at recognizing what problems they could solve and how to solve them. In short, APD helped Angela focus her efforts on what she thought would prepare students to succeed in math careers—it changed her approach to course design and teaching to focus more on asking questions and doing things that would help students develop leadership and problem-solving abilities.

In theatre, Frank said, success meant mastering traditional acting forms, becoming a generous collaborator who gets consistent gigs, and choosing roles that inspire people to improve their lives. Frank said that while he was at the faculty retreat, crafting his course purpose for TMA B, “there were focusing questions that allowed us to say, ‘What’s going to be meaningful, . . . valuable—what is the essential and most important focal point of this course?’” That helped him “[design] that course purpose with the most important skill set in mind.” The course purpose was tied to Frank’s “interest in [students becoming] a collaborator that can . . . compete with others” and be “someone who brings energy and clarity to the work” and has a “generous quality” that makes people “want to work with them again.” Writing a course purpose statement thus helped him focus his course on the skills that would help students master a central element in traditional acting, as well as a collaborative disposition that would help future coworkers want to continue working with them. Frank said that he did discuss with the students how they could choose and portray roles in a way that kept a high moral standard and inspired people to love others, and this kind of language showed up in his notes from the CTL retreat, where he wrote about students’ preparation leading to “truthful and beautiful performances.” However, this goal was not explicit in his course purpose or design. The role of APD—as far as

his course design was concerned—was to help him clarify the skills that would be most valuable in the course to help students succeed in theatre, and then write a course purpose encapsulating that and design his course around it.

It appears that the participants' goals for their students to make a morally positive contribution to their fields were visible in their teaching, but were less visible in their course designs. For Frank and Jed, their course designs benefited from the clarification of essential skills their students would need to succeed in their fields, but making a distinctly *positive* difference was absent from Frank's course design. Jed's course design had a clearer element of making a positive difference, but this may be mainly because the course content was already focused on solving problems in public health. Angela's case was different because she used a teaching purpose rather than a course purpose; compared to Frank and Jed's course purposes, Angela's teaching purpose had a greater focus on the attributes she wanted her students to develop.

**IMRP 5: Working outside the classroom to improve teaching.** This last moral reference point that I inferred is somewhat surprising, because it is not related to what happens in course design processes or in the classroom, but what happens outside the classroom. It has several facets that I have collected loosely into two semi-related moral reference points that fit under the heading “working outside the classroom.” I will treat each moral reference point separately—by describing it and explaining its relationship to APD—and then summarize the overall picture of how work outside the classroom impacts teaching, and what role APD contributes.

***Necessity of balancing teaching with other priorities.*** The first moral reference point I inferred in this category is that good teaching means balancing one's teaching efforts with other



priorities in one's life. Jed said that although he is usually making improvements to his course (based on student feedback or his own observations), he "spend[s] more energy on that in some semesters than others," depending on how big the gap seems to be "between what I think I want to achieve with the students and what we're actually achieving." He said he had many other priorities at BYU and in his outside life, and "part of good teaching is recognizing whether what you're doing is good *enough* or not;" when he felt "like that gap is acceptable, then we don't necessarily need to try to close the gap. . . . I have other priorities. So I have to choose." Angela agreed that it was important to balance her efforts in her various priorities, but did not share Jed's perception of how to manage the "gap." She did not mention balancing teaching per se with other priorities, but said that she had felt tension between spending time on her own research and working with her "mentored research students."

Frank also talked about how he found it difficult to teach to his ideal while there was "so much going on" in his BYU responsibilities. He said that during a summer he had taught only one course and "didn't have other major responsibilities"; in that course he had "regularly returned to [the course purpose] . . . with the students" and talked about how each day's work related to that purpose. But his "daily preparation and daily execution" during that course "felt differently than [during a normal semester,] when I feel *very* busy." He said that normally, he would have very little time to prepare for each class session. In summary, the participants felt a tension between working to improve their practice using APD and putting the necessary time and energy into their other responsibilities.

***Dynamics between APD and balancing teaching with other priorities.*** Although each participant experienced a tension between improving their teaching or course designs and fulfilling other responsibilities, each also talked about things that eased that tension or facilitated

their efforts to achieve their course purposes or otherwise improve their teaching. Jed said that while he was not always able to give a lot of energy to making course improvements, the feedback he got from students did help him with APD; that is, their feedback helped him know how well the learning activities were accomplishing the course purpose. So while there was tension between continuing to design his course purposefully—particularly aligning its elements—and putting time and energy into his other responsibilities, his efforts to continue his course design improvements were made easier by students’ feedback about how helpful course activities were for them.

Angela said that a recent professional development experience had helped reduce the tension she had once felt between spending time on her own research and working to design a comprehensive mentoring program for her mentored research students. In her efforts to figure out how to better implement her teaching purpose, she had attended a class that discussed learning theories. A discussion about Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation helped her see how she could change her approach to mentoring students in research and thereby reduce the burden of one of her responsibilities. She had previously felt that she had to “do all the work to get [everything] set up for” her research students, and “it was a lot harder to get them to do research” than it was to just work on her own research. She said, “It was a burden, because I was in charge of all these things.” But Lave and Wenger’s work showed her that “mentoring is actually just inviting [students] into the process [of research].” She said that it also helped her see that “working in research is actually pulling my teaching along, and . . . as I learn more in teaching, that actually helps me clarify things in terms of my research as well.” She could see how her research and teaching (or mentoring students) could enhance one another; rather than being two separate responsibilities, they were both part of

inviting students into participation in the math community. Thus seeking to align her practice with her teaching purpose led her to gain a realization that lessened her burdens outside of classroom teaching.

Frank said that he “often [was] so focused on the day-to-day aspects . . . that [he didn’t] regularly return to the course purpose” consciously in his own mind or with students, but he felt that doing so could improve his practice. The tension between fulfilling his many responsibilities and wanting to focus on his course purposes more consistently and consciously was made easier, however, by the fact that he could “trust that . . . the syllabus already [had the course purpose] integrated. . . . In the day to day aspect [he didn’t] need necessarily to refocus [himself, because it was] already built into the daily plan.” He said the integration of the course purpose in his syllabus was especially helpful because in writing it he had given “full consideration” to what would be most meaningful for students. When he lacked time to think about the “big picture” in his daily lesson preparation, he said, “I feel like I can trust [the course purpose], because I’ve given it thought . . . [in] writing it, and then in the development of . . . the syllabus.” Authentic purposeful design, then, gave him peace of mind that he was doing valuable things for his students, even when he did not have time to think consciously about the “big picture” purpose of daily activities.

For each participant, something different helped ease the tension felt between using APD—designing and teaching using a course purpose—and fulfilling other responsibilities at BYU and in daily life. For Jed, student feedback not only helped him improve the course design, but it also helped him gauge how well his course design and teaching were achieving his course purpose. Assessing this gap helped him know how much time and energy to give to improving his course versus his other responsibilities. Angela felt a tension between spending time

improving her program for mentored research students and working on her own research, but in a professional development experience aimed at helping her accomplish her teaching purpose, she had a change of perspective and was able to see a less stressful approach to her mentoring program, as well as how her mentoring program and her teaching could inform and lift each other. Frank's usual difficulty in taking time to consciously return to his course purpose in daily preparation—because of his many other responsibilities—was not of great concern to him because he had crafted the course purpose carefully and integrated it into his course design, such that daily activities were already infused with meaningful purpose. Student feedback, professional development insights, and having the syllabus already framed by the course purpose seemed to be factors that helped lessen the tensions that participants felt between improving their courses or teaching (to achieve their course or teaching purposes) and fulfilling their many other responsibilities.

***Consideration of outside factors that impact teaching.*** This moral reference point is similar to one previously mentioned, which stated that good teaching involves aligning one's course with colleagues' courses and with the overall program. However, this reference point refers to affecting things at the program or department level (or higher levels) to improve teaching in the classroom. Participants said or implied that such an effort was part of good teaching—or at least part of “good member of a teaching community,” as Angela said. Jed did not state anything along these lines directly, but as I will show below, he implied that it was valuable.

Angela said that “it's good to have a community of teachers that are making good decisions about . . . your educational program,” and that each faculty member has a responsibility to help with that. Unfortunately, she felt that some of these things were “actually

not happening,” in her department, such as “coordinat[ing] how courses fit together.” These department-level factors had a negative impact on Angela’s teaching, such as restricting her “flexibility” to improve her courses and by allowing students into one of her courses without sufficient preparation. She recognized her own responsibility to help improve these factors, and she talked about efforts she had made to do so (as outlined below).

Frank said that he and his colleague acting professors coordinated their pedagogical efforts pretty harmoniously, but he imagined that at some point they might “reevaluate the curriculum as a whole” to consider improvements to their course sequence and learning goals. He said that it was “good for departments to keep on growing . . . and changing and adapting.” Each participant seemed to see ways that factors outside of the classroom influenced their ability to teach their courses well.

***Dynamics between APD and improving outside factors that affect teaching.*** Outside factors that affected participants’ teaching (such as the goals or values of their department or discipline) were different for each participant, and there were various dynamics between those factors and APD. At the end of my final interview with Jed, he said that his department had recently followed principles of APD to create a program-level purpose (BYU, n.d.-b) and align each course to that purpose. He seemed positive about this development, wherein APD might help improve the purposefulness of teaching in courses in the department. This effort by his department seems to have also helped them more explicitly align their program curriculum with the aims of a BYU education.

Angela perceived a need to improve pedagogical practices in her department, as well as in the broader field of math education. Since she first began to perceive this deficiency and its effects on her ability to teach well and use her teaching purpose, she had been finding ways to try

to influence the pedagogical climate in her department and in the field. She had tried to be an example of “practic[ing] accountability” in her teaching and showing “how things work better,” hoping that her colleagues would “jump on board.” She had tried to teach colleagues about using accountability and learning mindsets to improve their teaching, and she had tried to encourage discussions about purposeful pedagogy. She said she did not “know, as the authority, the best way” to teach, but hoped that she could empower “everybody . . . to figure out what the direction” was that they should go. She had also talked to “context holders” at various levels in her organization to try to influence the processes and values in play. She did not consider all of this work necessarily part of good teaching, but part of being a “good colleague” and “a citizen of the university.” Things happening at the department level had impinged on her ability to use APD as she wanted to, and she tried to improve those factors by educating colleagues, being an example, and having discussions with those colleagues and organizational leaders who were willing to engage in such discussions.

Frank, like Jed, did not experience any department-level impediments to using APD. His colleagues did not use course purpose statements (to his knowledge), but he felt certain that as time went on he and his colleagues would be able to continue making improvements to the program to improve their teaching.

***Dynamics between APD and working outside the classroom to improve teaching.*** The overall moral reference point inferred from these cases is that good teaching requires faculty to (a) balance teaching improvement efforts (including using APD as a course design and teaching tool) with other responsibilities and (b) be involved in making improvements at a program level in order to enable further pedagogical progress. Each participant experienced different difficulties and found different resolutions, but the main thrust of the dynamics was that student

feedback, professional development, and having a well-designed, course-purpose-centered course can help ease pressures to constantly improve teaching while also fulfilling other responsibilities. Further, APD can help program-level efforts to improve teaching, and there are many ways to encourage department-level improvements if program-level factors impede utilization of APD.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

The use of moral realist inquiry in this study enabled an exploration of participation in practice that revealed new insights regarding (a) the moral space of the practice (teaching at BYU), (b) the conceptualization and use of APD and its fit within that practice, and (c) the experiences of three BYU professors as they used APD in their teaching. In this discussion I summarize the answer to my primary research question: “How does APD, as a practice, fit within the moral space of teaching at BYU?” I then comment on cases and practice. In particular, I discuss the unique things that a moral realist lens enabled me to see in my participants’ experiences and then answer my secondary research question: “What is revealed about APD and teaching at BYU when studied from this moral realist perspective?” Throughout the discussion, I attempt to show how the findings of this study relate to viewpoints and arguments in the preceding literature review. I conclude by discussing this study’s limitations and its implications for faculty consultants’ practice and for future research.

#### **Significance of APD within moral spaces relevant to teaching at BYU**

Looking across the moral reference points that I inferred from interviews, observations, and documentation of these three participants’ practice using APD, I came to see a range of considerations bearing upon the use of APD in the moral teaching spaces of these three professors at BYU. In moral realist terms, the following seem evident (see Figure 2):

- Each participant was embedded within several moral spaces, including BYU, their discipline, and other contexts within their lives.



- Each participant took a moral stand (whether deliberately or more passively) within each moral space or was an embodied commentary on that space by virtue of valuing and striving toward various moral reference points embedded in that space and its practices.
- The moral stances of the professors influenced their course designs and teaching.
- Authentic purposeful design was a tool (for reflection, clarification of intent, and backward design) that affected how professors' moral stances influenced their course designs and teaching, dependent upon how each professor used the tool or was prompted to use it.

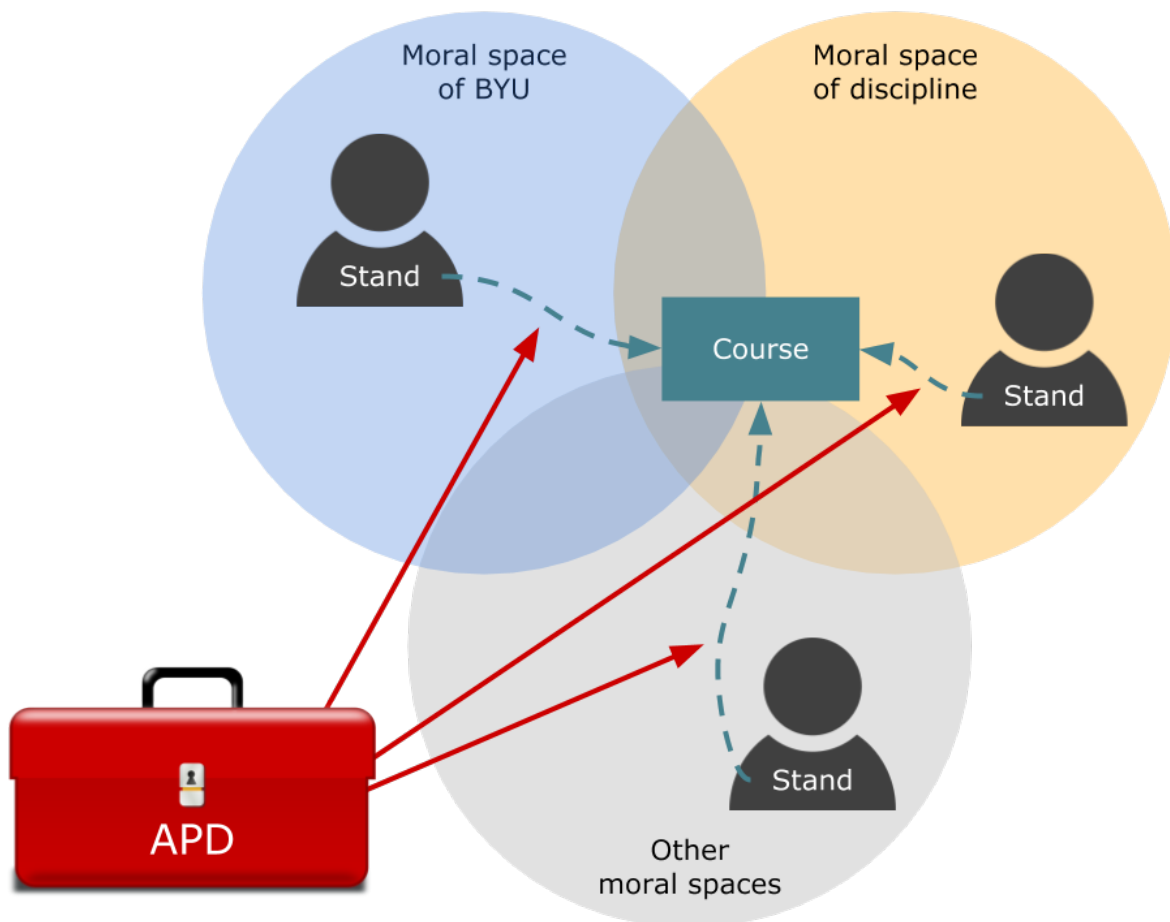


Figure 2. Significance of APD within moral spaces relevant to teaching at BYU.

The moral space of teaching at BYU is an intersection of the moral spaces of (a) BYU, (b) the various disciplines in which faculty and students participate, and (c) other contexts of which faculty are part. Thus the moral goods toward which faculty strive and the moral reference points to which their moral stances are attuned may be any combination of reference points from many sources, which could include their religion, their department, BYU as an institution, their colleagues in the discipline, the governing bodies or powerful organizations within their discipline, their family life, their political party—the list is almost endless. All of those moral spaces affect (or could affect) the goals that BYU teachers have for their students, so all are relevant to the practice of teaching at BYU and thus constitute a broad moral space within which that practice lies. The significance of APD within this intersectional space is that it helps faculty have a more “deliberate approach to curriculum planning . . . [and] classroom practice” (Hora, 2014, p. 1) and have a better idea of “what to teach, how to teach, and how to improve” (Stephenson, 2001, p. xix). It does this by encouraging them to make explicit their essential intent for students’ learning in a given course (or program, etc.) and can help them align their pedagogy (e.g., as an accountability tool or “north star”) and course designs (e.g., as a filter or focusing device) to that essential intent. The way that a person uses (or is guided to use) this reflective tool determines how much (and what parts) of their moral stances are incorporated into their essential intent for their course design or teaching practice. Further, APD is a flexible tool that can be used by any kind of person to clarify moral purposes (whether good or evil) and amplify their effect on practice.

### **Commentary on Cases and Practice**

Having sketched out the relationship between APD and the moral space of teaching at BYU, we can now use that as a lens through which to view the moral spaces and stances within

each case and the role played by APD. In the case commentary below, I describe the stances of each participant within the moral spaces of BYU, their disciplines, and other contexts relevant to them and comment on how APD as a tool affected the relationship between their moral stances and their course designs and teaching. I then discuss what this study revealed about APD itself and how it augmented my understanding of the moral space of teaching at BYU.

**Commentary on cases.** As this study used a particular framework specifically attuned to moral phenomena, it is worthwhile to ask what it enabled me to see in each participant's case that I might not have tuned into using another approach. In this study the lens of hermeneutic moral realism helped me see the relationship of APD to the many things that were important in each professor's teaching practice. Each professor takes a stand (or moral identity; see Brinkmann, 2008) within the moral space of teaching at BYU by responding to invitations, pressures, and responsibilities in a different way, and each experiences different dynamics because of colleagues' stances in moral space. Many of these factors can affect or be affected by APD. I endeavor here to outline the stands that these participants took within some of the moral spaces relevant to their teaching at BYU and then comment on the role of APD in moderating the relationship between those moral stands and their teaching practices. The reader should note that although I have artificially separated these moral spaces for the sake of analysis, in reality they often interact and overlap. Further, the moral spaces mentioned in each case are by no means an exhaustive list, but were selected for inclusion if a moral realist lens brought noteworthy insight into that moral space in that case.

**Commentary on Jed's case.** Teaching was just one of Jed's many responsibilities, which also included his family, his church service, and his research, among other things. His moral stance regarding teaching at BYU might be summarized by saying that he wanted to use the

limited time and energy he had for teaching to be a positive influence on students' lives, both in preparing them for their future work and in supporting and mentoring them in more personal ways. The moral spaces that Jed was part of included the discipline of teaching, the discipline of public health, and BYU.

Within the moral space of teaching, Jed's desires were (a) to create well-designed courses that accomplished the goals of the program and (b) to teach in a way that was responsive to students' learning needs and goals. Authentic purposeful design facilitated this in many ways. First, it helped him develop what he felt were higher quality courses by using backward design principles to align course elements to each course's purpose. Second, it helped him clarify what was most important for students to learn in each course. Third, creating a course purpose helped him link one course (HLTH Y) with relevant program-level objectives. Finally, the course purpose for HLTH Y also helped him choose appropriate learning outcomes from many that were possible, unified the learning outcomes into an overall skill for students to gain, and helped Jed stay "grounded in . . . what I want them to become" and focus on the *why* behind each topic he taught the students. This helped him be more learner-centered in his pedagogy, which can be difficult for teachers to do (see Ebert-May et al., 2011).

Within the moral space of his discipline, Jed's goal was to prepare students to do some good in their future work in public health. He said that APD helped him focus his teaching on what would prepare students for public health jobs, such as helping them become curious and gain a habit of asking questions and seeking answers about public health, as well as using appropriate tools effectively to identify, analyze, and propose solutions to public health problems. Creating a course purpose helped him align his objectives, course elements, and teaching practices to those overall goals.

Within the moral space of BYU, Jed's stand was that he was committed to the mission of BYU and wanted to teach in a way that led students to accomplish that mission. Much of this happened outside of the classroom, where Jed took many opportunities to interact with students one on one and support them not only academically, but spiritually and emotionally. Some of it also happened inside the classroom, where he shared insights about spiritual aspects of the discipline that he felt would be helpful to students. His course purpose statement worked as a filter to tell him that sharing those insights would be appropriate in this class (HLTH X). Other than that, APD had no obvious mediating effect on the connection between Jed's pedagogy and his moral stand regarding BYU's mission.

At least two things also facilitated his used of APD. First, in another relevant moral space to his practice—his department—his colleagues had similar enough moral stances to his own that they were not at odds with Jed's purposes, which allowed him freedom to design and teach according to his desires. Second, his students cared enough about their learning that they gave him feedback about how well course activities were helping them achieve the goals of the course, which helped him achieve better alignment between course elements and his course purpose.

*Commentary on Angela's case.* Angela talked about how in the last few years she had come to feel that her department, the field of mathematics, and traditional education in general were approaching pedagogy in a less-than-ideal way. She compared it to "being out in the middle of a river" that is pushing one in the direction of its flow, "and maybe the direction of the river isn't really the best direction to go. But [one still has] to contend with the river." This metaphor describes her overall stance in the moral space of teaching at BYU accurately in terms of pedagogical practice. In earlier years, she more or less walked with the flow of the river; her

default mode of teaching was to cover the content that students needed to acquire. As she learned about principles of organizational leadership and then instructional psychology (including APD), she gradually saw a better way to go. Moral spaces that were relevant to Angela's teaching included BYU, the discipline of organizational leadership, the discipline of teaching, the discipline of mathematics, and her department.

Within the moral space of BYU, Angela was striving to match her teaching to the mission of the university. She wanted to help her students learn to participate in the field of math in a way that would further God's work and build up the people around them. From my interviews with her, it seems that meeting with Richard Swan to reflect on her purpose as a teacher helped her consider these goals and put some of them into a teaching purpose statement that would guide her teaching. That purpose statement is explicit about helping students develop "personal influence leadership," which Angela tied to the idea of building up other people. But it is not explicit about helping students find work in math that will bless people's lives and further God's work. In Angela's case, the role of APD was to help Angela ponder on and clarify her purposes as a math teacher and thus define a north star toward which she could grow. The explicit teaching purpose she wrote, while it does have an element of encouraging students' moral development, does not contain everything she cares about in that regard—but it seems to serve as a reminder of those things.

Within the moral space of organizational leadership, Angela's stance was informed by the stances of authors who wrote about things such as multipliers (Wiseman & McKeown, 2010), mindsets (Adams, 2009) and accountability. She wanted to be a multiplier who helped students and other teachers practice accountability, have a growth mindset, and develop multiplier leadership qualities. This was aided by APD as Angela reflected on her purposes, and some of

these desires were summarized in her statement of teaching purpose, which reminded her of the goal toward which she was working as a teacher.

Within the moral space of teaching, her moral stance had changed since she started teaching. She had become more acquainted with the moral space—a more full participant in the community of practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) might say—by learning about APD, decision-based learning, and other ideas in the field of instructional science. Her stance turned away from valuing traditional content-driven teaching and toward wanting to use more learning-centered approaches, such as helping students see the big picture of why they are doing math and how various mathematical concepts fit together in a broader framework of approaches to problem solving. Her course purpose focused on helping students become problem solvers, and this guided her efforts to pare down content and alter activities in her courses, so the role of APD in this moral space was both as a reflection tool and a guide for course design. It also guided her to professional development opportunities that facilitated her efforts to match her teaching practice to her vision.

Within the shared moral space of the discipline of mathematics and Angela's department, Angela's moral stance—including teaching in a more learning-centered way and focusing on choosing worthwhile projects and knowing her rationale for working on them—was at least somewhat in opposition to the commonly held stance, including her own previous stance. Reflecting on her purposes for teaching (part of APD) helped her change that stance, or at least ponder it and create a concrete vision toward which to strive as a teacher.

Overall, APD helped Angela define her vision of how her teaching would influence students, which was informed by things she had been learning and doing as she sought improvement as teacher. In turn, her teaching purpose guided her as she sought further

improvement as a teacher, made some course improvements, and started moving toward a kind of teaching that she felt would be much more beneficial for students and for the field of math as a whole. This also enabled her to invite others within her department and the field of math to consider how they might improve their pedagogy, as well. She might have made similar improvements without APD, but it appears that APD helped her clarify her new stance within the moral space of teaching at BYU and guided her efforts to make her teaching match her vision and invite others to reflect on their own stances and practice.

*Commentary on Frank's case.* Frank outlined many aspects of the moral space in which he taught. His overall moral stance within in that space was a desire to give students the kind of life-changing experience he had had as a BYU student and prepare them to succeed in the field of theatre well enough that they could have consistent work and relatively low-stress, happy lives. The moral spaces that touched his teaching practice at BYU included his discipline and BYU.

Within the moral space of the acting discipline, Frank's stance seemed to be two-fold. First, he valued a pragmatic and constructive approach that would help students gain consistent employment, which included mastering traditional acting forms and fostering charitable relationships with one's coworkers. Second (and this is also connected to BYU), he felt acting should be oriented toward a certain moral good: inspiring oneself and others to be better and live more loving or Christ-like lives. The role of APD was to help Frank clarify what essential skillset students would need to be successful and financially stable actors and design his course to achieve an appropriate subset of those skills. The reflection surrounding writing a course purpose statement also helped Frank reflect on his inspiring and spiritual purposes, and these were visible in his teaching but absent in his course design.



Frank’s stances (regarding helping students to succeed as actors and to inspire Christ-like love) were congruent to the explicit moral reference points within the moral space of BYU; the mission and aims of BYU dictate that its graduates “should be capable of competing with the best in their fields” (BYU, 1981) and should become “men and women of . . . service” whose “morality . . . provide[s] the music of hope” (BYU, n.d.-a) for all people. His colleagues had similar stances. The role of APD was tied mainly to helping students gain skill (via clarifying the needed skillset and aligning the course design); it had little role in the moral development of students beyond the reflection on teaching purpose that was prompted at the CTL retreat.

It was clear to me that Frank could have taught a very good course even without using APD—it seems that APD’s main role was to enhance Frank’s ability to zero in on the essential skillset to be taught in his class and design a course that was aligned to helping students develop that skillset effectively.

**New insights into the formulation and utility of APD.** Having examined how moral realist inquiry illuminated the moral spaces of participants’ teaching practice and use of APD, I now look at how it changed my understanding of how APD is practiced, how it should be conceptualized, and what makes it more and less useful for different ends.

***Insights about authenticity.*** I begin by considering the term *authentic purposeful design*. Does it adequately describe the method it names? It is clearly an approach to *designing* a course (or program), and it can be readily seen that it encourages a *purposeful*, careful, and aligned framing of courses and course elements. But the legitimacy of *authentic* in its title is not as clear. At the outset of this study, I conceptualized authentic teaching as purposefully acting toward certain self-transcending goods and selectively bringing one’s personal background, desires, and values into one’s teaching practice. I theorized that by using APD professors would create course

purposes that are authentic, that flow out of both their moral and disciplinary identities; I anticipated that APD would help professors integrate these two identities and make them equally visible in their statements of course purpose. This hypothesis, or initial assumption, was the reason that I called this practice *authentic* purposeful design. It can be confidently demonstrated that these professors were authentic, in that my interviews and observations with them showed an integration of their disciplinary and moral or religious identities and the inclusion of their personal values in their teaching practice (as Rice, 2008, suggested teachers should be doing). However, the important question here is not whether the professors taught with authenticity, but whether the practice of creating and utilizing a course purpose statement is ipso facto an authentically purposeful—or purposefully authentic—method of course design.

My rationale for including *authentic* in the name of the method was this: “In theory, the reflective process of APD leads a professor to create a course purpose that is authentic, or congruent with her whole self; it flows out of both her disciplinary and moral identities.” It is clear to me that Angela’s teaching purpose—with its focus on developing leaders and problem solvers who are successful and influential in all areas of their life—is a better candidate for an authentic purpose than are the course purposes of Jed (focused on skills of learning and analysis) and Frank (focused on the skill and persona of an actor). A case can be made that Angela’s purpose flowed out of her integrated moral-religious-disciplinary identity. But while Jed’s and Frank’s course purpose statements were congruent with their similarly integrated identities and seemed to flow from their stances within the moral space of their disciplines, their moral or religious values and desires for students (which were clearly visible in their teaching) were not patently evident in their course purpose statements. It appears that authentic purposeful design

does not by default perform the function of infusing purpose statements with the full range of professors' values or desires for students' development.

On the other hand, if authentic teaching (or authentic design) includes the need for professors to be *purposeful* and *selective* in how they bring their background, values, and desires into their teaching, perhaps even a course purpose that has no explicitly moral element can be considered an authentic purposeful course purpose, as long as the professor was purposefully selective in excluding the explicitly moral element. Perhaps the aptness of APD as a title is not in whether course purpose statements are explicitly moral by default, but in whether by default the process of creating a course purpose requires a professor to consider to what extent (and in what ways) it would be desirable to imbue his course purpose with his personal values or desires for students' personal development. Angela seemed to consider how she wanted to put her desires for students' moral development into her teaching purpose, though it's not clear that she considered her whole moral identity in doing so. Frank's course purpose creation process (as revealed by his own notes) involved consideration of his moral identity and desires for students' growth. But Jed said that for him "the course purpose . . . [didn't] have much to do with me personally"; when he was writing his course purpose, he was not "deliberately thinking" about "the big picture of my life and my values and what I think is really most important" and trying to "make sure that my course is consistent with that." Instead, he was focused on what "specific skills" students would need to "work effectively in a job in public health," and in HLTH X those skills were "much broader" than his own work in the field. Further, he said that although his desire to have a positive impact on students' lives heavily influenced his interactions with them, it did not have much effect on his course purpose.

In Angela's member checking interview, she made several comments about whether APD is really a tool that encourages authenticity and, in particular, whether it helps faculty infuse desires for students' moral growth (e.g., elements of BYU's mission) into their courses. She said,

If you think about APD as the process that [CTL consultants] do, there are ways that you could do [it] that would not be as enriching as what has happened [in my case]. . . . If you just told somebody "apply APD," you could have a variety of results.

Angela noted that Richard Swan is "very careful to not impose agendas," because he wants each course purpose to be authentic to the professor. Instead, he and Ken Plummer (the consultant for Angela's college) engage with faculty in a "humanistic . . . way, in which they're willing to explore thoughts and ideas . . . [and] go down those paths with [the professor] and help sort those things out." As an associate director of the CTL, Richard Swan is the lead faculty consultant, and it is likely (based on my experience with the CTL consultants) that while the other consultants have each developed their own way of using APD, their approaches are similarly non-directive in encouraging faculty to reflect on their purposes for teaching or for a course without suggesting what those purposes should be. (As one example of this, Angela said that her inclusion of more whole-person moral aims in her purpose was driven by her desires, not by Richard's.) If this is true, the consultants are probably not wont to probe into why a faculty member is or is not including various personal values or desires for students' growth into a statement of purpose. In the tension between moral reference points of including moral aims and encouraging authenticity, the consultants seem to err on the side of authenticity.

At this point I consider it worth restating my earlier assertion that authenticity—in particular, including more personal values and moral elements in one's teaching—may flow

more naturally into statements of teaching purpose than statements of course purpose, because the former has a more clear connection to influencing students, while the latter has a more clear connection to course content. Thus in a statement of teaching purpose a professor may be more likely to include the kinds of things that Jed and Frank left out of their course purpose statements, such as helping students develop moral beauty or spiritual strength.

My conclusion with respect to the appropriateness of *authenticity* in the title of APD is that a course purpose can be authentic even if it lacks the full range of values and purposes in a professor's moral identity, so long as the professor is purposeful in selecting those that fit into a course purpose. Authentic purposeful design is not by default a design method that imbues professors' personal religious or moral values into the design of a course, but it does still enhance authenticity by the very fact of encouraging faculty to reflect on their purposes for teaching. Further, APD is a tool not only for better course design, but also for greater accountability in teaching; the full realization of professors' authentic desires to influence students' lives is not always found in the formal design of a course. Angela's case shows that a statement of teaching purpose may also be authentic to (at least some of) a professor's desires to influence students in both discipline-specific and personal, moral, or religious ways. Purposes created using APD—whether teaching purposes or course purposes—can be valuable means of guiding course designs and pedagogy to achieve authentic goals for students, though the authenticity of those goals may vary.

***Insights about purpose.*** At the outset of the study, I assumed that each participant would create a course purpose statement for each course, and that it would be this statement that unified the learning outcomes and guided the design of the course. I also assumed that it would include—or at least have an implicit link to—the professor's desires for students' moral growth.

I was mistaken in both of these assumptions, but the reason that I was mistaken prompts a new look into how the process of APD begins, or how a course's purpose is defined prior to designing a course. There were three ways that participants in this study defined purpose in preparation for their course designs.

First noticed was the assumed way: Frank and Jed (at least in HLTH Y) each began APD by creating a course purpose statement that summarized the essential skillset for the course. These statements guided them in the backward design of their courses, as expected, but had no clear ties to the ways that they wanted to influence students personally—their values, their faith, etc.

A second option was also presented: Jed (in HLTH X) unified the learning outcomes into a single goal by creating a diagram that showed their roles and relationships. His guiding purpose was to help students become effective in using that framework. He still created a course purpose statement for this course, but stating the course purpose was possible only because of the framework, which the course purpose pointed to directly. In short, the journey was in creating the framework, and the course purpose was just a small addition to focus students on using the framework to study the course's topic. While I think the course purpose was still a guiding and useful part of the course design, it seems that for Jed it was unnecessary to have written it, because in creating the framework he had already clarified for himself the essential purpose of the course; the formal writing of the course purpose statement did little in terms of actual guidance. So in some courses, a course purpose may be beneficially made by creating a framework of learning outcomes that unifies them into a single goal, almost negating the need for an actual course purpose statement. I will note briefly here that this way of defining purpose

seems to do no better at including professors' desires for moral influence than does the normal course purpose option.

The third option, however, is different in this regard: rather than create a course purpose for each course, Angela defined the purpose of her *teaching*. It appears that because this was focused on the overall goals she had for her students in their educational experiences with her, rather than on the content or skills of a particular course, it was more natural for her to include in it the kind of influence she wanted to have on students in all of her interactions with them. It also played a guiding role in her course designs, though this was limited because of several factors. She said that her default course purpose was to cover the content of each course in a way that accomplished her teaching purpose, but was starting to consider if she should start making individual course purpose statements; perhaps being more intentional in that way would help her improve her teaching practice.

These new insights into the different possible formulations of pedagogical purpose as starting points for APD enrich and clarify the way that the first stage of APD ("Journey to Authentic Purpose"; see Appendix) can be done and the connections that each option can have to course designs and to professors' authentic desires to influence students' moral development. Considering these different formulations of purpose, it may be wise for faculty and their consultants to consider when and whether to create a course purpose or a teaching purpose (or both). Based on Jed and Frank's cases, a course purpose seems ideal for creating a course that is attuned to the disciplinary skills, content, and attributes that students will need to succeed in their future work. The way that Angela defined and used her teaching purpose, in contrast, was more focused on clarifying the kind of impact she wanted to have on students' growth in many ways, including those both in the classroom and far beyond. It also provided a vision toward which she

could grow, which guided her professional development. It appears that a teaching purpose defined and used in this way may be an easier place for explicit clarification of the kind of moral impact one wishes to have on one's students (bringing in one's moral stances outside of the discipline). These things depend, however, on the ways that each faculty member or consultant approaches APD and the intentions they have about facilitating students' growth in different ways.

As sketched in my initial formulation (see Appendix), the focus of APD was twofold: (a) defining pedagogical purpose, and (b) creating a purposefully framed, well aligned course. The actual practice of APD by my participants shows, however, that APD may be better defined as reflecting on, writing down, and designing to accomplish one's purposes in teaching broadly or a course specifically. It does not de facto help professors imbue their pedagogical purposes with the full range of their personal moral identities and desires for students' moral growth, but it still appears to be an appropriate tool that could be used to that end: to help professors improve their course designs and pedagogical visions in ways that are authentic, or congruent with both their whole selves and their desires for students' growth as whole people.

***Insights about the functions of a course purpose or teaching purpose.*** Participants talked about their course purpose statements using a few different metaphors, each of which points to a function that the statement can have in pedagogy or course design.

Jed referred to his course purposes using the terms “an organizing principle” and “a filter.” Frank called it a “focusing device.” And Angela called her teaching purpose her “north star.” As an organizing principle, Jed said, the course purpose defined *what* the professor and students would be doing in the course, though not necessarily *how* in terms of professor-student interactions or kinds of learning activities. He also said that it was a filter, “so that when we



have an idea to possibly include something, we filter it through the course purpose and see— does it fit or does it not?” Frank said it was a focusing device, and relayed the questions he was asked as he was developing it: “What’s going to be meaningful? What is going to be valuable? What is the essential and most important focal point of this course?” Angela said that her teaching purpose was like the North Star in that it defined the end goal to which she was leading students (“basically, what it is is problem solving”) and guided her “in how I approach the students and the kinds of questions that I ask them.” A course purpose or teaching purpose has at least these two main functions, then: focusing the professor on the essential, valuable thing to guide students toward, and acting as a filter to guide the inclusion or exclusion of course elements and pedagogical tools to guide students to that end.

***Insights about instructional science jargon.*** In theorizing about APD in the thesis introduction, I said that APD would help professors “see . . . the value of learner centered teaching practices” and engage in “backward design . . . [to] an aligned, learner-centered, and relevant course-long learning experience without the need for the technical jargon of instructional design.” Was I too optimistic in this prognostication? This study does not clearly show whether or not this was the case for these professors, though there was some indirect evidence. Jed and Frank did both say that their courses were well-aligned. All participants’ course purposes and course designs did show relevance to perceived trends in participants’ fields and the kinds of work for which students would need to prepare. From my observations and what I know about participants’ course designs, the course activities also seemed to be student centered and encourage active learning. However, because I did not ask about whether these course qualities came into being without discussions of instructional design terminology or theory, I can draw no well-supported conclusions on this question.

**Initial and revised ideas about moral spaces of teaching at BYU.** My initial assumptions about moral spaces of teaching at BYU were very much informed by my years of work at the BYU Faculty Center, where I did research on teaching that accomplished the aims of a BYU education. The moral reference points that I saw guiding the practice of teaching at BYU were thus mostly connected to those aims (see BYU, n.d.-a); I assumed that teaching at BYU was (or ought to be) guided by five criteria: it should (a) enlarge students intellectually, (b) strengthen students spiritually, (c) build students' character, (d) lead students to lifelong learning, and (e) lead students to lifelong service. This study confirmed that the mission and aims of the university guided the professors' teaching practice, and it added moral reference points that further described, extended, or added to these aims. In addition, reflecting on this study through the lens of moral realism revealed that BYU as an institution is actually itself an embodied commentary (or takes a stand) within the broader moral spaces of which it is part (e.g., religion, society, higher education). The university's mission and aims outline this moral stance, which becomes a set of moral reference points partially defining its own moral spaces, within which faculty work and in relation to which faculty make their own moral stands.

One moral reference point that my participants' experiences suggest is that BYU teachers should be striving to improve their course designs and pedagogy, including the alignment of their courses with their colleagues and their program. This is probably related to the fact that courses should be intellectually enlarging; the logical aim of improving pedagogy, course designs, and curricular alignment is to improve student learning (or intellectual enlargement). A second moral reference point that appeared in my participant's experiences at BYU is related to the first: teaching may be enhanced by connecting one's teaching to one's field; this may not by itself improve pedagogical practice, but it in my participants' practice it helped them align their

educational objectives with what they saw as valuable in the discipline, which they hoped would help students become better able to compete and succeed in their disciplines—part of BYU’s mission (see BYU, 1981) and in alignment with suggestions made by Fink (2003) and Jaworski (2001).

My participants’ experiences also suggested that a part of good pedagogy was balancing their teaching efforts with their other responsibilities in and outside of the university, as well as doing things at the department level to improve student learning. Their experiences showed that endeavors in improving teaching at the course level or the department level may be facilitated or hindered by the traditions, flexibility, and pedagogical and organizational ideas and mindsets of one’s colleagues and leadership. Finally, this study showed that my participants were striving to influence students’ lives in ways that went beyond helping them learn course content; encouraging and mentoring students and sharing their personal values with students (as suggested by Schweingruber, 1985, and by Rice, 2008) seemed to be of great benefit to students, as estimated by the participants. This study served to enrich and expand my understanding of three moral spaces of teaching at BYU, including what may hinder or help good teaching practice and what can guide it both inside and outside of the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

In this thesis study I utilized a theoretical framework for qualitative research (moral realism), which enabled me to see the moral reference points that guided the teaching efforts of three BYU faculty and the dynamics that occurred when APD was introduced into their course design and teaching practices. The study revealed new moral reference points, clarified the formulation of APD, and showed various ways APD could be used in different contexts. There were many limitations to the scope and focus of the study, as well as limitations that were a

result of the newness of the method and the way I engaged it. I discuss these limitations, provide a few recommendations for people who use APD, and include possible future directions for research looking at the practice of APD or studying the moral space of other practices.

**Limitations and transferability of the current study.** As with most research, the current study was limited in scope. It considered only the experience of three tenure-track faculty at BYU, which is a unique school and different in some respects from many other institutions, including religious affiliation and faculty teaching and research expectations, among other factors. I did not study the practice of adjunct or professional-track faculty, faculty at other universities, or faculty who were not practicing Latter-day Saints. I also did not look closely at the structure or content of courses, did not interview students, and was not able to observe my participants in their process of creating course purpose statements. For these and other reasons, the transferability of this study is limited. Further, because my study included only one participant in each of three fields, the practice of APD in other institutions and other disciplines—and even by other faculty within these departments at BYU—will inevitably happen somewhat differently, be affected by different factors, be guided by different moral reference points, and have different results. However, I have endeavored to enhance the transferability of this study by including three disciplines as different from one another as possible, choosing participants who used APD in different ways, and focusing less on the moral values of the school and more on the practical issues of teaching and using APD.

Another limitation of this study is in my use of the method. I chose a method that was still in development, which made it difficult to focus my interviews toward the right phenomena and analyze the data in ways that adequately addressed my research questions—especially toward the beginning of the research process. However, in the final months of the project, the

methods had become much clearer and the steps for data collection and analysis much more concrete and suited to capturing the phenomena and vantage points of interest.

Two other method-related factors also negatively impacted the study. First, my initial approach to data collection was to spend one interview on each stage of APD and to focus on one course to do so. This limited my view of the participants' practice as a whole, and as a result I only asked about other courses in the final interviews, where I learned about how participants' implementation of APD differed between courses. Asking about their teaching practice and APD usage as a whole, rather than in one course, would have improved the richness and thoroughness of the data. Second, and possibly related, I found it difficult to know where to focus my questions because I had chosen a multifaceted phenomenon to study; I was not only asking about what guided the participants' teaching practice and how APD fit into that picture, but I needed to know about each stage of APD, including how they chose course purposes, how they designed their courses, and how they taught. Further, participants were not taught APD in the way that I had theorized it based on my conversations and observations (*as authentic purposeful design*); instead, they had each been taught in a slightly different way how to clarify the purpose of their teaching and then use backward design to achieve that purpose in their courses. This means that when I asked participants about their use of APD, neither they nor I could be very clear on what part of their practice I was asking about. I settled on using the phrase "writing and using a course purpose" in place of APD, but it was an imperfect substitution that I corrected only in final interviews when I briefly told participants about my conceptualization of APD and asked them to react to it. This also made it difficult to report succinctly on the fit of APD within participants' moral spaces, because some participant comments were about writing a course purpose, some were about designing a course, and some were about teaching.

Even with these limitations, however, the results of this study still have useful implications outside of its own scope. While the specific moral reference points revealed in this study may apply variously to some institutions or contexts more than others, the overall findings regarding the significance of APD within moral spaces of teaching seem broadly transferrable to a wide variety of institutions and contexts. Specifically, I am referring to the insight that APD can play a role in moderating the relationship between people's stances within moral space and their participation in a practice within shared moral space. Because APD encourages people to consider their reasons for engaging in a practice, codify these into a concrete statement of objective or vision, and design with that purpose in mind, it may have application at any institution of higher education, as well many other organizations where purposes, design practices, and accountability are relevant.

Other potentially useful findings to transfer from this study to other contexts are the various complexities that my participants experienced as they tried to use APD. These difficulties may be experienced by users of APD in any context. Some users may have similar difficulties to Jed, who had multiple objectives to achieve but struggled to see an overarching purpose that they fit; creating a diagram to show the relationship between these objectives might help in that circumstance. Other people trying to use APD may find that their ability to do so is limited by factors outside of their control. These may include the attitudes of coworkers, values or traditions in their field, or political forces within their organization. They may have limited freedom to design their courses or other products in alignment with their envisioned purposes. Faculty consultants or other trusted and knowledgeable mentors may help colleagues change mindsets, and a personal purpose (rather than product purpose) may help them focus their practice even if they cannot redesign a whole product (or course).

Despite limitations of sample and method, the findings and insights gained from this study also suggest ways for improving the use of APD, doing better qualitative research using a moral realist framework, and furthering research into the usage and effects of APD in higher education and other contexts.

**Implications for teaching and learning consultants.** Based on this study, I recommend the following for teaching and learning consultants and others who are using APD or encouraging faculty to use it:

- Consider the different functions and usages of a teaching purpose, a course purpose, and a learning outcome framework. Select which one (or more) would be most helpful given the professor's goals, topic, and program structure.
- Think about the organization and personalities within the professor's department or college. Identify factors that might impede or enable the professor's use of APD, and discuss what could be done to improve those factors.
- Experiment with asking faculty about what they value in multiple moral spaces relevant to their teaching. This might include how they want students to grow in spiritual or moral ways, what personal values they might share with their students, or how they might encourage students to consider their own moral stances. Explicitly guiding faculty in these ways may be valuable, as Edwards (2008) suggests that faculty may be hesitant to be explicit about their "spiritual convictions" (p. 18), and research shows (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011) that students are often open to invitations to grow in their personal values. Further, BYU faculty specifically are encouraged to address students' "inner needs . . . and help them develop their relationship to others and to God" (Wilkinson, 1996, p. 33). While these things can

be done outside of a formal course design, it may still be worthwhile to help faculty make more explicit their desires to guide students in these ways, whether in a statement of course purpose or teaching purpose or merely by taking time to reflect.

**Implications for future research.** This study was a first exploratory look at the utility and functions of APD and, to some extent, a moral realist lens for qualitative inquiry. Future research could improve understanding of how to best conceptualize and practice APD, how it can be used for certain ends, how it functions in different contexts, and what kinds of course designs, program-level curricular changes, and student outcomes it may impact. Further studies are also needed to better understand how inquiry in the moral space of practice (see Yanchar & Slife, 2016) can best be conceptualized and carried out.

For researchers wanting to use a hermeneutic moral realist approach to inquiry, I recommend the following courses of action:

- Clearly define the phenomenon in question before inquiring into its space within practice; if possible, pick a unitary phenomenon, rather than one with multiple components.
- Take time before commencing research to orient your thinking to this new mode of research, with its unique question formulation. This will help you have more focused and productive data collection and analysis.
- Decide carefully whether you want to study the phenomenon's fit within the moral space of practice for (a) people in various contexts or (b) multiple people in one context. For example, this study would likely have revealed different insights if I had interviewed three professors in one department.



- Ask participants about their participation in the practice and their experience with the phenomenon broadly, rather than in an artificially narrowed context. At first I artificially narrowed the context of practice I asked about by considering only one course that each participant was teaching. I learned a lot more when I asked participants about their use of APD across all of their courses and teaching efforts.

For researchers wanting to study APD, several questions may provide a better understanding of its usefulness in different contexts:

- What do faculty consider when writing a course purpose versus a teaching purpose? How do different questions guide this process in different ways?
- What tools or techniques—such as creating a learning outcome framework—make it easier for faculty to see the overall purpose of a course?
- How does a course purpose function differently from a teaching purpose? What happens when both are used?
- What happens when faculty try to use a course (or teaching) purpose to backward-design a course? What makes this easier or harder?
- Are results different when faculty are guided through APD in the way I initially theorized it (see Appendix)? Does it actually work as conceptualized?
- Are there design practices outside of teaching or instructional design—or even outside higher education—where APD can be applied? How does APD fit within those moral spaces?

These questions, of course, are not exhaustive; APD and use of a moral realist lens in qualitative research are both relatively new, and much work can be done to understand and use them more effectively.

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## APPENDIX

### **Authentic Purposeful Design**

#### **Definition**

Authentic Purposeful Design (APD) is a method of educational design and faculty development that centers around creating, utilizing, and improving a single-sentence purpose statement that acts as the overarching top-level learning outcome for a project, course, or program and reflects the authentic desires of the faculty for their students' becoming through the instrumentality of that project, course, or program. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) has chosen APD as their method of educational design for every level, with a hope to help professors and administrators clarify and use statements of authentic purpose for every educational endeavor.

#### **Process**

There are two phases of APD (see Figure A1). At first, faculty will go through them somewhat linearly, but later they may happen simultaneously as faculty have new experiences, change, and improve their course purposes. Although this same process applies somewhat to the use of APD in any educational endeavor, the following is focused on the process of a consultant helping a faculty member design an entire course.

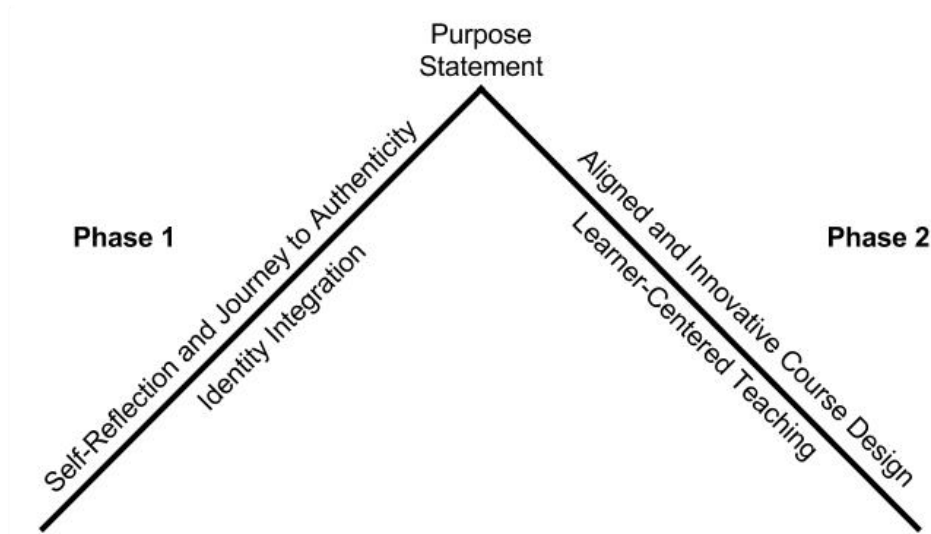


Figure A1. Two phases of authentic purposeful design.

**Phase 1: Reflection and purpose crafting.** The purpose of this phase is to help the faculty member articulate an overall purpose for their course through a process of reflecting on what matters to them in teaching. This is accomplished as the consultant talks with the faculty member about what they hope students will become through the course. During this conversation, the consultant may ask questions such as these:

- What do you want your students to become because they took this course?
- How will students be different in 10 years because they took this course?
- How does this course fit into the expected outcomes of the program and of the university?
- What are you trying to accomplish in this course?
- What do you want your students to accomplish?
- How can your discipline help students, the world, or humanity? What is special about it?
- What do you bring to your discipline that your students need?

This phase ends when the faculty member has crafted a purpose statement that has a sense of authenticity—when he or she has articulated a personally meaningful higher purpose for the course and is excited about and satisfied with it. Here are some signs that faculty are at this point:

- They show more passion, excitement, and engagement.
- Their language becomes less academic (e.g., textbook language, discipline-specific) and more whole-person (e.g., emotional, broad, moral, character-related, related to life outside school).
- They start talking about what the course purpose really means and how it will be helpful to them and their students.
- They become more learner-centered and mastery-focused instead of accumulation-focused. They may talk about changing content coverage to align with their purpose.
- Their purpose statement is in terms of what students will become.

As a final note about the variety of course purposes, some are more procedural or skill-based, whereas others are more relational, depending on the faculty member's desires and the nature of the course. The whole-person aspect of the course purpose may therefore be more or less explicitly moral in different courses.

Some examples of course purposes include the following:

- Students will become anti-racist through knowledge and compassion. (Sociology)
- Students will be able to create a professional report that characterizes the properties of an aquifer basin. (Geology)
- Students will become advocates for sound public policy. (Social Work)

- Be recognized as the best undergraduate mechanical engineering program in the world and the alma mater for the world's most influential engineers. (a department's purpose statement; The BYU Mechanical Engineering department's "big inspired goal")

### **Phase 2: Course design and teaching.**

*Course design.* With an authentic course purpose statement in hand, faculty must now design a course that will lead their students to become whatever the objective is. Using principles of backward design, consultants lead the faculty to plan a culminating assessment and then to choose content and learning activities that will prepare the students for that assessment.

The culminating assessment helps the faculty answer the question, "How will we know when students have achieved the course purpose?" It should measure the mastery and attitude that will attend a student who has fulfilled the purpose of the course. The assessment will measure skills, abilities, knowledge, desire, etc., as evidence for that mastery and attitude.

In some cases, there are pre-specified learning outcomes for a given course, sometimes because it is a prerequisite for a later course. In many instances, the department or program is open to having the faculty member propose alterations to those learning outcomes. This is important to point out to faculty, because they may assume the learning outcomes to be set in stone.

*Teaching.* After the faculty member designs the course, he or she teaches the students. During this process, the faculty member will likely have experiences that lead him or her to make changes to the course design or alter the purpose of the course. Over time as the faculty member continues to teach and live, he or she will undergo personal growth and changes. These will also provide opportunities to alter the purposes of courses taught.

Many professors tell their students about the course purpose at the beginning of the semester. Some are explicit with the students about tying each day's objective back to the course purpose and/or the culminating assessment. So far, in our experience, it seems that professors use course purpose most effectively when they talk about it regularly with their students and connect it with the class activities and learning outcomes.

### **Significance and Added Value**

**The status quo.** Often, faculty have hopes and dreams of what students can become, but these remain unexpressed, perhaps because they have never been asked about them and they have assumed that they needed to follow the status quo. In essence, they have been asked, however implicitly, to keep their personal, moral, and subjective lives separate from their disciplinary life. The result is that many professors seem to wear two hats; on campus they are a professor, and at home they are a person. Most often when faculty are asked to teach a course, they are told what the course is supposed to cover, and the textbook they choose largely drives the structure of the course. Their learning outcomes are usually driven by the content of the course, and rarely presented in a way that applies directly to students' lives outside of the discipline. When teaching and learning consultants teach the faculty course design concepts, such as alignment, active learning, and backward design, the faculty do not always understand or see the value of these practices. The students learn the content and procedures necessary for the assignments and exams, and within a matter of months they forget much of the content they learned.

**A bold question.** By asking the question, "What do you want the students to become?", consultants invite faculty to begin a reflective process of integrating their personal identity (including moral facets) with their disciplinary identity, which often results in a greater passion

for teaching. Although we only have anecdotal evidence, our experience tells us that as faculty members combine their personal desires with their disciplinary desires and create a course purpose, this purpose becomes a touchstone for all of their teaching, which can improve their teaching in many ways. It can breathe life into their learning outcomes as they connect their students to higher purposes. It often helps them in an organic way to see the importance of good design concepts. They often see a new vision of what teaching can be, and many say “I just can’t teach the same way anymore!” They start to become more student-focused instead of content-focused. They are able to articulate the purpose of the course to their students. In sum, they begin to teach more authentically, and (to the extent that their personal desires mirror those of the university) their courses begin to align more with the university’s mission.

**Outcomes for students.** We are also beginning to see that when students understand the purpose of their course and how all the parts of the course help them to fulfill that purpose, they have a better experience in the course. Overall expected outcomes of APD for both faculty and students are presented in Table A1 below, contrasted with the normal approach to faculty development and course design.

Table A1

*Comparison of APD with the “Normal Approach”*

Aspect of Teaching	The Normal Approach	Authentic Purposeful Design
Professors' desires for students' personal character growth	Usually unarticulated and unsolicited, kept separate from the teaching practice and course design. Unknown to students.	Articulated and integrated into the course design and teaching practices. Known (at least implicitly) by students
Professors' personal and disciplinary identities	Kept separated. Personal/moral identity is often hidden from students.	Becoming integrated and visible to students.
Guidance for course design	Tradition and content guide design	A clear sense of (moral) purpose guides design
Course purpose and learning outcomes	Plural, unclear Driven by content/textbook	Singular, clear An authentic expression of the professor's desires for student growth
Focus of teaching, view of role	Cover content, disseminate information	Facilitate students' personal learning and growth
Principles of good pedagogy and design	Faculty often do not understand and value these principles. There is a lot of jargon.	Faculty intuitively understand and value these principles (often without jargon) and are self-motivated to adopt them.
Alignment between course components	Weak or unclear alignment. Course components may seem incoherent or have unclear goals.	Clear and strong alignment. Course components are integrated. There is often have an integrative section late in the course to prepare students for the culminating assessment.
Learning activities	Lectures, PowerPoints, small discussions. Purpose is unclear and uninspiring. Organization may be unclear.	More active learning, authentic learning activities
Assessments	Usually multiple choice or short essay	Carefully thought out, tending toward authentic assessment
Relevance to students	Unclear	Clear and personal
Student focus	“What's on the test?” performance orientation	Mastery—learning oriented. This mindset also transfers to other classes.
Grades	The usual	Grade distributions tend to go up.