



The Morphology of the SoTL Article: New Possibilities for the Stories that SoTL Scholars Tell About Teaching and Learning

ABSTRACT

The folklorist Vladimir Propp identified a curious phenomenon in his study of 100 Russian fairy tales: despite their tremendous surface variety, they followed a single narrative structure or morphology. This article argues that the same phenomenon applies to SoTL articles: despite the tremendous variety of content and methods that SoTL articles evince, they have come to tell the same kind of story. They tell, over and over, a story of redemption. I identify two problems with the story of redemption, the first having to do with ethos (the character that an author projects to their readers), and the second having to do with plausibility. I propose an array of narrative possibilities to enable SoTL authors to tell other kinds of stories—possibilities based on problematizing rather than easily solving. I argue that these possibilities better realize how some of the foundational thinkers in SoTL wanted the field to evolve. While benefiting all SoTL practitioners, such an expansion of narrative possibilities will make the field a more welcoming place to humanities scholars in particular, many of whom share a skepticism about the possibility of linear progress and perpetual self-improvement.

KEYWORDS

redemption, problematizing, evolution of SoTL, SoTL and the humanities, narrative theory

INTRODUCTION

In a recent article in this journal, Laura E. Cruz and Eileen M. Grodziak (2021) offer their hope that this ongoing period of crisis can be one of opportunity for SoTL. They propose that “[t]he sharing of our individual experiences, our stories” will allow SoTL to take a leading role “within a greatly expanded teaching commons” (9). I wholeheartedly agree that we need to increase the number of stories that post-secondary teachers tell of their individual experiences. However, in what follows I discuss the likelihood that simply inviting more stories will fail to result in a “greatly expanded teaching commons” unless we expand the kinds of stories SoTL practitioners tell. In what follows, I will demonstrate how SoTL articles tell a single kind of story—a story of redemption—and how we might enrich this narrative impoverishment by revisiting some of the founding documents of the field. In what follows, I build on Cruz and Grodziak’s (2021) call for more stories by also calling for new kinds of stories. Such a call will, I hope, result in an expanded teaching commons by allowing SoTL authors to tell new kinds of stories that will in turn attract new readers and new SoTL scholars, including those from the humanities, who do not naturally gravitate toward stories of unfettered progress and redemption.

In what follows, I will explore my contention that the vast majority of SoTL articles tell a single kind of story, consider the limitations of this story, and provide a new set of narrative possibilities. In this

undertaking, I bring a narratological approach to SoTL. The study of narrative—the ways that narratives function to make sense of the world and how the impulse to narrativize experience manifests itself in every corner of human activity—can provide a new lens through which to inventory past SoTL articles and imagine new possibilities. Most fundamentally, a narratological approach enables us to view SoTL articles not as transparent vessels that simply provide information about how to improve teaching and learning but as meaning-bearing structures in and of themselves. The kind of story that SoTL articles have come to tell constructs the world of post-secondary teaching and learning as one where relentless self-improvement coupled with a belief in linear progress has become the norm. But this kind of story is problematic because it both excludes stories that could illuminate aspects of teaching and learning that currently remain obscured and limits the kinds of scholars who want to read or write SoTL articles that labor under this narrative constraint.

NARRATIVE SINGULARITY WITHIN SEEMING MULTIPLICITY

My contention that SoTL researchers tell a single story about teaching and learning might be difficult to swallow. Instead, it might more plausibly seem that the aspects of teaching and learning captured by SoTL are immense. Pat Hutchings (2000) has made that variety explicit. According to Hutchings, there are four different questions that SoTL researchers can investigate: “what works”; “what is”; “visions of the possible,” a concept developed by Lee Shulman (1999); and questions that enable researchers to expand the conceptual framework for thinking about teaching and learning. Craig Nelson (2003) offers a different way of registering the tremendous variety of the things SoTL researchers can do by listing what he calls SoTL’s “different genres,” which, according to Nelson, range from reports on particular classes to reflections on teaching experiences and summaries of prior studies. Cruz and Grodziaik (2021) suggest that there might be as many SoTL stories to tell as there are diverse practitioners. So how can I claim that SoTL typically tells just one story?

In support of this claim, I turn to one of the founding works of the field of narratology, the Russian folklorist Vladímir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*. First translated into English in 1958, *Morphology of the Folktale* “lays bare the essential form of the folkloristic text” (Dundes 1968, xiii). Propp’s corpus includes 100 folktales. These tales evince great variety: some involve princes, others involve bears or fish; some have fantastical elements, some concern the mundane. Sometimes the protagonist leaves home to hunt, and other times the protagonist leaves for war. Propp demonstrated that although these tales evince great surface variety, they grow out of a single basic structure, a “morphology.” Propp’s study of the structure of these Russian folktales or fairy tales is based on his analysis of their recurring *dramatis personae* and the functions they serve. As Propp concludes, the functions of the characters constitute “stable, constant elements . . . independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled” (1968, 21). Furthermore, Propp discovers that these elements always occur in the same order. For example, the fairy tales he scrutinized always begin with the hero leaving home, followed by someone telling the hero to do or not to do something (26). Propp reaches the startling conclusion that “[a]ll fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure” (23). One can say the same of the SoTL articles in my corpus: that they all follow the same structure.

My corpus for developing a SoTL morphology comprises the 34 articles published in the two most recent issues (at the time of my writing) of *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*: Volumes 9.1 and 9.2 (see Appendix for full list). This is, of course, a tiny fraction of all the SoTL articles published in the last couple of years, let alone since the founding of the field. However, I believe that the articles in my corpus

are, to a meaningful extent, representative of most articles in the field (for one thing, *TLI* is the flagship journal of the field). I want to say upfront that this morphology is not intended as a “key to all mythologies,” what Casaubon, the embittered pedant featured in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* ([1871] 1977), titles his ongoing (and never-to-be-completed) magnum opus. The effectiveness of my morphology depends on whether you, dear reader, experience a flash of recognition: “Yes, this is the story that most SoTL articles tell.” Even within my limited corpus, there are seeming exceptions to my morphology, involving “meta” or “state-of-the-field” articles (that is, articles focused on the field of SoTL *qua* field) and articles that provide a new conceptual framework for understanding an aspect of teaching and learning, which comport with the fourth type of question Hutchings proposes.¹ Yet, even these seeming exceptions conform to the morphology.

THE MORPHOLOGY OF THE SOTL ARTICLE

One of the founding distinctions in narratology concerns “story” and “discourse.” Narratives can render a sequence of events and the characters involved (“the story”) in myriad ways: for example, an author can start at the very beginning of the story and proceed linearly through time, or an author can start at the end and then use flashbacks to fill in what preceded it; at the same time, an author can tell the story from the point of view of one of the characters or from the point of a view of a narrator who does not participate in what happens. The story never changes, but the way it is actualized in print or on screen (“the discourse”) can introduce infinite variations. The folktales Propp studied follow a linear temporal structure—no flash forwards or flashbacks. SoTL articles also follow a linear temporal structure, although the discourse usually begins not with a founding event but a demonstration about why the story it is going to tell should matter to its intended readers. SoTL articles generally begin with a description of the scholarly conversation that the article seeks to enter, thus demonstrating to other SoTL scholars that the story the article is going to tell is important to read. We might call this the setting.

Once past the setting, there is a founding event. This founding event is the recognition of a problem or potential problem: the authors realize that students (or colleagues or scholars new to SoTL) are not doing something, doing too much of something, or doing the right thing but only intermittently. For example, FangFang Zhao and her co-authors (2021) know that teaching science via inquiry-based activities yields many benefits but realized that “the complexity of implementing” these activities can act as a deterrent (2). Let us call this initial element recognition:² the authors’ discovery of a problem, with or without a thick description of the context in which it arises. How authors discover the problem varies; mostly it comes from observing something in their own or another instructor’s classroom, but some authors derive the problem from prior SoTL research.³

I will call the next element of the SoTL narrative “searching,” wherein the authors explore what lies behind the problem, often drawing on other SoTL research to do so. For example, Jeffrey A. Stone and Laura Cruz (2021) realized that students’ difficulties in solving “wicked problems”⁴ arose because students are usually given only neatly bound ones. Searching is, however, an optional element in SoTL. Some articles do not investigate how the problem might have arisen, especially in cases where they assume its origins to be self-evident.⁵

I will use “revelation” to name the next element, the action or series of actions that authors take or plan to take to solve the problem. For example, Stone and Cruz integrated a range of extra-disciplinary content to help their students solve the wicked problem. Maureen Vandermaas-Peeler and her co-authors’ (2021) illuminating exploration of students’ perceptions of how their identities changed

during their study away experiences caused the authors to think about the difficulties these students experienced upon their return. Revelation ensued: to ease students' reintegration, the authors realized "the importance of reflection [by the students] before, during, and after global engagement experiences" (14). Revelation takes multiple forms in my corpus: from the inclusion of a new kind of content to a new assignment to a new commitment that instructors should adopt. An example of the last comes from Joe Bandy, Brielle Harbin, and Amie Thurber (2021), who discovered that it is not enough for instructors to support students' cognitive development when it comes to teaching race and racial justice; they needed to commit to supporting their emotional growth as well.

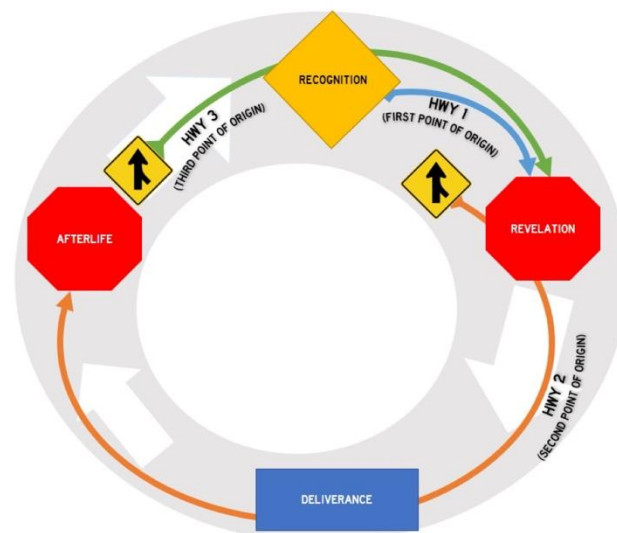
Revelation is followed by deliverance, the confirmation in the form of supporting evidence, that the actions taken to solve the problem have succeeded, whether this confirmation is achieved through regression analysis or close reading. There are a fair number of articles that omit this element, including the article by Vandermaas-Peeler et al. (2021) that I alluded to above. The reason for the omission varies within my corpus: it either occurs when the preceding element, revelation, comes at the very end of the article (see below for more details) or, much more rarely, because the authors' remedy failed to solve the original problem. This latter situation occurred in just two articles in my corpus: in articles by Trent W. Maurer and Catelyn Shipp (2021) and by M'Balía Thomas and Marta Carvajal Regidor (2021). In the case of Maurer and Shipp, their efforts to induce students to adopt more effective study methods were no match against old habits of highlighting (using fluorescent pens) and cramming. Yet, even in these two articles, the spirit of deliverance remains. The authors frame their experiment's failure to produce a change in students as itself a form of progress: instructors can now know that they will need to search for another solution than the one originally tried.

The final element in the SoTL article is another optional element, omitted even more often than deliverance. I will call it the promise of an afterlife, wherein authors consider the questions left unanswered by the current study and/or possible directions for further research—a possible sequel to the current study. For example, Lauren Scharff and her co-authors (2021), who investigate whether there are benefits to instructors keeping metacognitive journals, end their article by asserting that "[r]ich areas for future research include investigating ways of lowering barriers to journal use, using the journal as tool to facilitate faculty development, and exploring additional techniques for developing metacognitive instruction" (24). Michelle J. Eady and her co-authors (2021) end their article promising that "[i]n future scholarly publications we will continue the evolution of the framework and present practicalities of integrating the T-shaped SoTL framework into HE [higher education]" (274). Yet even when overtly omitted, the promise of an afterlife is still there in spirit.

Based on my corpus, there are three different potential points of origin for a SoTL article, even as the form of the story, an endless cycle of redemption, remains the same. One way to picture this kind of variation is to think about different versions of the Bluebeard fairytale. Charles Perrault ([1697] 2010) begins his version with Bluebeard asking a noble lady for her daughter's hand in marriage. But in "The Bloody Chamber" (1979), Angela Carter begins with Bluebeard's fiancée journeying to meet her betrothed. Carter has sped past where Perrault began the story to begin her version at a later point. Here are two different versions of the same story, with two different points of origin. Similarly, some SoTL authors begin their story before any changes to the class (or curriculum or practice) have been undertaken. In this first scenario, the authors devote most of the article to the element of recognition, often using thick description to locate where problems might lie. Because they devote so much time to discovering the problem, the only subsequent action they can take before they run out of space is to

propose a solution to it. Because they can only propose a solution, deliverance, or confirmation that the solution has worked, remains out of reach. A second point of origin that authors can choose has the story starting at a slightly later stage: the authors begin by immediately identifying a problem or set of problems, and they institute changes to solve it before too much space has passed. In this second scenario, deliverance can be achieved because they have the space to assess the solutions they put into place. It is also much more likely that an explicit promise of an afterlife will occur in articles with this origin point. A third group of authors start the story even later. Changes have already been put into place before their story has opened, and thus the authors devote their time to assessing the new situation and sifting it for problems that will inspire proposed solutions but not achieve deliverance: in other words, the third time frame begins the cycle anew.⁶

Figure 1: The never-ending cycle of the SoTL redemption story



Recognition, searching, revelation, deliverance, and the promise of an afterlife—I hope the identification of these elements allows us to identify the kind of story that SoTL articles tell: one of redemption.⁷ One might object that some of the elements commonly go missing, especially the final two, deliverance and the promise of an afterlife. Yet even when seemingly absent, these elements are still implicitly present because each SoTL article admits of the possibility of a follow-up article that takes place later in the cycle. Though deliverance can be achieved only for authors who begin their story late enough for them to have had the chance to put in place the solutions that could then be assessed, the promise of an afterlife, where deliverance will occur, is always present, even if not mentioned explicitly. The existing SoTL morphology generates a potentially endless cycle wherein problems beget solutions beget new problems beget new solutions—a cycle of linear progress and constant improvement.⁸ In the next section, I discuss how this insistence on progress and self-improvement, which sound like such good things, can also generate problems for authors and the field itself.

ETHOS AND PLAUSIBILITY

So far, my narratological analysis of SoTL articles has used a structuralist narratological approach: an identification of the elements that make up a certain type of narrative, without attending to

the role that readers have in infusing a given narrative with meaning. Another branch of narrative theory, rhetorical narratology, concerns itself with the ways that authors invite readers to form a relationship with the tellers in a narrative (authors, and, in the case of fictional narratives, narrators and characters). This relationship has intellectual, ethical, and emotional dimensions.⁹ A rhetorical narratological approach enables us to scrutinize the kind of relationship that authors of SoTL articles want to form with their readers and the obstacles that can get in the way. SoTL authors want readers to like and trust them so that readers will consider adapting their advice to their own pedagogy. But the redemption story can impede this relationship, especially for certain kinds of readers.

For one thing, the redemption story can lead to ethos problems. The narratologist Liesbeth Korthals Altes (2014) defines “ethos” by recurring to its meaning in ancient Greece: “a person’s or community’s character or characterizing spirit, tone, or attitude” (vii). In the ancient Greek understanding, “ethos” is one of a speaker’s three means of persuasion (the other two are “pathos” and “logos”). A speaker’s ethos—or the character an audience attributes to them—helps determine how persuasive the audience finds the speaker (or author). A reader’s “ethos attributions,” as Altes calls them, do not always match up with what the author hopes to inspire. When it comes to a SoTL article, sometimes a reader will attribute just the ethos that the SoTL author would like them to, e.g., “I accept the author as trustworthy and am happy to use them as my pedagogical guide.” But sometimes, a reader attributes an ethos to an author that the author does not intend. In the case of SoTL articles, two byproducts of the morphology can be the impression of either naiveté or self-righteousness.

The imperative to document progress can result in the expression of a belief that there is no problem that cannot be overcome. For example, the excellent article on wicked problems ends with this statement: “Our society is increasingly dependent on information technology and, thus, the creators of that technology will need to be sufficiently dexterous across multiple problem-solving approaches so that they can be ready to tame whatever challenges the future may hold” (Stone and Cruz 2021, 191). Another example comes from an otherwise persuasive article on mentoring: “Clearly the work toward institutionalizing SoTL cultural change will involve deconstructing power, privilege, and oppression” (Henry et al. 2021, 17).¹⁰ I also want to note that my own previous morphology-conforming work in SoTL might run into this problem. In “Too Close for Context,” my co-authors and I tackle the problem of teaching close reading to first-year students, a problem that has long vexed English instructors (Carter et al. 2022). We solve the problem by “add[ing] intertextual thinking to . . . the ‘strategic knowledge’ we want all English majors to learn” (Carter et al. 2022, 351). Although we try to acknowledge that this solution might not result in classrooms filled with newly minted F. R. Leavises, our article might still give the impression that we think we have solved an intractable problem. These examples distill what Sherry Lee Linkon (2011) would call the “enduring understanding” of the authors of redemption stories: a reflexive faith in progress. That so many SoTL articles end on such a redemptive note suggests that a future-looking can-do statement might be a generic feature of the SoTL article. Thus, I do not fault individual authors (or myself) for including these kinds of statements: after all, we are simply following the understandings and conventions of the discipline we are writing for. Yet I still read these statements and imagine that there are challenges that are not so easily tamed by information technology, SoTL mentoring projects, or intertextual thinking. The required narrative arc of the SoTL article puts authors in the way of seeming naïve.

The other ethos problem I mentioned, of self-righteousness, appears less when articles are taken individually and more when readers consider them in aggregate: “our approach illustrates that active

learning can be . . . impactful on student outcomes” (Barrett et al. 2021, 57); “these findings can be applied to other educational settings and international contexts” (Moreno 2021, 19); “the study allowed me to identify gaps and scaffolds that would influence my instructional design in terms of helping students develop problem-solving skills” (Yeong 2021, 154). None of the authors I have just cited seem self-righteous when considered individually, yet the effect of reading 34 articles that document the inevitable progress that SoTL researchers made does produce this effect. Read individually, the SoTL authors’ efforts to offer the results of their research so their colleagues can improve appears generous. But when considered in the aggregate, this impulse threatens to coalesce into self-righteousness: the SoTL articles in my morphology come to seem like an attempt to redeem benighted colleagues, whose likely experiences of setbacks and failures can come to seem, in comparison, like personal failings. I want to repeat that this is neither the intent of SoTL authors nor the effect of any article taken individually; it is the effect of the aggregate and their allegiance to a single morphology, which mandates that SoTL articles document linear progress and pedagogical self-improvement.

Why might it be difficult to register these ethos problems? I suggested above that only certain readers will likely notice them. Those readers include those new to the field, rather than insiders, and humanities scholars, rather than social scientists. A reason that social scientists and insiders in the field might not register self-righteousness derives from the habitual impersonality of SoTL prose. Because it is a feature of SoTL prose and the social science disciplines that many SoTL researchers hail from, I ask us again not to fault individual authors even as I offer an individual example to make the point clear. Consider this impersonal line from the article on study away opportunities: “The inquiry project “exposed” students to new experiences and interactions . . . to allow them to begin to see culture through a more critical and hybrid lens” (Moreno 2021, 18). We tend to associate impersonality with the passive voice (and *TLI* itself discourages the passive voice in its submissions guidelines), and you can see that this sentence has a lovely active verb (*exposed*). The impersonality in this sentence comes instead from the choice of subject: not the author, but the project that they developed and instituted. If you were to switch the subject to “I,” you would now have this: “I exposed students to new experiences and interactions.” Now imagine not just this author saying something like this but all authors of SoTL articles foregrounding themselves while following the morphology. If that were to happen, I suspect the problem of producing an effect of self-righteousness would become apparent even to social science insiders.

The convention of social scientific prose to put the researcher in the background prevents many readers from registering the self-righteousness that is an unfortunate byproduct of the morphology. One might, in fact, see this habitual impersonality as a solution to this ethos problem. However, I would say it is only a partly successful solution, for two reasons. First, impersonal prose leads to its own problems: it is not very vivid.¹¹ Second, it might make the ethos problem even more salient for outsiders to the field whose disciplines encourage the foregrounding of the researcher. Rather than seeing this impersonal prose as the result of disciplinary conventions governing how scientists and social scientists write, such outsiders to the field might see this impersonal prose as a manipulative attempt on the part of SoTL authors to avoid being identified as self-righteous.

If the first problem with the redemption narrative involves readers’ negative reactions to SoTL authors, the second involves readers’ doubts about SoTL’s plausibility in suggesting that redemption is the only story to tell about post-secondary teaching and learning. Let me introduce this second problem by looking at an article by Gordon Harvey (2003), former co-director of Harvard’s Expository Writing

Program. Harvey's article seems extremely realistic about how difficult it is to respond to student writing. Harvey is writing out of a rhetoric/composition tradition, which has made room for the kind of story that Harvey wants to tell, about how to respond to student writing. Harvey's "Repetitive Strain: The Injuries of Responding to Student Writing" (2003) does not follow the SoTL morphology. Readers conversant with the conventions of the SoTL article sense early on that Harvey is up to something different. The article provides revelation in the form of a (fantastic) four-step recipe for responding to student writing, but it is provided on the first page; the elements of recognition and searching that normally precede it have gone missing. Having gotten to revelation so early, Harvey has a lot of space to do something else—but it is certainly not deliverance. That something else involves Harvey's efforts to "acknowledg[e] the injuries involved in responding [to student writing] that don't often get acknowledged" (45). These include the psychic injuries brought on by having to assume contradictory roles when responding, from "mid-wife therapist" to "judge" (2003, 46); having to justify or explain concepts that are difficult to grasp if you are unfamiliar with the discipline; having to avoid saying straight out what you think about the topic the student is writing about; and having to "[maintain] the necessary tone of earnest optimism and encouraging appreciation, generally of caring, in our oral and written responses" (47).

If this were a SoTL article,¹² Harvey, having identified the problems that arise from responding to student writing, would hypothesize possible solutions, institute them, and assess whether they had been successful (and perhaps suggest an idea for a follow-up study). But that would be to stick a pin through the heart of this vibrant article and kill its emotional impact. Harvey's point is that these problems are baked into the act of responding. The article's final sentence documents one last physical injury caused by responding: "it's hard on the wrists, too" (48). Harvey does not offer a solution to the problem he has identified because his point is that there is no solution. Because he does not, the article registers as joyously realistic to those of his readers who recognize similar "injuries" they have sustained in responding to student writing and the impossibility of preventing them.¹³

Harvey's article suggests the second problem with SoTL's narrative monoculture: its implausibility. How can linear progress and constant self-improvement be the only stories there are to tell about teaching and learning? We might want SoTL articles to reflect more kinds of experiences that instructors have than the experience of always working toward redemption. What about solutions that require trade-offs, ones that are only temporary, or problems that have no solutions or resist even effective management? There are glimpses of these kinds of considerations in my corpus. For example, Barrett and his co-authors (2021) acknowledge the "difficult choices" instructors confront when trying to find time for active learning during a class session that is meant to cover a lot of content (57). However, this reference to a trade-off takes up only two sentences in the article. Paul Feigenbaum (2021) devotes his entire article to failure, although the article still tries to redeem failure by demonstrating the lessons that can be learned from it. Thus, I think it is still fair to suggest that SoTL articles might not just resemble fairy tales because they follow a single morphology but be fairy tales, in the sense of stories that depart from reality because of elements like their inevitably happy endings. Certainly, there is a useful distinction to be made between problems that can be solved and those that can only be managed, but even if SoTL were to turn more of its attention to the latter, we would likely simply replicate the morphology. We will now switch to focusing on how to better manage those problems. Even if it is likely that the problems any single SoTL article focuses on can be mitigated, is it

plausible, if we consider SoTL articles in the aggregate, that every problem that arises in the world of teaching and learning can be (easily) overcome?

ROADS NOT TAKEN

The solution-orientation of SoTL articles excludes important experiences in teaching. I want to demonstrate that the alternative—inviting new kinds of stories, which do not quickly reach for a solution or do not reach for one at all—is not an imposition on SoTL but a return to the field’s earliest conceptions. When I went back to one of the founding articles of the field, Randy Bass’ “The Scholarship of Teaching: What’s the Problem?” (1999), I was amazed at how seriously Bass takes his subtitle. He asks SoTL practitioners to dwell on a problem in teaching rather than quickly reach for a solution. Bass wants SoTL practitioners to cultivate a “belief in the visibility and viability of teaching *problems* that can be investigated as scholarship, and not merely for the purpose of ‘fixing’ them” (2). Bass again stresses the necessity of dwelling on problems later in the article, after he has discussed how he applied SoTL principles to a course he had been teaching. Although he acknowledges that he would want to “assess the effectiveness of the course,” he continues:

[O]verall, what has been striking for me is the way in which my initial questions gave rise to particular problems. And, as with other kinds of scholarly and intellectual work, the more I pursue those problems as inquiry and the more I reflect on what I’m learning, the more complex those problems seem (8).

This quotation reverses the usual order of the SoTL redemption tale. Whereas the articles in my corpus begin with problems and then find solutions, Bass begins by mentioning solutions and ends with the importance of digging into problems.

This emphasis on problems is further underlined by Bass’ use in this article of a word familiar to humanities scholars: “problematization,” the act of making something into a problem that might initially appear to work fine. Problematizing has extrinsic benefits, even when it does not lead to a solution. Problematizing can counteract the power of ideology to make people believe everything is going fine when it is not. It also encourages the development of approaches, such as intersectionality, that are good at illuminating the tenaciousness and complexity of an array of social problems. Even beyond these extrinsic goods, “problematizing” has intrinsic, non-instrumental value (and not just for humanities disciplines): even if it does not help us solve a problem, escape ideology, or lead to a new analytical lens, it constitutes deeper understanding or knowledge. Humanities scholars are not obligated to reach for a solution in their articles to the problems they discover.

Compare how “problematizing” is treated in SoTL 20-odd years after the publication of Bass’ article: as something to be sped through, if not avoided in the first place.¹⁴ We can see this shift in “SoTL and the Humanities: Navigating Tensions, Realizing Possibilities” (Little, Donnelly-Sallee, and Michael 2021), which describes the progress made by a group of humanities scholars whom the authors invited to embark on a three-year SoTL project to improve their classes. One of the humanities scholars enrolled in the study explains why he had trouble executing his project: “We needed space for problematizing this project. Problematizing is a legitimate part of intellectual work in the humanities. We can overindulge in it, but it’s also a part of our DNA, and outsiders don’t get it” (4). The authors use this humanities scholar’s dissatisfaction to exemplify how some of the “attitudes and dispositions [of

humanities scholars] complicated the work [of SoTL] for some project participants” (4). This observation makes a lot of sense if we place it in the context of SoTL’s reliance on the redemption narrative, the imperative to find a solution or at least mitigation for every problem: in this light, problematizing runs afoul of SoTL’s disciplinary norms. However, if we compare Bass’ (1999) article to this one, we can see how “problematizing” has gone from a concept meant to shape the incipient field of SoTL to something that makes a humanities scholar feel like an outsider to it. The humanities scholar’s impulse to problematize made him feel as if he could not successfully implement his SoTL project. Ironically, Harvey’s (2003) article, which gets the solution out of the way so that it can dwell on problems, might fulfill Bass’ (1999) early conception of what SoTL should be better than the articles in my corpus. But Harvey’s (2003) article comes out of a different discipline and was published in a journal for humanities scholars.

Here is another road not taken. In *Approaching the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, another one of SoTL’s foundational texts, Hutchings’s (2000) introduction lays out what has become the frequently cited four-part taxonomy of SoTL that I described at the beginning of this article: “what works,” “what is,” “visions of the possible,” and questions that lead to new conceptual frameworks. Based on my *TLI* corpus, “visions of the possible” seems less its own category and more a precursor to the element I am calling revelation: what changes can I make so that this assignment/course/curriculum more resembles what I imagine to be possible? The problem is that another element in Hutchings’ taxonomy, “what is,” has also been subsumed by an element in the redemption tale. “What is” has become part of recognition: the observation of what students are not doing, doing too much of, or not doing long enough. Like “problematizing,” describing “what is” functions more as a launching pad for SoTL authors than a destination spot: the thing that propels them to search for a solution and change the “what is” to something better, to redeem it.

I propose we allow “what is” to be a landing place, just as Hutchings wanted it to be. “Visions of the possible” might have seemed at the time Hutchings wrote her article to be the most radical category—it has a utopian vibe—but I would hazard that, a little over two decades later, “what is,” in the sense of an article that investigates problems and their context without reaching for a solution, has become the most radical possibility,¹⁵ an option that would break free of the morphology. Instead, “what works” has come to dominate the field: it is another name, after all, for the redemption narrative, and it has prevented “what is” from coming into its own. But we can change that.

OTHER STORIES WE CAN TELL

Instead of jettisoning the morphology (as if that were even possible), I ask us to recognize that it does not exhaust all the stories that SoTL authors might tell. There are many ways we can break the redemption story’s monopoly, in ways large and small, using the elements of the existing morphology as our playground. The good news is that some authors in my corpus were beginning to do these things, as I have suggested above; for example, Barrett et al. (2021) briefly considers the idea of a trade-off, and Feigenbaum (2021) argues for the importance of failure. However, a much more radical challenge to the morphology is to imagine alternatives to redemption and thus offer a more capacious account of post-secondary teaching and learning. In listing these four alternatives, I have certainly not exhausted all the ways we can supplement the morphology of redemption, and I invite readers to brainstorm other possibilities.

Here are four alternative morphologies that SoTL scholars can consider adopting:

- “What Can’t Be”: A story about a problem in teaching and learning that might be intractable and an exploration of why that might be. Harvey’s article fits this morphology.
- “Trade-offs”: A story that considers how solving one problem in teaching and learning results in others. This narrative structure suggests pedagogical development in some contexts is less a matter of discovering paths to redemption than assessing pros and cons.
- “The Limits of Individual Agency”: A story that considers the limits of an instructor’s agency in solving a problem because of larger societal or institutional forces at play.
- “Just What Is”: A story that stops at “what is.”¹⁶ It does not judge whether the problem it discovers is intractable or subject to solution (it may be). It just problematizes. This is a story that truly witnesses, because it understands that our capacity to understand what is going on is compromised by the impulse to exit into the more psychologically comfortable territory of improvement and progress.¹⁷

Before I discuss some smaller ways to challenge the conventional morphology, I turn to the writer Lorrie Moore to provide an illustration and justification for “Just What Is.” In Moore’s funny, devastating short story, “People Like That Are the Only People Here” (1997), a mother recounts what follows upon her baby’s being diagnosed with cancer. At one point in the story, the mother observes what makes her appreciative of her friends: “For one, they never offer impromptu spiritual lectures about death, how it is part of life, its natural ebb and flow, how we all must accept that, or other such utterances that make her want to scratch out somebody’s eyes” (70). These friends respond to what is happening to her family differently from the way her husband’s friends do, who “no[d] their heads with Sympathy” (70). The protagonist observes “How Exiling and Estranging are everybody’s Sympathetic Expressions!” (70). With her unorthodox capitalization, Moore invites readers to consider the counter-intuitive proposition that it is often kinder to witness someone’s grief than try to ameliorate it. A friend’s rush to tell you why you should feel better or why the tragedy you are experiencing has a purpose can feel like criticism, however inadvertent: there is something wrong with you for choosing to linger in a place of loss. I do not mean to suggest that the tragedy of a child with cancer is equivalent to an inability to figure out the most successful way to implement think-pair-share, but there are lessons to be learned from Moore’s exploration of the potential mismatch between people with certain sensibilities (Moore’s protagonist is a writer, a humanities-oriented person) and the response to their problems offered by Sympathizing friends. These lessons include the relief that might result from being allowed to recount one’s struggles without having the listener tell you how to overcome them and the justified irritation that ensues upon exposure to other people’s “helpful” insistence on the need for constant self-improvement.

Above, I called these four alternatives radical, and they are in the sense that they challenge SoTL’s reliance on a single morphology. However, in another sense, they are not radical but familiar: each of these alternatives foregrounds an existing stage of the redemption narrative. For example, “Just What Is” (minus the “Just”) is often featured within “recognition,” the part where SoTL authors offer a description of the current situation. “The Limits of Individual Agency” and “What Can’t Be” resemble possible forms of “searching,” where SoTL authors discuss how a problem has arisen (and why it persists). These alternative morphologies, with the possible exception of “Trade-offs,” do not require the invention of new elements, only a polite refusal to fully trace the circle of the redemption narrative; one must linger on an earlier element in the cycle and cease to reach for revelation or deliverance.

There are also smaller ways to avoid some of the pitfalls of the redemption story. How might SoTL more successfully solve the ethos problem of self-righteousness than simply deploying impersonal prose? What if, instead of avoiding making their presence felt, authors foregrounded it? At least one SoTL scholar has met with great success in pursuing this strategy. I would wager that the great popularity of Stephen Brookfield's "Through the Lens of Learning: How Experiencing Difficult Learning Challenges and Changes Assumptions about Teaching" (1996)¹⁸ at least partially derives from Brookfield's creation of a persona that neutralizes the ethos problem of the redemption story. In this article, Brookfield tells a story about learning to swim as an adult to demonstrate how important it is for instructors to become aware of how an instructor's own expertise might unfit them to understand the difficulty students have in learning something new. Brookfield's breakthrough is precipitated by a fellow student's suggestion that he use swim goggles; this leads him to acknowledge that someone's peers are sometimes better equipped to help than the instructor (14). I did not have to activate my literary close reading skills to glean these morals: Brookfield spells them out toward the end of his article, when he reveals he has become not just a competent swimmer but a more "even handed, empathic evaluator of students" (14). In other words, Brookfield tells a redemption story *par excellence*. Why do readers not see Brookfield as self-righteous?

Brookfield cultivates a fantastically humble persona in his article. For example, he sets the stage for his double redemption by saying, "It's the first evening of a class for adult non-swimmers and, while I'm stripping down to my swimming trunks, a number of thoughts are darting through my mind. One is that I hate to show my pale, pimply naked Englishman's body in public" (8). Even though he learns to swim, he does not learn to swim all that well: a self-proclaimed "psychomotor dolt," Brookfield knows that "[o]n any almost any scale imaginable . . . my performance is pathetic. People 40 years my senior are zooming past and my own actions are an uncoordinated mess of huffing, puffing and unsightly struggling" (12). These self-deprecating comments allow readers to identify with him. Even if we are already competent swimmers ourselves, most of us have experienced the indignities of trying to learn a new skill as an adult (my own personal Waterloo involved an attempt to learn how to ski). This readerly identification allows his pedagogical lessons to go down easily, especially because the lessons that Brookfield gleans while learning to swim incorporate the same humility and empathy that Brookfield has deployed so winningly in the strand of his article that focuses on learning to swim. In identifying with Brookfield in that strand, we identify with him identifying with students in the other. We are thus happy to accept his belief that we are like our students in their fumbling attempts to gain proficiency at something they do not yet know how to do.

I recognize that highlighting failure or emphasizing humility might represent an unappealing rhetorical path for authors whose credibility is already questioned, such as scholars of color.¹⁹ Keeping in mind this qualification, I would still point out the advantages in some contexts of following Brookfield's route of foregrounding humility or failure. Most obviously, an author could follow Brookfield in using a personal challenge, especially one they only imperfectly overcome, as an allegory for what students experience, but they could also emphasize the difficulties they ran into in various stages of their otherwise redemptive SoTL article.²⁰ Or they could promote identification between themselves and their readers by using humor or engaging in self-reflection, not just reflection on the possible shortcomings of their study.

WHO CAN TELL THESE NEW STORIES?

As Hilary H. Steiner and Christopher M. Hakala’s “What Do SoTL Practitioners Need to Know about Learning” (2021) attests, the field of SoTL still concerns itself, as it has from the beginning, with how it can remain a welcoming place for scholars new to SoTL, even as the field has often ignored what can be the chilling effect on humanities scholars of an equation of SoTL with the “science of learning.” As Stephen Bloch-Schulman and Linkon write in their introduction to a humanities-focused section featured in a 2016 issue of *TLI*, “our methods and even our questions sometimes generate disdain from our more empirically-oriented colleagues” (52). In the same vein, Janice Miller-Young and Michelle Yeo (2015) point out how SoTL often favors articles that have an “experimental design” (42), that is, articles that follow a scientific model. Yet there have been efforts to make the field more welcoming to humanities scholars. Many SoTL journals are now explicit in their invitation to SoTL researchers to take advantage of methods developed in humanistic disciplines. For example, in its description of itself (“About the Journal”), *TLI* invites articles from “all disciplines” and affirms its commitment to “methodological pluralism.”

Yet I think it is fair to say that the accommodation of scholars in the humanities has primarily involved an expansion of the kinds of evidence SoTL scholars are invited to draw on and the methods they use to collect it.²¹ A SoTL practitioner now has the choice to close read student essays rather than code responses from a questionnaire (an example Linkon uses in the introduction I quoted from above [2011, 52]). Yet this focus on expanding the methods permitted by SoTL research keeps in place another aspect of the typical SoTL article inhospitable to humanities scholars: its baked-in assumption of linear progress and endless self-improvement. This article has been an attempt to bring those aspects of SoTL articles into view.

While I believe that people from across disciplines can tell new kinds of stories about teaching and learning, humanities scholars might be particularly well-equipped to do so. I believe I possess a sensibility not uncommon in a humanities scholar: a skepticism about whether we as individuals or the institutions we belong to can make every single thing better—occasionally, it should be enough to try to understand a problem or simply come to accept one’s own inability to fix it. I also have an aversion to the genre of self-help (“Self-Help” is the ironic title of one of Lorrie Moore’s story collections). This sensibility has likely been shaped by the important, problematizing critiques that scholars in the humanities have offered, from the critique of “resilience” and individual agency to the foregrounding of the devastating character of what is called progress on the natural environment and on minoritized populations.

As I discussed above, humanities scholars spend a lot of time offering new understandings of “what is” without immediately leaping to “what works.”²² Focusing on “what is” would enable SoTL authors to avoid the imperative to solve every problem, and it also invites them to pay attention to problems that may be very, very difficult to solve, if not intractable. It also invites them to explore why a given instructor cannot improve student learning under certain circumstances or cannot improve it without making it suffer in other ways. It invites instructors to dwell in the discomfort of a teaching problem, as Bass (1999) has noted teachers do not like to do, without allowing the problem to be constrained and co-opted by the promise of a solution. Though experiences of trade-offs, paralysis, failure, or even simply an impulse to understand a problem better without reaching for a solution lie outside of the current morphology, they surely describe many people’s experiences of teaching and learning at least some of the time. These are SoTL stories where authors problematize and witness

rather than improve and solve—stories that resist the cycle of redemption. I am not suggesting we replace the current morphology with alternatives, only that we allow it to be supplemented. If the field could publish both articles that foreground progress and articles that resist redemption, we could offer readers a more capacious and realistic representation of post-secondary teaching and learning.

Even though Harvey and Brookfield wrote their articles well before what Cruz and Grodziak refer to as “our current period of global crisis” (3), they both insist on their own fragility: both are in danger of drowning.²³ This is just to say that they insist on their identity as human beings. They bring the texture of being human into their articles. One could say that SoTL articles are both inhuman in the impersonality of their social science prose and superhuman in the redemptive solutions they foreground. Rather than unfamiliar methods, what might most alienate humanities scholars is SoTL articles’ neglect of the human.²⁴

A final note: I recognize the irony in my having offered you what can seem like yet another path to redemption by pointing out ways of avoiding it. Yet instead of having simply left you with a performative contradiction, I hope I have enabled you, my dear readers, to become more aware of the narrative monoculture SoTL has inadvertently developed despite the many kinds of stories of teaching and learning there are to tell. Yoking SoTL authors to redemption has left many parts of the world of teaching and learning obscured and many people who might otherwise contribute to SoTL scholarship content to stay in the dark.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Gillian Silverman, Claudia Stokes, Gary Weissman, and the three *TLI* reviewers for their tremendously helpful feedback.

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NOTES

1. See Appendix for a list of articles from my corpus that fit into these last two categories.
2. In some articles, the problem is more implied than explicitly stated. For example, the reason Lauren Scharff and her colleagues pursue a project to increase metacognitive instruction (2021) is embedded in the following sentence: “[W]e believe this initial study provides evidence that efforts to develop metacognitive instruction are valuable and should be encouraged” (2–3). The implicit problem seems to be that there is not enough metacognitive instruction in our classrooms.
3. For example, Russell Kirkscey and his co-authors (2021) know from previous SoTL research how transformative capstone projects can be for students and wanted to examine whether the descriptions of such experiences in syllabi and course catalogues at their institutions match the reasons that SoTL researchers have found for their importance.
4. Wicked problems are problems “that are sufficiently complex, contested, and ambiguous that conventional, disciplinary specific approaches are inadequate to address them” (Stone and Cruz 2021, 180).
5. For example, there is no element of searching in Lucy Mercer-Mapstone et al.’s article (2021), which describes the authors’ successful attempts to teach sex and gender in more nuanced ways in an introductory biology class. Presumably, it had never been taught this way out of inertia or a lack of awareness about how this new approach fosters inclusion.
6. A social scientist reader of this article notes that this structure might characterize social science research articles in general.

7. See Appendix for a breakdown of how the articles in my corpus distribute themselves between these three points of origin.
8. One might respond that characterizing SoTL as an endless search for solutions is an inaccurate characterization. For example, Cruz and Grodziak (2021), quoting Brew, state that “the end goal of most forms of [SoTL] research is not about finding definitive solutions and closing off debate, as it is opening up new lines of inquiry” (4). However, the emphasis in this statement is on “definitive”: SoTL articles offer solutions, even as SoTL researchers are aware that any given solution reached depends on its local context and might not be replicable in another one.
9. I am indebted to James Phelan for the formulation of rhetorical narratology’s concern with the relationships between authors and tellers (see the “Preface” to *Somebody Telling* 2017) and the intellectual, ethical, and emotional dimensions of these relationships (*Living to Tell About It* 2005, 19).
10. I completely agree that the deconstruction of power, privilege, and oppression is a worthy goal; however, it strikes me as odd that there is no acknowledgment of how difficult such deconstruction is to do.
11. One might object that the aim of SoTL articles should not be to showcase vivid prose or that vivid prose distracts from the objective, informational aims of the ideal SoTL article. However, it is not clear why impersonal prose ensures objectivity rather than simply performs it.
12. Harvey’s article was published in *Profession*, a publication that blurbs itself “as a journal of opinion about and for the modern language profession,” rather than a SoTL journal.
13. For another example of rhetoric/composition work that scrutinizes and values failure, see the collection *Failure Pedagogies: Learning and Unlearning What It Means to Fail* (Carr and Micciche 2020).
14. I leave it to other scholars to address why this shift happened, but I can offer two hypotheses: SoTL’s increasing orientation toward social science methods contributed to the turn away from problematizing as a good in itself and/or SoTL was increasingly pressed into universities’ need to generate results-oriented or best-practices-oriented strategies for teaching.
15. Karen Manarin et al.’s “Examining the Focus of SoTL Literature—Teaching *and* Learning?” (2021) comes to similar conclusions about the rarity of “what is.” Manarin and her co-authors confirm in their inventory of SoTL articles that “empirical SoTL articles published 2013–2017 continued to emphasize ‘what works’ in terms of teacher activity rather than ‘what is’ happening in terms of student learning” (361).
16. In my corpus, Derritt Mason’s (2021) and Ingie Hovland’s articles (2021) come closest to exploring just what is. Although Mason ends up offering “future strategies” for improving an assignment he gave in his class, he spends most of his article trying to understand “the habits of mind that we cultivate and deploy” when “engag[ing] with interactive, digital texts” (200). Hovland uses an inductive method that “moves quickly past considering ‘what works’ and instead digs deeper into considering ‘what is’” (41), but she concludes her article by pulling back from this position and suggesting that SoTL scholars using this method can incorporate “a balance between ‘what is’ and ‘what works’” (42).
17. One reader suggested that the story of progress and redemption might be particularly comfortable for American SoTL scholars because it is an outgrowth of American culture and values (and that this American commitment to progress shapes the work of SoTL scholars from other countries). I would add only that there are of course many counter-traditions to the story of progress within the US. For example, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Transcendental optimism finds its inversion in Edgar Allan Poe’s tales of horror. If we turn to our own era, we find contemporary Native American authors adapting forms from dystopian science fiction to tell their stories.
18. First published in *To Improve the Academy* (1999), this piece was later included in Brookfield’s *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2017) and collected in many anthologies, including in *Using Experience for Learning* (1993) and *Learning, Space, and Identity* (2001). It also appears in innumerable syllabi and planning documents, including one put out by the YMCA at George Williams College (as published by Wolfe et al. 2010), an institution that literally teaches swimming.
19. As Edward J. Brantmeier and Maria K. McKenna note in discussing what they call a “pedagogy of vulnerability,” “[t]here are societal, cultural even economic barriers to vulnerability for scholars of color and scholars with other marginalized social identities” (2020, 8). But I would add nuance to this claim: humility has been deployed to great effect by many marginalized authors, where, for instance, it can implicitly highlight the undeserved arrogance of people in dominant groups.

20. This is different from the accepted convention in SoTL articles of researchers' reflecting on problems their study ran into. Authors could recount struggles or doubts they experience.
21. For example, in the foreword to Mary Taylor Huber and Sherwyn P. Morreale's *Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Lee Shulman (2002) states that "Methods of [SoTL] inquiry will vary as much as the methods of teaching students to understand the substance and syntax of diverse fields" (ix).
22. Humanities scholars' lack of allegiance to "what works" might also come from the association of "what works" with business culture and its focus on "impacts," "outcomes," and "deliverables." I want to thank one of my anonymous readers for pointing out how business culture has permeated the discourse of higher education in North America.
23. McKenna and Brantmeier (2020) offer a sustained look at a concept closely related to fragility: they look at the "pedagogy of vulnerability" in their edited collection of the same name. Their sense of the importance of vulnerability overlaps with mine. As they write "[o]ur collective work explores the contours of learning amid a time-honored and profoundly human struggle with vulnerability" (1). This article builds on their understanding of vulnerability as involving, in part, an acknowledgment of what the instructor does not (yet or may never) know: they show that this stance can lead to new teaching practices. I suggest it can also lead to new narrative forms.
24. Cruz and Grodziak (2021) suggest a similar point in their recommendation that SoTL embrace authors' personal stories despite its "endanger[ing] SoTL's . . . hard-fought reputation for quality, largely forged through rigorous application of social science methodologies, which leave little space for the telling of stories" (9). Although I recognize how SoTL gained legitimacy as a discipline by defining itself against teaching lore and anecdotes, as a humanist, I find the belief that the unfolding of personal stories compromises the quality of research dismaying.

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APPENDIX

The articles in my corpus, from *TL* 9.1 (15 articles) and 9.2 (19 articles)

Although all 34 articles in my corpus fit into the morphology of redemption, I have separated them into different groupings. The first and by far largest group of articles in the list have in common the aim to discover “what works” in the classroom or institution, although some spend more time on “what is” than others (generally articles that have either the first or third point of origin in the endless cycle of redemption). I have marked the articles in this first large grouping according to where their stories begin within the cycle. As I mention in the article, there are three possible origin points.

Articles marked by a single asterisk (*) begin their story by analyzing a situation in order to locate the problems that need solutions; many with this point of origin do not reach deliverance or the promise of an afterlife. They have either the first or third point of origin within the endless cycle of redemption; it’s difficult to tell because authors do not always reveal whether the situation they’re looking to improve has been changed in the past.

Articles marked with a double asterisk (**) begin with solutions having been implemented right before the story begins; the aim of the article is to assess these solutions (deliverance). These articles have the second point of origin described in the article. They always achieve deliverance, and many feature an explicit promise of an afterlife.

Articles that aim to discover what works:

- *Bandy, Joe, M., Brielle Harbin, and Amie Thurber. 2021. “Teaching Race and Racial Justice: Developing Students Cognitive and Affective Understanding.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 117–37. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.10>.
- **Barrett, Martin, Chad Hershock, Michael McCarthy, Michael Melville, and Joe Mertz. 2021. “What Type of Debrief is Best for Learning during Think-Pair-Shares?” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.5>.
- **Cozart, Deanna, Erin Maria Horan, and Gavin Frome. 2021. “Rethinking the Traditional Textbook: A Case for Open Educational Resources (OER) and No-Cost Learning Materials.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.13>.
- *Eady, Michelle J., Earle Abrahamson, Corinne A. Green, Mayi Arcellana-Panlilio, Lisa Hatfield, and Nina Namaste. 2021. “Re-Positioning SoTL Toward the T-Shaped Community.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 262–78. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.18>.
- *Graves, Jonathan. 2021. “Course-Based Versus Field Undergraduate Research Experiences.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.17>.
- *Guberman, Daniel. 2021. “Student Perceptions of an Online Ungraded Course.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 86–98. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.8>.
- *Henry, Dayna, Edward James Brantmeier, Anthony Tongen, Ashley Taylor Jaffee, and Olga Pierrakos. 2021. “Faculty Empowering Faculty: SoTL Leaders Catalyzing Institutional and Cultural Change.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.15>.
- **Hill, Jennifer, Kathy Berlin, Julia Choate, Lisa Cravens-Brown, Lisa McKendrick-Calder, and Susan Smith. 2021. “Can Relational Feed-Forward Enhance Students’ Cognitive and Affective Responses to Assessment?” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.18>.

- **Hoffmann, Darren S., Katherine Kearns, Karen M. Bovenmyer, W. F. Preston Cumming, Leslie E. Drane, Madeleine Gonin, Lisa Kelly, Lisa Rohde, Shawana Tabassum, and Riley Blay. 2021. “Benefits of a Multi-institutional, Hybrid Approach to Teaching Course Design for Graduate Students, Postdoctoral Scholars, and Leaders.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 218–40. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.15>.
- **Hovland, Ingie. 2021. “The Importance of Making-While-Reading for Undergraduate Readers: An Example of Inductive SoTL.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.4>. This article also fits under “adds to a conceptual framework.” Although it has the second point of origin in the endless cycle of redemption, it spends significant time on “what is,” in the sense of trying to understand how her students learn.
- *Kirksey, Russell, Julie Vale, Jennifer Hill, and James Weiss. 2021. “Capstone Experience Purposes: An International, Multidisciplinary Study.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.19>.
- *Little, Deandra, Emily Donnelly-Sallee, and Renee Michael. 2021. “SoTL and the Humanities: Navigating Tensions, Realizing Possibilities.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.14>.
- *Martini, Tanya, Lorenzo Frangella, and Meghan Vandervlist. 2021. “What Skills Are Learned at College?: Views of College Students and Working Adults.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.16>.
- *Mason, Derritt. 2021. “I Suck at This Game: ‘Let’s Play’ Videos, Think-Alouds, and the Pedagogy of Bad Feelings.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 200–17. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.14>.
- **Maurer, Trent, and Catelyn Shipp. 2021. “Challenges of Shaping Student Study Strategies for Success.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2): 241–57. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.16>.
- **Mercer-Mapstone, Lucy, Sarah Bajan, Kasia Banas, Arthur Morphet, and Kristine McGrath. 2021. “Breaking the Binary: Conceptions of Sex and Gender in Undergraduate Science.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.6>.
- **Moreno, Rhia. 2021. “Shaping a Critical Study Abroad Engagement through Experiential Arts-Based Inquiry.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2): 1–22.
- **Morse, Mary. 2021. “Increase Engaged Student Learning Using Google Docs As a Discussion Platform.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.20>.
- *Owens, Alison, Angela Daddow, Georgia Clarkson, and Duncan Nulty. 2021. “What Price Excellence in Learning and Teaching? Exploring the Costs and Benefits for Diverse Academic Staff Studying for a GCHE Supporting the SoTL.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 161–79. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.12>.
- **Scharff, Lauren, John Draeger, Sarah Robinson, Leli Pedro, and Charity Peak. 2021. “Developing Metacognitive Instructors through a Guided Journal.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.10>.
- **Scholz, Kyle W., Jolanta N. Komornicka, and Andrew Moore. 2021. “Gamifying History: Designing and Implementing a Game-Based Learning Course Design Framework.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 99–116. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.9>.

- **Schrum, Kelly, Niall Majury, and Anne Laure Simonelli. 2021. “Authentic Learning Across Disciplines and Borders With Scholarly Digital Storytelling.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.8>.
- *Simmons, Nicola, Lauren Scharff, Michelle J. Eady, and Diana Gregory. 2021. “SoTL in the Margins: Teaching-Focused Role Case Studies.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 61–78. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.6>.
- *Sobel, Karen. 2021. “Motivations for Continued Use of Critical Thinking Skills Among First-Year Seminar Graduates.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.7>.
- **Stone, Jeffrey, and Laura Cruz. 2021. “The Wicked and the Logical: Facilitating Integrative Learning Among Introductory Computing Students.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 180–99. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.13>.
- **Thomas, M’Balía, and Marta Carvajal Regidor. 2021. “From ‘Slow’ to ‘Being “Lazy” and Slowing Down’ and the Impact on Student Learning.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.12>.
- *Vandermaas-Peeler, Maureen, Olivia Choplin, Kirsten Doehler, Amanda Sturgill, Nina Namaste, and Matthew Buckmaster. 2021. “The ‘Authentic’ Me: New Understandings of Self and the World as a Result of Global Learning Experiences.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.11>.
- **Yeong, Foong May. 2021. “Using Asynchronous, Online Discussion Forums to Explore How Life Sciences Students Approach an Ill-Structured Problem.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 138–60. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.11>.
- **Zhao, FangFang, Gillian Roehrig, Lorelei Patrick, Chantal Levesque-Bristol, and Sehoya Cotner. 2021. “Using a Self-Determination Theory Approach to Understand Student Perceptions of Inquiry-Based Learning.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.5>.

I’ve separated out the remaining articles in my corpus according to whether they comment on the state of the field or enhance SoTL’s conceptual frameworks. These are articles, unlike the ones above, that do not discover or confirm “what works” in the classroom or institution. However, I indicate below why I believe they still fit into the morphology of redemption.

Articles that comment on the state of the field (but also fit into the morphology):

- Chick, Nancy L., Sophia Abbot, Lucy Mercer-Mapstone, Christopher P. Ostrowdun, and Krista Grensavitch. 2021. “Naming is Power: Citation Practices in SoTL.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2): 349–71. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.2>. This article describes both how authors currently cite and suggests strategies for better citational practices.
- Cruz, Laura, and Eileen Grodziak. 2021. “SOTL Under Stress: Rethinking Teaching and Learning Scholarship during a Global Pandemic.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.2>. This article offers a new framework for the kinds of questions SOTL practitioners could ask, so it could also fall under the category of “new conceptual frameworks.” It offers this framework so SoTL will have a place in a new expanded teaching commons.

Pace, David. 2021. "Beyond Decoding the Disciplines 1.0: New Directions for the Paradigm." *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.3>. The article ends with suggestions for how to improve the practice of "decoding the disciplines." The article provides a conceptual framework, so it could also be grouped in the third category.

Steiner, Hillary H., and Christopher M. Hakala. 2021. "What Do SoTL Practitioners Need to Know about Learning?" *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 79–85. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.7>. This article describes how to make it easier for people new to SoTL research.

Articles that offer a new conceptual framework (but also fit into the morphology):

Feigenbaum, Paul. 2021. "Telling Students it's O.K. to Fail, But Showing Them it Isn't: Dissonant Paradigms of Failure in Higher Education." *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (1): 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.1.3>. This article generates a paradigm to better understand failure and use it to improve students' learning.

Lock, Jennifer, Carol Johnson, Laurie Hill, Christopher Ostrowdun, and Luciano da Rosa dos Santos. 2021. "From Assistants to Partners: A Framework for Graduate Students As Partners in SoTL Research." *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.9>. This article offers recommendations for how to improve graduate student-faculty SoTL partnerships.



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