The Mandorla Model: Toward Collaboration as Liberatory Pedagogy

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Abstract: This paper responds to graduate student experience of the collaborative pedagogy (Moran & John-Steiner, 2004; Marta-Lazo et al., 2019) approach Drew employed in a music production course for educators in spring 2023. We here offer the Mandorla Model: an innovative conceptualization of the educational process that creates equal opportunities for students. It validates, affirms, supports, and sustains student narratives and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2006). We begin in this paper by introducing the Mandorla Model and its elements. We then reflect upon the course from which it was derived. Finally, we offer seven ways in which the Mandorla Model dismantles oppressive educational structures towards a liberatory pedagogy. By fostering an environment of equality, autonomy, and curiosity, the Mandorla Model serves as an alternative to dominant pedagogies.

Résumé : Cet article répond à l'expérience des étudiants diplômés d'une approche pédagogie collaborative (Moran et John-Steiner, 2004 ; Marta-Lazo et al., 2019) employée dans un cours de production musicale pour les éducateurs au printemps 2023. Nous proposons ici le modèle Mandorla : une conceptualisation innovante du processus éducatif qui crée l'égalité des chances pour les élèves. Elle valide, affirme et soutient les récits et les fonds de connaissances des élèves (Moll et al., 1992 ; González et al., 2006). Dans cet article, nous débutons par présenter le modèle Mandorla et ses éléments. Nous réfléchissons ensuite à la voie dont il est issu. Enfin, nous proposons sept façons dont le modèle Mandorla démantèle les structures éducatives oppressives vers une pédagogie libératrice. En favorisant un environnement d'égalité, d'autonomie et de curiosité, le modèle Mandorla sert d'alternative aux pédagogies dominantes.

Introduction

We here offer the Mandorla pedagogical model as a conceptualization of learner experience that emphasises equal opportunities and individualised growth in educational spaces. The Mandorla Model validates, affirms, supports, and sustains student narratives and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) that provides an alternative to dominant pedagogies. The name "Mandorla" is derived from the Italian word for "almond," and our use of it symbolises the journey that learners undertake over the duration of an academic course. This model, as we conceive of it, begins and ends with honouring the individual: by placing value on the experiences they have in, and the contributions they make to, the educational environments in which they are participants.

We begin this paper with a brief review of relevant literature and definitions before explaining the context of the study, which involves sharing methodology and participant data. We then provide an overview of what the Mandorla Model is, and how it functions. We then share larger suggestions for its application and implications for its development.

Drawing upon the works of Seana Moran and Vera John-Steiner (2004); and Carmen Marta-Lazo, Divina Frau-Meigs, and Sara Osuna-Acedo (2019), we here define *collaborative pedagogy* as the joint determination of shared goals between more than one party in a learning environment. Collaborative pedagogy was at the core of the graduate-level course for educators this study is based on, taught by Drew in spring 2023. Although collaborative pedagogy sounds like a classroom ideal, we recognize that not all students enter educational spaces with the same perspective: as Molly (a pseudonym), one of the students in this class, shared:

> [A]s a Black woman entering this [graduate] program I felt that I had to fight to be seen. As a result … I was triggered by Helen Storey's (2004)1 comfort with invisibility through collaboration. I felt that it was a privilege to desire that, considering invisibility has been the experience of marginalized people in the United States, especially when it comes to the contributions and

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1 In the reading referred to, interdisciplinary artist and fashion designer, Helen Storey (2004), shares that with respect to creative collaboration, "The key moments are far more important than having any identity. Having less of a personality is actually more enabling" (p. 49). Storey (2004) further expresses, "I hope one day to be totally invisible" (p. 49).

positive impacts that we have made. So naturally, I was resistant to the idea of putting myself aside and releasing acknowledgement for contributions I made to any project. However, some of that resistance began to subside as I learned to view collaboration outside of its traditional parameters. Collaboration extends itself beyond the numerics and physicality of partners, it touches the brilliance and genius of ancestors that laid the foundation for the canon of my discipline.

Molly's powerful statement of the implications of collaboration from a personal and broader socio-historical perspective cannot be taken lightly, and led our inquiry to be driven by the following question: What can collaborative pedagogy do to support, rather than restrict, individual expressions and identities? This is of particular importance for us as educators considering the ways in which our own pedagogies and use of creative collaborations are, ultimately, aiming to create space for marginalised voices to emerge. The Mandorla Model, as we here propose and explore it, offers a means of both honouring the individual, and creating conditions for engaged inter-student relationship-building based on inquiry, navigated through creative project work that simultaneously embraces the past, and looks towards the future.

Related Literature

The construction of the Mandorla Model, a pedagogical framework that recognizes and responds to the divergent paths of learners both as they enter and exit our classrooms, benefits significantly from a synthesis of diverse educational theories and research findings. This model and its visualisations are designed to assist educators in understanding and honouring the varied educational journeys of students by integrating insights from key scholarly works that highlight community-based learning, creative collaboration, and individual identity within educational settings. The Mandorla Model is our response to Mathilda Marie Joubert's (2004) call for "a more inclusive theorising language" (p. 50) with respect to creative collaboration. We note that the visualisations shared in this paper contributed in vital ways to our theorisation of the data.

In Sean Blenkinsop's article, "From Waiting for the Bus to Storming the Bastille: From Sartrean seriality to the relationships that form classroom communities" (2012), the author provides a

philosophical foundation for understanding the dynamics within classroom communities. Blenkinsop explores a group's transformation from a collective of individuals resulting from shared circumstances, to an intentional community built through meaningful relationships. This transformation is crucial to the Mandorla Model, which emphasises the role of interpersonal connections in recognizing and nurturing the distinctive educational paths of learners. By moving beyond Sartrean seriality — in which people "are no more than a loose collection of people gathered together by virtue of the constituting force of an outside entity" (Blenkinsop, 2012, p. 184), existing side-by-side without meaningful interactions — our model, and the study from which it is derived, present a classroom environment where relational depth acts as the bedrock for personalised learning experiences. This transition from seriality to community is of particular pedagogical relevance, we believe, in the online classroom environment from which this study is derived; however, it is widely applicable to courses designed and taught in-person as well.

The "Funds of Knowledge" concept, articulated by Luis C. Moll, Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff and Norma González (1992), further examined by Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez and James Greenberg (1992), and reaffirmed by Norma González, Luis C. Moll, and Cathy Amanti (2006), emphasises the importance of integrating the rich cultural and cognitive assets that students carry from their households and communities into schools. This approach advocates for a curriculum that is deeply rooted in the diverse experiences and backgrounds of students, ensuring their unique perspectives are respected and utilised in and through learning processes. This blending of inside and outside learning environments not only enhances classroom life by creating a richer, more inclusive setting, but also fosters a profound sense of belonging and mutual respect among learners (Moll et. al., 1992; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992; González et al., 2006).

Paulo Freire's (1970) pedagogical principles, particularly from his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, contributes a transformative dimension to this discussion. Freire (1970) champions education as a practice of freedom, viewing it as a means to achieve critical consciousness and liberation from oppressive societal structures. By integrating Freire's focus on liberation through education and the educational process, the Mandorla Model embraces a pedagogical approach that is not only inclusive but also liberatory. We recognize that, by empowering

students through the validation of their knowledge bases, and encouraging critical engagement with the world around them, we are aiming for the liberation of learners through informed, critical, and active citizenship (Freire, 1970). This is both an honouring of the past and a means of considering the future.

Further, the insights from Seana Moran and Vera John-Steiner (2004) on how collaboration in creative work impacts identity and motivation provide empirical support for the Mandorla Model's emphasis on collaborative learning. Moran and John-Steiner's (2004) research highlights how collaborative creativity within educational settings can significantly influence students' development of identity, and impact intrinsic motivation. This is particularly relevant to the Mandorla Model's objective of facilitating learning experiences that are not only informative but also transformative, enabling learners to explore and express their individual identities through creative and collaborative inquiry-based endeavours.

Lastly, the study by Carmen Marta-Lazo, Divina Frau-Meigs, and Sara Osuna-Acedo (2019) on the collaborative digital pedagogy experience in the tMOOC "Step by Step" illustrates the practical application of these theories in a digital learning environment. Their findings show how technology-mediated collaborative learning can effectively support the personalization of education, which aligns with the Mandorla Model's goals and the online classroom environment this study was derived from. The integration of digital tools in pedagogy, as evidenced in the tMOOC format, serves as a contemporary extension of the traditional classroom, offering additional avenues for students to engage with content and peers in ways that respects their individual learning preferences.

The Mandorla Model is enriched and substantiated by these scholarly contributions, each providing an individual lens through which to view the complexity of educational environments. This brief literature review not only highlights the theoretical underpinnings of the Mandorla Model but also supports its practical relevance in contemporary educational discourse.
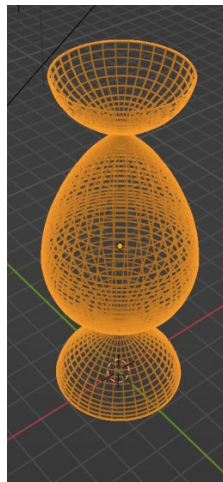
Origins of the Mandorla Model

The Mandorla Model (see Figure 1) emerged as an idealised theoretical framework resulting from a 2023 graduate course Drew taught called "Music Production as Collaborative Pedagogy." It was Drew's intention to foster dynamic and inclusive learning

conditions in an online space. This course was designed to bring students together to collectively determine the course outcomes, allowing them to take ownership of their learning journey and create a collaborative composition project that aligned with a shared vision.

Figure 1

Mandorla Model birds-eye view. Created by Josef Duchesne.

Central to the Mandorla Model is the understanding that each student is an individual with a diversity of lived experiences: experiences that have the potential to enrich the perspectives of others in the class, if an environment of openness and sharing is fostered by the educator. This is consistent with the student funds of knowledge (Moll et al.,1992) approach in which students' "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (p. 133) are honoured and recognized in the context of classroom life; and takes it further through a collective focus on the future.

Context and Method

This secondary research paper is derived from an analysis of students' final reflections on the course, which were submitted in the form of a comprehensive paper, approximately 2500 words in length, designed to encapsulate the individual learning

experiences derived from the course's curriculum. This curriculum included an array of readings, interactive discussions, collaborative projects, and practical applications geared toward enhancing the pedagogical skills of the participants in and through creative collaboration. The primary objective of the final assignment was to enable each student to articulate the personal and professional transformations they experienced as a result of course activities. Submissions provided diverse insights into the subjective educational journey of each student, offering a rich dataset for evaluating the impact of integrative learning strategies in teacher education.

At the conclusion of the course, permission from the Institutional Review Board was secured to conduct a secondary study of students' coursework, rooted in phenomenological "first-person reports of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 84) of the course's focus on creative collaboration. It was our "excitement and curiosity" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 104) as researcher-educators, and "personal histor[ies]" (ibid) that brought the "core of the problem into focus" (ibid) - which was that of honouring individual identity in the context of creative collaboration. We contacted each student individually to solicit their consent for their coursework to be examined as part of this paper, and received permission from all students in the course ($n = 8$). All participating graduate students were educators, many of whom were in-service public school teachers, and all participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities.

The final collaborative composition from the course is an eclectic amalgamation of both digital and acoustic elements, rich in textural landscapes. Comprising 31 tracks, the composition artfully interweaves digital instruments — including, but not limited to, drums, pianos, strings, and various synthesiser patches — with acoustically-recorded instruments such as cellos, violins, and voice. The layering of real and sampled instruments of the same type (i.e., acoustic violin and MIDI violin) was done in a manner that added intentional depth and complexity to the auditory experience.

Structurally, the song adheres to a dynamic and somewhat traditional format: it opens and closes with a chorus, with interspersed segments including sung verses, a rapped verse, and an instrumental solo. This structure serves not only as a scaffold for the musical elements but also as a narrative arc for the lyrical content. Central to the chorus is the repeated invocation of the

word "spiralling," which echoes throughout the piece as both a motif and a thematic anchor. The song traverses a spectrum of emotional and psychological states reflecting the concept of control: over one's thoughts, processes, actions, and intentions. This exploration is multifaceted, moving through introspection, determination, and sometimes turmoil, which are expressed through both sung and rapped verses. This lyrical journey is significant in its ability to mirror the internal struggles and triumphs that are often involved in collaborative processes, making it a pertinent study in a class focused on collaborative pedagogy and music production.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this song exemplifies the potent educational value of collaborative music creation. It serves as a practical illustration of how diverse musical elements can be synthesised to form a cohesive and expressive work. The inclusion of both traditional and innovative musical techniques fosters a learning environment that encourages experimentation and creative risk-taking. Moreover, the song's thematic focus on control can metaphorically parallel the challenges and rewards of co-managing a collaborative classroom or music production environment, where diverse ideas and personalities converge to create something uniquely powerful and instructive.

For the purpose of this study, we limited the scope of our analysis to the course's final reflection paper. Working alongside one another online via Zoom (mirroring the modality of the course itself) we simultaneously read through each students' final essay and discussed statements of interest, transferring these into another document in which we began to broadly code and categorise entries by theme. We then refined the themes and further analysed students' statements.

Themes emerged that outlined the students' experiences through the process of creative collaboration; and the tensions with regards to personal and professional identity, trust, risk-taking, vulnerability, and student take-aways from the course. It was in analysing these emergent themes that we realised there was a larger structure being revealed: that of the process of learning that both begins and ends with the individual, and involves important experiences of coming-together in the middle. Although the course was focused on creative collaboration, we began to consider more broadly the shape of the learning process in any classroom experience. We wondered: What might that

collaborative process look like? And how does visualising it help us theorise it in a way that is helpful, pedagogically?

How the Mandorla Model functions

The Mandorla Model was the outcome of the early analysis of the participant data. What emerged, more specifically, was an emphasis on the beginning and endings of courses as critical points of convergence that provide opportunities for first, looking inwards towards the possibilities for learning in the course; and at the conclusion, looking outwards towards new horizons and a transference of new understandings into different contexts and communities.

The participants were themselves aware of the occurrence of this liberatory shift: as Bree noted, "[A]s an older student, I very much leaned into the idea that I am here to learn and am not expected to know everything … As we got to know each other more and gave ourselves more space and permission to step outside our self-imposed boxes, the conversations got richer and more enjoyable." Molly similarly echoed, "Prior to this [course], I viewed classes as an obligation to my overall grade and an opportunity to learn from my instructor. However, the more we talked about the importance of collaboration, the more I began to view different elements and learning tools in my journey." Student statements highlighted an initial approach to collaborative elements in the course with more of a fixed mindset; and remarked upon a positive shift as the course continued towards more meaningful engagements with one another in and through its collaborative components.
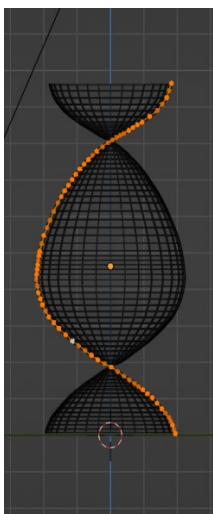
In our analysis, we noted the common phenomena of ultimately positive outcomes of collaboration, partly due to the course's design which permitted students to explore curricular material at their own pace in a manner that honoured their individual learning preferences. Considering this aspect of the learner experience, this approach fostered autonomy and ownership, allowing students to delve deeper into topics of personal passion; additionally, it provided opportunities for students to make essential connections between their in- and out-of-school lifeworlds. Participants remarked upon being provided with responsive and relevant resources, assignments, and learning pathways that ensured a dynamic, engaging educational experience. It was this experience that helped us in conceiving of

the shape of the Mandorla Model, and in considering each student as a through-thread in the educational process.

In Figure 2, the orange dotted line symbolises the experience of an individual engaging in an educational space in initial serialisation alongside others (the other black lines): an individual's journey in a particular course begins at the open-ended top of the mandorla, representative of the wide-ranging communities, experiences, and identities students bring with them into the classroom. This open-endedness is mirrored at the end of the course when students adjourn and hopefully seek new educational experiences in which to engage. Inside the almond-shaped part itself is where and how the learning takes place during a course: it is, ideally, a space of communal expansion through new knowledge, experiences, and connections. We highlight the fact that individuality is retained throughout, and yet is integral to the structure of the whole: there would be no mandorla without the essential role each individual plays in the shaping of the experience. The "bulge" in the middle is representative of the expansive possibilities for learning, and an acceleration of personal and educational growth that occurs, particularly nearing the end of a course.

Figure 2

Mandorla Model tracing the individual's contribution. Created by Josef Duchesne.

From our own experiences as students and educators in diverse settings, we know that learners will naturally diverge from one another as they pursue different avenues of exploration and acquire varying depths of understanding as a course progresses. Some students may choose to specialise in specific aspects of the subject matter, while others opt for a more comprehensive and balanced approach. In the Mandorla Model, learners are encouraged to bring their own essential lived experiences into the classroom. The model celebrates individual differences, looking towards learners' communities of origin; and recognizes that diversity in learning opportunities and approaches enhances the overall richness of the educational experience.

As a course nears its conclusion, student activities are intentionally designed to create opportunities for convergence and adjournment. This adjournment phase entails a thoughtful and rigorous student-led review of the core concepts and essential skills covered in the course, opportunities for reflection, and a consolidation of understandings. As Randi shared:

> On several levels I am truly indebted to the willingness of my peers to be vulnerable at various crucial points this semester and the resulting access to a unique creative headspace that I am not accustomed to in professional or academic settings. This echoes Moran and John-Steiner's [2004] discussion of how "creative collaboration can become a vehicle for identity development, allowing different aspects of identities to come to the fore, differentiate from, and integrate with other emergent identities." What I find most salient about this framing of creativity and identity is the idea that aspects of the self cannot be willed into existence but rather they surface through our interactions and collaborations with others.

As Randi's statement suggests, such an experience is a process - and one that, although may be encouraged by educators, cannot be forced or mandated. There is a recognition, in several participant statements, of the necessity that other students enter the learning space in the spirit of trust, vulnerability, and openness. Part of this must be mirrored in both the course educator's approach, and in the course's evaluation structure.

Courses based on the Mandorla Model would culminate in an adjourning assessment, carefully designed based on an educator's knowledge of their students and students' needs: just as learners came into the model as individuals, they emerge as individuals (Blenkinsop, 2012), though changed through the creative collaborative process. We interpret the mandorla as a transformative pedagogical pocket through which horizons and possibilities are broadened. As Gerri shared, "I have learned so much in collaboration with others that I don't think I could turn my back on the collaborative style of research I have come to enjoy," highlighting creative collaboration's transformative and liberatory capacities.

Application: Reflection on the Mandorla Model in a Course

There are three key components of the Drew's course that contributed to the conceptualization of this pedagogical model:

1. Students' involvement in determining course outcomes;
2. Students' co-created development of the final project; and
3. The continual use of reflective assessment tools.

Determining Course Outcomes: Each student (the 'individual threads' in the Mandorla Model) was actively involved in determining the course outcomes over its fifteen online sessions. As the semester progressed, students gradually diverged in their individual explorations of music production, creation, and cultivation. At the 10th session, Drew posed a set of questions to the students concerning what they thought would be most valuable to their learning, thus opening the door for collaboration. Instead of having predefined objectives set by the instructor, the class engaged in an open discussion and brainstorming session to identify the key concepts and skills they wanted to explore and master throughout the final portion of the semester. This process empowered the students to shape the conclusion of the course according to their interests and aspirations.

Throughout the semester, the course offered personalised learning experiences for the students. Recognizing that individuals have diverse interests and learning preferences (the beginning of the "bulge" in the middle of the Mandorla), students pursued topics that resonated with them - which, in many cases, reflected their professional or social identities. This approach encouraged

individual growth while still contributing to the collective goals of the course, and the final project.

The course fostered inclusivity and collaboration among the students. By working together to set the course outcomes and assessment guidelines, students appreciated one another's perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds – thus constructing educational possibilities – through an open interpretation of the framework of the course itself. The mutual understanding cultivated throughout this process enriched the learning environment (the "bulge" at its fullest in the Mandorla) and facilitated creative problem-solving through diverse viewpoints.

Students were empowered to be active participants in their learning process, which has emerged as a key component of the Mandorla Model. Students expressed agency and ownership over their education, an empowerment that positively impacted their motivation, engagement, and commitment both to the project's success, and to continued collaborative approaches to their own education and classrooms moving forward.

Converging at the Final Project: While students understandably diverged in their individual explorations, Drew's carefully-crafted pedagogical approach ensured that they reconvened at the final project. This aspect of the learning process was typical, as educators are often tasked with creating course culminating evaluations.

However, consciousness of the musical applications of students' individual funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) led to a co-created, coherent, creative, and comprehensive output: a single song composed and recorded by all of the members in the class. The format of this final submission was a departure from the previously-assigned projects and tasks, exemplifying the power of collaborative pedagogy. It showcased the strength of a collective effort, and highlighted the joy of a shared accomplishment.

Reflective Assessment: The final assessment in the Music Production course was designed to be reflective and holistic - in this context, meaning that the final assessment took into consideration the entire range of the course and its activities. Students showcased their technical skills; and also articulated their growth, challenges faced, and lessons learned throughout the semester. This assessment process acknowledged that learning is an ongoing journey, and that the process of creating music collaboratively was as valuable as the final outcome itself.

This approach to the "Music Production as Collaborative Pedagogy" course exemplified the power of inclusivity, ownership, and collaboration in education, which has become a vital component of the Mandorla Model. By involving students in determining course outcomes and creating a shared project, the model fosters a deep sense of engagement, respect for diverse perspectives, and empowerment in the learning process. This experience left a lasting impact on the students. As Bobbi revealed, "I feel empowered. ... Using my new skills, tools, and knowledge, my classroom will become one of creation, a space of safety and trust where novel ideas can be manifested and collaborated upon." Freddi remarked, the course "wildly improved my general well being and my internal creative life. Being able to engage with my stranger, more experimental artistic side again has been incredibly liberating." Kim noted, "Throughout this class, I was learning how to believe, trust, and validate myself." These participants' experiences demonstrate that a focus on creative collaboration built confidence in them beyond technical skills in music production: that collaboration contributed to the development of empathy, and instilled a belief in the power of collective agency that didn't diminish individual identity.

Scope: Using the Mandorla Model to Dismantle Systems of Injustice and Promote Equity and Inclusivity.

The Mandorla pedagogical model offers an approach to the dismantling of racial and other injustices in institutions and learning environments by promoting equity, inclusivity, and personalised learning experiences. By starting all learners at the same entry threshold and acknowledging their diverse backgrounds and perspectives, the Mandorla Model actively addresses systemic racial disparities and colonial approaches that have long been prevalent in traditional western education systems.

1. **Equal Entry Threshold:** Acknowledging the diversity of backgrounds and experiences students bring into each classroom environment they participate in, the Mandorla Model ensures that all students - regardless of their diverse backgrounds - are welcomed equally. This mitigates the advantage that certain racial or privileged groups might have had in the past due to differential access to quality education and resources. By providing an

equitable starting point, the model lays the groundwork for a fair and just learning environment.

2. Personalised Learning: Students are encouraged to explore topics based on their individual interests and learning preferences. This approach accommodates a diverse array of perspectives as well as cultural and personal experiences, allowing all students to contribute their unique insights to the learning process. As learners delve deeper into subjects that resonate with them, they are more likely to be engaged and empowered, fostering a positive and inclusive classroom environment with wide-reaching implications for student life beyond the classroom.

3. Acknowledging and Celebrating Diversity: Learners will naturally diverge as they progress through a course. The Mandorla Model celebrates the richness of this diversity in the classroom. It values the contributions of students from various social, racial and ethnic backgrounds, creating an environment where students learn from one another's experiences, and develop cultural competence and empathy through the construction of meaningful relationships.

4. Collaborative Learning: The Mandorla Model encourages collaborative activities and group discussions, particularly through the middle of the course (i.e., the "bulge" in the almond). By working together, students have the opportunity to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, promoting understanding and breaking down barriers.

5. Inclusive Assessments: By adopting assessment methods that are inclusive and culturally responsive throughout the course, the model mitigates the potential for racial biases in grading and evaluation. This ensures that students are evaluated based on their knowledge and skills rather than on their racial, or other, identities.

6. Empowering Marginalised Voices: The Mandorla Model empowers students from traditionally marginalised backgrounds, including those from racial minority groups, by allowing them to direct their learning journeys. Through personalised learning paths, students can explore topics and perspectives that are meaningful to their experiences, giving a voice to communities that have been historically silenced or underrepresented.

7. Teacher Development and Awareness: Implementing the Mandorla Model necessitates teacher training and awareness of injustices and biases that exist within educational systems. Educators play a vital role in creating a safe, inclusive, and anti-

racist learning environment by fostering empathy, cultural sensitivity, and awareness of systemic inequalities.

Concluding thoughts: Towards Broader Application of the Mandorla Model

The Mandorla Model, developed as a visualisation of student perspectives through this secondary study, offers a powerful tool for inclusivity and personal growth with a view towards the communities in which learners live. It highlights that through collaborative endeavours, each learner can chart a distinct educational journey while still arriving at a common destination of proficiency and ownership. In spite of Molly's initial concerns about the loss of individual identity and contributions in collaboration, by fostering an environment of equality, autonomy, and curiosity, the Mandorla Model supports students in academic and interpersonal successes, promotes the generative possibilities of a lifelong love of learning, and tends towards continuous personal and professional development. Additionally, the Mandorla Model provides a liberatory pedagogy, through which educators and students alike are provided with a powerful framework for re-imagining together the educative possibilities that serve both individual and community needs.

We acknowledge that the sample size of our study is small ($n = 8$) and look towards the future for opportunities to explore the development of the Mandorla Model with larger groups. An important consideration as we continue our examination is conducting more research into the beginnings and endings of courses as critical junctures of student experience.

We hope the Mandorla Model will support pedagogues in realising diverse access points into collaborative engagements, as our students' funds of knowledge - if we are attuned - provide rich information regarding what they need in order to flourish. It is the duty of educators to support students in the contexts in which they are engaging. With the goal of dismantling of racial injustices in institutions and learning environments that often manifest themselves as systemic barriers to or for marginalised persons, the Mandorla Model paves the way for transformative, liberatory change in education and beyond. Through educator attentiveness to vital points of access and engagements, we take an important step forward in realising this crucial goal.

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