

## **Generations of SoTL Scholars: Transferable Lessons and New Possibilities**

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### **Abstract**

Although the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is no longer considered an emerging field, it continues to dynamically evolve. This evolution pertains to the nature of the inquiries posed, the scholars active in the field, and the frameworks and conventions that shape the transdisciplinary SoTL landscape. These structures serve as pillars and offer support to SoTL scholars; occasionally, they may also constrain the diversity of voices and perspectives that are embraced within this academic domain. In this article we apply a generational framework to the way that SoTL has evolved in white, Western, English-speaking contexts. We first articulate the generational waves (Generation Zero, Generation One, Generation Two and “SoTL First” scholars) that have emerged in this context and explore the people, goals, challenges, and successes that each generation has frequently experienced in their work to transform higher education. Subsequently, each author positions themselves within this generational framework, placing emphasis on the structures, norms, and processes that have aided and hindered their engagement with SoTL. Our goal is to explore what can be learned from the generational journey of this set of SoTL scholars, so that as SoTL continues to grow, we can better support a broader and more diverse set of scholars. In our discussion, we invite readers to consider their own SoTL journeys and to complicate and expand on this generational analysis.

### **Keywords**

generations, history, networks, relationships, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, SoTL, transdisciplinary teaching

## Introduction

Entering into the field of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) requires us not only to engage with new literatures, frameworks, and ways of knowing, but also invites us to learn about the people and structures that have shaped the field. In this article, we revisit the commonly referenced story of SoTL's emergence in North America and describe it through the lens of a generational approach. In identifying three SoTL generations, we highlight the varied pathways that have been taken into the field and patterns in these pathways over time, as well as some of the hallmark activities of each generation. In doing so, we hope to raise questions about how to best support new scholars in their SoTL journeys (i.e., how to encourage, recognize, and make room for the new voices entering and shaping the trajectory of the field) and about where the field can and should expand (i.e., its ways of knowing, its physical and intellectual spaces, and its popular origin story).

## A Story of SoTL Generations: Benefits and Limitations

Karl Mannheim's essay "The Problem with Generations," first published in German in 1928 and translated to English in 1952, proposed that generations consist of individuals who are influenced by social and historical events of the time. Generational groups, according to Mannheim, can be identified by their shared experiences, distinguishing them from their parents. Strauss and Howe (1991) popularized Generational Theory into mainstream discourse, identifying the generational groups of Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Y. We see a few benefits of considering SoTL through such a generational lens. First, a cohort analysis prompts us to consider people and ideas as richly embedded in context: *What ideas resonated during a particular SoTL generational era? What political, social, and structural dynamics affected higher education during that time?* It also surfaces the intellectual and epistemological cross-pollination—currently and historically—that occurs across generations, as well as the relationships that link one to another. Finally, it serves to complicate the oft-cited statement that "SoTL is a young [or emerging] field." Of course, many disciplines have longer timescales than does the field of SoTL, but that statement flattens what is in fact a more complex history, both horizontally (across geographical spaces) and vertically (across multiple generations of scholars).

We also recognize the limitations of applying a generational analysis to these SoTL narratives. Critiques of Generational Theory, and particularly the work of Strauss & Howe (1991), argue that generational analyses overgeneralize and oversimplify the influence of cultural events on identity, incorrectly assuming that value and belief systems remain static within generational groups (Brinkhof, 2023). Identifying distinct generations implies clear delineations between groups (e.g., age, stage of joining the community, waves of thinking); in fact, no generation is monolithic, and the boundaries between them are often blurred. The five authors of this article, for example, see how our social locations and identities influence the generational (as well as inter- and intra-generational) spaces we inhabit in the SoTL community. Cross-cohort conversations meld our ways of thinking and unlock new, emergent understandings. Generations can't help but be changed—and problematized—by these positionalities and exchanges. Additionally, we recognize that the transmission of knowledge across inter-generational boundaries occurs across a semipermeable membrane, allowing only some ideas to advance and only some stories to be prioritized. These imperfections apply to our analysis here. Ours is just one explanation of SoTL's

generations, defined by our experiences, our knowledge, and our positionalities, leading to a story about SoTL that centers the predominantly white, English-speaking, established scholars whose work launched SoTL into national and international conversations. We thus invite readers to expand our particular analysis, fill in the gaps, revise our framework, or even toss it out and start anew, so we can collectively enrich our understanding of SoTL across generations and spaces.

### **SoTL Generation Zero**

*“How do you know that person?” I ask at a coffee break between conference sessions.*

*“Oh,” they say, “We were CASTL Scholars together.”*

The 1990 publication of Ernest Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* is often described as a genesis moment for SoTL. The report calls for “a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar—a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching” (Boyer, 1990, p. 24). Boyer writes that a scholarly teacher must stay engaged with the developments in the field, work to “build bridges between the teacher’s understanding and student’s learning” (p. 23), and engage in ongoing inquiry into teaching and learning because “good teaching means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners” (p. 24). Further, the report identifies higher education as being in a “crisis of purpose” (p. 55) at that time, such that the prestige of the institution, and the scholars within it, were all being held to the same standard, one in which the metric of value was traditional measures of research productivity and impact. In response, Boyer calls for the bringing of “teaching and research into better balance” and “urge[s] the nation’s ranking universities to extend special status and salary incentives to those professors who devote most of their time to teaching and are particularly effective in the classroom” (p. 58).

Boyer’s ideas were countercultural and disruptive in the America of the 1990s. Importantly, they weren’t developed in isolation but in sustained conversation with colleagues. One such colleague was Eugene Rice, who explored the implications of Boyer’s four forms of scholarship for expanding the ways of knowing that operate in the academy (Rice, 1996). In addition to in-depth collaboration with Rice, then a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT), many other scholars at CFAT influenced this thinking, including Charles Glassick, Bob Hochstein, Mary Huber, and Gene Maeroff. The Carnegie Foundation, chartered by the United States Congress in 1906, was charged to “do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher and the cause of higher education” (Carnegie Foundation Archive, n.d.). In 1997, three of these scholars built on *Scholarship Reconsidered* with *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate* (Glassick et al., 1997). These authors affirmed Boyer’s 1990 argument that institutions must recognize and reward all forms of scholarship, saying “The modern American university has built its distinction on the excellence of the scholarship of discovery. Institutions must remain unfaltering in that commitment. But research alone will not secure the future of higher education, nor of the country at large. Poised on the cusp of a new century, in a world that wrestles with a multitude of difficulties, the university must fulfill a more well-rounded mission” (p. 10). They point out, however, that “[t]he effort to broaden the meaning of scholarship simply cannot succeed until the academy has clear standards for evaluating this wider range of scholarly work” (Glassick et al.,

1997, p. 5). With this book, the budding field of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning embarked on what is still open for debate in many circles: How to evaluate the merits of SoTL?

The same year of *Scholarship Reconsidered's* publication, Lee Shulman, an educational psychologist at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, stepped into the role of President of CFAT. Shulman identified a set of criteria for evaluating whether an enterprise, teaching or otherwise, should be deemed scholarship: "For an activity to be designated as scholarship, it should manifest at least three key characteristics: It should be public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use by other members of one's scholarly community" (Shulman, 1998, p. 5). At the same time, and in partnership with Pat Hutchings, Mary Huber, and others, he launched the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Higher Education initiative, which sought to position the field of SoTL so that it could, and would, lead to enhanced student learning, enhanced teaching practice, and enhanced status and recognition of teaching as a form of scholarship (See Bernstein & Poole, 2020, and Isaacson, 2001, for more detailed descriptions of the CASTL components). As summarized in the Carnegie Foundation online archive, "the goal of CASTL [was] to render teaching public, subject to critical evaluation, and usable by others in both the scholarly and the general community" (Carnegie Foundation Archive, n.d.).

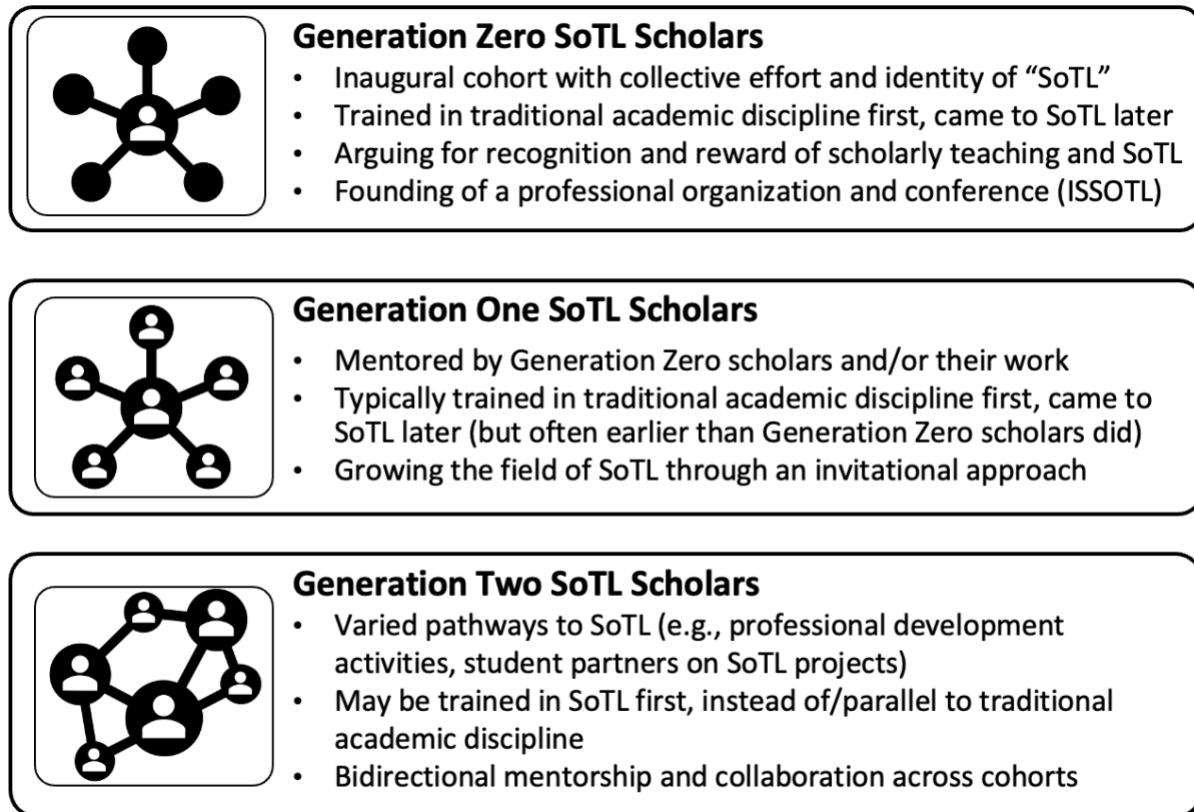
To accomplish this goal, a number of initiatives were undertaken, heavily informed by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) Peer Review of Teaching project (see Hutchings, 1996). Each year, from 1998 to 2005, cohorts of scholars were invited to participate in intensive two-week summer residencies. Each cohort attended two years of summer residencies, so the cohorts would overlap and cross-pollinate. These 156 CASTL Scholars became a core contingent of SoTL Generation Zero. During the same time period, CFAT sought to bolster institutional-level SoTL through the established the Carnegie Teaching Academy Campus Program and the CASTL Institutional Leadership and Affiliates Program, which established 13 multi-institutional clusters focused on institutional change around teaching and learning. One of these clusters, named the "Expanding the SoTL Commons" Cluster, dreamed of an international society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. University of Indiana-Bloomington was an institutional member of this cluster, and faculty from IU-B, including Craig Nelson, Jennifer Meta Robinson, and Whitney Schlegel, recruited CASTL Scholars and other engaged colleagues to attend a "Founding Members" meeting in fall of 2004, followed by the inaugural International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) conference in late October of that year. The theme of the conference was "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Perspectives, Intersections, and Directions." Invitations to the conference were extended to all participants from the CASTL Institutional Leadership and Affiliates Program, and more than 400 scholars accepted the call.

Thus began ISSOTL. As stated in the Society's inaugural conference program, "The International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning has formed to further the emerging recognition of the scholarship of teaching and learning as a powerful and integral component of higher education's mission and identity and to advocate for support, review, recognition, and appropriate uses of scholarship of teaching and learning" (ISSOTL, 2004, p. 3). The initial ISSOTL Board of Directors were Barbara Cambridge, Craig Nelson, Keith Trigwell, Mike Prosser, Mick Healey, Jennifer Meta Robinson, Kathy Takayama, Nancy Randall, Lisa Kornetsky, Barbara

Gayle, and Nancy Chick. A year later, the second ISSOTL conference was hosted by the University of British Columbia and chaired by Gary Poole. As he and Dan Bernstein reflected on this moment 15 years later, they recall that “SoTL began to feel like a movement” (Bernstein & Poole, 2020).

**Figure 1**

*Summary of our SoTL Generations Framework*



The work of this original generation, SoTL Generation Zero (see Figure 1, above), was that of conceptualization and expansion—of what scholarly teaching could and should look like, how institutions could recognize and reward SoTL and the act of scholarly teaching, and how intentional convenings of teaching scholars could dramatically shift the teaching and learning landscape (see Dewar & Perkins, 2021, for a reflection on this experience by two Carnegie Scholars). Trained in traditional academic disciplines and coming to questions of scholarly inquiry later in their careers, this generation moved SoTL, even though not fully realized, by leaps and bounds toward what Shulman described in “Inventing the Future” in 2000:

I believe that by 2005 there will be a fundamental recognition at colleges and universities in the United States that good teaching requires serious investigation into teaching and learning. I believe we will begin to see a fundamental reconception of our shared understanding of good teaching. Ultimately, investigative work into teaching and learning will not be an intriguing aside, or an

add-on, but an essential facet of good teaching—built into the expected repertoire of scholarly practice. How will we identify this shift? Faculty members will increasingly ask important questions about teaching and learning and find ways to go about answering them. Campuses will develop means to support faculty effectively in this work through teaching academies, through direct financial support, and through changes in the reward structures governing tenure and promotion. Graduate programs will develop ways to introduce the scholarship of teaching into their training. The public may even begin to recognize and value the increased knowledge about student learning and attention to effective practice. It is a future worth inventing.... (p. 105)

### **SoTL Generation One**

*“How did you get involved in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?” they asked.*

*You reply: “Oh, I was in a faculty learning community with [SoTL Generation Zero scholar], and they invited me to join them in a SoTL project. We presented our work at ISSOTL 2013 in Raleigh, and the rest is history!”*

These scholars entered SoTL through one of two pathways: They were mentored by Generation Zero scholars or their peers, and/or they were influenced by the ideas and products of that initial generation. SoTL Generation One scholars tended to enter the field of SoTL through relational networks and were mentored developmentally into SoTL, as articulated in Bunnell and McGowan (2024). This generation then worked to pay forward the mentorship and influence they experienced by actively bringing others into SoTL’s “big tent” (Huber & Hutchings, 2005, p. 30). It was during this time that the invitation to engage in SoTL was also intentionally extended to students, with scholars partnering with students as co-inquirers, co-creators, and co-authors on SoTL projects (Cook-Sather, 2006; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Werner & Otis, 2010).

Like their predecessors, Generation One scholars typically trained in a traditional academic discipline before stepping into SoTL as an additional area in which to build their expertise. This trajectory is perhaps why so many Generation One scholars have written about the experiences of navigating SoTL as a transdisciplinary space—learning new literatures, expanding ways of knowing, and balancing a SoTL identity with a disciplinary identity (Bailey et al., 2021; Bennett et al., 2016; Miller-Young et al., 2018; Simmons et al., 2013). As described by Simmons and colleagues (2013), “engaging with SoTL leads to troubled knowing. It requires us to develop the capacity to become comfortable being in a nexus of discomfort created by SoTL work” (p. 12). And yet, in informal conversation and published literature, these scholars consistently portray their pathways into SoTL as the process of joining a supportive community of like-minded individuals. Drawing on the framework of Parker Palmer’s *The Courage to Teach* (2007), Godbold and colleagues (2021) describes SoTL as a “community of congruence” held together by shared values of “a commitment to make a difference in the lives of students ... a belief that SoTL is essential and valuable, and a willingness to challenge boundaries between research and teaching, between different identities and between disciplines. It is within these communities that we feel less divided” (p. 389). And so, despite any discomfort or tension resulting from this post-disciplinary

path into SoTL, some SoTL Generation One scholars describe it as the eventual finding of their “intellectual home” (Simmons et al., 2013, p. 16).

### **SoTL Generation Two and Beyond**

*They ask: “When did you first get involved in SoTL?”*

*You reply: “I was involved in a program run by the Centre for Teaching & Learning while studying at [a university where SoTL has become institutionalized, thanks in large part to the work of Generational Zero and Generation One SoTL scholars], and so when I started my first university role, I knew that I wanted SoTL to be a core part of my job.”*

At this point, SoTL is no longer a new concept, and institutions have increasingly invested in support for teaching and learning. There has been a substantial increase in SoTL graduate school certification programs and teaching centers with dedicated staff focused on supporting faculty in developing their SoTL expertise, and students who are coming to SoTL as undergraduate or graduate student partners—and potentially staying as they seek careers in SoTL. Additionally, the pathways by which scholars enter SoTL have expanded: No longer are scholars solely coming to SoTL later in their careers after establishing themselves as experts in a traditional discipline. Rather, a number of scholars are now “SoTL First” scholars, those who build transdisciplinary expertise in SoTL alongside (or perhaps in place of) traditional academic disciplines. In contrast to Generations Zero and One, these “SoTL First” scholars learn about SoTL as students or early in their first academic positions, often placing them years ahead in their professional thinking about scholarly teaching relative to many early-career academics who were trained first in a discipline (see Abbot, in press). Sophia Abbot, a SoTL-first scholar, describes herself as a “SoTL citizen,” saying, “I do not have a space beyond SoTL.... I speak multiple dialects because there is intentionally no ‘official’ language” (p. 6). A little further in her essay, she reflects on the implications of being a Generation Two scholar, saying, “I do wonder whether my always-SoTL, always-interdisciplinary self grants me its own *different* [emphasis her own] kind of consciousness. I enter classrooms without reinforced assumptions of what a particular pedagogy should look like” (p. 6). Thus, we see Generation Two as a group of scholars who frequently develop a transdisciplinary SoTL mindset at an early point in their journeys, and as a result, bring new insights to questions of teaching and learning.

This shift in entry point for SoTL Generation Two also has significant implications for cross-generational and transdisciplinary relationships in SoTL. Whereas Generations Zero and One shared a fairly linear model of invitation, mentorship, and influence, the newer generation may operate across or even outside of this linear genealogy. Friberg and colleagues (2021) point to this changing dynamic, saying, “While conventional mentorship relationships still prevail in SoTL, in which experienced faculty members mentor early-career faculty or new researchers, more recent literature emphasizes dynamic mentorship roles” (p. 395). Whereas Generations Zero and One may have engaged in cross-generation collaboration, these experiences are no longer serendipitous for SoTL Generation Two: They are intentional and ongoing. From a wide range of places and stages in the academy, these SoTL scholars extend the work that Generation Zero started. If Boyer’s original vision of the four scholarships was countercultural and disruptive, his descendants in Generation Two are even more so. Perhaps the most visible site of this revolution is in what is

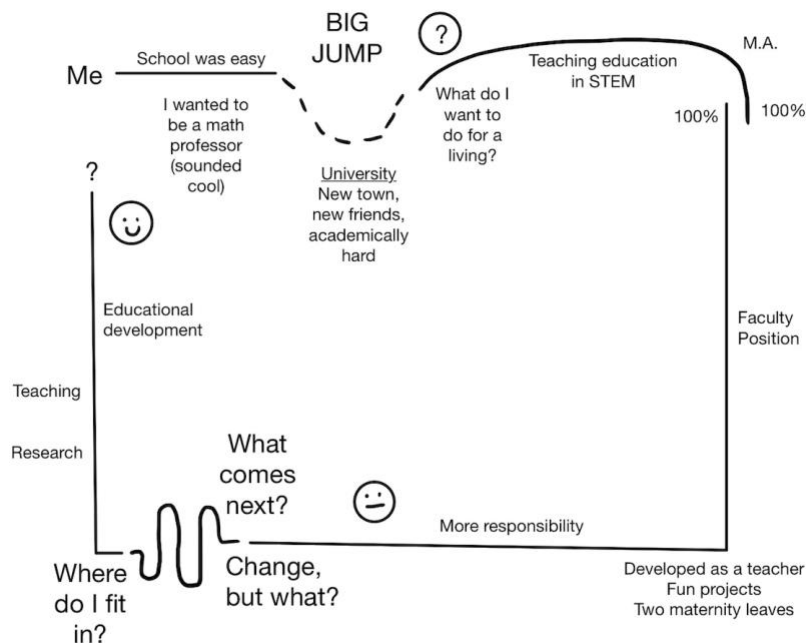
now known across the field as “students as partners” or “SaP”; what was emerging in Generation One is now close to common practice in Generation Two (e.g., Kehler et al., 2017; Mercer-Mapstone & Abbot, 2020; Shaw et al., 2017).

## Collecting the Stories: Narratives of SoTL Generations

In late 2019, two of the authors on this article (Sarah and Nancy) were chatting about how we got into SoTL and, in sharing our stories, became curious about SoTL journeys more broadly. Our next joint-conference opportunity wasn't until the 2022 meeting of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) in Aarhus, Denmark, so there we facilitated a workshop that invited participants, who identified as SoTL scholars and/or academic developers who support SoTL, to represent their journeys into SoTL in a visual poster. The resulting posters and participants' explanations quickly revealed both overlapping themes and insightful distinctions across the more-than-20 individual journeys shared in the room. Here, we'll highlight two—both of which we've redrawn to maintain anonymity—that prefigure the notion of different generational pathways into SoTL.<sup>1</sup>

### Figure 2

#### *Journey Map A*



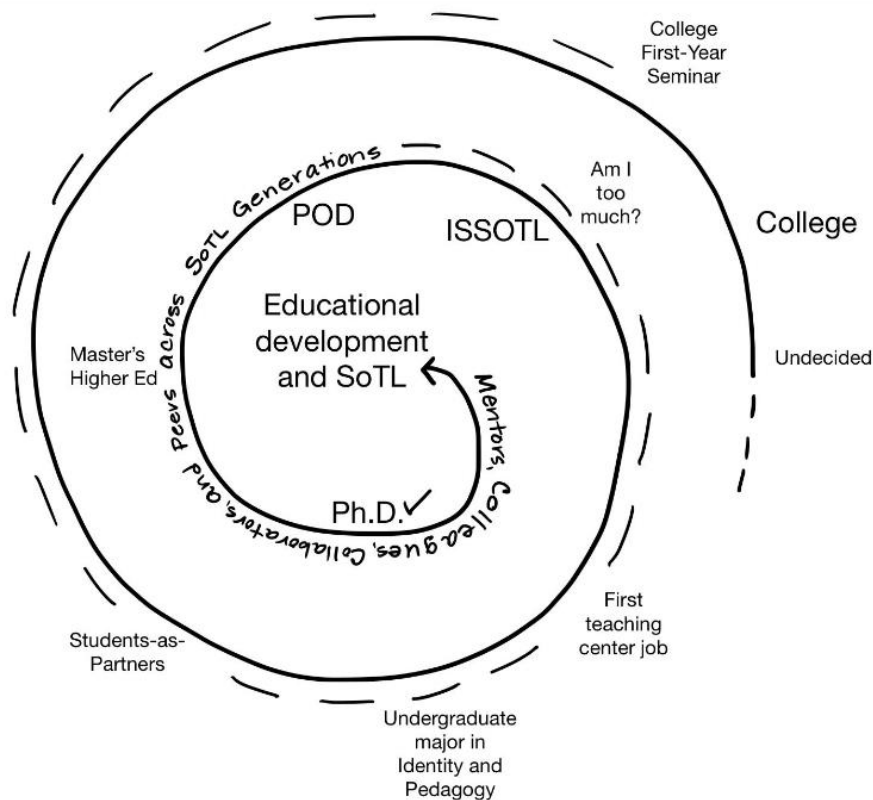
<sup>1</sup> All session attendees were asked to provide their consent for the products of this session to be included in future scholarly publications or presentations. Only the materials for which we have consent are included in this analysis.



Journey map A (Figure 2, above) is drawn as a fairly linear path starting with the participant's desires to be an educator, leading to a long stretch in a traditional faculty position with increasing responsibilities. The simplicity of the pathway is interrupted by a questioning phase that resulted in a change in direction toward SoTL, educational development, and happiness. In journey map B (Figure 3, below), the individual drew their journey into SoTL as an inward spiral punctuated by influential relationships. This original map featured 12 individual names of people who were critical to this scholar at key moments in their journey, with each name carefully following the curve of the spiral. We have anonymized these names as "Mentors, Colleagues, Collaborators, and Peers across SoTL Generations." The names are positioned starting in the participant's undergraduate coursework and continue along the individual's journey as the spiral approaches the center destination of educational development and SoTL.

### Figure 3

#### *Journey Map B*



These two maps, accompanied by nearly 20 more, underscored for us some very different paths into SoTL, with different moments, motivations, and mechanisms for entry. Ultimately, these patterns coalesced into the metaphor of generations that we have described earlier in this piece. We also wondered where we ourselves fit into these generations, and how this metaphor resonated with our colleagues, thought partners, and friends, so each of the authors of this article wrote a brief reflection positioning ourselves within this SoTL generations narrative, delving more deeply into experiences that might illuminate points of recognition within the larger SoTL community,

including where we might better welcome, support, and expand future generations of SoTL scholars. We believe that origin stories matter, because they remind us of who we are, why we are, where we are, and the people and circumstances who have shaped and guided our way. We turn to each of our SoTL origin stories now.

### **Nancy**

In this generational framework, I think I'm Generation Zero. I was a tenured English professor in one of the Carnegie Clusters and went to the first ISSOTL conference as a representative of the University of Wisconsin System. I'd already been immersed in the work for about a decade through graduate school experiences and then the UW System's SoTL programs, so when I attended that first ISSOTL business meeting where they were filling out a Board of Directors, I volunteered. This conference—rather, the people I interacted with at the conference—solidified my career trajectory with SoTL at the center.

As a Generation Zero SoTL scholar, I've always strongly identified with my original disciplinary training and my full career as an English professor. As a literary scholar, I come from a humanistic approach to knowledge construction, meaning-making, and communication, an approach that has triggered everything from off-handed comments to full-throated assertions that the way I do SoTL isn't research, isn't rigorous, and even isn't SoTL. These rejections of my expertise come from other SoTL scholars who've also brought their disciplinary identities into SoTL but then use these identities to make broader, biased claims of legitimacy and exclusion. I was fortunate enough early in my career to participate in a year-long, cohort-based SoTL program directed by Tony Ciccone, a scholar in French literature who intentionally and repeatedly presented SoTL as *genuinely* interdisciplinary, so I persisted and tried (not always successfully) to do SoTL in ways that felt authentic. I've since felt a responsibility to advocate for current and prospective SoTL practitioners who come from humanistic disciplines. But I worry that this effort is too big, as suggested in a 2023 essay that concludes, "SoTL is, and has been for more than two decades, in an abusive relationship with humanist scholars" (Potter & Raffoul, 2023, p. 5).

As I have reflected on my experiences and in co-drafting this article about subsequent generations, a few ways forward come to mind. I see these issues—both the problems and the solutions—as I did ten years ago, as matters of difference, power, and privilege (Chick, 2013). Those of us who are committed to SoTL's methodological diversity can pave more inclusive paths into and within the field by revising the "curriculum" we use to educate others about SoTL (rather than continuing to pass on exclusive traditions), call out the moments of exclusion as they surface, and uplift examples of humanistic SoTL. These actions will help literary scholars, philosophers, historians, classicists, and visual and performing artists of any generation see themselves represented in this work.

### **Sarah**

I think of myself as a Generation One scholar, and one who became so through a combination of accident and luck. Needing a job to afford my apartment in graduate school, I interviewed (while sick with a terrible cold) with Dan Bernstein at the University of Kansas Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) the summer after my first year of studies. In my five years at CTE, not only was I introduced to the field and my ability (and passion) to contribute to conversations about teaching

and learning, I was also connected to other SoTL leaders across the U.S., Canada, and Australia. During this time, I discovered who I wanted to be as a teacher, a scholar, and a colleague. At the same time, I developed my expertise in my traditional home discipline, psychology, a home discipline that Dan also shares. While always having agency and independence in my training, I recognize that my SoTL origin story parallels my mentor in some important ways.

The principal challenge that I encountered in my academic journey is one that many others have written about. I was walking a tightrope across two professional identities that often seemed in opposition to each other: The research expectations of a tenure-track position where SoTL research is undervalued, and the passions that I have for SoTL collaborations, inquiry, and institutional change. I was also navigating a liminal identity space (e.g., Simmons et al., 2013): I was nurtured in intellectual communities, both in my disciplinary and SoTL graduate training, that were developmental, mentoring, and empowering. As a fully-fledged scholar, however, I was inhabiting many professional communities that were competitive, performative, and critical without being constructive. The intellectual and affective conflicts were multiple. I was not prepared.

What does my journey suggest about recommendations for others? I'm not sure, although I do wonder about our collective responsibility to new SoTL scholars, launched into institutional spaces in which their identities and values are undervalued. Especially as current and future generations of scholars are more likely than their predecessors to develop their SoTL identity quite early in their career, at a time that they may have little structural power at their institutions, how can we help support and smooth these journeys? What are the lessons we can leverage from previous generations, as well as the CASTL institutional leadership programs that sparked so many individuals to first engage in SoTL, in order to build a more SoTL-hospitable academy?

### **Cherie**

To consider where I might “fit” within this generational landscape, it is important to acknowledge it is not simply about how I position myself but also about how I am positioned by others and my contexts. What influences this positioning is tied to my job position, the length of time I have participated in the SoTL community, the focus of my research, and my social location as a white settler, English speaking, first-generation (first in family) scholar.

I joined the SoTL community in 2007 through introduction by Ray Land, while working at the University of Strathclyde. This timeframe would place me as “Generation One.” However, I didn't feel any sense of a disciplinary home as others have described who joined within this generation. With a bachelor's degree in linguistics and a recent MBA graduate, I had been working in widening access roles for universities for nearly a decade. In a disciplinary sense, I was nomadic. My passion for SoTL was not based on direct teaching experience in the classroom context; it was rooted in my desire to make university spaces more accessible and just. In that sense, my journey into SoTL was (and still is) inherently bound to axiological concerns. Why am I here, who is not here, and what good can I achieve in the process?

I found a scholarly home yet I have felt homeless without the cornerstone of a single discipline to claim as part of my identity. Now, 15 years from my first encounter, with a PhD focused on students co-creating curriculum and a faculty position in a Centre for SoTL, I have most certainly

found a home. Yet it is only recently that I have begun to articulate the paradox of my experience: SoTL has helped me better understand why I have felt troubled with transitional ideas of being a “proper academic” doing “real research” with the “right” social and cultural capital. In my work with and across the SoTL generations, and with individuals located similarly and differently to me, I have found a space to disrupt the idea of the scholar I thought was required in academia. SoTL and its community has provided a space for me to become a version of the academic that *celebrates* disciplinary breadth, commits to transformational education, and tries to disrupt hegemonic practices. Telling my generational story in this way is part of what I want to offer those joining the movement and it is something I intentionally raise in my work with students-as-partners.

For us to nurture future SoTL generations, it is important for us to continue diversifying who participates, challenging the reification of particular research paradigms, and resisting conventional forms of knowledge dissemination and production. I am concerned that in our effort to be taken seriously as a field, we’ve replicated forms of scholarship mobilization that are not “community property” (Shulman, 1993) and continue to perpetuate particular (colonized) ways of being a SoTL scholar. As we continue to tell different origin stories, I’m keen to hear about what SoTL helps to un-do as well as build.

## Mel

I consider myself an accidental researcher, despite my background as a nurse. My journey into research was largely unexpected, given my education's limited exposure to it, primarily within the nursing practice realm. Even in my Master of Nursing Education, I was exposed to qualitative research but not taught about fundamental research concepts like epistemologies and ontologies. My journey into academia began six years after obtaining my bachelor’s degree in nursing when I started teaching without formal educational training. My curiosity about students' learning processes and the effectiveness of my teaching methods remained constant during my time as a nursing instructor. A transformative moment occurred when I discovered Nursing Education journals in the library. This discovery marked the beginning of my venture into scholarly teaching, a term I was yet to become familiar with at the time. A pivotal point in my SoTL journey was enrolling in the University of British Columbia’s Scholarship of Education Leadership (SoEL) program, led by Harry Hubball and Andrea Webb. I realized I was embarking on a lifelong journey of SoTL. Harry and Andrea played a crucial role in illustrating the boundless opportunities for investigating areas beyond nursing. Concurrently, I was tasked with developing the SoTL program at my college, supporting others interested in SoTL research.

I identify as a second-generation SoTL scholar, and I have assumed leadership roles in SoTL at national and international levels, including chair of SoTL Canada and vice president for Canada at ISSOTL, and now president-elect for ISSOTL. Engaging in discussions with prominent SoTL scholars has provided valuable insights into their journeys. I observed a significant challenge within colleges—limited exposure and opportunities for instructors to conduct research, compounded by a teaching-focused environment. In my context, mid-career faculty (MCF) members express a keen interest in SoTL but lack institutional backing. My doctoral research focused on revitalizing MCF through effective professional development and mentorship, exploring how SoTL could reignite their enthusiasm for teaching. I found that MCF experience disconnection and frustration due to inadequate support. They feel overlooked. Transforming

higher education to support the ongoing professional development of MCF is imperative; this support should foster an environment for deep reflection, leadership, and transformative dialogues that propel faculty from scholarly teaching to SoTL. Educational leaders must formulate policies that support MCFs' professional growth and career progression to ensure institutional growth and an enriched student experience.

### **Anna**

Attempting to position myself in this SoTL generations framework, I conceive of my positioning as relationally shaped and contextually defined. Reflecting about my origin story, I think about the activities that gave me the most joy, and I think about the people who shared their time, experience, and wisdom. I had never felt completely at home in any one disciplinary space, or indeed in academia, before discovering teaching and learning. My journey in educational development and/or SoTL are not quite one and the same (Cruz et al., 2022; Felten & Chick, 2018; Santucci, 2022), but they are tightly connected. A key chapter of my story was my discovery of the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning while I was a PhD student at Brown University: I would wake up full of energy on the days I taught my students or facilitated peer-mentoring as a Sheridan graduate teaching consultant. Thinking about the characteristics of Sheridan's programs for graduate students, I now realize how intentionally they were designed for me to find community, develop scholarly teaching competences, and grow into my professional identity. When I first crossed the threshold of the Sheridan Center, its director was Kathy Takayama. Years later, she was the person who "anointed" me as a member of the SoTL community: While discussing how I was supporting faculty's SoTL as an educational developer at my current institution, she simply said, "Don't forget about your own SoTL!" Even if my interdisciplinary PhD combining participatory theater pedagogies with language acquisition and intercultural development was quite squarely SoTL work, that was probably the moment when I truly started considering myself a SoTL scholar/practitioner. My journeys have been nurtured by numerous such micro-mentoring moments, broadly and internationally distributed among many individuals.

While my experiences might align with several SoTL generations, having encountered SoTL early in my career, the distributed nature of my collegial relationships across disciplinary boundaries and generational cohorts, and the questions I find myself asking about SoTL as a transdisciplinary space place me in Generation Two. My direct connection with Generation Zero scholars suggests some alignment with Generation One; however, in important ways I feel that I have been, and continue to be, both mentored and mentoring through a field as a community in which I actively belong and matter, rather than only through specific individuals. As current director of a Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning for Higher Education at a university that has a long history of SoTL institutionalization (Thelen & Santucci, 2024), I strive to be mindful of what this means for how I impact others along their own SoTL journeys.

What's something to take away from my experience? I do wonder if as Generation Two+ scholars we might be at higher risk of taking things for granted, and thus being easily hurt or disappointed, in terms of how teaching and learning should be valued and how traditional academic cultures need to be challenged and disrupted. Does the privilege of having encountered a SoTL Welcome (Bunnell & McGowan, 2024) early in our journeys risk making us less respectful guests when we enter spaces that are not (yet) our own, less capable of humility (Santucci Leoni et al., 2024), more

intolerant of the slow paces of academia? Does our early-hatched lived experience in SoTL make us more demanding and impatient for progress? And if so, how might we best harness such impatience towards greater good?

## **Discussion**

To be clear, our goal for this article is not to map a pathway for the replication of previous generational patterns or duplication of individual SoTL scholars. Rather, we hope our analysis has suggested some ways in which individual scholars and the broader SoTL community can best support current and future SoTL scholars in being as expansive and visionary as possible. However, we see two significant shifts across this generational analysis that raise important questions for the SoTL community moving forward. First, the early generations of SoTL scholars predominantly came to SoTL from traditional academic disciplines, and their home disciplines' methods and ways of asking and answering questions served as frames for how they conducted SoTL inquiries. With the emergence of a generation of "SoTL First" scholars, we wonder what is gained, and perhaps also what is limited, by the potential decoupling of SoTL and the disciplinary ways of knowing so deeply embedded in earlier generations. As Generation Two scholars bring their transdisciplinary training to bear on questions of teaching and learning, how can we help them navigate institutions that still typically operate in discipline-heavy, siloed ways?

Second, Generation Zero scholars typically came to SoTL as mid- and late-career academics, with established and secure positions at their institutions. Given the decline of tenured positions and rise of contingent and part-time faculty (Colby, 2023; Daddow et al., 2023), who can "afford" passionate engagement with SoTL, as it was originally envisioned? And what are the implications for SoTL's entry points for students, for early-career faculty, and for other folks who are precariously positioned in the academy?

In this article, we've explored some SoTL origin stories—of the field itself and some of its practitioners—all of which are individualistic, subjective, and deeply personal, and none of which are definitive. At the same time, we believe that this history of SoTL and ISSOTL, the generations we've outlined, the two ICED posters, our own narratives, and this article's overarching analysis tell us something about what SoTL newcomers navigate. In imagining the (near) future of the academy, Shulman (2000) challenged us to change how we think about teaching and learning and how we engage as an ethical community of teaching practitioners. Almost 25 years later, nearly two decades and at least one generation after the future Shulman dreamed of, we wonder what the next generations of SoTL scholars will need and desire and imagine both in their work as teachers and learners and in their experiences within this community. We challenge all of us (us authors, you readers, and the broader SoTL community) to welcome these new generations of SoTL scholars, not by paving the way for them but instead by making sure the field is open and arable enough for them to create their own pathways.

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