

February 25, 2016

Dear Dr. Murray,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit a revision of my research manuscript, with a slightly revised title, *Proving Montessori: Identity and dilemmas in a Montessori teacher's lived experience*, to be considered for publication in the Journal of Montessori Research. In this letter I articulate the changes I have made to the paper in response to your February 6, 2016 email message.

I focused my substantive revisions on the overall recommendations and also responded to the more specific requests for clarity from both reviewers. Sometimes the substantive revisions also took care of stylistic/clarity concerns, as I ended up adding to a number of sections in order to further strengthen my overall report and analysis.

I have attached my responses in a table format below. I appreciate your willingness to consider my revised manuscript. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or additional feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Olivia Christensen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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<p>Overall recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate non-Montessori literature into your literature review. • Improve transitions between sections. • Follow traditional manuscript organization: Introduction with research question or statement, Literature Review and possibly a Theory section if appropriate, Methods section and then Findings, Analysis/Discussion, could have Implications and then Conclusion or Implications and Conclusion merged. 	<p>I have included a literature review with more current research on early childhood teacher identity and identity in general.</p> <p>Transitions have been created and/or more fully developed.</p> <p>I have rearranged the manuscript to follow a more traditional format. However, there is an additional, more “non traditional” section on researcher positionality. This is an important part of the phenomenological research process and analysis. Also, Analysis and Findings are still discussed jointly. I explain my reasons for doing so in the paper (p. 14) and below:</p> <p>van Manen (2014) wrote that “phenomenology does not only describe what something is, it also explores what this phenomenon can mean by offering possible interpretations” (p.390). Going further, Vagle (2014) posited that analysis and findings regarding the researched phenomenon can be more fully explored when worked through together. For this reason, both my analysis and findings are discussed jointly.</p>
<p>Reviewer 1:</p>	
<p>1. Explain much earlier on the distinction between Big D little d discourse.</p>	<p>After more thought, I realized that I do not address “little d” discourse in the paper. For that reason I altered my theoretical orientation and analysis to focus solely on “big D” Discourse. I hope this helps to clarify.</p>
<p>2. When you inset your personal narrative for bracketing purposes make clear that this is an aspect of the phenomenological method.</p>	<p>This has been clarified in the section on Researcher Positionality (p. 11).</p>
<p>3. Do not allow charts to span pages. (This is also an APA formatting issue.)</p>	<p>Corrected (p. 14).</p>
<p>3. Some quotes might benefit from longer segments being included, including the prompts/questions asked.</p>	<p>I have added a Method section (p. 10) that provides some information on my research/interview approach. Since the interviews were unstructured and I acted more as a listener than a contributor (especially during this section) there are not many researcher questions for me to incorporate.</p>
<p>4. Occasionally you switch verb tenses in ways that are problematic in your analysis section. Decide whether or not you are writing in the</p>	<p>I proof read multiple times and am hoping I made the necessary corrections! My intent was to write in the past tense.</p>

present or past and maintain throughout.	
Reviewer 2:	
Wondering about the title of the article – not sure it does justice to the actual content of the study. I understand that the teacher might be thinking she has to “Prove Montessori” to the families, and maybe this could be part of the title, but in the abstract you identify implications for teacher preparation and inservice teacher development, and I think this a stronger headline for the field. Otherwise, it is just an experience, as you so note.	Agreed! This was something I started to think about almost immediately after submitting it for review. I have changed to the title to relate more specifically to the content/focus of the manuscript: <i>Proving Montessori: Identity and dilemmas in a Montessori teacher’s lived experience</i>
P. 4 Pseudonym used? If so, please note.	The participant recently read the work and requested that her name be changed (originally she had thought she would prefer to be identified). A pseudonym is now used and noted (p. 10).
P. 5 In my experience many hires seem just perfect, the teacher is an amazing practitioner, but cannot related to parents or articulate the links between theory and practice. How do you know that the issues that surface are not simply due to personality or emotional characteristics on Emily’s part?	This is a realistic point, and ultimately I cannot say that I knew, or know, <i>for sure</i> whether she was the best hire and potentially able to relate to parents. My positionality and interpretations are now clarified as post-reflexing and hopefully assist in making it clear that these were my thoughts and interpretations, not necessarily fact. I also feel that the last Analysis and Findings section where Claire describes her struggle with not wanting to change who she is helps to describe the dilemma between being able to fully relate and meet the needs of parents vs. focusing on the practice and theory of Montessori.
Overall comment – you note that this is phenomenological research, but it also seems, from your involvement as a board member, that you are conducting ethnographic action research in which you are an embedded part of the context. I advise you to include a small Methods section, typically this goes after the literature review and theory sections, however, I defer to the editors here. You can pull from your guiding theory section and also include more about your role, subjectivity, action research, etc.	This study was following a phenomenological approach. Though I understand how one may see similarities between that and auto-ethnography, ethnography was not an influence. I have included a Methods (p. 10) sections and added more information on phenomenology throughout the paper.
Also, you are a board member and Montessori educator, but you need to say something about your role as researcher. Are you a professor, doctoral student? Board members and teachers	I added that I am a doctoral student on the bottom of p. 3.

<p>don't usually conduct discourse analysis or do research on their peers!</p>	
<p>P.6 As your description of Emily's issues goes on, I think you need to make another big structural change. Really what you have in the Background Section is data and this all belongs in your Findings section. Instead of all this context you really need a literature review. All of this background is chock full of great contextual information that I too experienced as a Montessori educator – explaining the importance of mixed age, the third year, etc. Ground this in non-empirical more anecdotal writing (Montessori Life) and literature on the importance of mixed ages and looping. Also the literature on parent teacher relationships and family engagement writ large is valuable here. This validates Montessori practices by situating them in the greater educational canon. (By the way on page 10 you have an Analysis and Findings Section. These MUST be separated into a Findings section and then you can have a separate Analysis and Discussion section.)</p>	<p>Structural changes have been made and a literature review included. See my answers to the general comments/concerns above.</p>
<p>The Guiding Theory section is really nice, comprehensive, and important for readers. However, there is actually too much data analysis throughout. Pull out references to Emily and her specific experiences and your observations and limit your commentary to general use of theory as applied to the study. For example something like, Theory X is important because it serves as a lens through which to analyze teacher relationships with families. A _____ approach supports the analysis of teacher reflection on practice and helps to identify key themes and implications. Something along those lines.</p>	<p>References to the participant have been removed. The overall section has been slightly rearranged.</p>
<p>P. 10 Findings begins rather abruptly. Just one intro sentence that reminds us of why D/discourses are important. Because you are going to really pare down your theory section, an intro sentence here will be great.</p>	<p>A transition has been included (p. 14).</p>
<p>The 4 discourses seem like great "boxes" and made me want to learn more. Also parallels the trajectory of teacher life from classroom to</p>	<p>I did not add more examples because I felt it may get repetitive with other excerpts throughout. If this is still something Reviewer</p>

<p>larger policy contexts, to personal feelings about one's teaching self.</p>	<p>2 and/or the editor would like I can add.</p>
<p>I am not clear on the headings in the findings section. Backing up to my comment about the section beginning abruptly, I would actually like to see a strong intro paragraph here that tells me what you are going to do. It could have been the combination of findings and analysis that was throwing me off, but I got lost in the data here without more guidance.</p>	<p>This has been clarified in my Analysis and Findings transition section (p. 14).</p>
<p>The questions raised on page 22 seem a bit of a muddle. I see a few big themes emerge here that need to be better articulated: 1) What, if any, responsibility does an individual teacher have to promote the third year of Montessori in the face of well-engrained status quo norms related to kindergarten entry in non-Montessori programs? MANY Montessori teachers are caught in this trap. They feel bad about their program, feel they are letting children down and not adhering to pure Montessori practices. Parents on the other hand are making purely technical, logistical choices. So in a way there is a tension between education theory and practical planning.</p>	<p>I worked on clarifying and connecting my questions, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations throughout the last section. Though I agree this is an experience many Montessori teachers face, I feel that it is logistical <i>as well</i> as highly emotional for parents. I agree that looking more deeply at the relationships and dilemmas faced by parents as well would be enlightening, however I did not feel I had enough data to really discuss that topic any further. For the purpose of this paper I wanted to focus on Claire's multiple identities and Discourses and how that experience affected her (and how teacher educators/leaders may help) more than the greater policy issues at play.</p>
<p>Then you raise questions about her practice with children. This gets lost along the journey of this paper. Maybe tease it out a bit more with some clearer structure in a separate analysis section. Maybe stick to discourses in findings and share what you heard and saw, but then in Analysis you can come up with some headings related to themes drawn from your discourse analysis that will help you to make some generalizable statements, connected back to literature. That would be really powerful.</p>	<p>I did a remove a line about children collaborating with one another which may have placed too much emphasis on the actual teaching strategies and curriculum that were not central to this research or paper.</p>