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Metaphorically speaking: How a group of teachers used metaphors and similes to captivate their professional dispositions and experiences

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated that metaphors not only add “the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish” (p.3) to enrich verbal communication, but also embody culture-specific thoughts and actions. Richardt (2005) further explored ways in which disciplinary genres and metaphors are intertwined. Drawing on these conceptual lenses, this research explored how a group of teachers used metaphorical devices to captivate their professional dispositions and experiences, which in turn helped them conceptualise and articulate the purpose and questions for their thesis projects. Specifically, the research site was a liberal arts college in the United States. The participants were 16 teacher candidates and the primary data sources were the metaphors and similes these students generated in their research journal writing, which was intended as a planning tool for their thesis research proposals. The results show a remarkable level of diversity and complexity in their lived experiences. The findings point to the potential to employ metaphorical devices as a research tool. The research may also encourage other educators to study teacher narratives via the vehicle of metaphorical language.