Planning Your Own SoTL Project

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Who are we and why are we here today?

Keep in mind…

- Conducting a SoTL study is as complex as traditional, disciplinary research. Done well, it should be rigorous, reflective, and systematic.

- SoTL is (typically) context-specific. This form of action, practitioner research is not inherently generalizable.

- Our time together this afternoon represents a 35,000' view of SoTL…but this session can be a useful starting point for those of you interested in this type of research.

SoTL project design, Step 1

- Pose a problem related to teaching and learning.
- Operationalize your problem into a research statement or question.
- READ about how other folks have addressed the problem you hope to study.

Where do SoTL Questions Come From?

Problems

Why aren't my students prepared for class?

Opportunities

What is the impact of this experience on my students' learning?

Wonderments

If I use this unlikely pedagogy for my students, could it help them learn?

What are you interested in learning more about in terms of your teaching or your students' learning?

How might you word a research question/statement to explore this topic?

SoTL project design, Step 2

Study your problem using methods appropriate for specific disciplinary epistemologies.

OR

Step outside your comfort zone and think about methods that might differ from your disciplinary norms but have the potential to yield rich data.
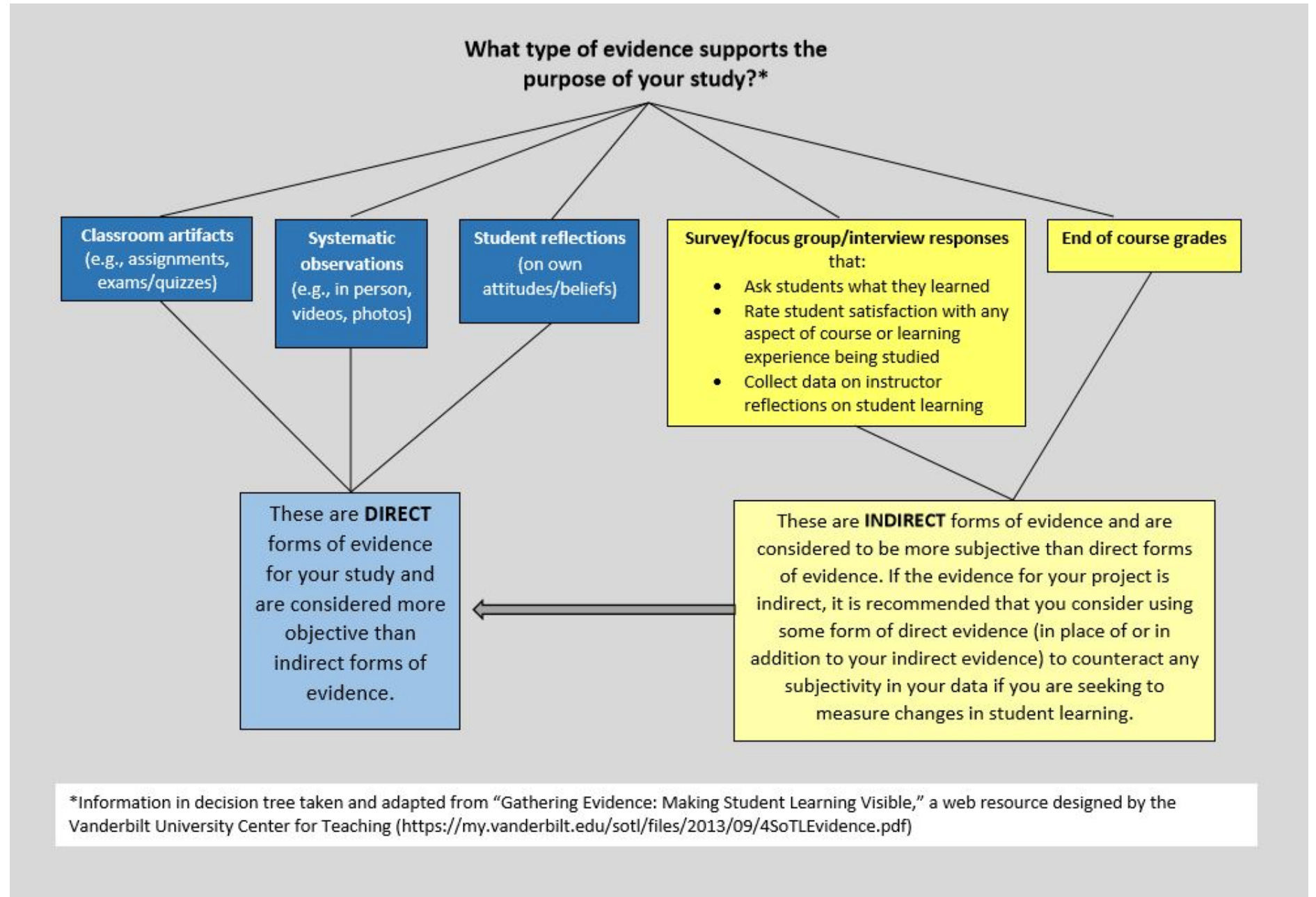
Data Sources for SoTL

You're only limited by your own lack of creativity!

Journals

Class projects

Assessments

Interviews

Surveys

Focus groups

Course assignments

Pre/Post tests

And many other things! ☺

Direct vs. indirect data

(aka: not all data is created equally!)

What type of evidence supports the purpose of your study?*

Classroom artifacts (e.g., assignments, exams/quizzes)

Systematic observations (e.g., in person, videos, photos)

Student reflections (on own attitudes/beliefs)

Survey/focus group/interview responses that:
- Ask students what they learned
- Rate student satisfaction with any aspect of course or learning experience being studied
- Collect data on instructor reflections on student learning

End of course grades

These are **DIRECT** forms of evidence for your study and are considered more objective than indirect forms of evidence.

These are **INDIRECT** forms of evidence and are considered to be more subjective than direct forms of evidence. If the evidence for your project is indirect, it is recommended that you consider using some form of direct evidence (in place of or in addition to your indirect evidence) to counteract any subjectivity in your data if you are seeking to measure changes in student learning.

*Information in decision tree taken and adapted from "Gathering Evidence: Making Student Learning Visible," a web resource designed by the Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching (https://my.vanderbilt.edu/sotl/files/2013/09/4SoTLEvidence.pdf)

Data analysis in SoTL

How you approach data analysis will likely be reflective of your disciplinary experiences and preferences. Your SoTL design and data analysis does not have to reflect your disciplinary norms, but consider:

- The audience for your work.
- Your preferred outlet for sharing your work.
- Perceptions of merit and rigor.

SoTL project planning, Step 3

- SoTL is almost always considered to be research with human subjects, so an IRB is necessary prior to engaging in research on teaching and learning.
  - The key to SoTL IRBs is understanding the risks that exist and working on a plan to mitigate them.

Ethics & SoTL
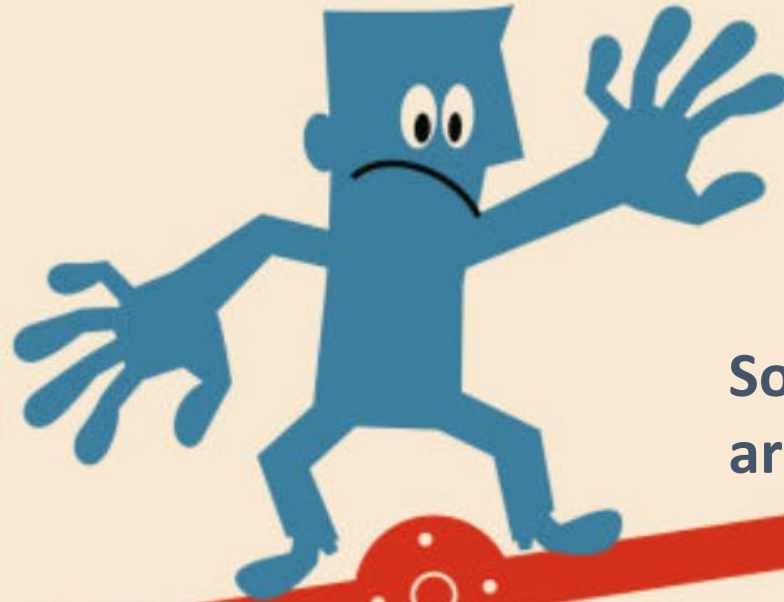
Some key IRB considerations are:

- Protection of confidentiality and/or anonymity
- Avoiding coercion or perceived coercion in participation
- Developing accurate and detailed informed consent statement and procedures

Human Subjects **+** Making work public **=** IRB for SoTL Research

SoTL project design, Step 4

- SoTL is not SoTL until it is shared with others. There are a variety of ways to do this, but typically, SoTL is shared in the same manner that disciplinary research is shared.

Determining Your Audience For Sharing Your SoTL Work

Potential audiences are broad!

- Disciplinary peers
- Other SoTL scholars
- Colleagues in other departments or disciplines
- Students
- Accreditation staff
- Campus administration
- Community members
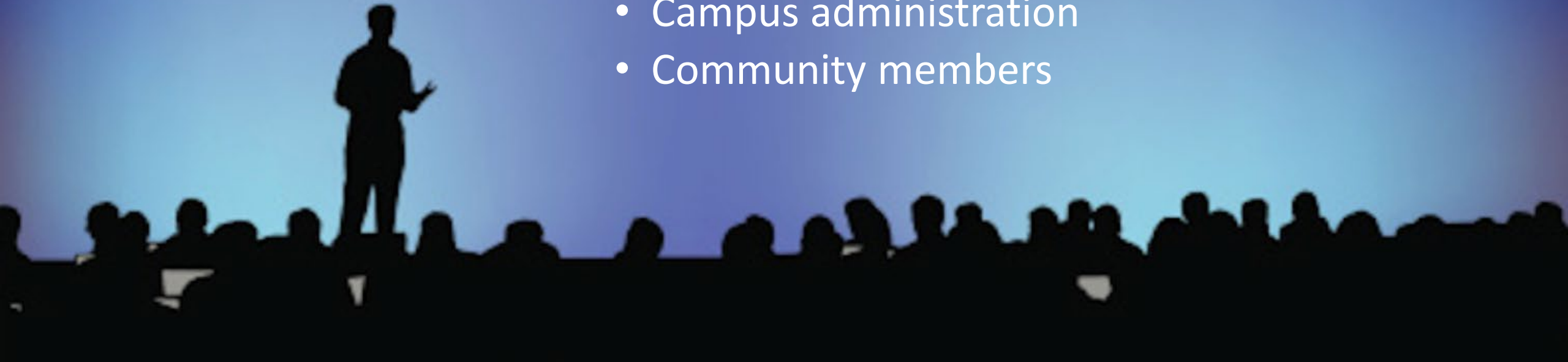
How is SoTL Disseminated?

You can choose a manner to disseminate your work that is consistent with your disciplinary expectations:

Traditional research paper/research note

Conference presentations

Book

Blog

Wiki

Creative endeavors (e.g., documentary, artistic representation)

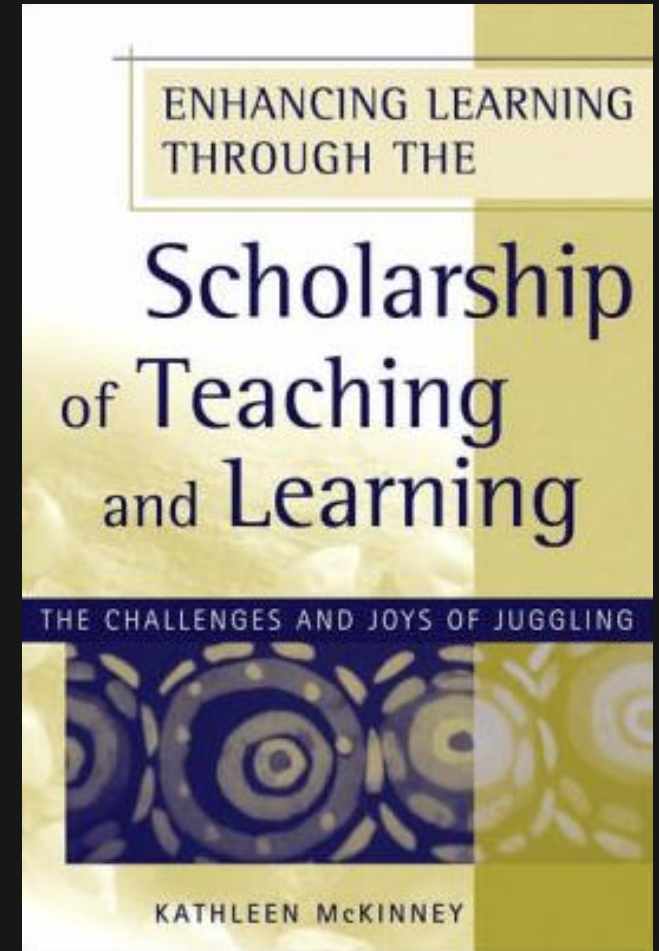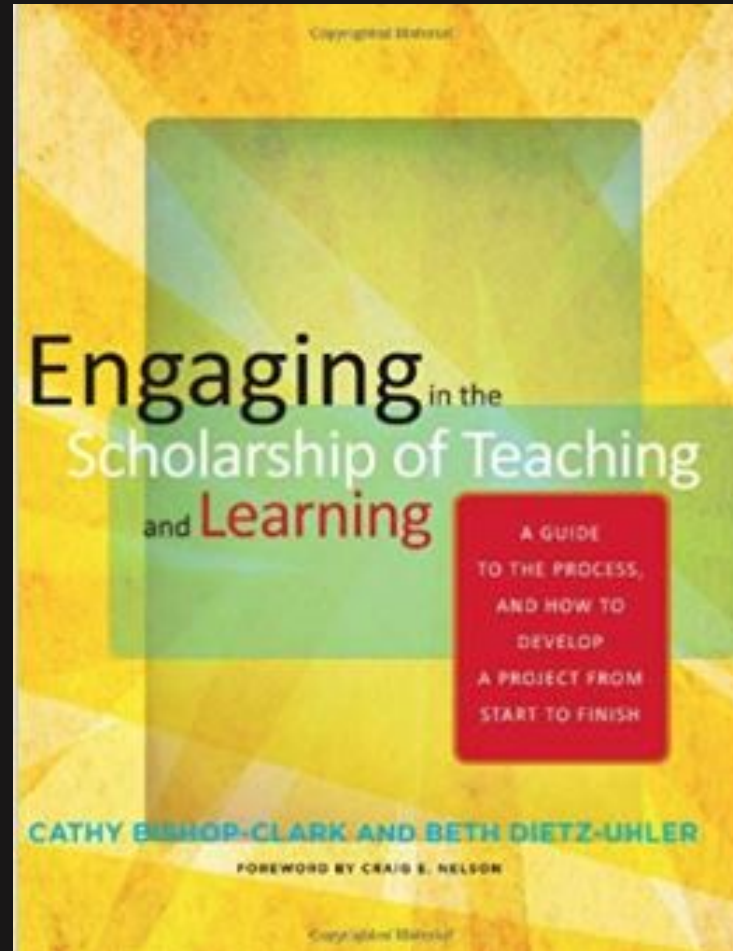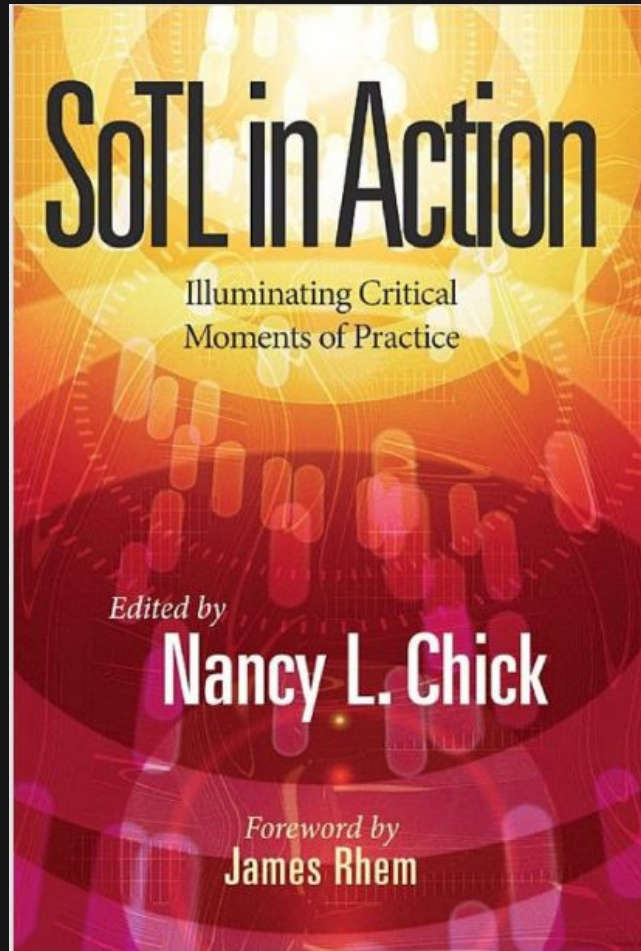# Resources for SoTL – these are sometimes hard to find!

Societies: ISSoTL, ISETL, SoTL Commons, EuroSoTL

Institutional Websites: ISU, Vanderbilt, Elon, Michigan, Calgary

Blogs: *SoTL Advocate, Improve with Metacognition*, ISSoTL's blog

Journals: *TLI, JoSoTL, International JSoTL, IHE*

SoTL text recommendations:

Concluding Thoughts & Questions