



4-2002

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Chamberlin, Carla (2002) ""It's Not Brain Surgery": Construction of Professional Identity Through Personal Narrative," *Teaching and Learning: The Journal of Natural Inquiry & Reflective Practice*: Vol. 16: Iss. 3, Article 2.

Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/tl-nirp-journal/vol16/iss3/2>

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“It’s Not Brain Surgery”: Construction of Professional Identity Through Personal Narrative

Carla R. Chamberlin

This article addresses how the professional identity of a teacher is constructed through narrative with two intended goals: 1) to examine the ways in which theories of teacher education are embedded in professional identity, and 2) to suggest the inclusion of individual narrative analysis as a reflective tool in professional development and teacher education. A teacher’s spontaneous conversation about his or her work is analyzed in terms of personal and professional knowledge, collegiality and isolation, and teaching as a reflective practice versus technical activity. The complex, and sometimes contradictory, results support the obvious challenges and tensions facing teacher education; however, the use of conversation analysis as a tool for teachers to examine their own identity offers a new dimension to reflective inquiry, allowing teachers to make connections among public images, individual thoughts, and professional practice.

Public images of teachers as ill-prepared, unskilled workers are often displayed in media and reflected in public conversations. Judgments such as "those who can't do, teach" along with complaints that teachers do not work enough hours and have insufficient preparation are part of a public discourse in which teaching is reduced to a non-challenging career choice. Every so often someone stands up for the "martyr" teacher who is recognized for unfaltering dedication and personal sacrifice—this constitutes a good newspaper story or movie screenplay. These polarized images present public images of teachers as incompetent buffoons or social miracle workers. Professional educators, on the other hand, work in the area between these stereotypes and are aware of the complex nature of teaching, the intellectual involvement, and institutional constraints that define the profession. The gap between public and academic conceptualizations of teaching inspired me to ask the question of how teachers see themselves as professionals within this dichotomy. How do teachers portray their professional lives in casual conversation? First, the narrative analysis in this study is presented as part of a process of understanding how certain images of teaching are constructed through language and embedded in a teacher's talk about his work. Second, the narrative

is explored as a potential tool for professional development.

The Language of Teacher Education

The prevalent discourse of teacher education serves as a framework in this study to which a teacher's talk about his work can be compared. Current thought on what it means to teach, the process of preparing people for the profession, and how to continue the process through supervision and professional development emphasizes reflective thinking and cognitive complexity as central to teaching (Dewey, 1938). The narrow "technicist" view that strips teaching of its moral, personal, and intellectual characteristics by prescribing foolproof methods is under scrutiny (Hargreaves, 1994; Kincheloe, 1991; Schön, 1983, 1987), and an expanded vision of the knowledge base of teaching has taken hold. The language in the profession has shifted from the technical jargon of designing decontextualized lesson plans, rigid training programs, and repetitive exercises in planning and assessment to the discovery of teaching as an unpredictable, cognitively complex activity, characterized by decision-making and reflection in action. Students, classrooms, schools, and communities shape the landscape from which teachers gather material to inform their practice.

While content and pedagogical knowledge remain critical to teaching, a teacher's ability to deal with social contexts, ambiguity, and the unpredictable are qualities now regarded as part of effective practice.

Consequently, the language used to describe what teachers do and how personal beliefs and values shape their teaching has also evolved. In particular, teacher education has embraced the discourse of "reflection." Teachers are encouraged to revisit an event and see it through multiple perspectives, looking for clues as to why something worked or did not work. A reflective thinker makes connections between his or her experiences, values, and beliefs and the ways in which these personal ways of knowing are played out in classroom decision-making. Reflective teachers are able to monitor, reflect, and make decisions appropriate to the changing needs of students and the demands of the context (Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1987, 1996). They do not rely solely on external authority for guidance and validation, but can look at their own work with critical inquiry to initiate change.

This effort to recognize the cognitive dimensions and the role of previous experience in teaching has also served to legitimize the stories that teachers have to tell as consequential to professional practice (Golombek, 1998; Harrington, 1994; Lortie, 1975; Olson, 1995). The intersection of beliefs, values, and personal experience reveals how teachers deal with the social negotiation and moral dimensions of teaching and how they make sense of their classroom practices (Britzman, 1991; Clandinin, 1986; Elbaz, 1983; Woods, 1987). Clandinin and Connelly (1987) describe the dynamic and situated nature of teaching and the "personal practical knowledge" that guides a teacher's interpretation of experience. Teaching is shaped by experience and by the ways in which stories about teaching are constructed, retold, and interpreted. Teachers' personal stories help to challenge and define the nature of the profession.

Likewise, a focus on teacher development, in contrast to training, is challenging a tradition of judgmental supervision and checklist evaluation. The idea of an outside expert telling a teacher what

to do is challenged by the notion of a colleague serving as a good listener, a sounding board for ideas, and a willing participant for conversation (Edge, 2002; Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000). The reconceptualization of "supervision" as a tool for reflection has influenced models of supervision aimed at helping teachers to identify their own concerns, design and implement their own interventions, and assess the quality and quantity of change (Pajak, 1993). In contrast to more traditional supervision, these reflective models do not "fix" behaviors that fall out of the boundaries of neatly prescribed criteria (Smyth, 1987), but aim to help teachers define, articulate, and make connections between their beliefs about teaching and their classroom practice (Freeman, 1991; Woods, 1996; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Moreover, these models are based in the flattening of hierarchical relationships among teachers and administrators (Blumberg, 1980; Chamberlin, 2000; Waite, 1993). Collegiality, collaboration, mentoring, and coaching are part of the current discourse used to describe professional relationships.

In essence, much of the research and writing in teacher education tells us repeatedly that teachers are more than transmitters of information, that students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, and that the varied contexts in which teachers work greatly affect their practice and decision-making. Above all, emphasis on reflective practice recognizes teachers' abilities to examine, critically analyze, and transform their own work. The stories that teachers have to tell, in fact, are important not only as part of their personal professional development, but also serve to create a more public image of the teaching profession.

The following analysis explores a teacher's narrative to see how his story fits into the current discourse of teacher education and to examine how this teacher constructs an image of his work through the language he uses to talk about it. Using current theories of teacher education as a framework for analysis, the following question is explored: *How does a teacher's story reveal representations of reflection, collegiality, and personal practical knowledge in his professional experience?*

Methodology

Participant

The participant in this study is a male secondary school teacher in his early forties. This teacher, referred to as Tim, has spent his career teaching in a large school district in the United States. Tim received a bachelor's degree in education from a teachers' college and at the time of this conversation was teaching ninth grade social studies. His school provides episodic professional development workshops, and the principal and associate principal are responsible for supervision of all teachers. Content containing identifying information has been removed to protect anonymity.

Data Collection

The data examined in this study is unique in that it is not drawn from a planned conversation. I met Tim at a social gathering where we began to talk about our work. After approximately a half hour of talking, I noticed a tape recorder nearby, asked Tim for permission to record the rest of the conversation, and Tim agreed. The conversation continued for over two hours, 90 minutes of which was recorded. The spontaneity and authenticity of this conversation set it apart from data collected in a more planned, systematic manner. My only agenda was to listen to Tim, avoid judgmental remarks, and allow him to talk openly about his work. Follow-up conversations took place over the following 12-month period. I made conceptual notes of the follow-up conversations and used them to validate interpretations of the conversation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Analysis

Narrative analysis was used to identify specific themes within the recorded conversation. A verbatim transcription was made, using notations to mark hesitation (...), emphasis (___), and latching/overlapping (=). Next, the transcript was carefully perused for topical patterns in the comments that

related to teaching and supervision. I selected a constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which allows for a combination of sorting through data for emergent themes as well as realizing that current theory serves as a template for interpreting the data. In this way, both inductive and deductive approaches can be used to analyze the conversation.

The interpretive paradigm used here assumes language represents interpretations within a context of shared social practice. The discourse of this teacher may mirror representations of teaching in society but does not necessarily reflect the reality of individual practice (Denzin, 1997; Fairclough, 1992; Potter, 1996). Tim's way of describing his work is constructed through the language available to him, his personal interpretations of experience, and the socially-mediated portrayals of his work (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Overall, this account is not meant to represent any reality beyond that of the image of teaching as portrayed in this conversation. As a tool for personal professional development, on the other hand, this methodology allows teachers to closely examine the relationships among thought, discourse, and practice.

As themes began to repeat themselves, segments of talk were coded and categorized into the following themes: devaluation of teaching, efforts to please the administration, relationships between teachers and administration, supervision and observation for evaluation purposes, teaching as a technical act, and a lack of recognition of professionalism. This focused coding allows for precise categorization and inclusion of a large amount of the conversation (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser, 1992). These six categories were then collapsed into three larger categories: the value of personal and professional knowledge, relationships and collegiality, and teaching as a technical act. While many of these categories overlapped and were distributed throughout the transcript, the following results and simultaneous discussion provide clear examples to illustrate each category.

Results and Discussion

The following discussion presents excerpts from the conversation with interpretations based on current thinking in teacher education. General patterns indicate that references to personal practical knowledge are lacking, professional relationships are described in terms of hierarchy rather than collaboration or collegiality, and that technical notions of teaching pervade the conversation. These three categories are described and illustrated below with the most striking examples from the transcript. The following discussion serves as a model for teachers to examine the ways in which their own conversations reflect professional identity.

Category 1: The Value of Personal and Professional Knowledge

On a few occasions toward the beginning of the conversation, Tim indicated a sense of separation, or seeing himself as different from the other teachers, based on pedagogical knowledge. He seems to believe that because his formal teacher education program was so long ago, he is working at a disadvantage. When asked what guides his teaching the most, he responded:

Tim: On the job experience. Just doing it and seeing what works and what doesn't. It's been too far removed in twenty-two years=

A: =Do you think it's any different for teachers who come right out of college?=
Tim: =Oh, absolutely.

A: How...do you see a difference from observing your colleagues? Can you see that there's a difference from a teacher who's twenty-one, just right out of undergrad=
Tim: =Sure. They've got the most recent experience on the theory of teaching and the different ways kids learn. I rely on the way I was taught and that doesn't work all the time, obviously.

A: And you think theirs does?
Tim: No, but I think they are probably pleasing the principal. Which is what it all comes down to.

Tim sees himself as being different from the teachers who come directly from undergraduate programs in education. Tim does not see his personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987) as an asset to what he does. He places more value on knowledge of new methods. However, he defines value through the eyes of administrators. His "on the job experience," which, ironically, new teachers sometimes complain is missing from their own preparation, is what Tim sees as important, but perhaps not legitimized in his own experience as a teacher.

Category 2: Relationships and Collegiality

The relationship between teachers and administrators, as inferred from Tim's comments, is of a complex and somewhat contradictory nature. Although current theories and models aim at promoting a collegial relationship between teachers and administrators, the traditional chasm between the two is explicit in Tim's discourse. He talks about his effort to please the administration, the power struggle between the two, and his recognition of the administrators' responsibilities. The following excerpts describe Tim's experiences with administrators during cycles of supervision.

Tim: In this one last class there was this one girl, this is the third time I've had her in class, so she's not gonna do much anyway, but we got her going a little bit so he liked that.

In this case Tim is talking about his own observation and the fact that "he," referring to the principal, was the reason for trying to improve a student's behavior. Tim also shares his experience in preparation for his very first observation as a new teacher:

Tim: My first year I was scared stiff. I took three weeks to plan this lesson for right on that day, and he canceled on me. So I kept the lesson plan till he came back. Yeah, I know. I'm teaching to impress him.

With full recognition, Tim shares a reaction to supervision that may be all too typical (Blumberg, 1980; Little, 1990; McGee & Eaker, 1977; Smyth, 1997). Although he followed this statement by saying that now, with more experience, he does not change his lesson plans for the approval of his superiors, this idea of compromising later resurfaces:

Tim: Oh sure, you play your strength. You know, they want uh...what's the term I want?...group work. They want that and you can't do that all the time, but I guarantee that when the principal and assistant principal came in, that's what we were doing that day.

Although Tim seems to recognize that variety is part of teaching, his decision-making process is overshadowed by thoughts of what the principal wants to see. The desire to please the administration is clear. The relationship between teachers and administrators, however, is not quite so straightforward. Tim talks about the power struggle between the principal and the teachers, and his need to please classroom observers suggests a traditional superior-subordinate relationship. At the same time, Tim obviously feels more powerful in his experience with classroom observations than he did as a novice teacher.

Tim: This year, I already had my lesson plan; this is what we're going to do. We are going to do three things. Boom, boom, boom. Come see it if you want. And that's...I'm not gonna change for you...

It is unclear, however, whether or not Tim feels more confident in his teaching or just less confident in the process of supervision. In the following excerpt Tim attributes administrators with the ability to evaluate accurately a teacher's performance in less than twenty minutes. He makes excuses for their time limitations, but ultimately, he sees supervision as "their" responsibility. Supervision is not a collaborative effort.

Tim: The thing I did here, when the principal or associate principal came they stayed the whole 90 minutes, which is kind of a waste. I think you can figure it out in the first twenty.

A: You think so?

Tim: Oh yeah. Especially with a veteran teacher.

A: What do you think they are looking for? If they figure out in twenty minutes=

Tim: =I'm not sure. I'm not really sure. But my guess is twenty minutes. And to me, it's a waste of time for them to stay 90 minutes because they are very busy people. And I would think they have...I know they have other things they need to do. And that's one block out of four in one day. That's a fourth of the day. And if you're going to be observing...we have maybe sixty staff members. That's a lot of time. And you have a lot of other things to do. So, but that's their business, not mine.

Interestingly, Tim does not know what the administrators are looking for when they do an observation, but he claims that they can do it in as short a time period as twenty minutes. Later in the conversation it was suggested that if the lesson is pre-planned for the observation, then twenty minutes probably is enough, and Tim agreed. This raises the question then about whether or not Tim does feel empowered as a teacher. He says he no longer changes to please the administration, yet he does not believe that they need to observe his classroom for more than twenty minutes. This internal contradiction may be symptomatic of a prevalent belief in teaching as a technical act.

Category 3: Teaching as a Technical Act

In several excerpts from the conversation, teaching seems to be regarded as an act of technical skill and know-how, at least on the surface. Tim emphasizes the value of theory and methods over his own reliance on the way he was taught. At no time does he recognize a teacher's personal style and knowledge as contributing to the learning process; he only distinguishes between the new and old methods. In addition, respect for another teacher is

not based on personal observations or even hearsay of his or her work; it is based, rather, on the number of years the teacher has put in. This becomes apparent as Tim talks about his mentor.

Tim: I didn't feel equal cause he'd been there. He was a teacher there when I was in high school, but I feel more equal to him now. He was a great help. I'd say, "Hey, what are you doing with this?" [He'd reply,] "Here's my folder take what you want out of it." So he was a big help, and he's done that for other teachers over the last two years. So he's really good about that.

Not only is the mentor admired for his veteran status, but also for his sharing of materials. Mentoring in this manner seems to reduce professional development to the acquisition of lesson plans and materials.

Tim, at least in some respects, equates successful classroom instruction with knowledge of methods and good lesson plans. This may be due to the fact that he does not see himself as a creative person (see excerpt below), in addition to having to cope with the constraints of the administration and the imposition of standardized tests. Tim criticizes his division's use of standard tests for all content sections and admits to having to teach for the tests and literally give students the answers to questions. Although he strives to teach for understanding (Lampert & Loewenberg-Ball, 1998) and relates content to his students' lives, Tim's self-perception is that he lacks creativity.

Tim: I taught [name of course] last year, and I really didn't like it cause it's hard to teach, and I'm not a creative person. I'm not gonna put on costumes and dress like George Washington or whatever. I'm not gonna....although if I can teach them a few ideas, a few concepts. You know, what did we get from the Romans and the Greeks. I try to tie that in... look at Roman law and what do we have today? There's a lot, and from each period if we can come up with a few points, I'll be happy.

Tim, here, equates creativity with entertainment, not realizing that he does not have to dress up and entertain his students in order to be creative with the content of the course. Further, he does not give himself credit for encouraging students to understand the material as it relates to their own lives. Perhaps he does not give himself credit because the structure of supervision in his school does not support his efforts. Ben-Peretz (2001) points out that "teaching for understanding seems to contradict teaching for standards and/or vocational readiness" (p. 51), leaving some teachers uncertain about priorities.

Later in the conversation it becomes evident that the supervision process in Tim's school does not prioritize reflective thinking or question the ways in which learning can be meaningful. The observation process is characterized by a "let's get this thing over with" attitude. The following excerpt illustrates the mechanical nature of this process:

Tim: The assistant principal called me up and said, "Geez, I got four of these to do by the end of the week and you're one of the four. When can I come in?"

A: So, what kind of information did he gather?

Tim: Basically, you fill out a form ahead of time, the pre-observation form. What your objectives are, how the objectives relate to your goals, and your plans to meet these objectives, how do you know when the kids have met these objectives? And then just list what your lesson plan is for the day, basically. And, uh, I did that for him. And he said, "Well, we'll have our pre-observation conference with our post-observation conference." We combined them and he showed up when I started the class and said, "I'll stay twenty minutes."

A: OK, so did you have a post-observation?

Tim: Yes.

A: What did you talk about in that?

Tim: He said, basically, uh..."How do you want me to fill this out?" He was real informal. He was the assistant principal and he had better things to do...but what it consisted of was, you know, he told me what he thought, like did I meet

my objective or not, and answered the questions on the form.

A: Umm, was it helpful then? Did you learn anything from the cycle of supervision?

Tim: Not this year.

A: But in the past?

Tim: =Yeah, in the past the principal had some good observations, and last year the assistant principal observed me and had some good observations.

From Tim's recollection of this episode, it is clear that the assistant principal's attitude signals to the teachers that this observation is not useful. The fact that the assistant principal considers classroom observation so lightly may be a reflection of his disagreement with the evaluative nature of the process, or ambivalence toward the process. Tim's perception that the assistant principal has "better things to do" is disquieting in that it intimates several possible, yet all negative, attitudes. Tim may feel that supervision is a threat, he may not have any confidence in the process, he may not feel as if there is any possible benefit, or he may believe that what he does is not deserving of his superior's time.

Ironically, Tim says that the only time he "learned" something from his observations was the previous year when the principal or assistant principal observed his class for the full period (90 minutes), yet he also insists that a 90-minute observation is a waste of time and that 20 minutes is sufficient. Moreover, what he "learned" consisted of the observations of others about mechanical things, such as involving every student. Student participation is important, of course, but having a second pair of eyes in the classroom for a long session offers opportunity to collect meaningful data about issues that are of concern for the teacher. When the teacher designates the data to be gathered, the observation becomes part of a process of inquiry. The process outlined by Tim reflects a technical procedure in which a superior must offer some kind of feedback, whether it is meaningful to the learning process or not.

Finally, teaching is portrayed as a technical act in this conversation by the lack of both the

recognition of teaching as a profession and the sense of moral duty attached to the position. Tim makes two very striking comments about his teaching that indicate his own disregard for the importance of his profession. When talking about having to unexpectedly teach a class, he admits that he depended on the book then adds, "but I've fulfilled my obligation." Shortly afterwards he talks about his strategy for teaching by saying, "It's not brain surgery."

Tim's dedication to teaching may seem questionable from these comments, yet from additional unrecorded conversations his enthusiasm for teaching is overwhelmingly apparent. He talks about students, colleagues, and his school with a sense of dedication and caring. He takes his job seriously and wants to do it well; still the language he uses to talk about his work reflects a negative stereotype of teachers as "those who cannot do anything else." The rewards and challenges of his teaching are lost in a maze of stereotypes and negative images.

Also missing from Tim's discourse is the language of reflection and professional development. Throughout his discussion of mentoring and observations, Tim seems unaware of the potential each of these processes offer for professional growth and change. The mentoring program he described is designed with new teachers assigned to veteran teachers, with no time allotted for meaningful conversations. This sets the stage for what Hargreaves (1994) refers to as "contrived collegiality" in which participants are forced into a relationship. In addition, the assistant principal's lack of concern for the observation signals to teachers that they are either not worthy of his time or that they have no reason to reflect on their own work and learn more about themselves as teachers. Professional development is not an apparent goal. Unfortunately, this attitude can carry over to the ways in which teachers view the classroom. Tim remarks that block scheduling is good because, "if you got a bad class it's not everyday but every other day." A change in scheduling is more effective than realizing a change in behaviors or patterns of communication in a "bad" class. While this

comment might not represent Tim's actions in the classroom, it does indicate a lack of reflection on a problem and even overlooks "change" as an option. Going back to the beginning of the conversation, however, Tim does mention that the most important influence in his teaching is on the job experience that allows him to see what works and what does not. Creating a dialogue about the differences between the "things that work" and the "things that don't" is a missing component for teachers such as Tim. Tim needs the opportunity to create a discourse for explaining the ways in which he can see "what works" and understand the beliefs and values that underlie his decision-making. Without this discourse he cannot articulate, and perhaps not even recognize, the complexity of his profession.

Implications for Teacher Education

Tim's narrative provides one very important glimpse into the lived experience of a teacher and how these experiences may be portrayed in social discourse. Through Tim's conversation about his work, educators are reminded of the challenges faced by new teachers, as well as the ways in which stereotypes about teaching and teacher education can become great obstacles to reflective practice. Tim's construction of an image of his work through his language reveals the incongruities that teachers, administrators, and teacher educators continuously confront.

First of all, Tim defines his work through pedagogical terms and knowledge, compares himself to other teachers, and makes no mention of personal practical knowledge. Although the consequences of one's personal practical knowledge may be seen in the classroom through the ways in which teachers' interact with students and content, Tim may represent a population of teachers who have been trained to believe, or say, that the "best" classroom behaviors are those prescribed by outside experts. Although it is certainly valuable to be able to apply theory and methodology, the personal decision-making involved with the actual application phase is critical to effective practice. Is Tim's belief that the most recent graduates of

teacher education programs have a distinct advantage a reflection of his personal lack of confidence or of a notion that equates good teaching with proper training? Overall, Tim does not outwardly question his ability to teach; he just reduces his work to mechanical behaviors. This attitude, reinforced by a school culture that values immediate and measurable results, may create tensions for professional development and teacher education.

Secondly, Tim validates his work in terms of how it is viewed and judged by administrators, who in turn may be representing, willingly or not, a product-oriented system. Tim believes that he has to please the administrators and mentions blatant attempts at doing so. Unfortunately, Tim is not alone in this reaction. Blumberg (1980) referred to this phenomena as a "private cold war" between teachers and administrators; and while there are really no victors in this war, teachers are clearly the losers (and students are the victims). Without a shared vision of supervision as an opportunity for professional growth and development, supervision is devoid of collegiality and reflection.

Third, a sense of separation from administrators is an issue that teacher educators continuously encounter. Tim does not provide a great deal of information about his interpersonal relationship with the administrators, but often he isolates himself from "them." A relationship that facilitates conversation between teachers and supervisors is not part of his discourse. Instead, the relationship is defined by levels of perceived threat. Because of the negative stereotypes of supervision and the failure to see supervision as an opportunity for learning, professional teacher development needs to deal with the establishment of a safe learning environment for the teachers and participating administrators.

Overall, Tim's discourse is a poignant reminder that a reconceptualized vision of teaching and learning as an unpredictable, cognitively complex activity has not quite infiltrated the discourse of all practicing teachers. Tim's school is considered to be one of the best in the state, and it offers innovative programs and classes that encourage community involvement and public support. Still, a faculty

member such as Tim, who has participated in a mentoring program, professional development workshops, and supervision, does not talk about meaningful learning, reflection, critical thinking skills, classroom-based research, or personal experience. His discourse is limited to the technical world of evaluation, standardized tests, block scheduling, and administrative concerns. While Tim's discourse exhibits an absence of contemporary theory, it may serve well as an example of the dissonance between verbal description and actual practice. Tim's professional ability is not necessarily limited by what he expressed in this narrative; however, the voice to express, discuss, and negotiate meaning from the daily activities of teaching and learning needs to be encouraged in teacher preparation and professional development.

As a starting point for professional development, teachers should be aware of how they portray their work through their talk and casual conversations. Time may be well spent in professional development workshops asking teachers to examine transcripts of their own talk. The quality of the discourse, of course, is contingent on giving teachers the opportunity to talk with someone in a trusting, safe environment and record this conversation. A list of guiding questions or scenarios should be provided as prompts for conversations. Next, teachers should have the option to listen to the conversation by themselves, or with a partner. An initial analysis can focus on listing the words used to describe teaching and comparing these to stereotyped images of the teaching profession. Consequent steps include listening to the conversation on the macro level for categories of thought, such as reflection, technical aspects, supervision, student relationships, professional relationships, or any other salient topics. Subsequent listenings can focus attention to a micro-level analysis of particular words and connotations, uncovering patterns in thought and description that reflect power dynamics, stereotypes, and uninformed judgments. Finally, teachers need to analyze the place of the conversation within their professional lives, beginning with two questions: 1) How are the ways in which you talk about your

work related to your practice and behaviors as a teacher? 2) How are the ways in which you talk about your work related to a) your teacher training, b) professional development activities, c) the attitudes of your peers, and d) the portrayals of teaching that you encounter outside of the academic world? This activity allows for many variations, but should be designed with the intent of first allowing participants to use a systematic analysis by discussing and examining the influence of social stereotypes, followed by the individual, reflective component. Some teachers may be ready for reflection and personal self-assessment right away, but others may benefit from a more systematic analysis that ultimately leads to a more introspective approach. Alternatively, an anonymous transcript can be used as an exercise for a large audience. Individualized narrative analysis can complement portfolios, peer mentoring, reflective supervision, coaching, and initiatives that aim to develop professional identity and improve classroom practice.

Conclusion

To educators immersed in the discourse of teacher education and professional development, images ranging from the reflective, professionally engaged practitioner, to the overworked, institutionally constrained, burnt-out worker bombard the landscape of the discipline. Although these extremes may exist, it seems more plausible that most teachers, such as Tim, fall somewhere along the continuum where seemingly contradictory philosophies and practices co-exist, where beliefs and behaviors do not always fall into harmonious union, and where self-image and professional identity are cultivated by a mixture of public images and personal and professional experiences. Asking teachers, then, to engage in reflective practice involves recognition of these tensions and complexities as a foundation for professional development.

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- teachers and supervisors and interaction among students from diverse language backgrounds.*

Carla Chamberlin is currently an assistant professor at Penn State Abington College, Abington, PA, where she teaches courses in communication and English as a second language. Carla has taught and supervised teachers in the United States, France, and South Korea during the past 15 years. Her research explores relationships between