(Re)negotiating Teacher Identities Across Two Discursive Frames of Critically Reflective Practice

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This paper explains how two very different, but linked, discursive frames of critically reflective practice provide the means through which a reconstructionist notion of identity can be enacted in talk about professional practice. It demonstrates how, using a teacher-authored picture book about professional practice, a researcher and a teacher "argue" back and forth about the kinds of identities that are readable, visually and verbally. The process itself inculcates a depth of critical reflection. A clear finding is that for a shift to a deeper form of critically reflective practice to occur, it is not important that co-reflectors reach a consensus on the alternative identities proposed during the talk. Rather, the goal is that they negotiate their ways through multiple perspectives of the professional world, some which uncomfortably challenge the status quo while others retain it.

This paper examines a transcript of a one-on-one research interview between a first year teacher (named Lucas) and the author. While in his final year of a teacher education program, Lucas participated in the first stage of a two-stage study that was about ways of making critical reflection more critical. Then, he produced an explanation of a self-authored and illustrated picture book where he reflected on his practice teaching experiences. During that stage of the study he had been prompted to challenge any taken-for-granted assumptions about the world of preservice teaching he represented in his picture book. Lucas was the only one of the 19 undergraduate student teacher participants who began to make this move (see Johnson, 2002a) to deeper critical reflection. With this research history in mind I reasoned that Lucas was amenable to a second interview where the researcher, this time using the vocabulary of poststructuralism more explicitly, once again challenged his explanation of the professional activities portrayed in his different (second) picture book produced retrospectively about his first year as an employed teacher.

For some time researchers have relied on the combination of storytelling and various methods of accounting for teacher stories, for example, seminar discussions and research interviews (Connelly, & Clandinin, 1990; Doecke, Brown, & Loughran, 2000), so as to achieve greater understanding of how teachers construct their professional identities. Some have used storytelling as a basis from which teachers might begin to know and change those identities (Britzman, 1986, 1992). An important finding, concerning the capacity of narrative for changing identity, is presented by Gomez, Walker, and Page
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(2000). They examined the talk about personal stories in a weekly university seminar with a social reconstructionist orientation to multicultural education, held over more than a year, and concluded that "once developed these stories did not support self- and peer-critique. Rather, the stories appeared to help prospective teachers author identities that reinscribed their personal experiences" (p. 742). More recently, Marsh (2002, p. 333) found that "by providing prospective teachers with the tools for conceptualising teacher thinking as social, teacher educators can provide future educators with alternative ways to author their identities". Elsewhere I have outlined three methods of accounting as tools that are useful for helping to produce alternative ways of reflecting on professional practice (Johnson, 2002b). This paper focuses more specifically on the third method, a one-on-one interview between a teacher and a researcher that is stimulated by the teacher's picture book narrative. It examines further possibilities for facilitating more deeply reflective talk that will enable teachers to challenge, understand and perhaps reconsider, if not change, personal experience stories and the identities they protect.

Two views of identity
When examining materials in relation to identity, whether connected to storytelling or in any other context, there are at least two perspectives available in the literature. One, an essentialist view, holds that there is a single observable "I" that is fixed and enduring and unrelated to contexts of time and place. This understanding of identity is often linked to biological history and ethnicity. A more contemporary view holds that identity is unstable and socially (re)constructed. Therefore any discursive event facilitates possibilities for changing identity through "an ongoing dialogue between one's personal history, present conditions, beliefs, values, and the social, cultural, historical, and political forces that surround groups of individuals in a given time and place" (Marsh, 2002, p. 333). Within this conceptualisation the identity attached to people is open to pressures of debate and destabilisation. This latter view provides theoretical support to the analysis of data in this paper. (See Proscham, 1997, for a fuller treatment of the two perspectives). The next section explains how two very different discursive frames provide the means through which the reconstructionist notion of identity can be enacted through talk about professional practice between a researcher and a teacher.

Establishing discursive frame 1 of the research interview
The interview between the teacher and the researcher was based on the understanding that the teacher would be asked first to explain what he meant by his picture book story, page by page. The talk presented throughout the paper has been transcribed using the notation symbols devised by Jefferson (1984) as outlined in Appendix 1. Thus Lucas begins with Extract 1.
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Extract 1
I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

1. I: OK well what I want to do today is um (.) I thought it'd be really good to talk to you because yours was the only one of the group in the um preservice teaching group that actually moved towards say an alternative reading

2. L: mmhmm

3. I: of your own work so that as you know is the prime concern of the study is to encourage teachers to look at their work in a um a critical way um and that's the work that I'm going to sort of in the second part of the interview I'm going to offer you my reading if you like um you understand the notion of different readings↑ ( )

4. L: mm

5. I: so what I like to do first of all is have you talk about in say an author based approach

6. L: uh huh

7. I: about what you meant by the story and then I guess um at the risk of actually offending (heh) you I'll give (h) you my (h) reading of it [and and I'd like to really um discuss it at that point so in the first um (.) part if you just want to just go through it page by page as as we did in the first round of interviews

8. L: [fair enough]

9. L: uh huh

10. I: and just tell me what you think it is and I mean there's there's no real point in my interrupting much because it's your story you know you're telling me the story about your story so

This request to "defend" his story (written text and pictures) could reasonably be seen to open the way for the teacher to take the floor and produce a personal "author based" (Klarer, 1998) intended and comfortable reading of the protagonist's identity in the context of the interview discussion. As can be seen through a cursory glance of Extract 2 of the interview (following), the researcher makes minimal input after the initial invitation to talk. She has justified this stance earlier with "there's no real point in my interrupting much" (turn 10). As Lucas works through his explanation, referring page by page to his written and visual text, he quickly establishes that his authorial intention is that his protagonist "Chuck" be read as a happy excited teacher who is "enjoying teaching" and "being with the kids" (Extract 2, turn 32). He establishes an autobiographical link to Chuck in turn 34.
Extract 2

I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

26. L: um (.) the next page he gets into what it is that um teaching's all about is actually getting in there and playing around with it um and he and he loves it he's doing what he wants to do so it's the various personas he has to take

27. I: yeah
28. L: as a teacher like um matter of fact excited um smug (h) stern
29. I: mmhmm
30. L: so he's just (.) doing what you know teachers are supposed to do I guess
31. I: mmhmm
32. L: in the next one (.) while he's enjoying teaching ah being with the kids is what he li-
33. I: ye
34. L: really enjoys um and here I've got them sitting on the floor that's basically because ah I'm a drama teacher and mostly whenever I teach the kids they're sitting on the floor all surrounded so

A key part of the explanation is taken up with the narrative problem Lucas wishes to reflect upon. He introduces this as a new topic in turn 42.
Extract 3
I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

42. L: this page [page 4] shows the two different worlds that I think that are existing in ah schools everywhere
43. I: mmhmm
44. L: um and it's (...) the stress levels and the um total politicking that happens on the other side of it ah the world that the kids actually don't see and ah that's something that I was struck by when I was going through schools like I never knew that that world existed
45. I: mmhmm
46. L: and now I'm a part of that world ah and that's what's happening with Chuck here he's realising that there's more to school than just teaching the kids and doing
47. I: yeah
48. L: good at your work
49. I: mmhmm
50. L: and then the next one [page 5] he's really um noticing that it’s not what happens um inside like the teachers aren't going up against each other it's external influences so that's why I've got the big cross there with a no cos that's not happening um it’s more that the people in the staff room feeling um oppressed by like admin and um things that are outside [of their and yeah policies and stuff

51. I: [policy and so on

Figure 3

Untitled (page 5 of Lucas's picture book).

52. I: mmhmm
53. L: things that are outside of their control and no matter what they do or no matter what they try to do
54. I: mmhmm
55. L: they're either not listened to or they're just not getting anything through
56. I: mmhmm
57. L: so they keep getting knocked down and then they get upset and then work suffers and stuff like this so Chuck is just like here he's going I I don't understand why is the stress levels so far up
58. I: mmhmm
59. L: but everybody's getting along

The problem for teachers, according to Lucas's explanation of page 5, appears to be "external influences" (turn 50) such as administration procedures and policies: "they're either not listened to or they're just not getting anything through .... so they keep getting knocked down and then they get upset and then work suffers .... but everybody's getting along". The question raised
now is what new or additional kind of identity does Lucas construct for his protagonist Chuck, in the midst of his reflection on this problem in his professional life? Looking to Lucas’s explanation of the next page (page 6 as outlined in Figure 3) he begins to describe activities related to that identity: "you've got to start playing the game" (turn 61). The same "you've got to play the game" identity is confirmed later in his explanation of page 7 (see turn 77 in Extract 5).

Figure 4.
Untitled (page 6 of Lucas’s picture book).

Extract 4
I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

61. L: in the next one [page 6] that's what he's doing he's thinking about it and um and he's realising that tea-teaching isn't just about teaching the kids it's you've got to start playing the game

62. I: mmmhm

63. L: ah but he doesn't like that idea
Figure 5.
Untitled (page 7 of Lucas's picture book).

Figure 6.
Untitled (page 8 of Lucas's picture book).
Extract 5
I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

77. L: like there's consequences so yeah that's what I like this page um then in the next one [page 7] um he starts realising this is when um you've got to start playing the game what you say to who you say it to because um he's realising that the rumour mill in schools are very very strong and they blast out everything out of proportion um and he starts learning how to speak properly and how to make sure that if he says something to someone ah when they're upset make sure that he phrases it in a way that they can't get upset with him

78. I: mmhmm

79. L: so yeah he's really beginning to play around um and realise what role he has to play

By the final stages of his explanation of his picture book, Lucas's talk has returned Chuck to the former happy child-centred teacher identity described similarly in Extract 6.

Extract 6
I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

81. L: then in the last um last page [8] it's like he's kind of realising that that's always going to be there

82. I: yep

83. L: but this is what teaching is really about having fun with the kids um and giving them an experience something that they can be happy with and go away and go you know I really enjoyed school because I had a really good teacher

In this first stage of the interview, Lucas has constructed two inter-related identities. The message one could take from this stage of the reflective process appears to be that Chuck the first year teacher must learn to play the political game and be careful of what he says, to whom, if he wants to continue doing what he loves best (teaching kids). The overall reason for making the picture book and explaining it to an interested colleague was to examine the suitability of the methodology for expanding critical reflection. The question raised now is if and how the process could be considered to enhance and deepen Lucas's critical reflection practice.

A danger with asking for an author-based explanation of a picture book that represents reflection on personal experience is that one will probably receive a recount of the artefact where little or no progress is made toward interrogating the status quo. That is, the possibility is there for the re-inscription of personal experiences (Gomez et al., 2000). I propose, in the example demonstrated here as discursive frame 1, that Lucas has moved beyond a re-inscription of personal experience. He has become critically reflective through the process of talking about the material artefact. Even though Lucas's picture book shows his alias Chuck as a happy classroom teacher who is aware of the pressures
that teachers endure outside the classroom, nowhere in the picture book itself does he state explicitly that he must "learn to play the game" if he is to continue his real love – teaching kids. It is only in the process of talking through the problem of external pressures placed on teachers, during the interview with an interested colleague, that he articulates these perceptions. An important consideration, in relation to the methodology's capability for expanding reflection, is that even though it does extend the critical reflection beyond the literal, its process of asking for an explanation of the visual-verbal text does not supply the tools to encourage explicitly a deep-seated critique of taken-for-granted professional practices. As Britzman (1991) urged, teacher educators need to encourage teachers to build bridges between biographies and social structures. The next section will examine such a move by focussing on a different discursive frame of critically reflective practice where the tools of challenge and debate are made available.

Moving to discursive frame 2 and an oppositional identity interview

Having read Lucas's picture book before the interview took place and then listened to his explanation of it in the first stage of the interview, the researcher/interviewer produced her own meaning of it. At first she too constructed an initial reading of Chuck the protagonist's identity as a peacemaker and diplomat. She then re-read as Chuck the isolated first year teacher.

During the second part of the interview she offered the latter re-reading to Lucas for discussion and debate. Overall, the researcher's re-reading challenged a stable author-based reading of the teacher's work and his perceptions of his protagonist as the happy teacher identity, as described above. This section demonstrates a different discursive frame of critically reflective practice, one that is designed to challenge personal stories and the often comfortable identities they protect. An important consideration is how the different identities are proposed and (re)negotiated by the teacher's and the researcher's talk. Once again this examination of the shifting nature of identity construction involves examining the dialogic uses the speakers make of conversational and linguistic moves, for example, management of topic choice, response sequences, turn-taking and discourse markers, particularly politeness strategies.

In the following extract from the second part of the interview, the interviewer sets up the new topic for discussion as trying to "stretch the boundaries of reflective practice as far as I can" (turn 84).

**Extract 7**

I (Interviewer)

L (Lucas)

Date: July 15, 2002

84. I: yeah mmhmm OK well as I said the aim of the study is to basically look at um trying to reflect on practice which you've done in a fairly unusual way you know not everybody sits down and does a picture book when they reflect on practice (h) as we all know but what I want to do is stretch the boundaries of reflective practice as far as I can and um I guess um introduce another reading and what I've done is I've pulled out just
some pages so in effect I'm sort of I'm just looking at the end of your story pages six seven and eight really um I suppose what I'm struck with is um what struck me was in a sense a happy ending you know you say it's not totally happy but you've basically worked out some solution so there's a resolution

85. L: mm

86. I: to to the problem that you've you've looked at you know that you there are minefields in schools and you've got to basically step carefully if ultimately the kids are going to have a good time so to speak would that be

87. L: mm

This explanation of discursive frame 2 is elaborated with a further explanation: "what I wanted to do was make trouble for the text..." (turn 88) and "we [must] ask but whose interests are served by this and what are the gaps and silences in the text" (turn 90). Thus the parameters of a different discursive framework are established, and subsequently present quite a different approach to critical reflection from that proposed earlier in the interview. At this time it is reasonable to assume that the interviewer has constructed an identity for herself as a poststructurally informed critically reflective practitioner, albeit of another's professional practice, and she is proposing to share this identity with Lucas by maintaining an intellectual discussion. The underlying assumption here is that there is a hitherto unidentified (by Lucas) professional problem related to his personal experience story and that a form of poststructurally derived critical reflection (see Johnson, 1997, 2002b) might be a way to resolve or at least become aware of it.

Any type of face-to-face encounter, even the most common daily interactions, are complex and dialogic events during which individuals co-construct and negotiate meaning (Bakhtin, 1981). A proposal to challenge others' personal experiences is especially complex. As a researcher I am aware of a warning by Gomez et al. (2000) about the sensitive nature of interrogating personal stories and the importance of considering social relationships in intellectual discussions (Tracey & Baratz, 1993). However, as explained earlier, as interviewer I reasoned that Lucas would be able to enter into this discussion without too much loss of face (Dabbs, 1983). Towards the middle of the interview, between turns 88 and 92, I put to him that this is delicate intellectual and personal territory and offer a face-saving device in the form of a disclaimer to appearing offensive.

Extract 8

I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

88. I: a fair enough summary↑ OK so what I wanted to do was to make trouble for the text (h) and um and I'm aware that there's the problem possibly with offending people (h) doing this but I want to work back from the happy ending to say the bits just before the happy ending and I looked particularly at the text mainly through the visuals and I was particularly interested in the notion of gaze and well technique wise well what was going on sort of visually gaze but my overall question was OK at the end of the story you look quite on top of things really you
know you've got the ways to be diplomatic and you're sitting there looking pretty sort of um not smug but satis-satisfied

89. L: mm

90. I: with the way things are and my question immediately came you know how we do in um critical literacy but we ask but whose interests are served by by this and what are the gaps and silences in the text so what I really wanted to know was well really um if we take it away from you L um we sort of just look at it as a text generally which is a little hard to do but you step back from it and you say OK how powerful is this person Chuck the first year teacher at the end of the story (.) so I want to introduce the notion that possibly there are minefields there that you hadn't really thought of that he hadn't really thought of we're talking about Chuck not you

91. L: (h)

92. I: OK um now I want you to you can either listen to me my point and then argue with me um or you can argue with me as I'm going along whichever you like so jump in whenever you like

The disclaimer is reinforced further by the conciliatory offer "listen to me my point and then argue with me" (turn 92). The apparent assumption here is that the interview genre will mutate to an intellectual debate that will introduce controversial kinds of identities. Lucas offers no objection to the shift in discursive frames of critical reflection from a personal focus in the opening stages of the interview to a more politically driven frame in the latter part. With the teacher’s implied consent to shift the discursive frame and the dynamics of the social interaction, the researcher/interviewer moves quickly to introduce an oppositional identity for Chuck (see Extract 9) from that co-constructed in the earlier stage of the interview during discursive frame 1.

**Extract 9**

I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

94. I: alright so first of all I looked at this bit and I thought um O::K you're in a school you're with a lot of colleagues there is this problem of the politics now (2) I just wondered why um (.) there's there's the **isolation** here you know as opposed to actually discussing the politics with other colleagues [bold used for emphasis]

95. L: mm

96. I: I thought well that's interesting because there's that sort of gaze out to the reader more or less bewildered you know but there's not the the other colleagues in here and then when we look at the next page which I thought was pretty good (h) symbolically actually (h) we've got the same thing you know there's still the mi-sort of getting away from it not sort of getting involved and treading the minefield but again on your own [bold used for emphasis]

In Extract 9 the identity of "Chuck the isolated figure in his school setting" is introduced as a new topic for debate. This identity opposes that which was offered by Lucas earlier when he implied that one of the primary characteristics of Chuck's identity
as a first year teacher was that he had learned how to get along with other colleagues regardless of the external pressures that were being exerted.

**Considering and rejecting an oppositional identity in discursive Frame 2**

When Lucas politely puts forward a justification for his seeming isolation, "yeah well to a degree with that I think because he is a first year teacher um he doesn't know how to approach other teachers" (turn 97) the interviewer quickly suggests that "degrees of power and hierarchy" (turn 111) are yet to be considered. She then follows up this addition to the topic with reference to her re-reading of another section of the picture book (page 8) again with reference to the poststructurally derived methodology for critical reflection (see Extract 10).

See again Page 8 of Lucas's Picture Book 2

**Extract 10**

I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

114. I: and I guess one of the ways one of the things () the products I guess of doing this sort of analysis is to be aware purely of of that um OK so this one I found really interesting because I saw the page [page 8] as divided into if we talk about contrasting discourses you know two distinctly contrasting discourses um this seemed to be there's a narr-ah visual grammar that allows you that Kress and van Leeuwen use that you can divide up a page between say the given that's the taken for granted and the new stuff well the given here seems to be that again there's the the gaze but this time it's inside the picture and I thought ultimately it worked out that Chuck was watching himself you know [watching his Ps and Qs [bold used for emphasis]

115. L: [mm

116. L: yeah that's

117. I: you know um and which again is a very isolated thing to be doing you know um

118. L: mm

119. I: and that then contrasted so grandly or (h) obviously with this um I guess this the rise of power there you know with the orator's sort of hand up and so on so there's this very much this contrasting discourse and it led me back to say well one way you could look at that and say well that's where he's come to but the other way you could say well this sort of confidence is really in a sense um oh I spose toned down a bit by this kind of view [bold used for emphasis]

Although the metalanguage "contrasting discourses" is familiar to Lucas from his teacher education program and his participation in the first year of the study, he does not acknowledge this. The interviewer's building in of this information signals that she is identifying Lucas as a teacher who should know the sought-after information (Pomerantz, 1988, p. 366). She has assessed the teacher's knowledge of the method of reflecting critically within discursive frame 2. With strong expectations that Lucas is
knowledgeable in this area, the intellectual discussion now rests on the potentially sensitive point, in reference to page 8. That is, Lucas has failed to see how Chuck is immersed in two "contrasting discourses" (turns 114 & 119) where the confidence he has attained at the end of the story is undermined by his isolation from his colleagues. The interviewer is proposing that Chuck's isolation is *not* a desirable identity for a first year teacher. Moreover, the proposed identity contradicts at least some of Lucas's description of Chuck as a happy teacher who gets along with his colleagues (see Extract 11). Theoretically and pragmatically, the interviewer is also introducing a constructionist notion that multiple identities are constructed from talk in personal and institutional contexts and that they are open to destabilization and debate.

Extract 11
I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

124. I: OK so in this discussion what I'm getting from it is that I'm seeing the isolation as a negative you're seeing it as a positive and that's interesting because you're saying well that gives you space to work things out and then to go into the public arena and basically perform at the level that you are confident at ( )

125. L: um but yeah so he ah I think he really needs a I do feel that looking at myself and working out where you fit in to things is much better than just going in hell for leather

126. I: like better in terms of long term power

127. L: mm

128. I: OK well that's that's interesting because the um the whole aim of doing this is not to say that my re-reading is truer than the author based reading or the the explanation that you've just given it's basically the whole idea of discussing alternative

129. L: mm

130. I: readings and how do you feel about that as a teacher so now we're talking not so much about this text but the process that ( )

131. L: of alternative reading

Rejecting an identity but engaging with a poststructurally-derived method of critical reflection?
Lucas politely but firmly disagrees with the interviewer's proposal and confirms he has taken up an appropriate identity where stepping back from the action is necessary and productive (turn 133) if he is to achieve his long-term goal of survival in a hostile professional environment. He displays no loss of face in his responses. The methodological concern now is what benefit, if any, Lucas gained from having an oppositional identity about his protagonist offered to him by the researcher. After all he appears to have considered, but ultimately rejected, the negative reading of Chuck the first year teacher as powerless and isolated from his colleagues. A further concern is this: in the process, does Lucas also reject the second discursive frame as a viable form of
critical reflection? It appears that this is not so (see Extract 13).

**Extract 12**

I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

140. I: yeah
141. L: I think it’s really valid because not only does it challenge um the author based reading
142. I: yep
143. L: um but it challenges everybody else’s readings as well like somebody else would read this
144. I: like the reading I gave [for instance yeah
145. L: ]yeah
146. L: um and through this ah to a degree even you have been able to challenge your own reading
147. I: sure
148. L: as compared to how I see it
149. I: yeah
150. L: as the author
151. I: that’s right
152. L: um so in in every way you’re always coming up with new ideas and new concepts and new possibilities

In this Extract (12) of the interview Lucas expresses very clearly the professional value of practising this form of critical reflection and reflexivity. A key point made is that the reflective process facilitates a challenge to “everybody else’s” reading of professional practice. As he reminds the interviewer, “even you have been able to challenge your own reading” (turn 146). When the researcher asks:

140. I: OK given I mean this has been part of a research project and it’s been a one on one what do you think about um this whole how this would work in the workplace in terms of discussing practice with other people

Lucas then explicates the benefits of this form of critically reflective practice for teachers (see turn 167) and “others” in administrative positions of power who might present as “external pressures” to classroom teachers (see turn 192 and following).
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Extract 13
I (Interviewer)
L (Lucas)
Date: July 15, 2002

167. L: I think with um teachers it'll really start getting them to where they're a
192. L: perhaps it would be valid for them to go through a similar process
208. L: so sitting down and reading the paper is one thing but going and that next step
further and putting it into practice I think that's a whole another kettle of fish and
unless they actually sit down and do it with their own work
209. I: yes
210. L: I don't think they're going to they might go oh yeah that's valid but then forget
about it

In summary, although Lucas rejects the oppositional identity offered by the
researcher in discursive frame 2 of the interview, he remains positively responsive to the
methodology of poststructurally-derived critically reflective practice, long enough at least
to consider its long-term benefits. This key finding could then indicate that the notion of
poststructural teacher reflection, with its emphasis on presenting multiple ways of seeing,
has been personally and professionally beneficial for this teacher and his colleagues.
More particularly, the point has been made that Lucas and the interviewer, within both
discursive frames, have moved beyond the re-inscription of personal experience stories,
in their intellectual discussion. A display has been made of how teacher thought is
"socially negotiated and individually enacted" (Marsh, 2002, p. 335). It is the methods of
challenging, considering and, if need be, rejecting alternative and resistant identities
that is important, not the adoption of new identities per se. It would be ironc and unhelpful
if new ways of seeing themselves were imposed on reflective practitioners. From a
poststructural perspective one might then ask whose interests such a methodology
serves; a seeming democratic tool for deepening critical reflection could be seen to
achieve the reverse.

Implications for implementing poststructurally-derived critical reflection
What are the professional implications for implementing a poststructurally derived form
of critical reflection into professional practice? Having now completed a 2 year project
where I have focused on preservice and in-service teachers' critically reflective practice by
asking the core question, "Can a new approach, generated from aspects of
poststructuralism, assist preservice teachers and experienced teachers in moving to more
critical reflection?" I see now that there are two major considerations for researchers and
practitioners wishing to develop further still the methodology for critical reflection
outlined in this paper. One addresses the theory-practice nexus, while the other considers
the question of maintaining workable social relations between participants during the
reflective process.

First, talk in the research interview with and around professionally relevant artefacts
is important. I have found that an artefact such as a picture book provides a very sound
support for reflection on and discussion about professional practice. Even so such talk about the artefact, with its links to the author’s biography, still runs the risk of re-inscription of stable personal experience stories. Having established that the requirement to explain what one meant about a represented incident always stimulated some degree of critical reflection beyond literal description, I also found that this process was not enough in itself to generate deeply critically reflective practice. Over the 2 year study, I have worked with 26 teachers in the undergraduate and inservice context and I have found that if the artefact is to stimulate deeply critically reflective practice, the talk around it must be grounded in the parameters described here as discursive frame 2. A key concern is that those engaged in critically reflective practice be aware equally of the theoretical supports to the discursive frames within which the intellectual discussion might take place and that they have the metalanguage to manage and critique the dialogic processes. For example, in order to shift reflective practice from discursive frame 1 to discursive frame 2, as outlined here, a vocabulary of poststructuralism, including the key concept of "contrasting discourses", needs to be understood and its related concepts woven into the discussion. This move would then insure a more level playing field for intellectual discussion between the participants. The question for further research projects is how best to introduce participants to appropriate ways of knowing how to reflect.

The second important consideration concerns the management of social relations between reflective practitioners. This becomes a greater concern when the nature of the reflection acquires additional critical layers where colleagues reflect upon and challenge the reflections made by others about their personal experience stories. The more the challenge is mounted the greater is the possibility for offence being offered and taken. There needs to be a great deal of thought given to this problem if we are not to end up with little debate because participants strive to keep face within the rules of what is considered polite, even within the framework of an intellectual discussion. Again, I have found that when participants share a metalanguage for challenging one another's readings, debate is productive and not marred by silence brought about by loss of face. Further, the use of the metalanguage helps to transpose the discussion from the personal to the institutional context where the potential for focussing on personal shortfalls and blame attribution is reduced.

As discussed above, a clear finding is that for a shift to a deeper form of critically reflective practice to occur, it is not important that co-reflectors reach a consensus on the alternative identities proposed. To do so could be seen as a methodologically expedient means of autocratically imposing “new” ways of acting and thinking on colleagues. Instead of opening up professional alternatives, the reflective methods could then justifiably be critiqued for closing down possibilities. Rather, what is newsworthy is that the participants in this process see the world of professional practice through multiple perspectives, some which uncomfortably challenge the status quo while others retain it. It is the process, not the product, that is important.

Finally, the methods for deepening critical reflection on professional practice outlined in this paper are not relevant only to teachers and the teaching profession. The search for appropriate, alternative professional identities is a trans-disciplinary concern. This paper
has highlighted the potential danger that the stories people tell themselves and others about their professional lives become fixed and that the options for (re)acting to organisational activity are limited. A demonstration is made of ways that stories can become destabilised, therefore opening up increased ways that professional practice might become more creative, challenging and reconstructive through the (re)negotiation of different workplace identities.

References


Prosheim, E. (1997). "We are all Khm, just the same": Ethnonyms, ethnic identities and ethnic groups. *American Ethnologist, 24(1)*, 91–113.

## Appendix 1

Transcription Conventions

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>transcription doubt</td>
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