

Teacher-Writer Memoirs as Lens for Writing Emotionally in a Primary Teacher Education Programme

JAMES G. DEEGAN

Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland

This paper examines student teachers experiences of writing emotionally through the lens of teacher-writer memoirs. The participants were ninety-nine postgraduate student teachers in a sociology of teaching module in an initial primary teacher education programme in the Republic of Ireland. Analysis of journal responses indicated how student teachers shaped and reshaped their emergent identities through discourse, memory, emotions, and personal biography and along a values-action continuum. Individual freedom was evidenced in moving towards danger and new ways of doing things. Conformity was evidenced in maintaining the status quo and familiar ways of doing things. Implications for teacher education renewal and reform are discussed.

Introduction

There is a long history of research on writing emotionally and identity in social discourses (Barbalet, 2002; Calhoun, Rojek & Turner, 2005; Denzin, 1992, 1989, 1984; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Goleman, 1995; Hochschild, 1983; Kemper, 1990; Lupton, 1998; Rosengeil & Seymour, 1999), and a comparatively more recent history in educational discourses (Clandinin, 2005; Clark, 2001; Florio-Ruane, 2001, Hargreaves, 2002, 1992; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey & Russell, 2004; Strong-Wilson, 2006). One of the stories told in writer's lore is that Aldous Huxley, the English novelist, author of *Brave New World* (1932) once advised a budding writer that a white page and

a sharp pencil were the pre-requisites for a good writer—a visceral metaphor for splicing the emotional vein, releasing memory, writing subjective, lived experiences, and building identity capital. This metaphor reminds us that all writing is a dialectical tick-tacking between notions of self and emotions at any given time in any particular milieu.

While there have been a number of positive developments in initial primary teacher education related to curriculum renewal and development in the last decade in the Republic of Ireland, the official discourse continues to privilege structural matters related to teacher quality, demand and supply (OECD, 2005). In counterpoint to other leading scientific and knowledge-based economies, there have been no major debates and controversies about teaching and teacher education as a technical problem, a problem-solving problem, or a policy problem. There have been no paradigm wars about reflectivity, constructivism or diversity, notwithstanding their centrality in the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). One of the outcomes is that little research exists on the ideological, moral and emotional dimensions of teaching and teacher education. What is especially missing is a significant corpus of research on teachers' "substantive, attitudes, values, beliefs, habits, assumptions, [and] ways of doing things" (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 219).

The research project reported here examined how, and in what ways student teachers bridged memories of their own childhood experiences through the prism of teacher-writer memoirs with scenes they are currently experiencing as student teachers in a primary teacher education programme. In this way, the study is located in the research on autobiographical understanding and narrative inquiry as represented in Clandinin's (2005) *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Specifically, the study contributes to the narrative inquiry discourse and methodology by using teacher-writer memoirs to uncover some of the hidden everyday and aesthetic aspects of student teachers' lives in a particular sociology of education course in an initial primary teacher education programme in the Republic of Ireland.

Conceptual Framework

The research on narrative, memory and identity contains a number of theoretical and conceptual tensions. While there are many elegant conceptualizations of emotions in terms of workplace realities, most notably Hochschild's (1983) seminal work on the commercialization of feelings entitled *The Managed Heart* and Kemper's (1990) sociological models in the explanation of emotions, there is an

acute absence of research on writing emotionally in educational discourses. Writing emotionally is defined in this study as a way of coming to know, understand and act on the emotions through writing, including sympathy, imagination, intentions, feelings, and thoughts of self and others. Writing emotionally is a process of cutting the emotional vein and setting free feelings and ideas that have been silenced in everyday discourse. And only by cutting the emotional vein, as Lupton (1998) stated, can "the emotional self as a dynamic project continually [be] shaped and reshaped via discourse, embodied sensations, memory, personal biography and interactions"(p. 2).

Assuming a Responsibility for Who I am as a Student Teacher

Lupton's (1998) writings on the emotional self beg an educational question: How is the emotional side of teaching shaped and reshaped in the lives of initial primary teacher education students. "Ironically, the emotional side of teaching that is ubiquitous in the [teacher's] work," as Rickert (2005) states, "is seldom identified or discussed by people who talk about teaching" (p. 57). Evoking Dewey's (1933) writings on teachers' thinking processes, Rickert (2005) states that writing emotionally provides essential insights into "the barometer that heralds the puzzles of practice" (p. 57). Yet, as Akin (2005) points out, "too often novices' experience is written out of the teaching text by the plethora of programmes and policies that neither ask what they think, nor care how they feel" (p. 67). These writers share a conviction in the importance of teachers "writing themselves back" into the texts of teaching and articulating a transformative vision for themselves and "[assuming] a responsibility for who I am as a teacher" (Akin, 2005, p. 68).

As a way of articulating a vision for teaching, Denzin (1992) suggests Ulmer's (1989) postmodern pedagogy described as *mystory*—which "brings into relation experience with three levels of discourse—personal (autobiography), popular (community stories, oral history, or popular culture), and expert (disciplines of knowledge)" (Ulmer, p. vii, 209). In complement and counterpoint, Goodson (1988) wrote that the life history of the individual should be located "within the history of his time" (p. 84) and by linking "personal troubles and public issues," a task which, as C. Wright Mills (1959) pointed out many years ago, is the essence of the sociological enterprise" (p. 90). These variants in the discourse on autobiographical understanding and narrative inquiry are represented through the lens of memoir, emotion and identity in the present study.

I discuss writing emotionally in one particular social foundations module. The module is part of a consecutive model of primary teacher education at graduate entry level in Ireland. The module entitled “The Sociology of Teaching” is theoretically and conceptually influenced by the American sociologist, Willard Waller's (1932) "classic" writings on "closeness/distance" in teaching which date as far back as the 1930s and Andy Hargreaves (2002) more recent postmodern writings on the "emotional geographies of teaching" (2002) in the early twenty-first century.

Memoir as innovative design

What is innovative in the design used in the present study is the use of a clutch of intertextual themes about becoming a teacher and developing personal and professional possible selves—what Gitlin (2005) described as the "not yet" latent in the childhood and teaching memoirs of popular and critically-acclaimed “writer-teachers.” The selected works were Bryan MacMahon's *The Master* (1992), and John McGahern's *Memoir* (2005). As Graham (1992) reminds us, “one approach for deconstructing mythologies is interstitial analysis [which] involves comparing several texts that hold some features in common, perhaps a set of representational techniques, a plot line, or a substantive topic . . .” (pp. 32-33). What is especially innovative is the use of intertextual themes that have been circulating as “truths” for almost a century in the lore and language of becoming a primary teacher in Ireland but have not, heretofore, been used as sensitising pedagogical tools of in educational inquiry, for example, the “call to teaching,” “teacher as community leader,” and “teacher as change agent.” The use of teacher-writer memoirs has significant bridging capacity in straddling social, literary and educational domains of reality.

Memoir as pedagogical tool

The memoirs of MacMahon (1992) and McGahern (2005) represent two of the most popular and celebrated accounts of teaching and writing in Ireland. John McGahern challenged some of the sacred cows of his homeland's social, sexual, religious and nationalistic, and educational orthodoxies—what we might describe as "a portrait of the reluctant teacher as a young man." In complement and counterpoint, Bryan MacMahon is a self-proclaimed *údar agus oide* (writer and teacher) whose writings probed the “the genius of the place (*Hero Town* as he described his native town of Listowel, Co. Kerry), the unusual, the bizarre, the estranged, as much as the more orthodox heroes and heroines of one’s society” (Fitzmaurice, 2005, p. 7) and “turned it into "imagination” (p. 7) —what we might describe as “a portrait

of the natural teacher as an older man." While feminist researchers could argue that these choices are restricted to the "silverback" variety, there is an absence of indigenous female "writer-teacher" memoirs, notwithstanding the existence of a wide range of novels, short stories and poetry references to being a teacher in Ireland.

The Study: Context and Data Collection Procedures

Research was conducted over a 12 week semester with a whole cohort of graduate level entry primary teacher education students in one of the largest teacher education programmes in Ireland. The cohort accounted for approximately 40% of graduate level entry teacher education students nationally. The cohort consisted of 99 student teachers; 79 female, 20 male. The module followed a pre-requisite social foundations module which surveyed major social theories and paradigmatic movements in the last century. The module met for 1 hour every week for a total of 12 teaching contact periods. The age of student teachers ranged from 25 to 45. All participants were Irish nationals who held primary degrees; 80% in arts/humanities, 20% across business, physical and biomedical sciences, computer science, social science, early childhood education, and theology.

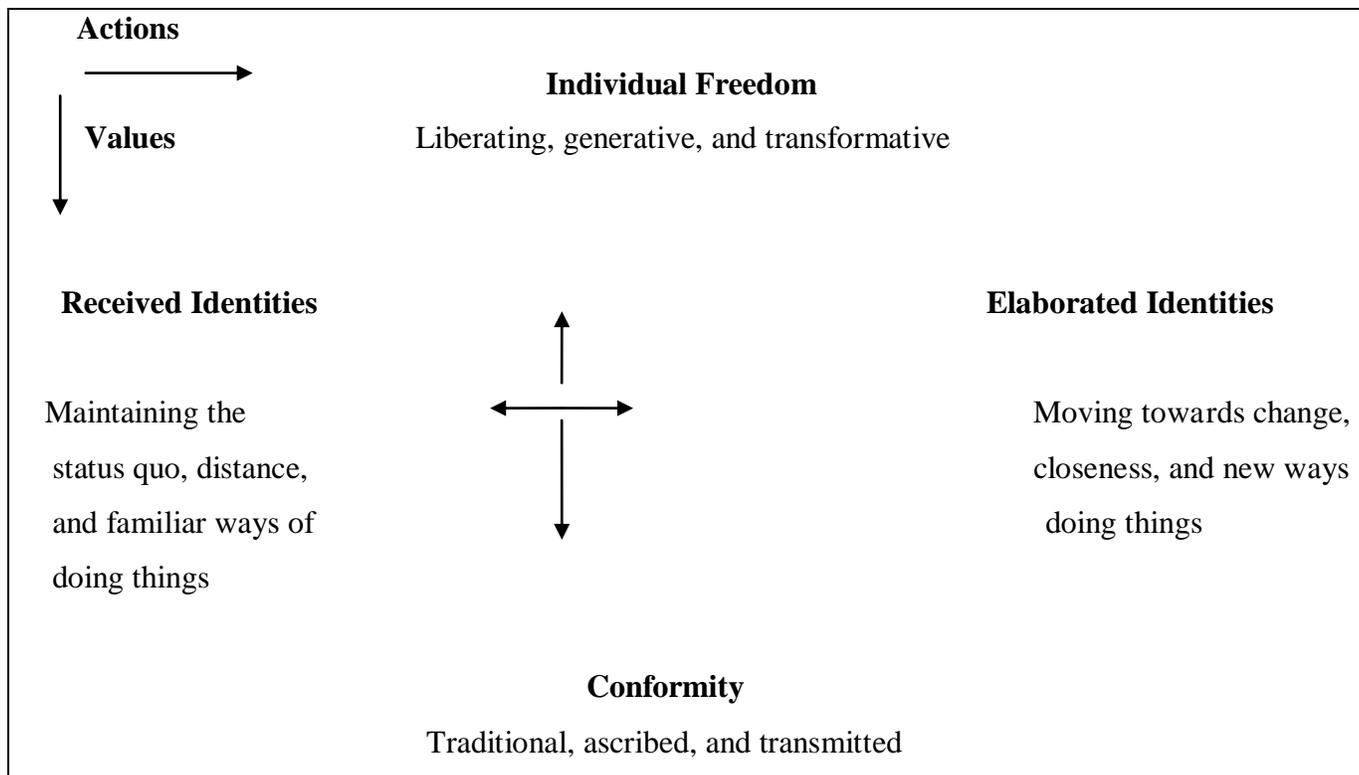
Data from the student teachers included weekly journal entries. The journals were designed to contribute towards the unfolding of a self-narrative through a layered set of interrogatives/responses on the emotions in teaching and the cultures of teaching, and with implications for personal and public issues. The methodology was a simple question and response approach, using a series of questions derived from framed or excerpted sections in the selected memoirs. Sample questions included: What lessons about teaching can I find in my past educational experiences? What lessons must I never forget? How am I beginning to think the same and differently about teaching from the teachers who taught me? In what ways do the fictional teaching accounts speak personally to me about the teacher I am becoming? When confronted by some of the cultures of teaching or emotions of teaching that I know get in the way of good teaching, how will I react? What will I do? Response journals served as an integral component for generating conversation building, skill and technique development—"journaling on"—a thinly-veiled conceit for the personal and collective odyssey of thinking, talking and writing about becoming a teacher in class debate and outside class in quieter moments. Data was collected with student permission and consent and all names and places are disguised for the purposes of confidentiality.

Following speculative analysis (Davies, 1982) and the identification of themes and categories, I incorporated three forms of triangulation that helped to build confidence in the interpretation of the data: (a) data were compared for themes grounded in the selected teacher-writer memoirs; (b) data were compared for themes grounded in sociological writings on the emotions in teaching and cultures of teaching; and (3) data were compared for individual student teachers with other student teachers. Data were analyzed for central themes and recurring ideas. Using constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), I worked the data to build theoretical categories from relationships discovered among the data. In addition, discrepant examples were analyzed to consider their relevance to the categories and relationships that emerged.

Findings and Discussion

The findings in the present study indicated that student teachers' identities were interrelated, dynamic and complex processes, defined by a values orientation and operationalised by corresponding actions. These processes are represented here in terms of a four-fold scheme, along a values orientation continuum with nodal points at individual freedom and conformity, and a corresponding actions continuum, with nodal points at received and elaborated identities. The four-fold-scheme included the following "couplets" or variables of analysis: (a) individual freedom/elaborated identities; (b) conformity/received identities; (c) individual freedom/received identities; and (d) conformity/elaborated identities. The four-fold conceptualization of identity processes is presented below in *Figure 1*:

Figure 1 Dimensions of identity processes



The analysis yielded two branches in the data set with meaningful and useful data for variables (a) and (b) only. In this study received identities are operationalised as essentially given or inherited identities with nevertheless active and dynamic dimensions; elaborated identities are operationalised as essentially generative or re-fashioned identities which are always active and dynamic. The data overwhelmingly supported the recursive connections between a particular values orientation and a set of corresponding actions, although there were some discrepant examples and nonsynchronous patterns in a small number of student teachers' identities. The majority of responses supported a values orientation focused on individual freedom (70%), whereas a minority supported a values orientation focused on conformity (30%). While the data included useful and valuable insights on student teachers' social, cultural, political and educational convictions, there was no evidence to suggest that students experienced significant social or cognitive dissonance in writing emotionally about their own identity processes.

Individual freedom and elaborated identities

The first major theme in the findings is the dynamic between individual freedom and corresponding actions. Indicative dimensions of individual freedom included a commitment to liberating, generative

and transformative values, and indicative dimensions of elaborated identities included moving towards change, closeness and a welcoming response to new ways of doing things.

A number of student teachers, such as Ronan, Elizabeth, Kieran and Liam used the resources of vicarious fictional accounts, their own biographies, and the wider dimensions of teachers' work to situate individual freedom at the heart of their identities. Their experiences in common with a number of their classmates show distinct resonances with Evans, Fraser and Taylor's (1996) concept of "local feeling" which is rooted in the unique and contingent "mix" of emotions people hold for particular, people, places and things in their neighborhoods and localities. The place of "local feeling" in student teachers identities in the present study evidenced nonsynchronous patterns with a range of consonant and dissonant dimensions. Ronan's response is indicative of this nonsynchronous pattern.

The writings of McGahern, MacMahon and McCourt painted a picture for me of a bygone era when teaching carried a different social perspective and a different form of social responsibility. The overbearing influence of the Church is now gone, although a link remains with the ownership of school property and the inclusion of religion in the curriculum. What has gone thankfully is the need for the teacher to be priest's right-hand man in the parish and the obligation to be a highly visible aspect of the community. This is not to say that I would avoid involvement in my locality but like McGahern I would treasure my relative anonymity and freedom to choose how I live my life outside of work hours, just like any person in another profession. This would not necessarily be the same for everyone and I'm sure many would love the oneness and love of community that MacMahon writes about in *The Master*. It is the freedom element that goes with teaching, however, that I find most attractive.

Ronan's response indicates a new measure of involvement in the locality which is tied in the first instance to the postmodern notion of anonymity over oneness with community. His response does not suggest a turning away from the locality but relief that the stultifying presence and visibility that characterized the teacher until quite recently as a pillar of the local community and only third in line in the village and small town social hierarchy to the parish priest and the doctor has passed. His response interestingly is not predicated on managing avoidance or deflection from the inherent importance of community but in elaborating individual freedom as a values orientation with a corresponding set of actions His perspective finds a prominent but not exclusive place for community in his values orientation.

Several others situated the centrality of freedom in elaborating their identities. Elizabeth's response was typical of a number of other student teachers who described the quest for freedom as a moral endeavor and the antithesis of conformity. Her descriptions also point to a conviction in the centrality of a quest for freedom in combination with the brighter emotions of "empathy, generosity and kindness" in her teaching.

The willingness to conform seemed to be the main issue during McGahern's time in college, rather than any educational or moral purpose. The fictional accounts have helped me to dig deep and hit a raw nerve in my own practice. During my teaching practice, I naively believed that I could encourage the inquisitive nature of children in an environment of quietness. While I was inciting conformity, I began to see myself sitting in the desk quiet as a mouse and the teacher talking up a storm in my own primary school days. There was *ciúnas* everywhere. I do hope to have a classroom that promotes openness and freedom for me and my students, where all feel respected, where sociocultural distance is rejected in favor of acceptance and where the brighter emotions of empathy, generosity, and kindness will be harnessed to make change happen faster.

Elizabeth's response provides interesting perspectives on what she sees as the power and controlling dimensions in "inciting conformity." Her response is recursively accomplished by bringing forward her school memories of teacher noise and children's silence. The culture of silence that she remembers was often issued in terms of the familiar word--"ciúnas"—which translates as silence in the Irish language. The phrase "ciúnas" is a loaded episteme that has been circulating in the lore and language of primary schooling for generations.

In his response, Kieran brings together dimensions from both Ronan's and Elizabeth's writings around the central notions of "conversation," "invitation/response," and "journey."

One of my teachers gave me confidence to learn beyond the school gate. From him I learned how to research and reference. I learned how to be an "independent learner." In truth, I learned how to be a teacher. In this way, being "vocational" is not "a call"; it is a *conversation*. It is about how I will relate to everyone in the educational sphere. It is not about teaching tricks but more about lifetime passions.

I would like to state that I do not like the question, "how are you the same and how you are different over the course of the programme?" Emotionally and in every other way, I did not begin my journey the day I

walked through the college gates. My experience is not the shortest distance between two points. I am not near the end of a journey. I am a work in progress. I like Hargreaves' (1992) approach because it helps me articulate much of what I would understand myself to be as a teacher. The several forms of emotional distance he formulates such as sociocultural, moral, professional, political and physical distance resonated with my own approach to life and people—it is a matter of “invitation and response.”

Kieran's response about “the call to teaching” emerged as a strong component for a number of students who wrote about the elaborating of identities as a *project of choice*. This theme is a variant of the writings on the emotions as "projects" or "endeavors" that need to be worked on continually and that never finish. One of the inherent features in the findings is that identity processes lie in the interstices between childhood memories and professional insights. It suggests that identities can be illuminated through simple and clear self-writing many years after they have been originally conceived.

One of the familiar discursive patterns in the lore and language of teaching and teacher education in Ireland is the use of the idiomatic or folk notion of “the call to teacher training.” With its twin emphases on “calling” and “training,” it sealed the trajectory for the identity formation of generations of student teachers in all teacher education programmes in Ireland. It represented a kind of roll of the divine dice. Students were chosen using a social arithmetic that included examination results and interviews. Interviews focused on ascertain the heritage dimensions such competence in Irish as a spoken language and musical competence. The choice to become a teacher was proscribed by a strict set of rules, regulations, and expectations. It involved what Gitlin (2005) described as “a priori commitments to everyday politics” (p.15). Kieran represents a new perspective on the call as a dialogical encounter which retains the spiritual dimensions of the past but sheds the proscriptive dimensions in favor of teaching passions.

One of the most potent references in the responses was caught by Liam in his invocation of Maurer's call “to move towards the danger.” Liam's perspective represents the responses of a large number of student teachers who strongly connected the emotions in teaching with the cultures in teaching.

McGahern describes beautifully some the reasons why people become teachers and how institutions can potentially mass produce “servants of the parish.” MacMahon brings us right into the core of the teaching world by creating “a teacher character” as a doer and creator. This really helped me to create my own reasoning from my schooling years and to understand the brighter and darker emotions in

teaching. What I really can relate to now in a more honest and personal way is what Maurer describes as “the move towards the danger.” This is the essence of what I was avoiding in my emotional journey through teaching.

One of Liam’s other responses echoes a common theme in a number of journal responses about the challenges in confronting change, bridging distance and closeness, and embracing new ways of doing things. His perspective is useful in highlighting elaborating identities as an accomplishment that requires time, space and, most especially, commitment. Liam’s response is conceptually clear on how to bridge values and actions—“not only talking to families from poor backgrounds but listening to families from poor backgrounds.” What is different in his response is the combination of idealism and pragmatism and an inherent pride in a “teacherish outlook.” What is especially significant is that his outlook is not suspended between his school days gone and his teaching days to come but situated in a place where as Gitlin (2005) argued “it is possible to see anew and move beyond the status quo to the *not yet*, without being completely immersed in the normative traditions of the present and past” p.15). Liam speaks about “living into” a true identity in the following journal response:

One can easily get caught up in idealistic as opposed to real notions about becoming a teacher. It is vital for any becoming teacher to get some sense of their true identity and learn to live into it. McGahern and MacMahon humanized teaching for me. They brought me back to the teachers who taught me so that I could deconstruct their identities and forward so that I could construct my own identity. In Hargreaves’ (1992) terms, I have a “teacherish” outlook. It is one that fills me with pride. I agree with Hargreaves that teaching is learned from the present and the past. My internal monologue is a lot more active now as a result of my own writings. When I assess my own emotional geographies, I realize that emotions are the cornerstone of all teaching and learning practices. I have come to a realization about closeness and distance in teaching. I have never had any difficulty talking to children and families from poor backgrounds but I now realize that I have naively allowed them to avoid taking to me. As a future teacher I can see the boundaries ahead and I am ready for them.

Frank discusses the challenges of acting on individual freedom in a related way but underscores some of the dynamics of self-writing and their connections to a commitment to change.

Having charted my self-questions regarding the cultures of teaching, I came to the realization that I could become a tool for socialization and transmissions of belief and values for the next generation. My

thinking also came round to the view that my teaching can be static and conservative. My writings seem to say so. I was exhibiting a tendency to close doors to parents who threatened me. I was failing to question my own methods. I was ascribing blame to external influences. I was not reflecting on my own shortcomings. I realized that the challenge was to open myself to risk and the chance of change.

Rena's responses resonate with those of Liam's and Frank's but emphasize tactical and strategic maneuvering in addressing how the "barriers ahead" in bridging conformity and freedom could potentially be negotiated.

That teachers are respected in Irish society, that teachers somehow have an elevated status in society that they somehow bear responsibility for instilling values, morals, ethics and beliefs in children is a double-edged sword. It can alienate the teacher from the community. I want to be the teacher, like the Christian Brother, that McGahern said had a twinkle in his eye. I want to teach maths well and everything else with passion. When I consider the impact of the Christian Brother who cycled out to the bog to tell McGahern's father to send the boy back to school, I wonder if I will have the same thoughtfulness and generosity of time and spirit.

Conformity and received identities

The second major theme in the findings is the dynamic between conformity and corresponding actions. Indicative dimensions of conformity included traditional, ascribed and transmitted values and indicative dimensions of received identities included maintaining the status quo, distancing, and adherence to familiar ways of doing things. In counterpoint to student teachers who used the resources of vicarious fictional accounts, their own biographies, and the wider dimensions of teachers work to situate individual freedom at the heart of their identities, other student teachers situated conformity at the heart of their identities. Aoife was typical of a number of student teachers who rooted received identities in traditional and ascribed values. She represents the broad swathe of students who modified as opposed to changed their identities in response to the fictional accounts of teaching and the readings on the emotions in teaching and the

cultures of teaching. Her view of change is one of gradual and incremental steps and in response to pragmatic dimensions.

In terms of my thinking, I would have to say that I still believe in my own ability and I'm very much focused. I maybe a little cynical but I have a good awareness of things from my previous work experiences. I am realistic. I wouldn't say I've gone so far as to change the way I view things but I've taken a broader view of things and how to fit things into my plan.

Lena represented a small number of students who were impelled towards conformity, situating their responses in a psychological notion of identity. She rooted her perspectives in what she described as her "institutional nature." Her response also evidenced an incipient paralysis in her teaching values and actions, motivated by a fear of litigation.

In some cases, however, I feel that my identity will conform to my institutional nature. We all have to conform, if we want to be teachers. We all have to teach eleven subjects, including Religion which we do not get paid for. I know that by conforming to an institutionalised identity, there will be professional and political gaps in my life but I need to be aware that consciousness raising is coming under more scrutiny in schools. We need to be aware of our boundaries. Obviously, I have accepted that some things won't change. My concepts of teaching will always be rural rather than urban. Like McGahern's mother, I would rather be on the cart than the train.

Her response represents a variation on the theme of "oneness with community." It underscores a fusing of professional identity and place of origin. This is a significant finding given that it provides some evidence of student teachers desire to return home to teach in their home place. In MacMahon's terms she wants to become an "orthodox hero" of present times. Lena's views resonate with a number of students who wrote about how their emotional selves were tightly-braided into a locale of family, friends and community.

Another variant on the perspectives of students who were impelled towards conformity and familiar ways of doing things was given by Tricia who discussed conformity as a struggle of unequally matched forces where the student teacher will "break" in the end.

Professionally as a teacher I believe that I need to conform in my community. I believe that the teacher's role still has huge expectations. MacMahon suggests that teachers have a double identity with the "ringing of the bell signaling entry into the other part." MacMahon, however, makes a telling point that

sticks with me. It is that personally and professionally if we are stuck in a struggle with individuality and conformity—a power struggle with ourselves—we will break.

Tricia's views represent a heightened sense of sensibility combined with a sense of entrapment, captured in the phrase, “you can think but you can't act” in moral or political realms. Her experience has been fashioned in a dualistic encounter between powerful and vulnerable forces. She is resigned to conformity. Her statements collectively give strong evidence to the view that received identities are rooted in maintaining the status quo, keeping distance, and familiar ways of doing things.

Personally, I wouldn't describe my choice of becoming a teacher as “a call but rather, like McGahern, “the right thing to do”—the sensible option. In McGahern, I get a hint that you can be an individual on a personal level but that this doesn't extend to political or moral matters. It reminds me of the saying; “Think what you say, but don't say what you think.” It is hard to move on because there is a fear that your own ideas might be against the grain of what is expected from you.

Conclusion

What the present study contributes to the research on teacher identity formation and development is support for the universality of student teachers' identities as contested terrain between individual freedom and conformity. This terrain is marked by a specific past that is evident in the present moment. Memoir is especially useful in illuminating signposts on this terrain. What makes these signposts interesting is that they exist very often in the subterranean world of becoming a teacher and rarely find expression in contemporary discourses on standards and competences in becoming a teacher. These are the messy discourses of values and actions, the spiritual and moral dimensions, and the desire to make a difference by eschewing sameness and embracing difference.

The present moment is a critical one in the evolution of teaching and teacher education in Ireland, as it is elsewhere. The changing context in Ireland, however, has not yet produced a debate on the nature and value of scientific research in education (Shavelson, Phillips, Towne & Feuer, 2002). This lacuna has stymied the cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices across disciplinary boundaries and the near-absence of research on the aesthetic, emotional, moral, and political dimensions of teaching and learning in teacher education programmes (Deegan, Devine, & Lodge, 2004). The present study raises serious theoretical and conceptual issues about how, and in what ways teacher knowledge is produced and

reproduced. The emotions, cultures and politics in teaching are key parts of this answer and yet they rarely feature in official discourses on standards and competences. So often official discourses dismiss the humanities as non-empirical and yet the humanities served as the spark for the high standards of dialectical tick-tacking evident in this paper.

What this paper attests to is that the value of teacher writing is not one of kind but one of degree. Few could argue, for example, with the potency of the selected teacher-writer memoirs of MacMahon and McGahern. These cut personally and professionally to the deep heart's core of what matters most in becoming a teacher for the participants in the present study. One of the key findings in this study is that student teachers' capacities and responsibilities lie along a values/actions continuum with conforming identities at one end and liberating identities at the other. This resonates closely with notions of authenticity and recognition in the discourse on the politics of identity where "*authenticity* connotes the idea that each of us should live in a way that is true to himself, not conforming to a way of life simply because it is accepted by others" (Waldron, p.157) [and] "*recognition* is the idea that others should be sensitive to my quest for authenticity" (p.157). And this brings me to the net point of this paper—writing emotionally in search of self generates alternative kinds of teacher knowledge which can potentially yield alternative teacher capacities and teacher responsibilities. These fundamental challenges remind us of Dewey's (1915) maxim that there can be no acquiring without first inquiring. If we truly want teachers with the capacities to think and corresponding responsibilities to act, then freedom to inquire and not conformity to acquire needs to be reclaimed as a touchstone in teaching and teacher education renewal and reform.

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Corresponding author:

Department of Learning, Society and Religious Education, Mary Immaculate College University of Limerick, South Circular Road, Limerick, Republic of Ireland. Email: Jim.Deegan@mic.ul.ie

