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Dialectics of development: Teacher identity formation in the interplay of ideal ego and ego ideal

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Abstract
This paper results from research examining pre-service teacher development in relation to experiences of mentoring during the Professional Experience component of their program. The paper focuses on the interplay between pre-service teachers' personal aspirations for their own practice and identity and their perceptions of more socialized and formalized, institutional requirements. The paper highlights the developmental potential of dialectical interactions between these 'inside out' and 'outside in' perspectives on pre-service teachers' practice and identity, drawing on psychoanalytic theory in order to gain insights into this process by viewing the pre-service teachers wishes and aspirations for their practice and identities as manifestations of the Lacanian ('inside out') ideal ego; while the school culture and the mentor teachers' (actual and anticipated) comments and judgments are read as representations of the ('outside in') ego ideal. The paper concludes with considerations of how universities and schools, pre-service teachers and mentors, might be encouraged to recognize the need for a sustained and open-ended dialectic between the ego ideal and the ideal ego in ways that might enrich the professional identities available to pre-service teachers.

Keywords: teacher identity; teacher education; mentoring; psychoanalysis

Introduction

Teachers' professional practice has moved into the public spotlight in recent decades. This move is reflected in developments such as the establishment of professional standards for teachers and the increased scrutiny of teachers' work in the media and through agencies such as the UK's Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). This shift raises the issue of a longstanding tension that exists between approaches emphasizing the exterior versus the interior basis of teachers' professional practice – between what Dawson (1994) characterized as 'inside out' as opposed to 'outside in' professionalism. Characteristic of the former approach are theorisations of teacher formation in terms of the development of a professional identity, grounded in teachers' intellects, emotions and experiences that tend to foreground internal sources of teachers' professional practice. By contrast, contemporary frameworks of professional standards that aim to outline the major contours of teachers' work and practice in comprehensive and specific detail reflect the recent dominance, at least in policy terms, of 'outside in' approaches, in which teachers' knowledge and expertise are seen to derive from an external source.

In this paper, we take up this tension and reframe it in terms of an ongoing dialectic between what Lacanians term the (imaginary) 'ideal ego', or aspired self and the (symbolic) 'ego ideal', or required self. The paper was prompted by a tendency we noticed in some of the student teachers we interviewed, as part of a project on the relationship between mentoring and development during professional experience placements in schools, to foreground either their own personal philosophies over external expectations, such as professional teacher standards or mentor feedback, and conversely, at other times, to foreground such external expectations over their own personal formulations of teaching. We read this tension in terms of an ongoing dialectic between ideal ego and ego ideal. Our overall argument is that neither lens by itself is sufficient but that productive development as a teacher requires the capacity to sustain a creative conversation between the two perspectives. We illustrate this through a single vignette of one pre-service teacher grappling with his own and others' perspectives on his developing teaching practice.

The paper draws on research on professional experience carried out as part of university-school system partnership between the Association of Independent Schools of NSW[1] and an initial teacher education (ITE) provider at a university in New South Wales, Australia. The aims of this partnership research project included documenting the complex, multidimensional nature of pre-service teacher learning and its relationship to experiences of mentoring during professional experience. Located within this wider study, the current paper focuses in particular on insights from interviews conducted with pre-service teachers, illustrated through the presentation of a single vignette of a pre-service teacher, whose case is typical of the wider pattern. This vignette highlights the pre-service teacher's struggle to navigate between, on the one hand, his own 'internal' ideals and aspirations and, on the other hand, the external perspective and influence of the mentor as a representative of the wider social and institutional order. In order to gain insights into this process, the paper explores this struggle through the lens of notions

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[1] The Association of Independent Schools of NSW is the peak body representing the independent (i.e. private or non-government) schooling sector in New South Wales.

from psychoanalytic theory, specifically Lacan's notions of the ego ideal, derived from external (symbolic) prototypes and the ideal ego reflecting the individual's (imaginary) identifications (Lacan, 1977).

More specifically, the paper reads the pre-service teachers' accounts of their struggles as attempts to manage the lack of 'fit', or the 'misfit', between "our social relations and psychic reality, between self and language, our subjectivities and our societies" without which "there would be no education. No learning" (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 44). Specifically, the potential for conflict arising from the space between the psyche and the social means that becoming a teacher requires openness to knowledge of the self and to knowledge originating in the other (Britzman, 1994, 2000). In other words, "to learn to teach, student-teachers need to develop their capacity to balance and understand the competing demands of their desires, consciences, other people and reality" (Boote, 2003, p. 258).

In the terms set out in the title of this paper, this means developing a capacity to shuttle back and forth between the desires and demands of self and other as well as to creatively respond to, tension, paradox and ambiguity. The paper thus concludes with considerations of how universities and schools, pre-service teachers and mentors, might be encouraged to recognize the need for a sustained and open-ended dialectic between the ego ideal and the ideal ego in ways that might enrich the professional identities available to pre-service teachers. We begin, however, by considering two dominant but distinct ways of framing the challenges of learning to teach – the competency-based professional standards approach, which dominates policy in this area and which represents an 'outside in' approach, and theorisations of learning to teach in terms of the professional formation of a teacher identity, which have been more prominent in the academic literature and which reflect a greater recognition of 'inside out' approaches to teacher formation.

Teaching and teacher professional standards
In the terms of this paper, teacher professional standards, while they may refer to and encourage autonomy, to a large extent represent what Dawson (1994) referred to as an 'outside in' view of teaching. To some extent, 'outside in' approaches have historically

dominated initial teacher education, providing a rationale for its existence, whether in the form of providing theoretical knowledge and expertise or, more recently, in the form of the 'competencies' discourse emphasizing the discrete skills of 'effective' teaching.

Towards the end of the 1990s, in Australia, the UK and the USA, the discourse around understanding and articulating what 'effective' teachers do underwent a shift from that of competencies to that of standards (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2003; Moore, 2004). Such is the currency of this language, that, in contemporary education policy discourses, learning to teach is largely conceived in terms of meeting the requirements mapped out in such frameworks of teacher professional standards, which are intended to serve both performance and developmental purposes (OECD, 2005; Holland, 2005; Stronge, 2010). That is, they are designed to provide an explicit language within which to discuss teaching practice and against which to evaluate its achievement, whilst also serving a 'curricular' function, establishing the contours of what should be taught in teacher education programs and providing a map for ongoing professional learning and development (Moore, 2004).

However, frameworks of teacher professional standards have not been without their critics. For example, while Ingvarson and Rowe (2008) note that globally standards are "emerging as a sound basis for defining levels of expertise in teaching and assessing teacher performance" (p.13), they also warn of possible limitations, namely, that standards may be narrowly focused, reflect the interests of an association, or not be relevant to the local context. In a more critical vein, it has been argued that "teacher professional standards remain locked within a hegemonic and reproductive version of the symbolic, where creativity and critique are reduced to a matter of selection from among established practices and received traditions" (Clarke & Moore, 2013, p. 494). Likewise, Taubman argues that standards in education, generally, have a depoliticizing and reproductive effect: "standards render all groups, individuals, communities, histories as synonymous, commensurable, interchangeable, while they diminish, mask or elide, in the name of neutrality and equal treatment, inequities in resources, power, access and treatment" (2009, p. 114). In this sense, it can be argued that contemporary teacher

formation is largely determined by "the regulative policies and highly structured frameworks that have come to define teaching in many countries" (Brown & McNamara, 2011, p. 3). The consequent frustrations with what is deemed to be an over-reliance on 'outside in' models of teaching and teacher development – both in education policy and, as a result, within teacher education – are one of the reasons why many scholars and educators have been drawn to the notion of 'identity' as offering possibilities for a more person-centered – and 'inside out' – vision of teacher formation.

Teaching and teacher professional identities
In contrast to the outside in perspective offered by teacher professional standards, teacher identity offers a relatively 'inside out' perspective. Theorising teaching and learning to teach in terms of identity offers a way of providing conceptual and practical space for issues of autonomy, agency and 'voice' in relation to teachers' professional practice. Indeed, one way of thinking about the challenges of becoming a teacher is in terms of a 'struggle for voice' against the 'cacophony' of other, more experienced and more authoritative voices populating the school, voices "that constitute experience as already filled in with essential and unitary meanings" (Britzman, 2003, p. 30).

'Teacher identity' is thus not asocial – it is not just about some inner 'essence' (Zembylas, 2003), but entails a complex and paradoxical entanglement of the social and individual, the personal and political, the rational and the emotional, the synoptic and the dynamic (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Clarke, 2009). Teacher identity may thus be viewed as an ongoing process whereby a teacher seeks to integrate a range of diverse knowledge and experience into a coherent image of self. This integration work can be a "difficult and sometimes painful process" (Korthagen, 2004, p. 85); but nonetheless, teacher identity approaches to teacher formation, unlike the outside in approaches represented by the standards movement, do recognize the agency of novice teachers in their own development and learning.

Clearly the challenges are many as student teachers make their way through teacher education and into initial practice: negotiating within shifting conceptions of what

teaching is or should be, relating to the identities of others, becoming agents of their own identity development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 185).

With the foregoing discussion in mind, the current paper utilizes the notions of the ideal ego and the ego ideal from Lacanian psychoanalytic theory as frames for thinking about the tensions between outside in and inside out perspectives and pressures in learning to teach. The following section provides a brief but important digression into psychoanalytic theory in order to highlight its relevance for conceptualizing and understanding the tensions in teacher education and the formation of teacher identity.

Outside in and inside out: Extimacy, ego ideal and ideal ego
It is commonplace today to talk about identities as multiple, fragmented and fluid rather than as singular, coherent and enduring as part of a postmodern rejection of the universal Cartesian subject who was central to the Enlightenment. In this regard, our interest in psychoanalysis derives from its engagement with the constitutive role of contradictions, paradoxes and limits in the human psyche – memorably captured in Freud's (1915, p. 289) observation that "it is impossible to imagine our own deaths and when we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators" – as well as its recognition of the disruptive effect of the void that inhabits subjectivity and signification, yet which (paradoxically) cannot be signified, and its view that there is something at stake in life and learning that is not knowledge, but a form of non-knowing involving love, hate and desire (Britzman, 2011).

Lacanian theorizations of identity have affinities with postmodernism's rejection of the essentialist, rational and autonomous subject, by arguing that the subject is 'extimate', i.e. neither fully inside nor outside, but both simultaneously, in a manner that problematizes the hard and fast distinction between inside and outside. The Lacanian subject is thus constituted through paradox in that it is neither fully self sufficient and internally agentive, nor totally alienated and externally determined, but grounded in "the certainty of the unconscious" (Lacan, 1981, p. 36). As Lapping and Bibby note, "the concept of extimacy opens a space to consider ways in which unrepresented or unconscious aspects

of subjects or discourses may be evident in spaces or practices that are apparently 'external' to them" (2014, p. 4; see also, Voela, 2014).

In thinking about the complexity of identity and the conflicted nature of the human psyche, the distinction between the imaginary and symbolic registers of the Lacanian psyche offers further insights. The imaginary register, like its Freudian counterpart, the ego, deals primarily in images and imagination, though it is also "always already structured by the symbolic order" (Evans, 1996, p. 83). Characterized by a tendency to seek out and hold on to perceptual unities, it is also the order of deception, alienation and illusions, including wholeness, harmony, autonomy and similarity (Boothby, 1991; Evans, 1996). The imaginary register may be structured by signification; but the latter forms the very foundation of the symbolic register, which, like the Freudian superego[2], is socially and linguistically mediated, and hence characterized by multiplicity, fluidity and relationality, just as the meaning of any individual sign in the signifying system is relational, i.e. dependent upon its relation to other signs. Hence, in contrast to the relatively enduring structures of the imaginary, the symbolic register involves a ceaseless shifting between synchronic simultaneity and diachronic succession (Boothby, 1991, pp. 86-94), in which "meaning is scattered or dispersed across the whole chain of signifiers…it is never fully present in any one sign alone, but is rather a kind of constant flickering of presence and absence together" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 111).

The imaginary register is central to what Lacan referred to as the ideal ego. The ideal ego comprises a set of images to which the ego attempts to correspond, or to 'mirror'. In other words, "imaginary ideal-ego identification is with the image that signifies who we want to be" (Dashtipour, 2012, p. 46). But as noted above, the imaginary register also deals in similarity and rivalry; the ideal ego thus serves as a point of judgment as to whether we like or approve of someone else, insofar as evaluation of that person involves evaluation

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[2] Though the superego is often linked to reproduction and censorship, Gabbard (2016) highlights the fluidity and multiplicity of the superego characterized by multiple identifications from various developmental levels, echoing Lacan's (1991, p. 219) comment "the game is already played, the die is already cast. It is already cast with the following proviso, that we can pick it up and throw it anew".

of the extent to which they match, or mirror, our ideal ego. These others may also be sources of alienation, aggression, rivalry and jealousy, insofar as they supposedly already have – or are – what we do – or are – not (Pluth, 2007, p. 51). The ideal ego is thus linked to fantasy, involving the maintenance of simplified and reductive 'pictures' of reality at the expense of more complex versions of the world.

Identities, however, are not only organized through the imaginary but also through the structures of the symbolic. The narcissistic, growth resistant fixations of the ideal ego can be challenged through the operation of the signifier, i.e. through "a symbolically mediated process of exchange [which] submits the imaginary organization of the ego to a continuous pressure toward re-formation" (Boothby, 1991, p. 159). In contrast to identification via the ideal ego, therefore, identification in terms of the ego ideal is "not a matter of how we see ourselves in images but *how we are seen* by that other which gives these images an order and which provides the co-ordinates according to which they become viewable, prioritized, important versus non-important" (Dashtipour, 2012, p. 48, emphasis in the original). In other words, "the ego ideal is a signifier in the Other from whose 'point of view' the individual is given a meaning and a place" (Pluth, 2007, p. 53).

Translating this into the world of initial teacher education, the inside out perspective of the ideal ego affords pre-service teachers opportunities to imagine the sort of teacher they aspire to be, with all the potential benefits and risks this entails. For example, a pre-service teacher may identify with memories of model teachers from their own childhood who 'inspired them with a love of learning', as folklore has it, and to some degree this is surely desirable; but risk also resides in this scenario in the form of the distortions of memory and potential resistance to rethinking this favoured model in order to move beyond it. In contrast, the outside in perspective offered by the ego ideal provides ways for student teachers to move beyond the potentially deadening and immobilizing effects of narcissistic fixation and fantasy associated with the ideal ego; yet the latter may conversely offer resources for resisting the regulatory regimes of the authoritative Other by imagining alternative scenarios. Critically, our argument is that growth does not arise from prioritizing outside in/ego ideal over inside out/ideal ego – or vice versa – but from

maintaining a space of productive tension between the imaginary constructions of the ideal ego and the symbolic structures of the ego ideal.

The following section provides details of the study that forms the empirical basis of this paper before we go on to explore these ideas in relation to one vignette of a pre-service teacher reflecting on the journey of Professional Experience.

The research study: Understanding practicum experiences

The study on which this paper draws was part of a collaborative project between a School of Education and the Association of Independent Schools in New South Wales, Australia. In order to conduct the study, the researchers sought and were granted ethical approval. In terms of Kamberelis and Dimitriadis' (2005) quaternary framework of analytic strata, i.e. epistemology, theory, approach and strategy, the study – and this paper – is located in a social constructionist epistemology and draws on key concepts from psychoanalytic theory. At the level of approach, the paper can be considered a small-scale case study, with semi-structured interview serving as the data generation strategy, and analysis involving an iterative movement back and forth between the data and relevant theory.

The context for the study is the Professional Experience component of an initial teacher education program. In Australia, the State and Territory Governments remain primarily responsible for education and for the registration and employment of teachers even though the Federal government funds in part public universities and certain initiatives, such as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, have been adopted across all jurisdictions. The expectations for "high-quality professional experience placements" are outlined in the NSW state-developed Professional Experience Framework (Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards, 2014, p.2). Pre-service teachers are required to complete a minimum total number of days of professional experience[3], during which they are expected to teach classes under the close supervision of an experienced teacher.

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[3] The current Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards requirements are 60 days for a two year graduate entry program and 80 days for a four or five year undergraduate program.

At the initial teacher education provider in which this study was carried out, pre-service teachers undertake three professional placements[4] over the course of a four-year undergraduate, or two-year postgraduate program, completing a total of 80 days of professional experience for the undergraduate and 65 days for the postgraduate program. A tertiary mentor is appointed to each pre-service teacher but it is the supervising teacher or 'mentor teacher' who has overall responsibility for the supervision, mentoring and assessment of the pre-service teacher. Significantly, in relation to our earlier point about the authority of professional teacher standards, it is important to note that while these standards provide the formal criteria against which pre-service teachers are evaluated, the standards are mediated and supplemented by the individual mentor teacher and her/his personal teaching philosophy. A group of six pre-service teachers agreed to take part in the interviews and this paper draws on data from just one of these semi-structured interviews. The rationale for this strategy is that the student case shared here is fairly typical of the wider group of interviewees, who all manifested broadly similar patterns. Thus, rather than presenting a number of quite similar cases in more superficial detail, sacrificing depth to questionable gains in breadth, we opted for discussing one case in greater detail.

In presenting this vignette, we recognize that it cannot be taken as representative of the wider group, despite any similarities, and we disavow any grand claims to generality based on inductive reasoning. Rather, we embrace the concept of "abduction", insofar as we were driven by the desire to offer a tentative and contingent explanation for what seemed a 'mystery' (Brinkman, 2014): how can we understand how pre-service teachers manage the competing demands of their own personal aspirations for the teacher they wish to be, alongside the social and institutional demands made upon them, while undertaking professional experience in a school? In moving back and forth between our data and our theoretical reading, we came to frame this mystery in terms of the degree to which pre-service teachers foreground the ego-ideal as opposed to the ideal-ego in

discussing and explaining their development as a teacher, that is, to what extent their identity as a teacher is shaped by symbolic prototypes imposed by the social, to what extent their identity as a teacher is shaped by imaginary identifications shaped by internal ideals, aspirations and desires, and to what extent these 'forces' function in a space of productive tension. Critically, the purpose of our analysis "is not to prove, but… to take notice of the particular and the peculiar, to consider what might be being rendered and referenced, and to put these moments into conversation with theory, and thus, to engage in analysis as a speculation" (Janzen, 2013, p. 382).

Finally, we would like to acknowledge a limitation in the data in that it is primarily focused on incidents from classroom practice and only rarely touches on personal or wider contextual questions and issues. To some degree, this reflects the limitations of our study and its focus, which was constrained by the requirements of our research partner organization but it also perhaps, in retrospect, reflects our anxieties about straying beyond 'professional' matters or 'prying' into the personal and emotional lives of our students. Following the example of Moore (2004), we might have elicited more personal and emotional data through warm-up questions but because we were somewhat familiar with our students and mindful of the time constraints they (and we) were under we tended to 'cut to the chase' in the interviews in ways that were, with hindsight, not entirely ideal.

Becoming a teacher: Christian's struggle

Christian enrolled in an undergraduate program at the School of Education as a recent school leaver, his first method, or main teaching subject, being drama and his second method being history. However, progression through the initial teacher education program was not automatic and Christian initially failed Professional Experience 1 before successfully completing the course after undertaking a second placement in a different school. He then went on to complete both Professional Experience 2 and Alternative Professional Experience unhampered, thereby gaining teaching experience in a total of four different educational settings.

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[4] These comprise Professional Experience 1 and 2 and a third placement called Alternative Professional Experience, which often, but not always, involves experience in a non-school

For Christian, as for many student teachers, school-based professional experience is the key site where fundamental issues of teacher identity and identification are negotiated and hopefully resolved. Christian's professional experience is marked by a struggle between becoming the kind of teacher he thinks he wants to be (his ideal-ego) and the kind of teacher he thinks he ought to be (his ego-ideal). This professional identity struggle can be seen being played out in two common challenges of professional experience – classroom management and professional commitment. Christian's professional identity struggle in both these areas arises from his concerns about what kind of teacher he may or will become. In the course of negotiating these areas, Christian seeks an answer to a fundamental identity question; 'what kind of teacher am I?' As shown in the two areas below, Christian's identity struggle is a dialectic process marked by colliding, opposing images of teaching that require some form of resolution and closure if he is to move forward. It is resolution in such areas that determines his professional identification and constitutes his professional formation.

What kind of teacher am I? Classroom management and student relations

In Christian's recounting of his practicum experiences, a clear tension is evident between being a 'strict' teacher with his Year 7 students and being a 'relaxed' teacher with his Year 11 students. Both these conflicting positions have identity implications, which he attempts to reconcile. In the following excerpts Christian's ego-ideal (required self) is indicated in underlined text, while his ideal-ego (aspired self) is marked in *italicised* text and instances where he manages to sustain a productive tension between the two are marked in *underlined italics*.

Excerpt 1
Christian: I think because I had a cross - with my first prac I had a year 7 and a year 11 class, so two very different types of classes. I think with the year 7s <u>I think I just had to be - I still had to be quite strict</u>, *but I was also, you know, smiling and I think, you know, happy to be there and show that I was happy to be there*. Show that I was happy to get to know them.

educational setting.

> Compared to that with the year 11s I think it was a more - *I didn't have to be so much as strict, like, a teacher kind of thing. I could be a little bit more relaxed. So I was telling them about - I could tell them a little bit more about myself.* So there was a concert that I went to whilst I was on prac and I told them about that. I think those type of little things really helps with older students because they think, *"Okay, well, he's kind of living in our world of thing. He's not some old ….." So that type of thing*.

Here, Christian struggles between his ego-ideal, that is, the required, ought-to self of internalised professional expectations - that "good teachers" need to have firm classroom management - and his cherished self-image (ideal-ego) of being a relaxed teacher enjoying rapport with his students and building warm interpersonal relationships. At the same time, being seen as a strict teacher, unable to relate to his students ("some old…") is the very self that Christian fears becoming because it is antithetical to the kind of person he thinks he is. As indicated in his italicised and underlined statements, this tension between Christian's professional ego-ideal and ideal-ego is somewhat resolved through a strategy of being 'quite strict' in order to meet the requirements of the former, while also developing class rapport through showing interpersonal warmth with Year 7 students ("smiling"; "happy to be there"; "show that I was happy to get to know them") and employing selective self-disclosure to his Year 11 students ("I could tell them a little bit more about myself") in order to fulfill the aspirations of his interpersonally-oriented ideal ego.

The same professional identity dilemma is also evident in Christian's concerns about being a strict classroom disciplinarian who suppresses his personality versus his desire to be genuinely himself as a teacher. This time, resolution is found in being a 'natural' teacher through a strategy of balancing pedagogy with personality, the professional and the personal. Here, the feedback given by George, the university practicum liaison, was influential in helping Christian realize that he needed to seek a balance between aspired and required self.

Excerpt 2
Christian: Yeah, I have to definitely - that was really good, like, what George - I had
               George for my mentor on my second prac. He said, "Look, you're very -

you're a kind of quick kind of guy." *I think you've definitely got to link up your personality to how you teach. I don't want to come into a room and change my voice and change who I am and be very blunt and very - because that's not who I am. Or don't smile in the class because you've got a bunch of horrid kids and you've got to try and be strict type of thing. That's not who I am.* <u>*So I think definitely linking your pedagogy and your teaching style to your personality, I think for me personally is really important because you need to be natural in that classroom. But you also need to be professional as well. So you need to be - it's that type of fine line*</u>.

Christian's insistence that he doesn't want to 'change who I am' or act in uncharacteristic ways, 'because that's not who I am', foregrounds the aspired self of the ideal ego but he is able to build bridges between this and the required self of the ego ideal represented by pedagogy and professionalism. Critically, he recognizes that maintaining both aspects of the self is no easy feat and requires walking along a 'fine line'.

Finally, the challenge of establishing a teacher identity through negotiating student relations takes on a new twist for Christian when he finds himself in certain situations as a male teacher in an all-girls school. In discussing legal requirements involved in a teacher's role, Christian identifies relations with his female students as problematic.

Excerpt 3

Christian: Okay. Definitely on the second prac, <u>because I was in an all-girls environment, this whole - the whole legal thing I think really played a part with me. So I had a little, like, alarm bell in the back of my head and just little things where these young</u> - I was getting a class ready and these girls were doing a dance class at lunchtime and then the teacher said, "Okay, girls, get dressed." <u>I quickly had to run out of the room</u>. [*laughing*]

Christian: That type of thing was really prominent on this prac. *So I had at the end of the lesson, at the end, the girls were, like, "Let's do a group hug."* <u>I said, "No."</u> [*laughing*]

Christian: So just that type of thing really. <u>The whole legal thing played a really significant role just because, you know, being a guy you're in an all-girls environment</u>.

Here, Christian experiences direct conflict between his required professional self - his

ego-ideal reflected in child protection discourses and requirements ("the whole legal thing") that teachers avoid all physical (=sexual) contact with students and his desired self – his ideal-ego of being a relaxed (male) teacher enjoying close rapport with his (female) students. In his expression, 'the whole legal thing', which he utters twice, he employs a vague, casual turn of phrase that possibly seeks to domesticate this frightening/threatening realm of law, crime, transgression and punishment. But lying behind this is the high profile in media and public debate of issues of child abuse and pedophilia, which bring a powerful charge to the situation for a young male teacher, regardless of his sexual orientation, who finds himself working in a girls' school with students not much younger than himself. Viewed in this light, his laughter after relating each of the two incidents above may reflect the tensions he experiences between wanting to act in accordance with his outgoing, sociable personality when asked, for example, to join a 'group hug' with students and his acute awareness of the legal and moral minefield he would be walking into if he did.

Hence, it is not surprising that being in the room while the girls were getting (un)dressed triggered Christian's self-censorship ("a little alarm bell in the back of my head") provoking images of being a transgressive teacher – a feared professional self that could only be avoided by rushing from the room. But it is intriguing how he breaks off after the phrase, "and just little things where these young –", as if interrupting and censoring an overtly/overly sensual stream of thought that might exceed the 'proper' limits of the institutionally situated interview. Similarly, avoidance was also Christian's only option in the second incident where the students requested a "group hug". Although this was exactly the kind of rapport Christian desired as part of his self-image of a 'relaxed teacher', direct refusal was the only course for meeting professional expectations (of his required self) of no physical contact. Unlike the previous two episodes, Christian was unable to negotiate and resolve the professional identity conflicts thrown up by this situation. In this instance, when issues of male-female relations arose there was no third way dialectic. Withdrawal or prohibition were the only possible responses.

From these reported episodes, it is clear that teacher-student relations are central to the

formation of Christian's professional identity as a beginning teacher. Student interaction is a key arena where he negotiates his aspired, required and feared professional selves. This negotiation can be seen as a dialectic process that sometimes, but not always, moves towards synthesis and resolution of conflicting images of teaching selves. While such resolution may not be possible in all instances, a certain degree of success is necessary for Christian's professional formation and development.

What kind of teacher am I? Professional expression and commitment

The vicissitudes of Christian's professional experiences also highlight fundamental issues of personal identification with and commitment to teaching. In his first placement in a school, Christian faced a major dilemma of either conforming to what he saw as the supervising teacher's rather restrictive teaching style (and passing the professional experience) or exercising freedom to be a creative and engaging teacher (and failing the professional experience). Not only was his supervising teacher's standard model of teaching antithetical to his own cherished views of teaching, but frustratingly, he was expected to adopt the model and abandon any attempt to explore a personal teaching style.

Excerpt 4

Christian: I had a year 7 class in Cronulla that were gifted. *I could do anything with them. I could do group work. I could do drama. I did a practical lesson with them in drama, group drama. I did creative lessons. I could do anything with them.* <u>These kids, I said, "Can I do group work?" "No." "Can I do some ICT stuff?" "Not really." "Can I do this?" "No." So it was really - I was just so restricted.</u> *I'm not into being the teacher that stands up in front of the room and talks for 40 minutes. That's not who I am.* <u>So it was - that's what she wanted</u>.

Facilitator 2: So that was how it was then?

Christian: <u>Yeah, that's what it was. That's what I really had to do</u> *which I thought was crap. I had no freedom to spread my wings*.

Facilitator 2: Did you pass that then?

Christian: <u>No</u>.

Facilitator 2: So…?

Christian: <u>Crash and burn, and a big burn</u>.

Reflecting on his first Professional Experience placement, Christian saw the supervising teacher's expectations limiting his own teaching practices and professional identity. The supervising teacher's expectations, the required ego-ideal, corresponded with Christian's anti ideal-ego (i.e. his feared self) of being a traditional teacher ('the teacher that stands up in front of the room and talks for 40 minutes') and thus conflicted with his ideal-ego (desired self) of being a warm, creative, engaging, agentive teacher ('I could do anything with them') – an emergent professional identity which he could only explore through the sort of opportunity to engage in experimentation he was denied ('I had no freedom to spread my wings'). Christian's placement experience therefore presented him with a fundamental professional identity dilemma between pursuing the desired creative, interpersonally-engaged teaching self of his ideal ego and adopting a feared, 'crappy', content-oriented teaching self.

Unlike previous episodes, Christian was unable to resolve this dilemma: developing his own teaching style versus complying with the supervising teacher's requirements in order to pass the professional experience. His failure in the placement ('crash and burn'), which clearly left a psychic scar ('a big burn'), was attributed to refusing to play the game and teach like his supervisor ('I think, "do what they want and do the lessons" - - - "do what they do", *which wasn't me*'). As indicated by the opposing italics and underlining, there was no compromise or negotiated third way between these two conflicting professional selves.

As a result of the negative experiences of his first placement, Christian found it difficult to continue identifying with being a traditional teacher (embodied in his repeated refrain, 'that's not who I am') and began to question teaching as a career ('this isn't for me type of thing'). These doubts, however, were fortuitously counterbalanced and outweighed by positive identifications with being a teacher of students with special learning needs, which he experienced during his Alternate Professional Experience (APE) program. The Alternative Professional Experience or APE program provides the opportunity for pre-service teachers to broaden their knowledge and experience by working as either a teacher or teaching assistant in one of a variety of educational settings that are distinct

from main stream schools. Christian gained experience teaching in a school for students with special needs. By providing a meaningful and worthy model of teaching evoking his desired self, this experience enabled Christian to envision teaching as a serious career commitment and 'rescued' him from quitting teaching altogether.

Excerpt 5
Christian: *I just thought that, you know, this isn't for me type of thing*. It was really good; the APE Program really helped me in that. I did a special needs prac so I was helping with special IM, IO students. *That really made sure. Okay, look, I want to do special education now. So I kind of took that avenue. Then when I went to Cronulla I thought, "I really like this now." So it's now really opened up my doors and that's really good and I just feel a lot more confident because of that*.

In psycho-dynamic terms – that is to say, in terms of changes and developments in the psyche – Christian rejected the required self, or ego ideal, constituted by the form of the kind of teaching he was expected to follow in his first unsuccessful professional experience because it was in direct conflict with his aspired self, or ideal-ego, of wanting to be and become a certain kind of teacher. At the same time, it evoked images of a teacher who is untrue to his/her self and consequently hates teaching (feared self), in direct antithesis with his ideal-ego involving the desire and confidence to teach in ways that are expressive of one's personality. As indicated in the italicised and underlined text, this commitment dilemma between wanting to identify with teaching as a career and the reality of being unsure about teaching is finally resolved in the newly discovered possibility of becoming a special education teacher and thus finding a way of successfully integrating the aspirations of his ideal ego and the requirements of his ego ideal.

In this last excerpt, Christian elaborates what it is about being a special education teacher that summons his professional identity and commitment. In this context, the higher social and moral purpose of being a teacher of students about life (satisfying both his aspired and required self) is contrasted with traditional expectations (his required, but not his aspired, self) of being a mere teacher of curriculum content. Thus the opposing tendencies that he struggled with in his first placement in a school, between being true to

the aspired self of his ideal-ego and meeting the requirements of his ego-ideal, are resolved in the identity and mission of the special education teacher, whose role it is to teach students life and work skills. In psycho-dynamic terms, Christian's new found source of identification for his ideal-ego through becoming a special education teacher prompts him to rework the traditional ego-ideal of being a teacher, as being solely a teacher of curriculum content, by expanding this ego-ideal in a way that brings it closer to his ideal-ego.

Excerpt 6
Christian: Yeah. I think definitely the APE in special education then really changed that identity of, "*I don't want to do this*." I just kind of did it because *I turned it around and said, "Okay, well, maybe this avenue." And do special education, which I'm still considering doing. So that made me really think because it was different type of teacher. I liked it because you're a teacher but not of content. I had a few issues with content on that prac as well. You're a teacher of life. You're a teacher of - - of kids. You're a real teacher. You don't focus... focus on the content. It's teaching them skills so that they can have jobs and just, yeah, and I really liked that aspect*.

In this excerpt, Christian begins by recalling his earlier sense of unease, captured in the refrain "I don't want to do this", but then describes how he "turned it around" by identifying how he could become a "different type of teacher", a teacher of 'life and of 'kids', rather than of 'content'. His categorization of this type of teacher as "a real teacher" perhaps reflects a sense that he has found a way to marry his preferred self-image as a teacher, involving scenarios that enabled him to foreground his capacity for warm interpersonal relationships with his students, with the societal expectations and requirements that comprise the price of recognition as a teacher. Here, finally, it seems that Christian has achieved resolution in what has been an ongoing struggle between his personality and the demands of being a teacher, a struggle that we have framed in this paper in terms of an ongoing dialectic of development between the imagined self of the ideal-ego and the required self of the ego-ideal.

Conclusion

In presenting this vignette of Christian's journey, as noted earlier, we are not making any

grand claims to generality. Instead, we are seeking to explain a 'mystery' that piqued our interest, provoking us to generate a plausible explanation that may in turn have wider significance and relevance for others in teacher education. In concluding, we would thus like to offer some tentative thoughts about how the tension between inside and outside pressures or forces, which we have analysed in terms of the tension between ideal-ego and ego-ideal might be built upon and turned to constructive ends.

In one sense, our analysis of Christian's case in terms of the conflicting demands of ideal-ego and the ego-ideal literally splits and de-centres the individual in a way that may seem counter to popular ways of thinking about identity in general, and teacher education in particular, as a matter of striving to discover one's true self. In response, we would make a number of points: first, that we do not adhere to a vision of a unified subject; second, that it may be more helpful to talk in terms of identifications (imaginary and symbolic identifications in our Lacanian terms, though we recognize that others will have their own preferred theories), which suggests a process rather than an object or 'thing'; third, that the sort of conflicts and dilemmas evident in Christian's case are present in most if not all pre-service and novice teachers and; fourth and finally, these conflicts and tensions need to be articulated in order to be worked upon in what we might think of as a space of productive tension between ideal-ego and ego-ideal.

Our argument is also that whilst pre-service teachers are almost inevitably going to experience tensions between the aspirations of their ideal-ego and the demands of the ego-ideal, merely prioritising either one of these at the expense of the other is unlikely to yield a satisfactory long term solution. In the case of refusing to cede on the individual's preferred self-image the consequence is likely to be alienation from and rejection by the professional community. Christian's initial failure can be read as symptomatic of this option. On the other hand, total compliance with the social demands of the ego-ideal can only be achieved at the expense of repression of core aspects – beliefs and attitudes – of the self resulting in depression, inauthenticity and resentment. Instead of either of these equally unattractive options, what we are suggesting is the need for teacher educators and pre-service teachers to engage with the challenge of maintaining a productive tension

between the inside-out aspirations of the ideal-ego and the outside-in requirements of the ego-ideal. Figure 1, below, attempts to represent this space.

[Place Figure 1 here] The 'space of productive tension' between ideal ego and ego ideal.

In saying this, we are not suggesting that teacher education needs to incorporate full-fledged psychoanalytic practice or therapy alongside its traditional focus on classroom practice and pedagogy – though we wonder what our need to insert this caveat says about our fantasised view of our (feared? revered? despised?) readers and what we imagine they might expect of or demand from us[5]. However, we would follow Boote (2003) in suggesting that teacher educators have an emerging role as 'belief-and-attitude therapists'. Of course, the intensification of interpersonal roles this suggests further highlights existing tension between teacher educators' role in developing the pedagogical practices of their students and their responsibilities as guardians or gatekeepers to the profession. But given the inevitability and inescapability of tension and conflict in teacher education (as in other walks of life!), surely it is better to develop concepts and vocabularies with which to analyse and discuss these conflicts rather than ignoring them and thus giving them free reign to sabotage practice and subvert development from beneath the radar of conscious attention. Such concepts and vocabularies – or thinking tools – introduce a third element into professional conversations. They thus turn them, at least potentially, from dyadic and potentially antagonistic encounters to less immediate, and therefore in a sense mediated, triadic dialogues (Muller, 1996). Such tools thus offer the potential to assist teacher educators in nudging pre-service teachers, like Christian, beyond their current imaginary fixations by tapping into the creative, in contrast to the regulative, potential of the symbolic (Clarke & Moore, 2013), thus creating scope to combine educational and therapeutic discourses by surfacing the emotional and identity issues that inevitably haunt pedagogy.

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