



Teacher Reflection in a Hall of Mirrors: Historical Influences and Political Reverberations

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This article traces the genealogy of reflection in teacher education by seeking the conditions of its emergence through the influences of Descartes, Dewey, Schön, and feminism. Drawing on the critical lenses of Foucaultian genealogy and the sociology of scientific knowledge, the analysis investigates how the complicated meanings of reflection get played out in complex and contradictory ways through research practices. The purpose of this article is to highlight the diversity of meanings that constitute understandings of the term and then to critique the effects of power that reverberate through current reflective practices.

“There is no such thing as an unreflective teacher.”
—Ken Zeichner (1996b, p. 207)

The students in my master’s level curriculum course are practicing teachers. In every class they take turns facilitating an activity that connects the course readings to their own classroom experiences. During one class in February 2002, the facilitators directed the class to write and perform satires of preservice teacher education. Three of the four skits included scenes in which the person portraying the teacher educator said something like this,

So, we have been discussing reflective teaching. How does this feel? How does this inform your teaching practice? Write a reflection about how it feels to learn about reflective teaching. Very good. Now, write a reflection about how it feels to write reflective journals.

This scene will come as no surprise to teacher educators who have witnessed a plethora of literature on reflective teaching at least since John Dewey’s (1933) *How We Think*. In the discipline of teacher education, reflection has become an “academic virtue and source of privileged knowledge” (Lynch, 2000, p. 26).¹ Reflective teaching has been an issue for so long that the debates have grown to include several generations of commentaries including examples of teachers’ reflective practices (e.g., Patterson, Santa, Short, & Smith, 1993; Swain, 1998); how-to manuals that explain steps for making teachers into reflective practitioners (e.g., Black, 2001; Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999); classifications of different types of reflection practiced by teachers and teacher educators (e.g., Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Gore, 1993; Loughran, 2002; Smyth, 1992; Sparks-Langer, 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1990; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991);

and meta-surveys of the different ways commentators have classified types of reflection (e.g., Feiman-Nemser, 1990, especially the table on p. 220).

Some recent educational literature portrays reflection as a wholly beneficial practice for teachers (see, e.g., Artzt & Armour-Thomas, 2002; Margolis, 2002; Mayes, 2001a, 2001b; Moore, 2002; Rock & Levin, 2002; Swain, 1998). However, significant critiques of reflection have come from several directions (see, e.g., McNay, 1999; Smyth, 1992; Zeichner, 1996a, 1996b). One direction of critique is that reflective practices have not helped advance teachers’ roles in schools. For example, Zeichner’s (1996b) critique of reflection suggests four themes that explain why some reflective practices tend to undermine their intended purposes for teachers: the privilege of university research over teacher research, an emphasis on teaching techniques and classroom management, disregard of the social and institutional context of teaching, and individual reflection instead of collaborative sharing. Zeichner argues that improvement will not occur unless teachers are supported and respected contributors to school reform programs: “despite the lofty rhetoric surrounding efforts to help teachers become more reflective, in reality, teacher education has done very little to foster genuine teacher development and to enhance teachers’ roles in school reform” (1996b, p. 201).

In addition to Zeichner’s support for teachers, other critical commentaries have recognized problematic features in the literature about teacher reflection. A major focus of criticism is the degree to which reflective practices serve to reinforce existing beliefs rather than challenge assumptions. Some reflective practices may simply be exercises in reconfirming, justifying, or rationalizing preconceived ideas. Loughran (2002), for example, notes, “rationalization may masquerade as reflection” (p. 35). Korthagen and Wubbels’ (1995) comparative study “found no indication of a link between reflectivity and inclination towards innovation” (p. 69).

Another major focus in the critical research on reflection concerns the degree to which reflective practices tend to provide instrumental analyses of teaching and ignore issues of social justice. Valli’s (1992) edited book, *Reflective Teacher Education*, includes six chapters² that criticize the kinds of reflective practices that are designed to help teachers be more efficient in delivering information or raising students’ test scores—the so-called “technical” or “instrumental” approach to reflection. Instrumental approaches to reflection are criticized because they do not promote social reconstruction of systemic injustices. Gomez (1996) documents that reflective practices have a complex and even contradictory role in the preparation of teachers for cultural diversity; for example, students may use reflective writing to reinforce their racist assumptions.

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Smyth (1992) writes, “reflective practices, far from being emancipatory for teachers, entrap them within the New Right ideology of radical interventionism” (p. 267). McNay (1999) argues, “some theories of reflexive change reproduce the ‘disembodied and disembedded’ subject of masculinist thought” (p. 95).

This article joins previous critiques of reflection in the assertion that research and practices of reflection have had consequences that tend to thwart reform. Based on that premise, this analysis adds two other dimensions to discourse on teacher reflection. One dimension is to historicize the term. Zeichner (1992) remarks that “the term reflection has become a slogan around which teacher educators all over the world have rallied in the name of teacher education reform.... One of the most notable characteristics of this emerging literature on reflective inquiry in teaching and teacher education is its ahistorical nature” (pp. 161–162). In response to that call, this article traces the constructions of reflection from Descartes to Dewey and Schön. Historicizing the term helps untangle the confusing morass of meanings, the treacle³ that we encounter in the uses of the term *reflection*. Another dimension of this article is to examine *reflection* through the lenses of Foucaultian genealogy and the sociology of scientific knowledge. These two lenses have been deployed in other critical approaches to educational literature (see, e.g., Ball, 1990; Olssen, 1999; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). However, these perspectives have not been brought to bear directly in research on teacher reflection. Genealogy and the sociology of scientific knowledge help to illuminate aspects of reflection that have not been made apparent from other critical perspectives.

Genealogy is a particular kind of history, and it is not the same as a search for origins (Foucault, 1971/1998a; Prado, 1995). Rather, genealogy assumes that concepts emerge in discourse as a product of multiple influences. In this analysis I assume that the popularity of reflection in educational research and practice is supported by a variety of constituents including conservative, radical, feminist, and Deweyan. Supporting arguments for reflection are so widespread and divergent that they often contradict each other. Genealogical analyses such as this rest on the assumption that the durability of a concept is enhanced by the heterogeneity of traditions that use that concept. The term *reflection* appears to be so natural and so acceptable precisely because it is supported by multiple perspectives with criteria for reasonableness that are otherwise incommensurable. A genealogy does not focus on how meanings fit together analytically but rather how they work together historically.

Some research on reflection points to practical solutions for sorting out a helpful definition of reflection. For example, to overcome the conservative tendencies of reflection, one remedy is to introduce a social dimension to reflective practices, making reflections public and available to critique among peers or critical friends (see, e.g., Loughran, 2002). Another proposed solution has been to integrate a spiritual dimension into reflective practices, thereby introducing a fresh perspective (see, e.g., Mayes, 2001b).

In contrast to those approaches, this article does not try to clarify the meaning of reflection. Rather, it emphasizes the historical and discursive complexities of the concept. I do this not by arguing for how the term should be used, but by mapping the way the term is being used.⁴ This approach results in an analysis that illuminates tensions in the discourse of reflection, for example, between reflection as expert knowledge and reflection as

anti-expert knowledge. Genealogy is a strategy to undermine the naturalization of the term *reflection*, to call attention to the history of power relations that have constituted assumptions about what reflection means, to highlight the ways discourse constructs subjects, and to suggest possible paths for sorting through the meanings of terms.

In the first part of the article, I trace the genealogy of reflection in teacher education by seeking the conditions of its emergence in discourse (Foucault, 1982). As Smyth (1992) writes, previous analyses have not done very much to explain “the reasons for the enormous proliferation of work currently occurring under the banner of reflective practice” (p. 275). After tracing the discursive threads that have contributed to the meanings of reflection in teacher education, I examine the political consequences of some reflective practices. I investigate how the complicated meanings of reflection get played out in current practices in complex ways. The purpose of this article is to highlight the diverse array of influences that have coalesced within the term reflection, and then to analyze how those incongruous influences reverberate through current research and practices.

Historicizing Reflection’s Many Faces

As a way of historicizing the concept of reflection, I trace four interrelated, sometimes contradictory, threads that contribute to the popularity of reflection in current U.S. teacher education research and practice: the epistemological foundations of Cartesian rationality, the appropriation of Dewey’s works as authoritative for education, the value of Schön’s professionalism for teachers, and the currency of feminist anti-establishment critiques.

Cartesian Rationality

Insofar as Descartes is regarded as a founder of modern philosophy, reflectivity—the ability to see oneself as object—is a defining characteristic of modern self-awareness, not only in the field of education but in most current academic inquiry (Nadler, 1989). Reflection, in its common Cartesian meaning, rests on the assumption that self-awareness can generate valid knowledge. When epistemology rests on reflection, it is not necessary to appeal to divine revelation or to a higher authority for knowledge. By implication, when teachers are asked to reflect on their practices, the Cartesian assumption is that self-awareness will provide knowledge and understanding about teaching. Contemporary writers in the United States rarely cite Descartes as the source of the modern sense of self as *cogito*; however, Cartesian assumptions are enacted whenever reflective practices in teacher education express Enlightenment optimism about the potential for human rationality. In a Cartesian scheme of self-awareness, the self plays both roles of subject-who-reflects and object-who-is-reflected-upon simultaneously (Nadler, 1989). This Cartesian framework places value on all reflection simply because it is a demonstration of self-awareness. From a Cartesian perspective, all reflection is desirable because it indicates a consciousness of self. Zeichner (1992) criticizes such indiscriminate celebrations of reflection when he notes,

there has recently been a great deal of advocacy for reflective teaching in general, without much comment about what it is the reflection should be focused on, the criteria that should be used to evaluate the quality of the reflection, or the degree to which teach-

ers' deliberations should incorporate a critique of the social and institutional contexts in which they work. The implication here is that teachers [*sic*] actions are necessarily better just because they are more deliberate or intentional. (p. 167)

In some U.S. teacher education literature, the Cartesian notion of self-awareness is extended to mean that the reflective self has agency. For example, van Manen (1991) defines reflection in education as the ability to make deliberate choices:

Reflection is a fundamental concept in educational theory, and in some sense it is just another word for 'thinking.' To reflect is to think. But reflection in the field of education carries the connotation of deliberation, of making choices, of coming to decisions about alternative courses of action. (p. 98)

In other examples, Ross and Bondy (1996) define reflection as "a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices" (p. 65). Evans and Policella (2000) write, "Reflection requires teachers to be introspective, open-minded, and willing to be responsible for decisions and actions" (p. 62). In each of these examples, the Cartesian notion of reflective self-awareness has been extended to mean that reflection can provide the basis for rational responsible choices.

Research and practices of reflection that share this assumption about rationality and responsibility walk a fine and dangerous line. On the one hand, of course we want teachers to be thoughtful about what they do. On the other hand, whenever reflection is conflated with rational choice (as it is in the previous examples), it takes on the same problems as liberal meritocratic thinking, namely the assumption of equal opportunity on a level playing field. For example, Korthagen and Kessels (1999) provide "empirical support of the realistic approach in teacher education" (p. 14). They portray reflection as a way to gain "insights into teacher development and the nature of the relationship between teacher cognition and teacher behavior" (p. 4). They advocate the "ALACT" model of five cyclical phases of reflection: "action, looking back, awareness of essential aspects, creating alternative methods of action, and trial" (p. 14). The research leading to the ALACT model and the research deriving from it construe reflection as a step-by-step process. Reflective thinking then becomes formalized in instrumental terms. Some, following Dewey, might say this is ironic because reflection was meant as an alternative to instrumental ways of thinking. When Cartesian reflection is cast in formal methodological terms, it becomes impossible to question the ways in which that methodology already incorporates the very habits of thought that reflection is supposed to interrupt. Methodological approaches to reflection also tend to assume a level playing field in which everyone who goes through the steps will arrive at the same place. This construction of reflection neglects both the effects of socialization and the workings of systemic injustices on the ways it is possible to be aware of ourselves both as subjects and as objects (Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Foucault, 1997b; Popkewitz, 2002; Rose, 1989).

John Dewey's How We Think

A second strand contributing to the viability of reflection in teacher education comes from the influences and appropriations of John Dewey. In 1910, Dewey wrote a book with the simple

title of *How We Think*. In 1933 he published a substantially revised version of that book with the title *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*. The 1933 version expands the original with the addition of several chapters, including "Why Reflective Thinking Must Be an Educational Aim," "The Process and Product of Reflective Activity," and "Analysis of Reflective Thinking." These revisions and the overall message of the 1933 book indicate the degree to which Dewey increasingly promoted reflective thinking as an educational aim.

U.S. teacher education literature in general tends to treat Dewey as an icon, so references to Dewey are usually of the authoritative type; research on reflection is no exception. Citations of Dewey have been used to support a vast array of different educational projects, and it seems that every educational researcher has his or her own way of reading Dewey. The reading I offer here is not mainstream fare, and I do not intend it to represent the whole of Dewey's complicated and multifaceted corpus. Rather, I am concerned to understand parts of Dewey's project as historically situated in the Progressive Era of educational reform, when administration and moral order were paramount in educational research (see, e.g., Cherryholmes, 1999; Kliebard, 1986; Popkewitz, 1998; Rosario, 2000).

One aspect of the historical context is that Dewey's reflective thinking was promoted as a means for instilling habits of thought and cultivating self discipline for purposes of social betterment: "The alternative to externally imposed inhibition is inhibition through an individual's own reflection and judgment" (Dewey, 1938, p. 64). Dewey advocated reflective thinking as a way to provide warrant for belief: "Reflection thus implies that something is believed in (or disbelieved in), not on its own direct account, but through something else which stands as witness, evidence, proof, voucher, warrant; that is, as *ground of belief*" (1933, p. 11). According to Dewey, reflective thinking is worthwhile because it "converts action that is merely appetitive, blind, and impulsive into intelligent action" (1933, p. 17). It gives increased power of control: "Only when things about us have meaning for us, only when they signify consequences that can be reached by using them in certain ways, is any such thing as intentional, deliberate control of them possible" (p. 18). Finally, reflective thinking "confers upon physical events and objects a very different status and value from those which they possess to a being that does not reflect" (p. 19). In other words, a particular kind of reflective thinking emerged in the early part of this century for very modern reasons: Reflective thinking represented a triumph of reason and science over instinct and impulse. Cartesian reflection is an enactment of self-awareness. In contrast, Dewey's reflective thinking was meant to replace appetites and impulses with scientifically rational choices.

For Dewey, reflection was a kind of forethought. Reflective thinking "deliberately institutes, in advance of the happening of various contingencies and emergencies of life, devices for detecting their approach and registering their nature, for warding off what is unfavorable, or at least for protecting ourselves from its full impact" (1933, p. 19). Dewey promoted reflective thinking as a way of exercising the imagination toward future possibilities. Describing the relationship between science and educational professionals in Dewey's time, Popkewitz (1987) writes,

The faith in a science of schooling was part of a discourse related to the professionalization occurring in the social and economic structures of American society. The Progressive Era is one manifestation of a larger change in the social organization of work and the commodification of knowledge through the formation of structured communities of experts. (p. 10)

The Progressive Era in the United States was characterized by burgeoning scientific and social scientific approaches to governance and the administration of society. Professionalism was associated with science and scientific methods as a means to raise social status. Teaching was one of the professions that was shaping and being shaped by emerging social sciences in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Progressive Era trends in the professionalization of teaching are exemplified in a fascination with psychology and “the scientific approach” to education.

Although current research cites Dewey in support of reflective thinking, the meaning of that term has changed considerably from Dewey’s 1933 version. Today’s notion of reflection usually means tapping into a more intuitive or non-scientific awareness, and looking to the past for purposes of introspective understanding (e.g., Clark, 2001; Loughran, 2002; Mayes, 2001a). When educational research cites Dewey in support of reflective thinking that looks to the past, these tend to be ahistorical insofar as they take Dewey’s future-oriented thinking out of its historical context of pragmatic and communitarian concerns.

Professional Reflection

A third major influence in the construction of reflection in teacher education is Donald Schön’s study of professional knowledge (Kennedy, 1990). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* was published in 1983 and followed in 1987 by *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. Schön contrasts positivistic “technical rationality” with intuitive “reflection-in-action.” Schön’s work was enthusiastically embraced in U.S. teacher education literature as a way to raise social status by bestowing on teaching the characteristics of professionalism (Collier, 1999; Gore, 1993; Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000).

Schön’s book emphasizes the value of uncertainty as a desirable aspect of professional reflective practice: “A practitioner’s reflection can serve as a corrective to over-learning. Through reflection, he can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience” (1983, p. 61). The value of tacit understanding promoted by Schön was reiterated in teacher education discourses that define professional practice as a combination of art and science. For example, Korthagen and Wubbels (1995) write, “Schön’s descriptions do not make explicit his interpretation of good teaching. It is conceivable that he stresses the experimental nature of good teaching, and does not attach a particularly high value to teachers’ use of the theoretical underpinnings of their teaching (p. 52). Schön’s definition of reflection is generally understood to be artistic and practice based as opposed to positivistic and science based. Gore (1987), for example, draws upon both Dewey and Schön to argue against a “technocratic rationality” which undergirds the

dominant behavioristic paradigm of teacher education in North America” (p. 33). Gore argues that a more social reconstructionist approach to reflective teaching can be upheld through appeals to Dewey’s notions of democracy and Schön’s notions of professionalism. In some cases, Schön’s reflective practitioner reverberates with Dewey’s reflective thinker to promote a form of professionalism that rejects instrumental and technocratic rationality.

However, there is also a major point of departure that distinguishes Dewey’s scientific reflection from Schön’s artistic reflection and that confounds the meanings of reflection today, especially when reflective practices strive to be based simultaneously in scientific expertise and in intuitive uncertainty. Schön’s discourse on intuitive reflective practitioners contradicts Dewey’s association of reflective thinking with the scientific method. Schön advocates practiced-based common knowledge and rejects scientific or intellectual knowledge that might appear too “theoretical” or disengaged from “solving the messy problems that practitioners face in the ‘swampy lowlands of practice’” (as quoted in Zeichner, 1996b, p. 221). These days the meaning of professional reflection is riddled with tensions between Schön’s notion of practitioner-based intuition, on the one hand, and Dewey’s notion of rational and scientific thinking, on the other hand. These tensions between intuition and science are combined with Cartesian impulses toward self-awareness and feminist interventions.

Feminist Anti-Establishment Interventions

Closely related to the populist and anti-scientific trends of current professionalism in the United States are the challenges to the expert establishment leveled by cultural feminist research in education. Unlike liberal feminism and poststructuralist feminism, cultural feminism takes the position that established research methods privilege “masculinist” ways of thinking (Gmelch, 1998). Cultural feminist scholarship promotes alternative modes of knowledge production that would allow “women’s voices” to sound (see, e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Cultural feminist projects in general rest on the assumption that expert knowledge has been socialized by (masculinist) technical rationality, but that one’s “own intelligence” and “center of knowing” have not been so socialized. Richert (1992), for example, connects reflection, agency, and voice in a feminist educational endeavor:

In the feminist literature, voice and power are often linked by a conceptualization that either explicitly states, or implicitly implies, that claiming, experiencing, and/or honoring one’s voice empowers the individual by putting her in contact with her own intelligence. . . . In Dewey’s (1933) terms, teachers who know in this way can act with intent; they are empowered to draw from the center of their own knowing and act as critics and creators of their world. . . . Agency, as it is described in this model, casts voice as the connection between reflection and action. (pp. 196–197)

Richert’s explication appeals—perhaps ironically—to Dewey’s terms to justify introspective sources of knowledge. Her version of feminist reflection seems to imply that expert knowledge has been socialized by masculinist agendas including technical rationality (or “phallogocentrism,” see, e.g., Grosz, 1989), but that one’s “own intelligence” and “center of knowing” are sources of empowerment. In this approach, reflection is constructed as a way of getting in touch with one’s authentic inner self in order

to think in ways that have not been influenced by the same theoretical tools that built the master's house.

Other cultural feminists cast a slightly different relationship between reflection and socialization. Noddings (1986), for example, appeals to Dewey for reasons quite different from those expressed by Richert:

For Dewey, and for me, socialization can be synonymous with education if the practices to which people are socialized are truly representative of defensible ideals. To induce the habit of inquiry and reflection, for example, would be to educate and also to socialize, if the society genuinely valued inquiry and reflection. (p. 501)

Both Richert and Noddings assume particular definitions of agency and reflection in which there must be some trustworthy inner self. These writers acknowledge the effects of socialization on thinking processes. At the same time, they advocate reflection in a way that suggests that some inner self remains untouched by social domination and exempt from the effects of existing power relations. These constructions of reflection interweave a complicated reliance on the authenticity of an inner voice and denunciation of the socializing influences that shape our knowledge and experiences.

I find this to be a confusing position because the assumptions set up a construction in which some aspects of the self are socialized and other aspects are not (Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Fendler, 1999; Lather, 1991; Scott, 1992). How can some feminists assume that society is structured by forces of domination and oppression and at the same time promote reflective thinking as if it had not also been shaped by those forces of oppression? Such feminist accounts of reflectivity do not account for the fact that all ways of thinking and systems of reasoning—including reflective inquiry and communities of practice—are themselves products of historical power relations, and that there is no sure way to tell the difference between reflective thinking that is complicit with existing power hierarchies and reflective thinking that is authentic or innovative.

The previous examination of the influences of Descartes, Dewey, Schön, and cultural feminism was designed to highlight the ways different historical influences have contributed complexities to the meanings of reflection in teacher education research and practice. Today's discourse of reflection incorporates an array of meanings: a demonstration of self consciousness, a scientific approach to planning for the future, a tacit and intuitive understanding of practice, a discipline to become more professional, a way to tap into one's authentic inner voice, a means to become a more effective teacher, and a strategy to redress injustices in society. Reflective teaching has become a catchall term for competing programs of teacher education reform. It is no wonder then that current research and practices relating to reflection tend to embody mixed messages and confusing agendas.

Political Reverberations of Reflective Practices

As a way of analyzing some of the political implications of the discourse of reflection today, I draw from the sociology of scientific knowledge and Foucaultian analytics of power. First, I follow Bruno Latour to argue against a hierarchical order for types of reflection. Second, I suggest that the effort to distinguish instrumental reflection from politically engaged reflection is problematic. Third, using the Foucaultian concept of governmentality, I argue

that there is no essential unsocialized way of thinking that can be depended upon as the basis for critical reflection on social power relations. Finally, following bell hooks, I suggest that certain devices of reflective practices, such as journal writing and autobiographical narratives, may include unintended effects that undermine their intended purposes.

Orders of Reflection?

In some areas of academic inquiry, particularly anthropology, there are distinctions among orders of reflection: a straightforward description of a classroom event would be a first order account and a critical or one-step-back explanation of that description would be a second order account (see, e.g., Pels, 2000; Sandywell, 1996; Woolgar, 1988). The implication is that the one-step-back account is more reflective than the immediate description. Hierarchical orders of reflection are incorporated into educational research when it is assumed that a one-step-removed examination of events will afford a more intelligent and "reflective" account. Some teacher education research uses the taxonomy of reflective thought found in Pultorak (1993) and van Manen (1977). For example, Collier (1999) applies an analysis of three categories of teacher reflectivity in which the first level is descriptive, the second makes reference to context, and the third takes an "objective" perspective. Similarly, Yost et al. (2000) recommend that we use "frameworks for evaluating levels of reflectivity":

- (1) no descriptive language; (2) simple, layperson description;
- (3) events labeled with appropriate terms; (4) explanation with tradition or personal preference given as the rationale; (5) explanation with principle or theory given as the rationale; (6) explanation with the principle/theory and consideration of other factors; and (7) explanation with consideration of ethical, moral, political issues. (p. 45)

These examples of research in teacher education impose a hierarchy of reflective practices in which description is a lower order, and lesser value, than explanation or theoretical grounding.

In explicit contrast, Latour (1988) argues against the possibility that reflection can be ranked in orders of discourse. He writes,

A text about Malinowski's way of writing about the Balinese is no more and no less reflexive than Malinowski's text about the Balinese and this is no less and no more reflexive than what the Balinese themselves say; and Woolgar's *n*th degree account of the whole thing is no more and no less reflexive than any of the others in the chain. Why can't they be ordered in a pile of reflexive layers? Because they are all texts or stories bearing on *something else*. There is no way to order texts in layers because they are all equal. Texts, so to speak, live in a democracy, as far as semiotics is concerned. (pp. 168–169)

Latour's analysis promoting pluralism for various modes and objects of reflexivity has provocative implications for understanding reflective practices in teacher education. It suggests that the straightforward description of a class is no less reflective than the perspective from one step back, or a description that is grounded in a given theory (see also Peshkin, 1993). It suggests that devaluing immediate description is a way of censoring certain ways of perceiving and talking about teaching. If teachers' writing is evaluated according to hierarchical levels of reflectivity, then that evaluation has as much of a disciplinary or socializing effect as generative or innovative effects.

What is Not Reflective Thinking? Deconstructing a False Dichotomy

Reflection that is purely instrumental or technical, without explicit attention to issues of social justice, is denounced by some critical theorists. The strong rhetorical distinction between technical (or instrumental) rationality and social reconstructionist (or critical) reflection is argued in much teacher education research (see, e.g., Emery, 1996; Loughran, 2002; Smyth, 1992; Valli, 1992). Gore (1992) problematizes this dichotomy and points out that “the debate over levels of reflectivity functions to disguise social reconstructionist’s primary concern for social, political, and ethical issues” (p. 150). Dedicated educational researchers are concerned about the role of schooling in the promotion of social justice. However, the alleged opposition between technical reflection and social reconstructionist reflection is a false dichotomy on two grounds.

First, instrumental and social reconstructionist (or critical) reflection come from opposite sides of a political spectrum—from the Right and the other from the Left. However, both traditions of reflective practice may constitute political activism. It is conceivable that teachers and teacher educators who engage in reflective traditions that appear to be instrumental or technocratic may do so precisely because of a heartfelt commitment to social reconstruction (Noffke & Brennan, 1991). They may engage in technical reflection because they believe that the efficient mastery of subject matter by their students is the most effective means of redressing social inequities. Educators from all political persuasions engage in a wide variety of reflective practices. Even when those reflective practices seem to be technical and instrumental, they may still embody a profound sense of moral and political commitment to improving society. When teachers reflect in allegedly technical ways, they participate in the political agenda of liberal democracy by trying to get all students to achieve higher test scores. This agenda is criticized by some critical theories as being conservative or reactionary, but such reflection can be a form of politically engaged social reconstruction nonetheless (Clark, 2001).

Second, some social reconstructionist reflective practices are tied closely to critical traditions whose standards of political correctness may be based on Marxian notions of oppression and domination in society. A reflective practice may be judged to be reconstructionist because it explicitly engages with issues of race, class, and gender; however, if the reflective practice heedlessly replaces the ideology of liberal democracy with that of Marxism or critical pedagogy, then the latter form of reflection is no less technical or instrumental than the former. The false dichotomy between technical rationality and reflective thinking deconstructs both on the basis of alleged differences in political motivations and on the basis of potential for instrumental conformity to given ideological systems.

Governmentality and the Possibility of Reflection

Foucault’s (1979/1991) analytic of power as governmentality is useful for thinking about the politics of reflection, namely that historically specific power relations construct what it is possible to think. In Foucault’s words, governmentality is “the government of the self by oneself in its articulation with relations with others (such as one finds in pedagogy, behavior counseling, spir-

itual direction, the prescription of models for living, and so on)” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 88); “This encounter between the technologies of domination and those of the self I call ‘governmentality’” (1997b, p. 225). The lens of governmentality casts a particular light on reflection and points out the ways reflection is a technology of self-discipline and self-governance. These technologies make reflection problematic because it is impossible to guarantee an uncompromised or unsocialized point of view (see also Gore, 1993).

One of the main purposes of education in 20th century democracies has been to promote self-discipline according to social norms. The key point here is the relationship between the reflecting self and the existing expectations of normal self-discipline and self-governance. In these circumstances it is difficult to sort out exactly what is the subject doing reflection and what is the object being reflected upon. Given that the notion of modern democratic governance is inseparable from self-discipline, it is impossible to draw a line between an authentic experience of reflection and what has already been socialized and disciplined. There is no guarantee that one kind of reflection will produce an insight that is any more authentic or emancipatory than any other kind of reflection. The practice of reflection is itself a product of specific historical power relations. Teacher reflection can function as a disciplinary technology whose purpose may be obscure or unrecognized because ways of thinking are subject to and produced by social practices of discipline and normalization.

Foucault locates this problem of reflection in language, and he argues that reflection and fiction have the same task. The task for both is not to make the invisible visible but to point to the limits of thought and language. The problem with trying to make the invisible visible is that in the process of becoming visible, the Other becomes assimilated onto familiar ground and loses the distinctive character that makes it Other:

Any purely reflexive discourse runs the risk of leading the experience of the outside back to the dimension of interiority; reflection tends irresistibly to repatriate it to the side of consciousness and to develop it into a description of living that depicts the ‘outside’ as the experience of the body, space, the limits of the will, and the ineffaceable presence of the other. (Foucault, 1966/1998b, pp. 151–152)

When reflection is understood as a turning back upon the self, the danger is that reflection will reveal no more than what is already known. Even gestures to the outside run the risk of repatriating the Other and thereby reasserting the existing state of affairs: “Hence the necessity of converting reflexive language. It must be directed not toward any inner confirmation—not toward a kind of central, unshakable certitude—but toward an outer bound where it must continually content itself” (Foucault, 1966/1998b, p. 152).

Because reflection entails circular ways of thinking, research about reflection is problematic and can be dangerous if it assumes a privileged status in teacher education. Reflection may offer possibilities for transgression and social reconstruction, but this possibility cannot be guaranteed because it is reasonable to assume that reflective processes—ways of thinking and categories of understanding, including peer review—have already been molded and disciplined by the very social practices and relations that the reflective process is supposed to critique (Foucault,

1975/1996). There is no satisfactory way to distinguish between practices of reflection that are transgressive and those that are complicit with existing power hierarchies. The idea of governmentality and its relation to reflection reverberates eerily with Dewey's (1933) earlier critique: "Beliefs that perhaps originally were the products of fairly extensive and careful observation are stereotyped into fixed traditions and semi-sacred dogmas, accepted simply upon authority, and are mixed with fantastic conceptions that happen to have won the acceptance of authorities" (p. 194). It seems that the idea of a reflective practitioner has won the acceptance of many authorities today. Cartesian rationality, Deweyan educational aims, Schönian professionalism, and individual agency endow reflective thinking with a seductive appeal that has tended to deflect critical appraisal.

Devices of Reflection for Teachers: Journals and Autobiographies

In this section, I focus on two common practices of reflection for teachers and teacher educators: journal writing and autobiographical narratives (Gore, 1993). Following Michel Foucault and bell hooks, respectively, I critique the disciplinary technology of the confessional and the identification-by-stereotypes that are enacted through these common reflective practices.

Confessional journals. Foucault's genealogical treatment draws a connection between the practice of confession and a Christian heritage:

This theme of self-renunciation is very important. Throughout Christianity there is a correlation between disclosure of the self, dramatic or verbalized, and the renunciation of the self. My hypothesis, from looking at these two techniques, is that it is the second one, verbalization, that becomes the more important. From the eighteenth century to the present, the techniques of verbalization have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively a new self. (1997b, p. 249)

Here, Foucault explains that the human sciences have used the verbalization technique of self-disclosure as a way of constituting a new self. Verbalization resembles participation in a litany or catechism as a technique of reiteration that constructs a particular self-identity.

Reflective thinking in teacher education is often practiced using the technique of writing in journals. Journaling, which is usually intended as a means by which teachers and students can get in touch with their own and each other's thoughts, can also be considered to be a form of surveillance and an exercise of pastoral power.⁵ Gore (1993) makes the argument that "journals can function as a form of confession and/or therapy" (p. 150). There is a wide variety of possible scenarios in which journal writing can circulate power: self disclosure can constitute a new self; the journal can be a means for the teacher to encroach on the private life of a student and then intervene; a student can use the journal to develop an opinion and come to a critical realization; a teacher can interrupt a destructive prejudice expressed in a student's journal; or a student can use the journal to explain to the teacher that journals are intrusive and manipulative. Journal writing can also be seen as a piece of evidence that gives clues to the history of schooling and how its pedagogical practice has

shifted from training behaviors, to educating minds, to disciplining souls. When journal writing is seen in historical relation to Christian confessional practices, it becomes possible to question the normalizing and disciplinary effects of journal writing. The boundaries of public and private become available to critical scrutiny, and it makes me wonder: What does a teacher have no right to know about a student?

Autobiographical narratives and life histories. Autobiographies are used in teacher education as a way for students, teachers, and teacher educators to come to terms with the ways in which their personal experience affects how they perceive teaching and learning (Brookfield, 1995; Brown, 1999; Johnson, 2002; Kugelmass, 2000; Rousmaniere, 2000). Writing autobiographies and life histories also serves to legitimate the personal voice of the writer. In an autobiography, the teacher writes as the expert on the topic of "self," a practice that recalls Cartesian reflectivity. This device was presumably instituted as a way to situate knowledge and to dispel the elitist notion that scholarly writing must come from an objective or generic "god's eye" point of view. In the case of authors from underrepresented demographic groups, autobiography can also provide visibility and recognition for people who might otherwise be overlooked.

If I write an autobiography as a way of reflecting on my position, then the assumption is that I will learn something about myself in the process. Sometimes autobiographical narratives can provide writers with great insight about how perceptions are shaped by experience. However, other times, reflection is practiced as a way to reject outside influences and validate an inner voice as "authentic." Brookfield (1995) offers several caveats that remind teachers of the dangers of relying on personal experience: "To some extent, we are all prisoners trapped within the perceptual frameworks that determine how we view our experiences. A self-confirming cycle often develops, in which our uncritically accepted assumptions shape actions that then serve to confirm the truth of those assumptions" (p. 28). At the same time, Brookfield advocates autobiography as a means of sorting through perspectives in order to reject those that come from the outside and to confirm those that are based on "personal experience": "In becoming critically reflective, we also learn to speak about our practice in a way that is authentic and consistent. Speaking authentically means that we are alert to the voices inside us that are not our own, the voices that have been deliberately implanted by outside interests rather than springing from our own experiences" (p. 45). The simultaneous skepticism and support for autobiography constitutes reflection as a complex form of normalization in discourses of education.

In addition to constituting a particular definition of experience, autobiography can also re-circulate and reinforce existing stereotypes by taking sociological constructs of identity (e.g., race, class, and gender) and applying them to individuals in the form of expectations. bell hooks (1994) does not dismiss the possibility or even the desirability of strategic identification for political purposes. However, critiquing Diana Fuss's work on essentialism, hooks (1994) calls attention to an insidious form of exclusion embedded in devices of identification:

Fuss does not address how systems of domination already at work in the academy and the classroom silence the voices of individuals

from marginalized groups and give space only when on the basis of experience it is demanded. She does not suggest that the very discursive practices that allow for the assertion of the 'authority of experience' have already been determined by a politics of race, sex and class domination. (p. 81)

In this analysis, hooks does not focus on the relatively commonplace form of stereotyping by race. Rather, she calls attention to the rules of discourse that determine what can be called an experience, and the ways those discursive practices authorize some experiences and not others.

This line of inquiry allows a critical perspective of the categories that are assumed to constitute an autobiography. The categories frequently used in autobiography are the populational categories of race, class, gender, age, ability, and sexuality (see, e.g. Hacking, 1990; Popkewitz, 1991). According to those conventions of autobiography, I would be obligated to think of myself as a single, White female. In labeling myself that way, I invoke populational stereotypes. As an exercise in contrast, it is interesting to imagine what other features could just as easily have become conventional autobiographical labels that would identify the particular historical situation of the author, such as "I am revising this paper for the 13th time on a cloudy evening in December while listening to *All Things Considered*." In this latter case, an autobiographical narrative does not rely on populational categories to identify the writer and the writing. Rather, particular historical circumstances provide another kind of autobiographical context and identification for the writing. I do not mean to imply that the latter form of autobiography is any better than the former. I offer the example as a contrast to make the conventional forms of autobiographical identification seem less inevitable.

When the device of autobiographical narrative is considered together with the technique of self-disclosure in journal writing, the combination functions to construct the idea of teachers as a people who repeatedly confess and affirm their identity in terms of categories that reflect existing popular assumptions. This construction is a technology of the self that tends to perpetuate the status quo because the autobiographical markers are based on stereotypes and the conventions of what constitutes an autobiography are historically constructed. In this way, the autobiographical identification circumscribes what it is possible to think and authenticates some particular ways of being a teacher while it obliterates others and confounds the possibilities for thinking outside existing categories of thought.

Conclusion

In the case of teacher education, the laborious attempts to facilitate reflective practices for teachers fly in the face of the truism expressed in the epigraph of this article, namely, that there is no such thing as an unreflective teacher. If educational researchers believe that all teachers think about what they do, then why is there so much talk about making teachers into reflective practitioners? Zeichner further writes, "an illusion of teacher development has often been created that has maintained in more subtle ways the subservient position of the teacher" (1996a, p. 201). Zeichner's critique of the subservience of the teacher is based primarily on the observation that expert researchers rarely listen to teachers when they develop policy and teaching guidelines. My critique extended Zeichner's onto epistemological and political

grounds by arguing that an array of historical influences has contributed to complex meanings for reflection, and that common practices of reflection (journal writing and autobiographical narratives) may have unintended and undesirable political effects. When teacher education research provides elaborate programs for teaching teachers to be reflective practitioners, the implicit assumption is that teachers are not reflective unless they practice the specific techniques promoted by researchers. It is ironic that the rhetoric about reflective practitioners focuses on empowering teachers, but the requirements of learning to be reflective are based on the assumption that teachers are incapable of reflection without direction from expert authorities.

The case of teacher reflection provides an example of the need for educational researchers to examine their assumptions about the relationship between research and teacher education. All research has unintended consequences. Unintended consequences are not necessarily bad: "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism" (Foucault, 1982, pp. 231–232). Educational practices that are intended to provide relevant, effective, and politically responsive insights for improving education have complex consequences. At the same time, research practices become normalizing technologies when they reiterate assumptions that establish a particular power relation between research and teaching.

This analysis points out the generative complexities of a common term in teacher education. It does not seek to clarify or simplify the meaning of reflection, and it does not offer a solution to the problems of some reflective practices. This sort of analysis is a strategy to highlight the power relations that come together in discourse. Dedicated researchers are aware of and concerned about the possibility of performance gaps—the degree to which our research practices may inadvertently undermine our educational values. If we are sanguinely optimistic about our work, if we do not maintain a skeptical and critical attitude about what we do, then we have little chance of discovering the ways our best intentions may be falling short of the mark. But if we are open to the possibility of vigilant critique, then at least we have a fighting chance of avoiding similar oversights the next time around. As Foucault (1975/1996) has said, "To reveal relations of power is, in my opinion at any rate, to put them back in the hands of those who exercise them" (p. 144).

NOTES

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¹ In teacher education, anthropology, and the sociology of knowledge, there are examples in which *reflection* is distinguished from *reflexion*. This is usually done to distinguish instrumental kinds of reflection and reflexion from social reconstructionist kinds. I do not adopt the spelling devices in this article, and I draw no distinctions among *reflection*, *reflexion*, and *reflexivity*.

² Part II, "Critiques of Reflective Teacher Education."

³ Thanks to Helen Featherstone for this turn of phrase.

⁴ Mapping relies on a variety of sources including keyword counts in library databases and conference programs, citation searches, conference presentations, teacher education courses, and conversations with colleagues.

⁵ This argument is extended in Fendler (1999).

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