

MULTIPLE ANNIES

FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURAL THEORY AND THE MAKING OF A TEACHER

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Feminist poststructural theories of subjectivity posit a notion of the self as a site of disunity and conflict that is always in process and constructed within power relations. In teacher education, this theory of subjectivity troubles the notion of a predetermined, unified teacher identity assumed to emerge if a novice follows a linear, already-completed path of the student teaching experience. This article presents the story of Annie, a young woman learning to teach under the guidance of two cooperating teachers, Candace and Sheila, who espoused opposing discourses of teaching and mentoring. Deconstruction of Annie's experience illuminates how her subjectivities shifted between competing discourses within the discursive field of her student teaching experience. Annie's becoming a teacher was a wrenching, uneven process as she constructed her teacher subjectivities while situated within the unstable relationships between power, knowledge, and experience. Annie's experience of learning to teach offers a postmodern perspective on the normalizing assumptions and discourses embedded in current teacher education practices.

Poststructuralist theories of subjectivity¹ reject the humanist² notion of a unified, fixed self that has a stable, essential core and instead propose the self as a site of disunity and conflict that is always in process and constructed within power relations (Britzman, 1994; Flax, 1990; Kondo, 1990; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1997). Furthermore, feminist poststructuralism posits that subjectivities shift among the discursive fields that create them and that the individual is "always the site of conflicting forms of subjectivity" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). Weedon (1997) described this feminist concern with poststructural theory as a way to conceptualize multiple subject positions within varied discourses,³ a way to give voice to constructed meaning and to rewrite personal experiences (p. 33). For Weedon, this opens up space for consciousness raising and resistance.

The social structures and processes that shape our subjectivities are situated within discursive fields where language, social institu-

tions, subjectivity, and power exist, intersect, and produce competing ways of giving meaning to and constructing subjectivity (de Lauretis, 1986; Kondo, 1990; Weedon, 1997). Reflecting certain values, competing discourses emerge within discursive fields, and the language and practices of these discourses give rise to an individual's conflicting subjectivities. In this way, the meaning of structures, as well as the subject positioned within, become sites of political struggle (Weedon, 1997).

Embedded in the normative discourse of teacher education is the valorization of experience, and subsumed in this is the idea that learning to teach is a linear process in which a novice student becomes a teacher through the function of unproblematic experience. Britzman (1994) critiqued this discourse as too simplistic in its view of experience as following a preordained path, or a map, that excludes "an interrogation into how the dynamics of social activity and expression produce our understanding of expe-

rience" (p. 60). Britzman used poststructural theory to trouble the notion of a predetermined, unified teacher identity assumed to emerge if a novice assimilates and follows the already-organized, complete path of the student teaching experience. She claimed that learning to teach and shaping a teacher identity are struggles "to borrow, to negotiate, to claim ownership, and to take up that which seems already completed" (p. 54). Student teaching, in particular, provides a context in which novices must "speak and act as subjects from within a discursive field that they did not set up" (p. 61).

In teacher education, the teacher/student, expert/novice binaries are laden with meaning, meaning constructed by those who are situated within the unstable relationships between power, knowledge, experience, and subjectivity. The normative discourse holds that those who have the most experience possess the most power and knowledge, and those who tout this discourse expect novice students to conform and fluidly take up an identity similar to that of their mentor, who is the master teacher. Other, competing discourses vie for the students' subject position, discourses constructed by the values and beliefs of those in power—mainly other teachers, university people, and administrative personnel who work with student teachers. Therefore, the discursive field of the student teaching experience offers multiple, conflicting subject positions for novice students.

METHOD

A feminist, poststructural deconstruction⁴ of Annie, a young woman learning to teach illuminates how her subjectivities shifted among competing discourses within the discursive field of her student teaching experience. Annie is a 22-year-old, White, middle-class woman who was enrolled in an initial teacher certification program at a major southeastern university. She completed her student teaching practicum in English at a large, suburban high school during spring semester 2000. She was under the tutelage of two White, middle-class women: Candace, who has been teaching for 8 years, and Sheila, a veteran teacher of 26 years. Annie taught two classes of 10th-grade college-prep En-

glish in Candace's classroom and two 9th-grade honors English classes in Sheila's classroom. Almost all of the students in these classrooms were White and from middle- and upper-class suburban families.

During Annie's 9-week practicum, I worked as her university supervisor. I visited her school, observed her teaching, met with her cooperating teachers, and discussed her experiences with her. Over this period of time, I observed her teaching four times (twice in each classroom), and I was struck by how different she was as a teacher in these settings. In Candace's classroom, she was vibrant—moving about the room, engaging students in animated discussion, smiling, and taking risks in her pedagogical choices. In Sheila's classroom, however, Annie stood immobile behind a podium, recited notes from the overhead projector, passed out worksheets, and seemed detached from the students. I asked her about this difference, and we had many talks both over the telephone and during seminar meetings about the conflicts she felt and her attitude toward her frustrating experience of having to operate within two opposing discourses of teaching espoused by Candace and Sheila.

As a feminist who is theoretically positioned within poststructuralism, I became interested, as I worked with Annie, in her conflicting subject positions as a teacher and how her subjectivities were constructed in response to the power relations inherent in her teaching situation. My feminist poststructural proclivities lure me into the constant critique of structures, what those structures produce, and their particularly devastating effects on women. Annie's situation—one in which she was constructed within two conflicting discourses—lent itself to a poststructural analysis to explore what historical processes and discourses produced her, to interrogate this construction, and to examine how Annie resisted the trap of competing discursive practices, opening up space for agency (Butler, 1992; Scott, 1991).

Because Annie's experience was stressful, confusing, and emotionally draining for her, we had casual conversations (in person, over the phone, and via email) several times per week.

At these moments, Annie needed more than a university supervisor or a mentor; she needed someone to listen to her as she attempted to work out the tension and conflict she faced daily during one of the most important experiences of her life. Although I offered to step in and attempt to mediate the situation, Annie insisted that she handle it alone. My own subjectivities were implicated and remained in productive tension throughout the duration of this relationship: My feminist tendencies to rush in and liberate Annie from her oppressive situation were tempered by my poststructural hesitancy to avoid imposing what I perceive as the emancipatory path of liberation, potentially positioning me in the oppressor role. My responsibility grew into necessary counsel with Annie constantly to assure her that she was not "schizophrenic," as she put it; to assuage her feelings of incompetence; and to support her acts of accommodation and resistance through my explanations about how structures and power relations were operating in her specific experiences that produced the conflicts and tensions in her learning to teach.

As a result of these talks in which Annie had confided in me, we built a friendly, trusting relationship and developed a positive rapport. Therefore, Annie did not hesitate to participate in an interview study after she completed student teaching and left the high school. I asked her to speak more formally with me about the misalignments between the two classrooms and her teacher self so that we could both make sense of what happened in those classrooms. Annie told me her stories during two separate, 1-hour interviews that took place in my office on campus. These interviews were loosely structured around Seidman's (1998) guide to in-depth, phenomenological interviewing. My intent was to have Annie reconstruct the phenomenon of her learning to teach from her own perspective. In the first interview, I asked Annie open-ended questions that allowed her to focus on the details of her experience, describing her mentor teachers, her own teacher identity, critical incidents in learning to teach, and a typical day moving from one classroom to another. During the second interview, I asked Annie

more pointed questions about those details, and in this interview, she reflected on the meaning of these experiences, described the nature of her inner feelings during her practicum, explained why she chose particular incidents as critical to her learning to teach, and imagined how her experience might shape her first year of teaching. With Annie's written consent, I audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed our conversation for this article. To ensure confidentiality, the names of Annie, Candace, and Sheila are pseudonyms.

Through feminist poststructural theory, I use all of the above data⁵ (observations, formal interviews, casual conversations) to deconstruct how Annie shifted her subjectivities and carved out spaces in which to experiment, to accommodate, and to resist as she learned to teach. How she took up multiple subject positions was never seamless and never without tensions, and how she moved among these spaces was in response to the power structures within the context of a particular classroom. This became a wrenching, uneven process as she negotiated the bumpy terrain of being and becoming a teacher under the supervision of two very different mentor teachers who espoused opposing discourses about teaching and mentoring.

To understand Annie and her experiences, I take up the feminist researchers' concern of honoring the voices of women, using a multiplicity of data, and starting with women's personal experiences (Reinharz, 1992). I also take the poststructuralist stance that our knowledge claims are locally situated (Haraway, 1988) and that we use language to "word the world as we know it" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 483). I am most interested in Annie's stories because, as Britzman (1991, p. 59) wrote,

Cultural stories can narrate the painful and private moments when student teachers fall back on useless routines, become confused or anxious when things do not go as planned. . . . To study the cultural stories of student teaching, then, is to study the uncanny, the creepy detours, the uneasy alliances, and the obvious clashes between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

For these reasons, I foreground Annie's own words, her use of language to shape her mean-

ing of learning to teach, throughout this text. Her stories are evidence of the “creepy detours” and “uneasy alliances” that erupted during her student teaching experience.

In the following sections, I present Annie’s perceptions of the two teachers, Candace and Sheila, who mentored her during the 9-week student teaching practicum in English. In the final section, I use feminist poststructural theory to deconstruct how power, discourse, subjectivity, and experience operated in troubling, complex ways during the making of Annie’s subjectivities as a teacher.

“LIKE A SNEAK ATTACK”: CANDACE

Annie said that she and Candace “clicked immediately” when they met. During one of their first conversations, Annie realized that she and Candace shared the same philosophy of teaching, and she believed that it would be easy to step into Candace’s student-centered classroom and assume the identity of the teacher. Annie described Candace as “little but loud,” alluding to Candace’s short stature (barely 5 feet tall) but loud and commanding voice. Annie commented that Candace’s voice and her presence in the classroom make her a dynamic teacher:

She has good projection and volume, but it’s more than that. She knows what she’s talking about. She has everything planned out before a lesson—the rationale, the objectives, everything—but when she gets up there you can’t even tell it’s like that. It flows, and she’s very open in discussion. She never uses worksheets; she uses lots of activities to get kids involved. It’s like a sneak attack—kids don’t know that they’re learning.

Annie described Candace’s teaching style as “loose,” “spontaneous,” and receptive to students’ needs, and she admired Candace’s skill and subtlety in guiding students through reading literature. Annie remarked that the student-centered, open environment of Candace’s classroom was conducive to “great discussion,” but everything “ran smoothly.” Annie attributed this smoothness to the structure and expectations in place. According to Annie, although Candace was loose about curriculum and planning, she had “strict rules” about trivial things,

such as her intolerance for students’ forgetting their books or needing to leave the room for a bathroom break.

Although Candace kept tight control over student behavior in her classroom, Annie said that Candace put no constraints on her. Annie believed that Candace’s flexibility with curriculum, planning, and student learning—her teaching style—influenced her mentoring style. Annie said, “Candace threw me into it [teaching] and said, ‘Do it. It’s yours.’” She went on to describe the first week of her student teaching in Candace’s classroom:

I was there a couple of days observing. Then on the third day, she said, “You watch me teach third period, then you do fourth period.” I modeled her teaching for a couple of days and then the next week she said, “They’re all yours.” She wanted me to jump in and to develop my own style to see what would work for me.

Annie said that Candace left her alone in the classroom beginning that second week to give her space to construct her own teaching style; after the first couple of weeks, Candace did not insist that Annie mimic her approach. She said, “In Candace’s classroom, I can be the type of teacher that I want to be.” Annie noted that Candace did sit in on some classes to observe and to offer suggestions, but the nature of this feedback centered on “little hints to keep the class running smoothly.” Because of Candace’s hands-off approach to mentoring, Annie felt free to experiment with her teaching style and identity in this setting, with her mentor ready to offer help if she asked.

When I pressed Annie to explain “the type of teacher she wants to be” and the sense of freedom she felt in Candace’s classroom, she had difficulty articulating what this looked like, which connotes her process of constantly constructing her teaching identity and having the space to do so. Annie said that she was able to have “open-ended discussion” with her students about literature. She also commented, “I can use my sense of humor, keep everything light, relate to the kids, and help them understand literature.”

However, constructing a teacher identity in Candace’s classroom was a different process for

Annie from that in the classroom of Sheila, her other mentor teacher. Candace's and Sheila's classrooms offered two opposing discourses, and carving out space to craft her own teacher identity within the structures of Sheila's classroom proved to be no easy task for Annie. Annie was more persuaded by the discourse of Candace's classroom, so she shifted her subjectivities to resist and accommodate within the structures imposed on her in Sheila's classroom. Discerning the complex nature of the power, discourse, and subjectivity struggles inherent in her student teaching practicum requires understanding Annie's perception of Sheila.

"SHE WANTED THINGS IN THEIR PLACE": SHEILA

During our conversations (both formal and informal), Annie spent much more time speaking about her other mentor teacher, Sheila. Even when I asked questions directly focused on her experiences in Candace's classroom, Annie shifted her responses to talk more about her subject position in Sheila's classroom. Her experiences as a teacher with Candace's guidance served as points of departure—of comparison and mostly contrast—and she struggled to find words to describe her feelings of confusion, betrayal, suspicion, oppression, and exhaustion in Sheila's classroom. In this struggle, her multiple experiences in the two classrooms folded and unfolded on one another, remaining inexorably intertwined. Annie, in constructing her teacher identity, was not an "autonomous, free agent who merely chose the discourse of the day" (Britzman, 1994, p. 58). Instead, as a vulnerable subject who occupied multiple, clashing subject positions, she constructed an identity in response to the power of the normalizing expectations in each of the two classrooms. The pain she experienced as a subject in process (Weedon, 1997) was evident in everything that she did, signifying compliance or resistance to opposing norms of what it meant to be a teacher. The continuous redefinition and constant slipping (Weedon, 1997) of her subjectivity was an effect of the conflicting discourses in Candace's and Sheila's conceptions of what it means to learn to teach.

According to Annie, Candace's teaching and mentoring styles contrast sharply with Sheila's, a veteran teacher of 26 years. Annie described Sheila's pedagogy as "rigid, teacher centered, and test driven." According to Annie, Sheila is "worksheet oriented" and "teaches straight from the book." Annie said,

Sheila takes all her questions for class discussion from the teacher's edition. The teacher's edition has this sidebar for help, and she takes them straight from there. . . . She made the kids have *her* answers on their worksheets because their answers had to match *her* questions that were on the test.

Annie observed that Sheila's teaching consists of guiding student discussion to ensure that they are able to recite the prescribed answers on a worksheet taken directly from the teaching materials that accompany anthologies. From Annie's point of view, Sheila is most interested in her students' abilities to copy, memorize, and reproduce material for a test; no space exists for open, creative, critical thinking. Annie was baffled over how to engage students when such rigid teaching practices are central to classroom activity.

Inherent in Sheila's classroom pedagogy is her desire to control every aspect of teaching and learning. Annie perceives Sheila as the type of teacher who is mostly concerned about a perfect correlation between what the teacher says and what students write on their tests. What is most remarkable about their relationship is how Sheila's pedagogical approach spilled into her mentoring of Annie, who was a student but also an educated, adult woman. Annie felt that Sheila wielded similar control and domination over her—telling Annie what to teach and how to teach it. Such unbalanced power relations subjugated Annie's autonomy, and she felt painful, internal tension.

Sheila did not permit Annie to write her own lesson plans, forcing her to use plans that were written by the entire group of ninth-grade English teachers. Furthermore, Sheila used beguiling tactics to give Annie the impression that she had *carte blanche* in planning and teaching when actually she did not. Annie explained,

I had 2 weeks with the poetry unit, and she wouldn't let me plan it. It was all her plans, and I had to follow

them. I asked her if there was a specific way she wanted me to teach it, but she said, "No, do whatever you want." But that was *not* the case. I would teach my own way, and we would discuss things afterwards. She would say, "You should do it this way. . . ." She was very rigid with me. Everything that I did, I had to run through the mill. It was crazy. I was actually trying to plan the poetry unit, and I was showing her some things, and she kept saying, "No, we've got this planned."

Annie continued by recalling many other instances of Sheila's telling her to write plans and show them to her, only to instruct her to modify her plans to fit Sheila's preconceived vision of how the lessons should look. Sheila wrote a unit test first, then planned "backwards" to force a fit between the worksheets and the test. In contrast, Annie liked to be more spontaneous in her planning, adjusting activities daily to fit the needs of her students and crafting alternative assessment tools, such as portfolios, that would exhibit what students learned. Sheila, however, was not receptive to Annie's more "open and flexible" style of teaching and required her to design tests and worksheets modeled after her own.

Sheila also attempted to script Annie's way of managing difficult students. One of Annie's classes, consisting of ninth-grade honors students, often became "chatty." Annie was "bothered" and "amazed" by Sheila's method of quieting the class. Annie told me that she heard Sheila say to this chatty class, "Guys, you're honors students, *not* college prep. I expect more out of you." Annie, reflecting on this method, said,

That just killed me. I could not stand it. And she told me one day, "If they talk too much just say that." And I was like, "No way." I mean, that is one thing I would *never* say to them.

As we discussed this more, Annie admitted that it was degrading to set up hierarchies in this manner, in which certain students are privileged over others. Her refusal to allow Sheila to script her classroom management methods was one of the ways she resisted slipping into the type of teacher she did not want to be.

Annie spoke with disdain when she talked about Sheila's "ridiculously organized" management system. Annie said that everything in

Sheila's classroom is color coded, from her teaching files to her grade book. Annie described herself as "scattered but organized," with papers and books piled in stacks for easy retrieval as opposed to tucked away in their proper place. Annie noted a recurring incident that always left her feeling shocked and invaded:

Sheila could not handle my organized mess. I would have my papers sitting on my desk, and when I would come back from lunch, they were all neat and filed away. She would go through my notebook of plans and write in things that she wanted taught. She'd even move my books from where I was sitting when I was at lunch. I'd come back and say, "Where's my stuff?" And she'd say, "I put it over there." I never even asked her why. There was no reason. I know why she did it . . . because she wanted things in their place.

The irony of Sheila's desire to keep Annie in her place also was not lost on Annie. Through her mentoring practices, Sheila controlled Annie's power and authority in the classroom. Annie said that she was never "the teacher" in Sheila's classroom, not only because she had no freedom in her teaching methods or planning but also because of the inordinate and unnecessary amount of time Sheila spent in the room while Annie was teaching. With Sheila remaining in the classroom the entire duration of Annie's 9-week student teaching practicum, the students never viewed Annie as the person in charge; more important, Annie never felt like the authority figure that she was in Candace's class. Annie explained,

If the students [in Sheila's classroom] had a question, they wouldn't come to me, they'd go to her. And Sheila wouldn't say, "Go to the teacher." She'd answer their question. It made me feel like I was being undermined—just her chipping away at me. I'd think, "Well, then, I'm not their teacher!" Candace would actually say, if [the students] came up to her, that I was the teacher. I really appreciated that. But Sheila never did.

Through her mentoring style, Sheila expected Annie to "smoothly assemble into a portrait of the 'self' . . . that is almost never contradictory or multiple, and whose traits are held to be equally characteristic of all members of a particular group," creating a homogenized, undifferentiated, and limited self (Kondo, 1990,

pp. 36-37). Sheila did not acknowledge difference and assumed that Annie would assimilate to teach exactly like her, even though Annie's method of teaching is nearly opposite Sheila's. Annie advocates a more open-ended, student-centered discussion of multiple interpretations of a text, whereas Sheila expects the students to paraphrase a text and to understand the worksheet answers, which are Sheila's own interpretations. Sheila expected Annie to follow suit and use the same methods of teaching literature. Furthermore, Sheila gave Annie no space to interpret her experience as contradictory or messy; Sheila insisted on the appearance of unity despite any inconsistencies or conflicts. In this discursive field, which allows no space for difference, Annie was expected to follow a predetermined path of experience that would mold her into Sheila's preconceived type of teacher, and Annie experienced the violent tension of taking up a "discourse that is at once authoritative and impossible" (Britzman, 1991, p. 57). Nevertheless, poststructuralism suggests that "the space of freedom available to us is not at all insignificant, and we have the ability to analyze, contest, and change practices that are being used to construct ourselves and the world" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 493). Foucault's theories of power relations (Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988) show us that Annie is freer than she feels; and examining Annie's agency through poststructuralism reveals how she worked to subvert Sheila's structure and to refuse an identity that was imposed on her.

"CAVING IN" AND "SLIPPING IN": POWER, ACCOMMODATION, AND RESISTANCE

Foucault's (1976/1978) strategical notion of power posits that power is and comes from everywhere, that it exists in relations, that in these relations it is unstable and shifting, and that it produces resistance. Power is implicated in discourse because "discourse illustrates how language gathers itself together according to socially constructed rules and regularities that allow certain statements to be made and not others" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). What gets to be-

come "true," then, is an effect of power relations within certain discourses:

There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operate through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (Foucault, 1980, p. 93)

As Weedon (1997, p. 110) maintained, power is a "dynamic of control, compliance, and lack of control between discourses and the subjects constituted by discourses, who are their agents." Multiple power relations operate simultaneously, and because subjectivity is implicated in unbalanced power relations, power can be productive and create resistance; resistance then becomes less a thing *to be done* but more a daily, ongoing *effect* of power relations. (Kondo, 1990; St. Pierre, 2000).

Foucault's theories of power and discourse as producing realities, truths, and freedom make possible the idea that what is constructed can be deconstructed and contested. For Annie, power relations within certain discourses produced a "truth" about what it means to be a teacher. The danger of this construction is that it forced Annie, in Sheila's classroom, into a subjectivity that was "always already" there (Butler, 1992), a subjectivity that was always and should always be "true." However, because this "truth" is socially constructed by the material and cultural practices of its subjects, it is open for reconfiguration and transgression: "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 101).

The ubiquity of shifting, unequal power relations in Annie's relationships with her mentor teachers caused her to adopt multiple subjectivities in her conformity to and resistance of the antagonizing discourses of teaching. This is most evident in the way Annie describes a typical teaching day, moving between "being" the teacher within the opposing discourses of two classrooms. After spending her morning teaching in Candace's classroom, Annie felt a shift in her subjectivities as she prepared to enter Sheila's classroom. During the

first two classes she taught, Annie described herself as follows: "I could be how I wanted to be, how I envisioned myself next year in my own class." However, when the bell signaled Annie to leave Candace's room for Sheila's, she felt dread and the "pressure to perform" that would ensue. As she gathered her materials to walk to Sheila's room, Annie said that she would "take big, deep breaths." She went on to say,

As soon as I walked in the door and see her in there, I would tense up. I'd be thinking, "Is she going to stay in here?" Most of the time she stayed. And, sometimes she would take her time getting her stuff together and leave later, like she was listening to me start the class to make sure I was teaching the way *she* wanted me to.

Annie described this "teaching the way *she* wanted me to" as making sure students could read the text and answer the questions that were on the worksheet, a worksheet that Sheila always provided for Annie's use. Annie felt intimidated and doubtful of her abilities when she was under the authoritative gaze of Sheila, which became disciplinary power in a space of domination that "holds [subjects] in a mechanism of objectification . . . [and] manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 187). Unfortunately, Annie believed that she was *always* under surveillance because Sheila rarely left Annie alone with her students and, when she did, it was only for a brief period of time. Furthermore, Annie believed that she remained vulnerable to Sheila's authoritative gaze regardless of Sheila's purpose in the classroom; on one occasion, Sheila completed a formal evaluation of Annie's teaching, without alerting her, under the guise of doing her own work. Annie characterized this as "sneaky," and it angered her so much that she could not eat lunch that day. Annie explained that, in contrast, she was accustomed to Candace's openness about her reasons for remaining in the classroom, especially when she was completing a formal evaluation of her teaching. Because of this perceived trickery and deception, Sheila's presence made Annie feel "suspicious" and "nervous."

Just the feeling of her [Sheila] in there made me forget what I wanted to say. I'd start saying something,

and I'd wonder, "What is she thinking about what I'm saying?" It was terrible. It would wear me down. I'd feel so exhausted after that class.

The unequal power relations between Sheila and Annie produced a state of domination and caused Annie to defer her own emotional and psychological needs to those of Sheila. Annie spoke of the fear of "breaking down" Sheila's structure while her own subjectivity was being "chipped away." How Annie's subjectivities shifted in response to the power relations in Sheila's classroom is evident in the following comment:

I would try to do different things to keep from having discussion while she was in there. I worried about her critique of me, worried about the structure, worried that she would think I was breaking down her structure. Her structure is so important to her. When she left, I felt free to teach the way I know it would be more effective—more effective than relying on worksheets. I would really let loose. I'd breathe a sigh of relief and say to the class, "Let's start talking."

Although Annie seemingly accommodated to Sheila's rigid methods of teaching, she resisted during those few times that Sheila left the room, physically taking her authoritative gaze with her. As Annie said, she "breathed a sigh of relief" and told the students, "Let's start talking." She shifted her subjectivities and moved the classroom discourse, for example, to an active interpretation of the text, not rote memorization of literary devices. Sometimes, with Sheila gone, Annie quickly covered the worksheet answers with the students and then moved on to a student-centered discussion of the text. Annie described it as "just *slipping things in* that the kids would need for the test so that we could really discuss." With Sheila and her disciplinary power temporarily absent, power relations shifted; and Annie moved into a more persuasive discourse and constructed a subjectivity from a different set of power relations: Annie as the teacher, Annie as the one in charge. However, Annie's resistance ended as soon as Sheila was present again, and the previous, familiar, unbalanced power relations filtered back into the classroom. Annie felt the internal shift when Sheila returned, and Annie

explained that she “picked up the worksheet” and geared her teaching back to Sheila’s expectations. Annie adopted multiple selves in Sheila’s classroom and was able to slip back and forth in response to Sheila’s dominating presence, which determined—even translated—Annie’s way of being a teacher.

Theorizing from feminist poststructuralism, Annie’s redefinition of and slipping among subjectivities in response to shifting power relations illustrate that “knowledge of more than one discourse and the recognition that meaning is plural allows for a measure of choice on the part of the individual, and even where choice is not available, resistance is possible” (Weedon, 1997, p. 102). When Annie could freely choose the discourse of what it meant to be a teacher in Candace’s classroom, she embraced it; when she could not, as when she was forced into the discourse of Sheila’s classroom, she resisted. Annie’s subjectivities were inscribed in her practices of resistance, refusal, and compliance as a result of her naming the discontinuity between the normalizing discourse of Sheila’s classroom and the more persuasive discourse of Candace’s classroom. This is not to say that Annie did not resist or accommodate at all in Candace’s classroom; nor is it possible that there were no power relations between Annie and Candace. However, the power relations in Candace’s classroom were not blocked by domination and unnecessary authority as they were in Sheila’s classroom. Annie’s subjectivity in Candace’s classroom made her “feel like a teacher,” and she accommodated and maintained Candace’s “trivial” classroom rules because, within that particular discourse, she had a sense of freedom to use her own methods while doing so. For example, she upheld Candace’s rule of giving detention to those students who forgot their books for class. Unlike Candace, though, Annie did not verbally reprimand the students, disrupting classroom teaching and learning; she calmly, without comment, simply wrote the students’ names on the board if she noticed them without their books.

The contrast between Sheila’s and Candace’s mentoring styles and expectations further exacerbated Annie’s multiple subject positions in

their classrooms. In writing lesson plans, Candace told Annie, “Do whatever you want.” From Sheila, however, Annie heard, “You can’t do this.” Annie said, “I do things for Sheila that I don’t have to do for Candace, but I do them just to get Sheila off my back.” Also, Sheila accepts late work from her students, but Candace does not, so Annie had to negotiate these contradictory expectations. When she approached both mentor teachers with her own ideas about late work policies, Candace told her, “As long as you can justify it to parents.” However, Sheila said, “No. We do it this way.”

In response to these contradictions, Annie coped with this attitude: “Some battles just don’t need to be fought. I’ve learned to *cave in* on most things.” Annie became exhausted from “caving in” on all issues in Sheila’s classroom, from planning and teaching methods to classroom discipline and organization. At the same time, she grew savvy in her subversion of the unbalanced power relations between Sheila and herself. Nevertheless, this violent, uneven process of shifting her self from one type of teacher to another every day caused Annie to feel silenced, displaced, and controlled in a classroom that was supposedly “her own” for 9 weeks.

CONCLUSION

Feminist poststructural theory, used here to deconstruct the relations between power, discourse, subjectivity, and experience, is concerned with “how material discursive realities act upon the actions of others . . . no matter where and how differently placed we are in the grid of identity and privilege these realities constitute” (Bové, 1990, p. 59). This concern is apropos to teachers and the construction of their identities because these constructions are historical products of the intersection of power and discourse within particular institutions and specific disciplines. As Bové wrote,

“Discourse” is one of the most empowered ways in modern and postmodern societies for the forming and shaping of humans as “subjects.” In a now-famous play on words, we might say that “power” through its discursive and institutional relays “subjects” us: that is, makes us into “subjects,” and it

"subjects" us to the rule of the dominant disciplines which are empowered in society and which regulate its possibilities for human freedom—that is, it "subjugates" us. (p. 58)

Clearly, Annie worked within two very different structures, and poststructural theory moves us beyond questions of meaning (e.g., What did Annie's experience mean?) to ask different questions of structures: "How does discourse function? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects?" (Bové, 1990, p. 54).

Because the interrelationship between power, discourse, and experience produces certain subjectivities, we should consider what it means for Annie (and other novice teachers) to construct a teacher identity from her student teaching experience. Feminist poststructural theory posits that "identity is not a fixed 'thing,' it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous—the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings" (Kondo, 1990, p. 24). The construction of the self, then, becomes a heavy task of taking up certain subjectivities in response to contextual demands. What makes this "subjectivities in process" theory even more complex are the ways individuals interpret their experiences. In opposition to the humanist notion that meaning is "out there" for language to reflect, feminist poststructural theory asserts that meaningful experience is constituted in language. de Lauretis (1984, p. 159) redefined experience as a continuous process in which

subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival from which one then interacts with the world. On the contrary, [subjectivity] is the effect of that interaction which I call experience . . . and thus it is produced by . . . practices and discourses that lend significance to the events of the world.

Scott (1991), taking up de Lauretis's notion of experience, challenges the normative understanding of experience as "uncontestable evidence" and the origin of knowledge (p. 777) to posit that

it is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin

of our explanation, not the authoritative evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. (p. 780)

In this continuous process of interacting with the world, in which our subjectivities are historically produced by our experiences, we construct meaning about things by thinking and speaking about them. In this way, experience is open to "contradictory and conflicting interpretations," debunking the myth that language expresses already-fixed meanings (Flax, 1990; Weedon, 1996). This means that interpretations, and the voices giving meaning to the experience, are historicized—they are temporary, specific, and open to challenge.

Haraway's (1988) postmodern desire for "radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects" insists on

the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life. (pp. 579-580)

The "meanings and bodies" that get produced in teacher education do have a "chance for life" when feminist poststructural theories of power, discourse, experience, and subjectivity are utilized to problematize the notion of a linear version, or "truth," to the student teaching experience as well as the assumption of a unified, completed identity that emerges from this experience. To deconstruct the power and structures that produce certain subject positions is to build new, different, and contingent meanings that are not fixed but open to resistance and change. Butler's (1990, p. 16) question, "What can be meant by 'identity,' then, and what grounds the presumption that identities are self-identical, persisting through time as the same, unified, and internally coherent?" opens up the category of "teacher" to reenvision this identity not as a normative ideal but as a descriptive feature of experience.

Annie's experiences—and the power and discourses—that produced her teacher subjectivities are local and specific and therefore open to multiple interpretations. Through my positioning as a poststructural feminist, I am able to move from descriptive questions of

what it means to learn to teach toward a deconstruction of the structures that produced Annie. Power and discourses that operate within institutions to produce certain subjectivities become exposed in feminist poststructural theories, and the situatedness of experiences and subjectivities become concerns for teacher educators.

I agree with Haraway's (1988) view of the politics of interpretation as a "power-sensitive conversation," one in which "stuttering translation" is always partially understood (p. 589). It is not my intention here to present one theoretical interpretation—or translation—that is the best or right one, realizing the power implications in making such a move as well as the dangers of "simplification in the last instance" (Haraway, 1988, p. 590). Instead, I am interested in providing a *partial and positioned* interpretation that opens up the category "teacher" and invites teacher educators to reimagine what our responsibilities should be. If we accept, as poststructuralists do, the idea that foundational knowledge is constructed and contingent (Butler, 1992), then we can believe that structures are not absolute and we become responsible for examining those structures and exposing what they do. Foucault (1984a, p. 343) explained, "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* [italics added]." St. Pierre (2000, p. 484) posited that

feminism's slogan that everything is political must be joined with the poststructural idea that "everything is dangerous." . . . If everything is both political and dangerous, then we are ethically bound to pay attention to how we word the world. We must pay attention to language that . . . rewards identity and punishes difference.

In teacher education, feminist poststructural theories can help us to ask new questions about power, discourse, experience, and the production of teacher subjectivity. Specifically, as Scott (1988, p. 35) suggested, we should consider the specific contexts and processes that produce meaning, leading to questions that employ critique about how some meanings emerge as normative and how others are eclipsed. We should

be concerned about the structures and the inherent power relations that produce our teachers: universities, public schools, and the personnel who espouse the sometimes competing discourses within these institutions. Indeed, we are responsible for taking up Bové's (1990) questions to expose how these structures function and what their effects are on those who are produced as teachers within them. When we see how certain structures and discourses get produced and regulated (and others silenced), then we might contest them, reconfigure them, and make space for new ways of learning to teach that reward difference rather than identity. It is then that we can give up the idea of expecting a predetermined teacher "self" to emerge from a linear path of the student teaching experience and instead open up new possibilities of multiple and contingent knowledges, experiences, and subjectivities that are productive in the making of a teacher.

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NOTES

1. Weedon (1997, p. 32) defined subjectivity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world."

2. For further reading in humanism, see Davies (1997) and Foucault (1984b).

3. Bové (1990, pp. 54-55) did not define discourse but explained how discourse functions:

Discourse provides a privileged entry into the post-structuralist mode of analysis precisely because it is the organized and regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting, functions of language that it studies: its aim is to describe the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought.

St. Pierre (2000, p. 485) explained discourse in the Foucauldian sense as "never just linguistic since it organizes a way of thinking into a way of acting in the world."

4. It is important to note that deconstruction neither points out errors nor seeks to destroy categories. Lather (1991, p. 13) wrote that "the goal of deconstruction is neither unitary wholeness nor dialectical resolution . . . [but] to keep things in process, to disrupt . . . to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal." The ef-

fect of deconstruction is to "find questions where others had located answers" (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 12). Deconstructionist methodologies do not reveal absolute truths (doing so would violate deconstruction's premise); they explore social realities and challenge dominant assumptions.

5. My emotional and physical immersion in Annie's experience cannot account for all the data that inform this writing. Although not all the data were collected systematically, I contend, along with St. Pierre (1997), that some data escapes language and becomes nontraditional.

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