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Five Secondary Teachers: Creating and Presenting a Teaching Persona

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Citation

Abstract

This qualitative study investigates the ways that five secondary teachers developed and presented personae. The researcher collected and analyzed data using a theoretical frame based in social psychology, including Goffman's Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), and Miles and Huberman's (1994) three-step approach to qualitative data analysis. Findings indicate that teachers drew on three major realms—the physical, psychological, and social—when constructing classroom personae. Implications include increased opportunities for teacher reflection on persona and its effects.

Keywords: persona, social psychology, qualitative, reflection

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Five Secondary Teachers: Creating and Presenting a Teaching Persona

Teachers and actors have similar jobs—they perform for audiences, and those audiences can interact with the actors and change the outcome of the performance based on their reactions. Elliot Eisner (2002) calls the classroom a context for improvisation and likens teaching to stand-up comedy. Those who teach know that they do not necessarily play the same role in class as they do at home or among friends. We adopt personae and present the sides of our selves that suit us and the situation. The word persona comes from the Latin word for mask and suggests the "taking on of a mask," that "involves artifice" (Parini, 1997). This aspect of teaching is especially relevant to the current push to determine what successful teachers do: a recent *New York Times Magazine* article suggests that teaching is "decidedly not about being yourself" (Green, 2010). Persona is complex, and we know little about how and why teachers create certain personae in their classrooms. It is crucial to know all we can about what goes on in the classroom, including the ways that teachers enact roles; investigating how teachers create personae may impact teacher training in the future.

The Construct of Persona

The persona provides external clues about one's self-image (Sadoski, 1992). Since the time of Aristotle, when public speakers employed the rhetorical technique of *ethos* to highlight their character to sway their audiences, people in society have engaged in playing social roles (Minot, 1989). More recently, social psychologists have investigated how and why people enact social roles: symbolic interactionism states that we adopt roles and define our selves depending on our understanding of and response to situations (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1982; Zurcher, 1983); thus, as applied to teaching, describing one's persona helps others understand how the actor views the teaching act. In education, symbolic interactionists might refer to the novice teacher

who "takes on the role" or persona of the teacher (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Labaree, 2000; Lortie, 1975). Among the reasons for certain personae are one's expectations and understanding of specific professions, which include rigid role expectations for teachers due to our extended time as students (Lortie, 1975; Perlman, 1986; Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Studying social roles has extended to poker games, college football fans, and sorority houses and revealed that people do play roles consciously based on the audience's expectations and the context (Zurcher, 1983). However, there are few clear examples of studies that investigate the ways that personae emerge within the complex sociological interactions of teaching.

Theoretical Frame

Various ideas from the literature underpin this study. Figure 1 details the interrelationships of theory that informed data collection and analysis. The process of persona creation set forth in Figure 1 also served as an *a priori* hypothesis about the ways that the participants would create personae.
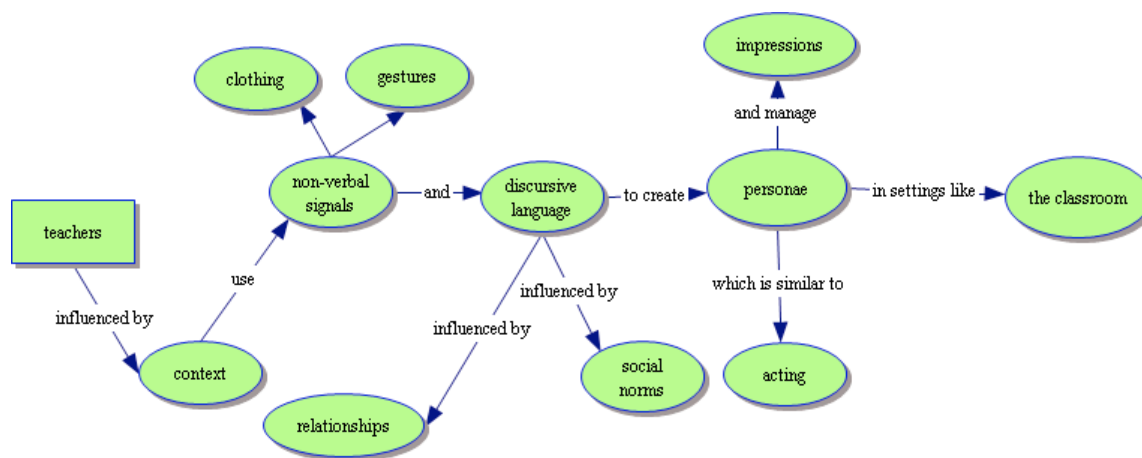

Figure 1. Theoretical frame.

As seen in Figure 1, consideration of context serves as a filter for managing impressions and constructing persona (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Schlenker, 1980). Teachers are primarily influenced by the classroom context as they create personae. The context can shape a leader's presentation of self; charismatic leaders use positive characteristics like high self-esteem and motivation and manage their audience's impressions through framing, scripting, staging, and performing, which leads to positive group outcomes (Gardner & Avolio, 1998).

The next stage of the diagram shows the various ways that people construct a persona in society: Goffman (1959), in his Theory of the Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, separated the methods of creating a persona into discursive and non-discursive actions. Non-discursive actions might include such signals as clothing or gestures; it is partly through these that a teacher conveys his or her ideas about the role of the teacher. Discursive speech is influenced by relationships and social norms, which comes from the field of sociolinguistics. Relationships and social norms influence discursive language because they are a part of the discourses that preservice teachers encounter in their own schooling and teacher training programs (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

As indicated in the third stage of the diagram, the purpose of these actions is for the teacher to display a persona and manage the students' impressions of him or her. Part of the point of managing students' impressions is for the teacher to continue to do his or her job (Schlenker, 1980); depending on the teacher, this may take the form of increasing student attention or learning, or simply be to make the teacher want to continue appearing in front of the class day after day. This process of persona creation and presentation occurs in all social settings, including the classroom.

Study's Purpose

Because there has been little research in the area of teacher persona, the purpose of this study was to investigate the ways that teachers create a persona in their classrooms. The research question guiding this study was "How do teachers develop and present a teaching persona?"

It is important to know how teachers present personae in the classroom because the method infuses and modifies content—or how one teaches is constituent with what is taught (Eisner, 2002). This study's findings provide insight into the ways that teachers construct personae in the classroom, which can in turn inform pre-service teacher education and teacher staff development. Once we know more about the choices that teachers make when creating personae, we may be able gauge the effectiveness of various personae in future studies and intervene to enable teachers to construct the most effective personae possible.

Method

Site and Participants

Participants were a convenience sample of teachers at the Trinity School; I gained access to the site through an acquaintance who taught at the school. The site was conveniently located but was not as saturated with other researchers as other public schools in the area due to the presence of a large research university in the vicinity. The five participants volunteered for the study in response to an email sent to all teachers at the school. The teachers were all Caucasian, between the ages of 30 and 65, and had been teaching for more than three years, some for more than a decade. The participants taught math, English, science, history, and Government.

Trinity School, a private, religious, K-12 school of about 700 students, is located in a residential area of a small city in the mid-Atlantic region. The approximately 400 seventh to 12th

grade students pay tuition of more than $12,000 a year; most students are Caucasian and upper-middle-class. The school website indicates that 13% of the student body is made up of minorities and 20% of the students receive some financial assistance. Observations suggest that the largest group of minority students are Asian, followed by a small number of Latino, African-American, and biracial students. Sports are an important component of student life at Trinity: almost 80% of students play at least one school sport, and the hallways showcase newspaper clippings about teacher-coaches or student-athletes.

Data Collection

Data collection involved observations, interviews, and document analysis and took place from September 30 to December 1, 2008. Observations totaling 15 hours included class periods at multiple class levels, such as honors or regular, as well as time immediately before and after the class periods to observe "backstage" (i.e. not engaged in teaching) behavior at those times. I conducted semi-structured, audio recorded interviews of between 45-60 minutes with each participant. These interviews included questions that were grounded in the literature and probed teachers' ideas about their personae, including their responses to different school and student contexts and prior teacher models. Sample questions and sub-questions are listed below:

What do you think you are like as a person?

What do you think you are like as a teacher?

If the two are similar or different, please explain why you believe that is the case.

What kinds of personality traits do you think you present to the class purposefully?

Why do you choose those traits?

Are there any traits that you deliberately choose not to show?

How much personal information (about children, spouse, hobbies) do you choose to share

with students?

Why do you choose to share it?

I interviewed each participant once, near the end of the data collection period. Interviews

took place at Trinity School, and I transcribed them for analysis. Document collection included

assignment sheets, lecture handouts, photocopied readings, and the school schedule, website, and

newspaper. I collected these multiple sources of data in order to triangulate my findings—which

is vital to qualitative research—and not rely on one source of data collection. All of the data that

I collected contributed to answering the research question, but I relied most heavily on

observations for the initial phase of analysis. Because of the nature of the research question, I

used observations to determine how teachers presented their teaching personae. Interviews

mainly addressed how teachers had developed their personae over time. Documents were a

minor source of data collection and served to provide details about the classroom and school

context in order to support a thick description.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved Miles and Huberman's (1994) three-step approach of data

reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. I developed a start list of codes that

was grounded in the literature and added emergent codes during the process of analysis, which

ran concurrently with data collection. Coding language mirrored Goffman's (1959) discussion

of enacted personae, using, for example, the code "costume" for teacher clothing, "setting" for

classroom decoration, and "backstage" for teacher comments that occurred when the teachers

were not engaged in the act of teaching. Some later codes that evolved during the analysis

included "sarcasm," "teacher sensitivity to student needs," and "address".

After uploading all data files into the NVIVO computer program, I assigned codes during multiple readings of the entire data corpus. In addition to assigning codes to relevant sections of text at the phrase level, NVIVO supported later phases of analysis, which included the creation of models using these codes and displays of instances of certain key codes across the participants. For a complete list of codes, see Appendix I.

Limitations

As with any study, this study has limitations that must be acknowledged. These limitations included the site and participants, time for data collection, and data collection implementation**.** The site for this study was one private, religious school, which means that extending the findings to public school teachers is most likely not advisable due to the difference in context. The data collection for this study took place over the course of eight weeks, starting at the middle of the semester, which is a relatively short period of time. Additionally, while I compare instances of codes across the participants in the findings, my observations did not always provide a completely representative sample of each participant's schedule. While I developed the questions for the interview protocols from the literature, it is possible that my questions did not resonate with the participants as they described their experiences. It is also possible that the themes I derived from the data were not absolutely representative of the participants' experiences, however in order to guard against this I employed member checking. Each participant accepted my analysis and played a role in shaping the final themes. Finally, I did not have access to the pupils' perspectives through interviews, although pupil voices do appear in my field notes and I observed their actions and reactions during my note taking.

Findings: How Do Teachers Develop and Present a Teaching Persona?

Analysis of the data revealed that the teachers were operating within and drawing from

three interconnected realms—the physical, psychological, and social—when developing and

presenting their personae (Figure 2). Each teacher's persona was informed by all three realms,

but the teachers varied in the degree to which each realm drove their choices. Figure 2 illustrates

the relationships among these realms and associated concepts; the subheadings listed under each

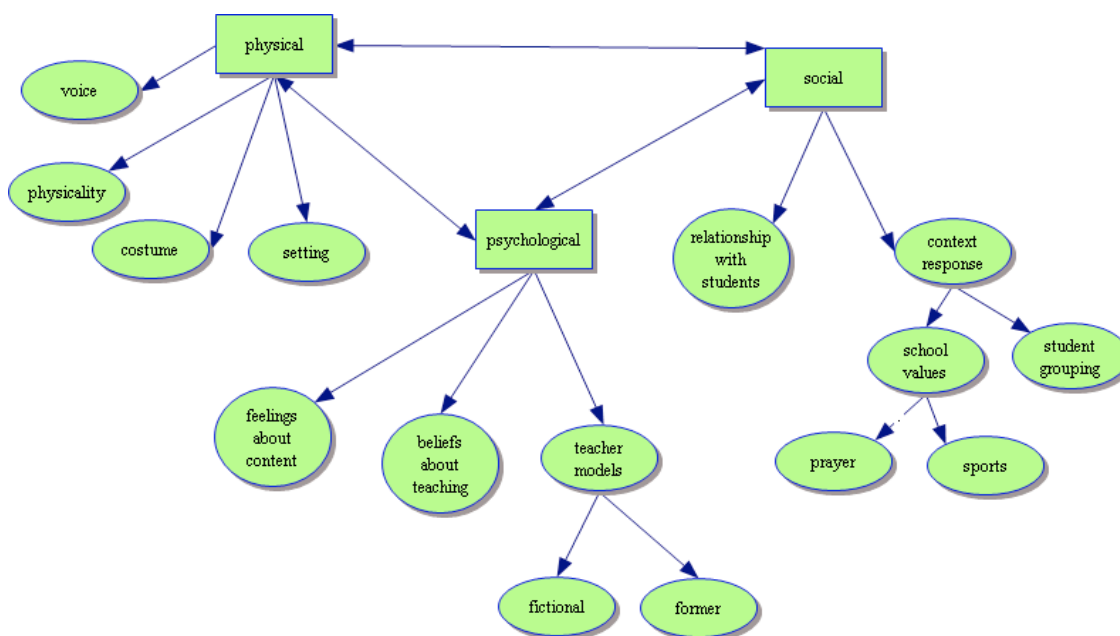realm below align with those found in the figure.

Figure 2. The three realms of persona development.

The Physical Realm

According to Goffman (1959), we use sign vehicles, or indicators of persona, for two

kinds of expression: the one that we give discursively, through speech and language, and the one

that we give off nondiscursively, through such nonverbal modes as clothing and gestures. These

two kinds of expression are inextricably linked in the dramaturgical view of social interaction

(Brissett & Edgeley, 1990). The participants in this study often used vocal volume, pitch,

discourse, and general physicality to present their teaching personae.

      Voice. Perhaps most notable among the ways that teachers created a persona were the

ways that they spoke to their students. A consideration of voice involved not only simply

volume and pitch, but also the kinds of speech the teachers used in their classrooms. Whether

through the use of questioning at various levels, calling students by name or by nicknames, or

using sarcasm, teachers conveyed differing roles of the teacher and the teacher's relationship to

students through their choices. Table 1 numerically represents these findings.

Table 1

Instances of Student Address, Questioning, and Sarcasm

Code	Ann	John	Mary	Rob	Tina
Address	14	27	26	12	10
Name	13	18	26	8	8
Nickname	2	12	0	4	2
Questioning	21	35	32	31	17
High	5	5	12	10	1
Low	16	30	24	21	16
Sarcasm	1	4	13	1	25

      Table 1 shows a clear division in the teachers' use of discursive language. Mary and

Tina used sarcasm often in the classroom, while Ann, John and Rob did not. Ann even

acknowledged that this choice was made deliberately when she said, "I don't think that it's

[sarcasm] appropriate for the classroom" (Ann, Personal Interview, November 20, 2008). Tina

said that she did use sarcasm purposefully because she saw it as a part of her personality (Tina,

Personal Interview, November 23, 2008).

For coding purposes, high and low levels of questioning were defined using Bloom's Taxonomy, with lower-level questions involving either clear yes or no answers that drew on recently-taught information or questions that asked students to comprehend instruction and respond to it briefly. Higher-level questions asked students to synthesize or apply knowledge or predict outcomes. All of the teachers asked more lower-level questions than higher-level questions, but both Mary and Rob often used higher-level questions as well. This could be due to the age of the students in their classes—both taught seniors—although Tina taught upperclassmen as well and she asked one higher-level question to 16 lower-level questions. The teachers' views of their content areas contributed here; Tina taught math and both she and the students saw the subject as being made up of more clearly right-or-wrong knowledge. Ann and John taught middle school science and social studies, respectively, and also had many more lower-level questions than higher-level questions—5 to 16 and 5 to 30, respectively. These two teachers also tended to focus much more on the process of learning, such as how to take notes, read for information, and conduct research, and acknowledged that they saw middle school students as needing this kind of support instead of a content-heavy curriculum. This contributes to the explanation of why teachers differ in their personae: they believe that their students need certain things from teachers.

Finally, the ways that teachers addressed students conveyed the teachers' personae. Persona is constructed within social interactions (Goffman, 1959), and the ways that people address others indicates their ideas about their roles in the interaction. For example, a teacher who calls students "honey" or "sweetie" with a gentle tone may be seen as presenting a motherly persona. Although in the initial analysis the difference appeared to be between teachers who did and didn't use nicknames, later analysis showed that a bigger difference appeared when teachers

did or didn't address students at all. I observed all of the teachers for the same amount of time,

but while Rob and Tina used student names or nicknames fewer than 12 times overall, Mary and

John addressed students 26 and 30 times, respectively. Mary did not use nicknames for students,

while John, who also coaches a sports team at the school, often referred to students as "my man,"

or by nicknames that slightly changed their actual names, like "Macster." Ann fell in the middle

of this division, addressing students 15 times. She favored nicknames like "sweet pea" or

"sweetheart," when she did use nicknames. This set up a big sister/mom persona and

relationship with the students. The use of names was one way that teachers conveyed a basic

relationship with their students, whether it was straightforward and collegiate, as with Mary, or

enthusiastic and coach-like, as with John's persona.

      Physicality. Teachers had active or stationary styles when it came to motion in the

classroom: Mary usually sat a large round table while discussing literature. Tina generally stood

in front of the SMART Board while teaching and rarely circulated throughout the room, perhaps

because there was little room to maneuver between the students' desks. John and Ann frequently

circulated throughout the room to check on student progress. John also frequently employed fist

bumps with his student in class, which created a coach-like persona and drew on the signals of

physical action and tone of voice, as it was often delivered in an expectant, excited manner. Rob

moved purposefully, and indicated how he developed an awareness of his movements, saying:

> I'm probably more self-aware of my body actions than most because of my law
>
> training…and I did ceremonies for the Marine Corps where everything from the curl of
>
> my hand to [where my feet are] was analyzed…I choose to sit down on the desk at times,
>
> or I'll be on a [Power Point] slide and then change it and consciously go to the other

side—that's kind of a classic persuasive use of body movement (Rob, Personal Interview, November 25, 2008).

Rob's deliberate and intentional use of physical movements to make points in the classroom created a lawyerly, college-like teaching persona. Other teachers did not express this level of awareness of their movements, although all acknowledged their preferences for sitting, standing, or circulating.

Costume. The teachers' clothing choices contributed to their personae in the way that the costume contributes to a character onstage. Both Rob and John dressed in a polished and preppy style. The first time I met Rob, he was wearing a pink oxford shirt with his monogram embroidered on the chest. Ann's colorful, youthful clothing choices included cowboy boots, brightly colored college sweaters, and mini skirts. Ann's style contrasted with Mary's and Tina's comfortable-looking and generally dark-colored wardrobes. Tina often wore knee-length jean skirts and solid-colored shirts, while Mary favored pants and tops in dark colors.

Setting. Decorations varied from many diverse materials to almost nothing. Although teachers had little control over the size, shape, and furnishings of their classroom space, they used posters and decorations to outwardly represent their personae. In this way, they served as the set decorators of their classrooms. Rob controlled the setting by planning several off-campus field trips and trips to the computer lab. Some choices were a function of the teachers' content areas; for example, Ann had live animals in her room because she taught science. Ann also displayed family pictures and large amounts of student work. This was a highly-charged election year as viewed from a conservative religious school, which led Rob, a Government teacher, both to take students to a polling place on Election Day and to break with his usual strategy of not telling students who would receive his vote. He attributed this choice to wanting to check in

with students about whether he was accurately presenting an unbiased view of politics. Rob also

displayed personal artifacts including framed diplomas. John decorated his space with college

pennants, a large American flag, and a personal Pez collection. In Mary's room, there were

fewer decorations, including two small pictures from nature and a bulletin board on MLA style.

Finally, Tina used the SMART board during lessons, but there were very few decorations on the

walls other than a few slogan stickers such as "If I throw enough at 'em, maybe something'll

stick," which presumably represented the tongue-in-cheek side of her view of teaching.

The Psychological Realm

Predating Goffman, some of the origins of our conceptions of persona can be found in

Jung (1875-1961), whose work centered on personality as exhibited through social interaction;

for example, the popular division of types into extravert and introvert is based on one's own

interest and attitudes toward others in social settings. Extending from personality and

intertwining with the psychological aspect of persona creation is teacher identity. Self-

presentation within the context of social interaction is seen in the research as a step toward

identity formation (Perlman, 1986; Zembylas, 2003). In other words, persona is enacted socially

with various others on a daily basis, and identity is formed by processing the effects of the

accumulation of these daily personae; this relationship between persona and identity highlights

that the ways people think about themselves impact the ways they conduct themselves in public.

For this study, the psychological dimension of persona creation included feelings about content,

beliefs about teaching such as what the role of a teacher should be and what students like or need

from a teacher, and personal teacher models, whether real or fictional.

Feelings about content. The participants' feelings about their content areas influenced

the personae they created in the classroom. Ann's enthusiasm for the nature of scientific

discovery meant that she wanted to present an enthusiastic persona for her students, while

Mary's feelings about English as an interesting but serious and scholarly pursuit led to her

serious and practical persona. Both Rob and John described a love for the civic opportunities

and relevance of social studies and government, and they revealed this through their professional

but democratic personae. They made their openness and desire to hear multiple students'

voices—as in a democratic society—a part of the personae that they presented to their classes.

Tina saw math as important but often boring, and her often impatient and sarcastic persona

flowed from these beliefs.

      Beliefs about teaching. In considering her views of teaching the students at Trinity, Tina

drew on her own experience as a student in a religious school and her upbringing and said,

> I know that these kids drink, they do drugs, they're not sheltered…a lot of the Trinity
>
> teachers actually believe that they do absolutely no wrong, and so they treat them as if
>
> they do absolutely no wrong…I don't want them for one second to think that I can be
>
> manipulated…I'm a control freak, and a lot of it had to do with that I grew up in an
>
> alcoholic family, a bad one. (Personal Interview, November 23, 2008)

      Tina acknowledged that her often inflexible, sarcastic persona came from these

aforementioned beliefs about the students. During one class, Tina said, "So this is solving, in the

other one we were just simplifying." When a boy offered a long explanation for how to do the

problems, Tina said in a joking, sarcastic way, "Well, that was made a whole lot easier" (Field

Notes, November 10, 2008). Ann's caring, motherly persona contrasted but could also be

attributed to her beliefs about teaching her particular students. She said, "Well, I believe the best

in all my students…my kids know I love them" (Ann, Personal Interview, November 20, 2008).

Rob had held a high position in the military and attended law school, and recalled the styles of

teaching and leadership that were effective in those settings as he considered his own persona.

Mary said that she enjoyed her work and English literature but admitted that she felt that "so

much of teaching is scut work" (Personal Interview, November 24, 2008).

Teacher models. A common expression that is supported by the literature is that teachers

teach in the ways that they were taught (Lortie, 1975), and the teachers in this study did describe

using their own favorite teachers as models as they formed their personae. Ann named a teacher

model who was "very frenetic" and who "looked for you to get things right, which is what I try

to do with my struggling students" (Ann, Personal Interview, November 20, 2008).

One particular movie proved to be polarizing between two teachers with different

personae. John stated, "One of the great models is actually from a movie, *Dead Poets'*

Society…I remember seeing that movie early in my college career and being inspired by it…just

the connection that his character was able to make with his students, I think is very powerful,

even more than academe" (John, Personal Interview, December 1, 2008). John frequently

enacted a charismatic, enthusiastic persona similar to the teacher in the film.

In contrast, Mary listed the prim and proper Mary Poppins from literature (not the film,

she indicated) as one of her models, and said that, "Some of the teachers that are *not* role models

for me are people like Robin Williams in *Dead Poets' Society*, sort of, you know, cutting edge

maverick, throw the book out the window…that's so not who I am" (Personal Interview,

November 24, 2008). In her teaching, she set up an opposing persona to the teacher in *Dead*

Poets' Society; she could be stern, inflexible, and sarcastic, and delved deeply and

straightforwardly into the text in discussions.

The Social Realm

Persona is enacted in social settings, with an "audience" (Goffman, 1959). The social

definitions of symbolic interactionists (Blumer, 1969; Schlenker, 1980; Zurcher, 1983) extend to

the classroom and persona: students form definitions and expectations for the role and behavior

of the teacher and teachers respond to these expectations (Lortie, 1975; Vanderstraeten, 2004;

Weber & Mitchell, 1995). In this study, the social realm of persona construction included the

teachers' relationships with students and their (the teachers') responses to the school context.

Relationships with students. As they enacted persona socially, the relevant audiences

for the teachers in this study were the classes of students they taught, and the kinds of

relationships that the teachers created were an important part of their personae. Ann wanted to

convey motherly warmth and gentle support in her relationships with students, and indicated that

she would hug students when they were upset. During class, John and Rob brought up

experiences with students that they had had while coaching sporting activities, which highlighted

their views of teacher-as-coach. Tina responded to the students' academic performance, at times

openly conveying frustration when they hadn't completed assignments or weren't paying

attention. Mary listened to the students' thoughts but pushed them to interact with and think

critically about the material (in this case, novels) instead of discussing their personal lives with

her or their classmates.

Context response. In this private, religious school, students were encouraged to get

involved in extra-curricular activities such as sports, and many of the teachers responded to this

context by discussing their coaching duties (as Rob and John did) or interest in student or

professional sports (as Tina and Ann did) during class time.

Additionally, Trinity School used ability grouping and at times the teachers adjusted their personae depending on the level of students that they were teaching. This became evident in observations and the teachers confirmed in the interviews that their choices were intentional. In this way, the prior and present actions of the "audience" of students informed the teacher's performance. For example, Tina was often sarcastic in class, but the tone of the sarcasm was more positive in the honors class, while in the regular class, it was harsher and directed at students' misbehavior or lack of involvement with the class activities. When teaching a mathematical formula, Tina said to a regular class, "Oh yeah. This is for two by two. It's gonna get big. ABC, DEF, GHI." Student: [sarcastically] "I hate you." T: "Write it down. I'll never ask you to like me, I'll never ask you to like this class, and I'm not asking you to cure cancer" (Field Notes, Tina, October 20, 2008). In the honors class, she said, "you have to be meticulous [she pronounces it carefully]. [To two students] Guys, stop petting." Student: "Were you petting her?" T: "Yes, like a dog. I'll check the numbers. You understand how, though? Maybe? Because I'm so nice, I printed this out for you" (Field Notes, Tina, October 6, 2008). She changed her persona slightly based on the "audience," and could be slightly more abrupt and negative with lower-performing students. Some of these differences between class levels were subtle and were enacted through slight changes such as the level of the questions asked of the students. For a comparison of the numbers of questions by level, see Table 1.

At Trinity, teachers pray with their classes at least once each day, and the ways that the teachers responded to this requirement contributed to their overall presentation of persona. Because prayer was the one subject common to the participants in the context of Trinity School (except Mary, who did not teach during the prayer time), their treatment of the prayers indicated their preferred teaching style, which was a part of the persona. While Rob began a prayer with a

joke and then chose some quotes from the Bible and explained their significance, Ann and John would ask for prayer requests from students and spend about ten minutes asking for strength and comfort for the students. In contrast, Tina once prayed for students in the class who were failing and may not be asked back to the school.

Discussion

The theoretical framework for this study served as an *a priori* hypothesis, and the process indicated therein did occur for each of the participants. They considered the context of their classroom and school and used non-verbal and discursive signals in order to manage the students' impressions of them. Goffman's Interaction Order (1983, as cited in Malone, 1997) indicates that face-to-face interaction involves "bodily displays [that] are enacted and read as if part of a natural theater." The participants engaged in this "natural theater," which included hand gestures, eye movements and gaze, facial expressions, and physical positioning in the classroom and in relation to the students. The importance of clothing and appearance, particularly for Ann, highlights some participants' attention to their physical presentation of self. Non-verbal signals such as these, combined with speech and use of objects, form what Gee (2000) calls a "combination" (109).

The participants developed and presented personae in various ways, and indicated varying levels of awareness that they were doing so. Research supports the actions of the teachers, including Goffman's Theory of the Presentation of Self, which states:

Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain. Sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware that this is the case.

Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but

chiefly because the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression

and not because of any particular response (other than vague acceptance or approval) that

is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression. Sometimes the traditions

of an individual's role will lead him to give a well-designed impression of a particular

kind and yet be may be neither consciously nor unconsciously disposed to create such an

impression (1959, p.7).

Personal biographies can impact teacher role identity (Knowles, 1992; Solomon, Worthy,

& Carter, 1993), and in this study, patterns of interaction from the participants' family lives were

also important when presenting a persona. This was especially true for Tina, who recalled toxic

relationships with her siblings and parents and who admitted that she sometimes resorted to

negative interactions with students.

The findings raise many questions which may be addressed in future studies. One of the

biggest remaining questions is that of teacher choice of content area and student age level (as in

middle or high school). It is unclear whether teachers made choices in response to the students

in the room or whether teachers chose the kinds of situations that suited their own personal

teaching preferences and personae. More work is needed in this area to know the reasons behind

this complex process of persona creation. Nevertheless, the research findings do have some

important implications for research on teaching and teacher education.

Implications

First, if teachers operate within these three realms, then it is reasonable to investigate how

teacher educators might prepare their programs to align with these areas. Results also suggest

that reflection on the development and presentation of one's personae may support teacher

awareness of their actions and interactions. This is a small sample of teachers at one private school, so more studies like this are necessary to know whether the persona-creating choices made by these teachers are similar to those made by teachers in larger and/or public schools.

Second, this study does not focus on effects of certain personae on students, but my observations suggest that students do respond differently to different teacher personae. Future studies must consider the impact of teacher personae on both student achievement and student attitudes about learning.

Conclusion

The kinds of personae that teachers enact in front of their student audiences vary a great deal. How do teachers develop and present their personae? This study aims to answer this question; the findings show that the physical, social, and psychological realms are vital as teachers construct their public selves in the classroom. Participants signaled their differences in persona through visual and auditory cues like vocal tone, student address, classroom decoration, and teacher dress. They interacted with students in different ways and drew on a variety of experiences as they went "onstage" day after day.

To what degree are the teachers' personae intentional? This question was beyond the scope of this study, but would definitely provide a rich source of data for future studies. If we can determine if and how certain teachers construct their personae purposefully in the classroom and the effects of those personae on pupils, then we may take a step toward increasing teacher effectiveness in the future.

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APPENDIX I

List of Codes

Tree Node	address
Tree Node	affect
Tree Node	content relevance
Tree Node	humor
Tree Node	motion
Tree Node	politics
Tree Node	questioning
Tree Node	sarcasm
Tree Node	teacher models
Free Node	age
Free Node	backstage
Free Node	collective teachers
Free Node	costume
Free Node	gender roles
Free Node	ignoring
Free Node	inflexibility
Free Node	micromanaging
Free Node	onstage
Free Node	personal story
Free Node	prayer
Free Node	process of learning
Free Node	setting
Free Node	sports
Free Node	student excitement
Free Node	student frustration
Free Node	teacher sensitivity to student needs
Free Node	text reference