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Voicing the First Year of Teaching: The Narration of Self, Other and  
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First-year teachers, even those who may not be natural storytellers, quickly become masters of narrative. Confronted with the unfamiliar, talk becomes a means of organizing their experiences. This paper is primarily concerned with teacher narrative; namely using critical discourse analysis to explore how first-year teachers voice students, colleagues, parents, administrators and themselves through reported speech. The types of voicing represented in the interview transcripts of two high school science teachers, one prepared in a pre-service teacher education program and the other through Teach For America, reflect macro-level tensions within education, most specifically the socialization of schooling and the interplay between institutional norms and assertions of individuality.

## Introduction

Historically, research within the field of teacher education has privileged empirical studies. Disregarding the notion that knowledge is never “point of view-less” (Bruner, 1991, p. 1-3), these accounts assert that a knowledge base for teacher education can be determined, distilled and replicated, regardless of context (Zeichner & Liston, 1991). In lieu of attempting to examine the profession *as it is*, one might consider, instead, to explore *how it is constructed*; for within the paradigm of narrative, the act of telling takes precedence over the search for objective truth. In Bruner’s terms, then, narrative is a form “not only representing reality but of constituting reality” (p. 5); in other words, the stories we tell are often the stories we live. First-year teachers, even those who may not be natural storytellers, quickly become masters of narrative. Confronted with the unfamiliar—students from diverse cultural backgrounds, confounding administrative procedures, a subject they may feel ill-equipped to teach—talk becomes a means of organizing their experiences (p. 4).

The majority of narratives are actually a variation within a genre; in this sense, stories are normative and listeners bring expectations concerning how a particular plot might be worked out through the telling. The predictability inherent within a genre makes the task of narrative interpretation less arduous, both for the storyteller and the listener (Bruner, p. 14). When teachers tell stories about their classrooms, they are, in many ways, appropriating an authorial voice, creating characters and representing speech in an attempt to shape an accessible narrative (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 118). Authorial representations have implications, however, and for that reason, it is instructive to explore the ways in which teachers choose to represent the voices of students, families, colleagues, administrators and themselves.

In this paper, I will use critical discourse analysis to examine the interview transcripts of two first year teachers, Bob Barrett and Immanuel Pinkston (all names are pseudonyms), with hopes of illustrating how the types of voicing represented reflect macro-level tensions within education, most specifically the socialization of schooling and teacher education and the enforcement of institutional norms at the expense of individuality. Within these transcripts Barrett and Pinkston, two white male teachers, are attempting to understand themselves as urban teachers within establishments like the public high school, the university education program and Teach For America (TFA). While there are indications that Barrett and Pinkston are attempting to resist the normalizing effects of these institutions by constructing themselves as different from the average teacher, there is ample evidence that societal norms are being reinforced. Furthermore, because “white male experience” is normalized in our society and because institutional voices are themselves often perceived as white and male, I am seeking to explore the following question: How can these teachers’ narration of the self and other provide critical insight into the ways in which certain voices are codified and reproduced through the project of teacher education?

## Methodology

### *Critical Discourse Analysis and the Project of Teacher Education*

TFA has been subject to numerous critiques, the majority of which attempt to address questions of student achievement or teacher retention (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2006; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). Very few, if any, attempt to explore the ways in which these novice educators narrate their experiences. In a postmodern account of the project of schooling, with a particular focus on TFA,

Popkewitz (1998) seeks to examine the circulating discourses of teaching and learning among TFA teachers, namely the fact that popular conceptions of education are seldom investigated or exposed in teacher preparation programs (p. 136). The notion of education as salvation and the construction of child as “other” were themes which repeatedly surfaced during his interviews with first-year corps members (p. 50). While the origins of such discourses remain ambiguous, an examination of mainstream assumptions of the meaning of schooling is long overdue. In her book, *Classroom Discourse Analysis: A Tool for Critical Reflection*, Rymes (2008), like Popkewitz, reveals the complexities inherent in even a seemingly banal exchange between student and teacher. Moreover, she demonstrates that the types of authoring teachers are engaged in often work against their stated purposes (p. 292). Drawing on Rymes’ analysis, this paper aims to make the implications of such authoring more transparent with the hopes of positively impacting the field of teacher education. The use of critical discourse analysis within classrooms and schools could offer teachers valuable insights regarding their own narrative practices.

Data sources for this paper were drawn from a broader corpus of nearly two hundred and forty interviews of first-year teachers conducted over three years in a mid-Atlantic city of more than a million people. These interviews are embedded within a larger research project sponsored by a teaching and learning department within the graduate school of education at the University of Pennsylvania. The chief aim of the study is to explore the nature of learning to teach through alternative certification programs. Half of the teachers in the study entered the teaching profession via TFA, which recruits college graduates from prestigious universities and prepares them to enter under-served urban and rural schools through a five-week summer training institute. The other half of the teachers became certified through pre-service teacher education programs affiliated with universities and consisting of a practicum or student teaching experience in which the students spend a semester working alongside a mentor teacher.

For the purposes of this paper, I selected to examine the narration of two white, male teachers believing that a detailed analysis of their individual experiences would provide important insight into how they construct the affordances and constraints offered by the predominant models of teacher preparation. The process of selecting these particular transcripts for analysis included a close reading of all of the interviews of first-year high school teachers. In doing so, I discovered numerous incidents of represented speech across the data set. Believing this phenomenon merited closer investigation as a window into the ways in which new teachers attempt to make sense of their experience; I chose Barrett and Pinkston as examples of this broader trend. Barrett was prepared through a pre-service teacher education program at a well-respected, public university and Pinkston participated in TFA’s alternative training program. Both

graduated from college the spring prior to entering the teaching profession, though Barrett stayed an additional year to receive a master's degree in science education. They both teach science at large public high schools with majority African-American populations and both note their purposeful selection of the urban classroom when discussing entry into teaching. Each teacher was interviewed three times during the first year of teaching and each interview is approximately an hour in length. Interview questions were scripted in advance by a collaborative team of researchers though deviations from the protocol were allowed and encouraged. While I personally interviewed Barrett, Pinkston was interviewed by another member of the research team and I thus relied on sound files and written transcriptions to conduct the analysis. My interviewer/interviewee relationship with Barrett allowed me to pose clarifying questions when necessary and seek additional insight into comments that I viewed as salient to my own research interests, things I obviously could not do with Pinkston. The segments highlighted here were chosen for the high incidence of reported or represented speech (Voloshinov, 1973) and were drawn from the first year of teaching, a time when the teachers were struggling to make sense of the profession.

### Literature Review

#### *The Phenomenon of Classroom Voicing*

Because classrooms are inherently dialogic places, they can serve as sites from which to explore the phenomenon of voicing. Even in settings where teacher monologues expand to fill the bulk of the school day, within a seemingly singular narrative account, a range of voices are present. No monologue, then, exists separate from its respective influences. Sometimes these voices are reported directly through the use of represented speech (Voloshinov, 1973); at other times, the principle behind a statement, what sociologist Erving Goffman described as "the institution or individual whose beliefs are being represented," must be discerned through closer analysis (cited in Rymes, 2008, p. 277). Conceiving of teachers as authors for the purpose of this paper requires an examination of the ways in which teachers appropriate the speech of others. When speech is reported—what Voloshinov (1973) called an utterance within an utterance—assimilation and normalization are bound to occur. In other words, the author's stylistic, compositional and syntactic norms can and do usurp those of the original speaker (p. 116). Bakhtin (1984) also highlights the insidious, if not transparent, consequences of voicing when he writes, "authoring is the process of juxtaposing others' voices in order adopt a social position of one's own" (cited in Wortham, 2001, p. 63). Through processes like

*ventriloquation* the narrator positions himself spatially with regards to the characters; while some voices in a story may correspond with the voice of the narrator, others may be re-cast, undermined or ridiculed as a means of establishing distance and clarifying respective positionalities (pp. 67-8). A literary example, found in Dickens' *Little Dorritt*, demonstrates how Dickens, the author, ventriloquates a loathing for the sycophants and phonies occupying the upper echelons of society (Agha, 2005; Wortham, 2001). Voicing, then, can provide critical insight into the projects narrators take on as they author a story.

## Data Analysis

### *Bob Barrett-The Appropriation of Institutional Voices*

All three interviews with Bob Barrett took place in his classroom immediately after school. The second interview was focused primarily on issues of race and class and occurred in late January of 2007. By this point in the process, Barrett was familiar with both the interviewer and the basic structure of the interview protocol. In attempting to answer a question posed by the interviewer concerning points of connection and points of difference between him and his African-American students, Barrett uses a good deal of reported speech to emphasize what he considers significantly divergent perspectives on justice.

In this excerpt Barrett is moving fluidly through two dialogic frames, one frame is characterized by the present conversation with the interviewer while the other concerns his past interaction with the students. The phrase "there's a big social justice disconnect" (line 8) is aimed at the interviewer and could be considered a direct attempt to answer the question, "What do you find as some points of connection and points of difference between you and your students?" (lines 1-2) However, in the re-creation of the student discussion (lines 10-12), Barrett breaks dialogic frame through his use of reported speech. He switches from the "here and now" to the "then and there." Despite this frame-break, he is still orienting the conversation towards the interviewer. Although one might assume that his students communicate primarily in African-American Vernacular English, their speech is reported in Standard English, perhaps because he recognizes this as the language of interviewer. He even formalizes his original sentiment when he says, "If you found out I knew who killed, like, who committed some murder, would you turn me in?" (lines 11-12) One could infer that "kill" might be the term likely to be employed by the students while "committed some murder" sounds like the lexicon of the police, the criminal justice system or the terminology of a more formal setting. That said, this maneuver might also be interpreted as a means of

“normalizing” his students to the standards of the school as an institution, which would put a premium on the use of Standard English.

8           **Teacher:** The disconnect? There’s a big social justice disconnect. I was  
 9           even having a discussion today with my students. They were asking me like,  
 10           *Oh, if someone punched you would you call the police on them.*  
 11           *If you found out I knew who killed, like, who committed some murder would you turn me in?*  
 12           *If I had committed a murder would you turn me in?*  
 13           And for me I’m like,  
 14           *the obvious answer is if you committed a murder you deserve to be in jail and I’m*  
 15           *going to do what I can to make sure you go to jail if I found out for certain*  
 16           *that you committed that crime.*  
 17           With them though it’s like  
 18           *it doesn’t involve you so why would you do it? It’s not like I shot your brother. If I*  
 19           *commit some other murder it has nothing to do with you. [The police are the enemy].*  
 20           I spent five years working in a police station as an auxiliary police officer.  
 21           Uhhh... yeah, that’s one of the biggest disconnects.

Although two distinct dialogic frames are present here, there is at least one instance when the frames collide and it becomes unclear whether Barrett is invoking the “here and now” or the “there and then.” One could argue that the phrase, “the police are the enemy” (line 19) could belong in either or both conversations. It comes at the end of a string of reported speech and thus could be read as a continuation of the student speech; that it truly belongs with the student speech, however, is unlikely. The prosodic elements of Barrett’s voice during the interview indicate a clear switch from the student speech to his own. Moreover, the phrase “the police are the enemy” lacks coherence with the rest of the reported speech either topically or grammatically. One might then read the phrase, “the police are the enemy” as either a segue provided for the interviewer or as a rudimentary summation of the reported student speech. If read as a type of paraphrase, it could indicate an oversimplification of the classroom discussion. For instance the line preceding this one states, “It’s not like I shot your brother. If I commit some other murder, it has nothing to do with you” (lines 18-19). The students may be attempting to negotiate the personal nature of justice and perhaps question the notion of blind obedience to the law. At least in this line of reported speech, no outright animosity to law enforcement is specified. By declaring “The police are the enemy,” Barrett is bringing his own personal attachments and emotions into the conversation. The next phrase in the transcript is, “I spent five years working in a police station as an auxiliary police officer” (line 20). In that sense, the police as an institution are not the sole enemy of the students. Barrett constructs himself as a type of enemy through his association with the police. Further, by invoking his own personal attachment to the police force he undermines his assertion that justice should be applied indiscriminately: “The obvious answer is if you committed a murder you deserve to be in jail and I’m going to do what I can to make sure you go to jail...” (line 14). Barrett goes on to draw a direct parallel between “crimes” committed outside the institution of the school and those committed inside:



21 You get called a snitch every time a security person or the principal asks,  
 22 *who did this?*  
 23 And you're like,  
 24 *Oh, that's this person.*  
 25 I'm walking through the hallway and somebody does something and I need to know their  
 26 name and there's another teacher there, like this happened the other day.  
 27 *Ms. M, do you know this kid's name?*  
 28 *Yeah.*  
 29 And she writes it on a pink slip and gives it to me and it's like the kids would say  
 30 that's snitching, giving the name to me but it's like  
 31 *no, we're colleagues. We're working together to try to better the school environment*  
 32 *and kids doing that sort of thing, spitting into my classroom, they deserve to be written up.*

The word “deserve” (line 32) is lexically tied to the previous discussion of murder. Here Barrett states, “and kids doing that sort of thing, spitting into my classroom, they deserve to be written up,” which echoes the statement “the obvious answer is if you committed a murder you deserve to be in jail.” Although the pronouns differ in each of these phrases, both have the same referent: the students. Line 14 is an instance of reported speech in which Barrett is abiding in the “there and then” frame, speaking to the students using the pronoun “you.” In the second example, his talk is directed to the interviewer in the “here and now” and yet the sentiments behind them are the same: crime must be punished.

In spite of an affiliation with this sentiment, Barrett resists the role “snitch” which his students have assigned to him; instead, he fabricates an alternative designator: “colleague.” As the author of these events, he has the option of casting himself as a positive character, in this case, a concerned colleague. Therefore, turning students over to the principal or to school security personnel is not “snitching” as the students might claim. Rather it is a collegial act, executed by those who are “working together in order to try to better the school environment” (line 31). The reported speech sample he provides includes the following exchange, “Ms. M., do you know this kid’s name? / Yeah” (line 27-28). Although Ms. M. may or may not have the same views as Barrett regarding crime and punishment and the place of snitching within the school environment, here she has been cast as a cooperative colleague, willing to hand over the name of a troublesome student in the hopes of bettering the school environment. Similar to his use of Standard English in voicing his students in previous segments, here, Barrett is re-framing street speech (snitching) with more institutionally-normalized words (colleague). In this sense, he is normalizing the social category of colleague (Agha, 2005, p. 44) and devaluing the social category of snitch, although this category may be the one that has more relevance to his students.

Barrett’s construction of himself as urban educator is another role designation that appears in one of his earliest interviews. While media representations of urban teachers abound, Barrett does not seem to be referenc-

ing any of these popular stereotypes. However, in describing the reactions of his friends and family to his decision to work in an urban school, Barrett narrates the urban teacher designation as one akin to danger and risk. His description, a segment of which is below, is peppered with exhortations and “warnings” about what might await him in an urban classroom:

2           **Teacher:** I've compared it on a few occasions when I've told people I'm going to go teach in  
 3           [City] to telling people,  
 4           *oh I'm going off to Iraq*  
 5           or something like that. I got responses that were as bad or worse.  
 6           Both of my roommates and two of my friends who were supervisors with me at my old job  
 7           (intercom interruption). I've got four friends, two roommates and two people who were  
 8           supervisors with me at my old job who are all going off to Iraq and they got less of a  
 9           *you're doing what?*  
 10          Than I did. So (pause) teaching (pause) everyone thought I should teach, like they were like,  
 11          *oh, you're gonna be a teacher? That's pretty cool. You seem like you'd be a good*  
 12          *teacher. You're going to teach in [City]? Why? What are you doing? Are you sure?*

Barrett draws an analogy between choosing a career in the urban classroom and enlisting in the U.S. army during an extremely unpopular war marked by a high casualty rate and unpredictable violence. Barrett is careful to distinguish that it was not the profession of teaching which was deemed problematic by his friends and family. Rather, Barrett suggests that the location of the job was the chief cause of concern (lines 11-12). When Barrett draws a parallel to Iraq, he does not use the term soldier or war. He simply indexes an entire set of assumptions through the locational marker “Iraq.” [City] is the only other location mentioned by name within this portion of the transcript. One might make the argument that as a location, it also indexes a set of assumptions, ones that caused his friends and family grave concern when he revealed his plans to them.

To understand the types of warnings being issued throughout this transcript, it is instructive to examine the types of generic voicing and the metapragmatic frames being utilized. The first warning or exhortation which Barrett reports lacks any type of meaningful frame: “They got less of a, *you're doing what?* than I did”(lines 8-10). Because the phrase “you're doing what?” is a type of cliché or at least a common colloquial expression, one might assume that the speaker is a nomic “everyone” or that this was a warning issued repeatedly by an unnamed number of friends and acquaintances. In two instances in the transcript, Barrett employs the metapragmatic frame “like” to introduce a portion of reported speech. In both examples (lines 10-12 and lines 18-20), the terms “everyone” and “a lot of my friends” seem to index a general group of concerned acquaintances. Vague advice issued later in the transcript, “*Oh good luck. You're not going to be able to do anything down there*” (line 20) seems applicable to any number of situations, the war in Iraq among them. In the midst of this litany of generic sentiments, is one piece of advice which Barrett receives from a specific friend upon his departure to the urban classroom:

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14 Behavioral stereotypes were the big one. Everyone was concerned for my safety because  
15 they were worried about the kids jumping me. One of my friends, her only thing that she  
16 said to me, instead of saying bye or anything she just said,  
17 *Barrett don't get shanked.*

Instead of framing this piece of advice with the term “like”, as he had the others, Barrett employs “said;” an indication that this statement is more likely a direct quote. The speaker referenced here is an individual, not the collective group of friends and family members mentioned previously (line 15). In the warning itself, she calls him by name, immediately indexing a different and perhaps more urgent type of admonition; she also employs the vernacular term “shanked” which has its origins in prison slang and refers to being stabbed with a homemade knife. The use of the term “shanked” further concretizes the comparison Barrett made earlier when he likened the urban classroom to Iraq. Like the improvised explosive devices used to target American soldiers, “shanked” implies a violence that is organic, unpredictable and located in a highly specific physical space: in this case, the schools of [City]. Thus, one might wonder to what extent the urban classroom as a violent place had been constructed for and by Barrett prior to his arrival in [City]. By extension, what implications does such a construction have on the work he strives to accomplish as teacher? For within this exchange, the institution of teaching is not under fire; as seen in the other transcript, institutions continue to be marked as universally “good” while it is those violent acts of rebellion, aimed at institutions, which inhibit them from fulfilling their purposes.

### *Immanuel Pinkston - Narrative Construction of the Teacher-Self*

In one of Pinkston’s initial interviews about his teaching experience, he is asked by the interviewer to tell a story about teaching. The reported speech he uses within his narrative reveals initial constructions of both himself as a novice educator and those of his students and colleagues. Initially it is helpful to consider the interactional positionalities of the interviewer and interviewee. By asking to hear a story about teaching, the interviewer is positioning the interviewee as a storyteller who is given official permission to author an experience and to represent the voices of those within that experience. Thus, the interactional text (defined here as the dynamic between interviewer and interviewee) can shed light on the denotational text (what is being spoken about). Many voices are represented within the narrative precisely because the interviewer asked to hear a “story” and in most sociocultural contexts, the word story indexes certain elements, including a cast of characters and a clearly defined beginning and end. In this sense, the interaction is framed metrically. The interviewer begins by asking, “Can you tell me a story from this week of teaching, of something that happened?”(line 1) and Pinkston ends the

interaction by saying, “So that’s a story” (line 24). Thus, Pinkston fills the interactional slot and demarcates an episodic boundary.

The story Pinkston elects to relate is an account of a freestyle rap act which he and an African-American colleague performed at a school assembly:

9           so he came up to me and he was like,  
 10           *do you freestyle?*  
 11           And I was like, *no but I actually beat box pretty well.*  
 12           *So he was like, we should go up there.*  
 13           And I was like, *okay let’s go.*  
 14           So he literally went onto the stage and talked to the MC and so we went up  
 15           there at the very end and I beat-boxed and he freestyled. And this is the ninth grade and  
 16           between the two of us we teach at least two-thirds of them. And literally it was like  
 17           hysterical, their reaction. Still today, random kids I’ve never seen before are coming up to  
 18           me, like laughing...

The word “like” fulfills a couple of different purposes within this exchange. First, it is used by Pinkston metapragmatically to frame both his speech and the speech of his African-American colleague (lines 9-13). In this case it could index, or point to, a non-exact duplication of a dialogue with “like” suggesting an approximation of an actual discussion. However in another section of the transcript, “like” is not used as a framing device for reported speech but rather as a descriptor to explain the event itself. When Pinkston portrays the assembly as “like hysterical,” (line 16-17) he is careful to qualify that what was hysterical was the students’ reaction to the rap, not the rap itself. Similarly, when he says, “Still today, random kids I’ve never seen before are coming up to me, like laughing...” (line 17-18) the re-appearance of “like” here further concretizes the semantic connection between the terms “laughing” and “hysterical” implying that the students may have, in fact, been laughing at the performance. Pinkston further establishes the assembly as “not-funny” when he (re)frames it as a powerful and important moment within the practice of teaching:

17           but it’s one of the  
 18           things that everyone always said was that,  
 19           *the connections you make outside of the classroom are the things you’ll*  
 20           *remember most. You’re not going to remember the day to day,*  
 21           **(frame break)** *Do this worksheet or you’ll get kicked out*  
 22           **(frame resume)** *You’ll remember when you pulled a kid aside, or when you were doing chess*  
 23           *practice or things like that and those are the things that will stand out.*

What is most interesting about this selection is the way in which the teacher situates this particular story within the larger narrative of his daily teaching practice. When Pinkston frames the reported speech with the phrase, “one of the things everyone always said was that” (line 18) he is indexing a specific “everyone” or at least a type of social category (Agha, 2005, p. 44). The conventional wisdom that follows concerning what the new teacher will and will not remember (lines 19-20) sounds like the kind of “teacher talk” one might hear from a professor of education or wizened veteran who is generously doling out advice to a novice. Unlike the

speech of the African-American colleague which is framed by “like,” the marker “everyone” is followed by “said,” suggesting a more formal interaction or set of mandates.

However, the reported speech shifts abruptly (line 21); Pinkston is no longer voicing a teacher education program but rather the institution of the school. Without a metagrammatic predicate to signal the change, the switch is evidenced mainly in the prosody of the speaker. When Pinkston says, “Do this worksheet or you’ll get kicked out,” he is giving an example of the type of day-to-day interaction his professors claim he will not remember but which might be necessary to maintain a structure and order expected by the school or TFA. The grammatical structure of the sentence indexes both a command and an ultimatum. Pinkston resumes the frame of “memorable teacher moments” with, “**You’ll remember** when you pulled a kid aside...” (line 22), a phrase which is lexically tied to, “the connections you make outside of the classroom are the things **you’ll remember** most” (lines 19-20) Thus Pinkston is narrating two distinct realities of the teacher’s experience: the memorable and non-memorable.

Similarly, as seen in Barrett’s transcripts, though Pinkston references an African-American colleague and teaches primarily African-American students, he employs a Standard English lexicon and grammatical structure. The only words which appear from the lexicon of African-American Vernacular English are “beatbox” and “freestyle;” however, even those are embedded within the grammatical structure of Standard English. Moreover, although his African-American colleague is manufacturing a memorable teaching moment for Pinkston, like the ones advocated by the education professors, his speech is marked by the informal “like” rather than the more authoritative “said.” Thus even when an experience is initiated somewhat organically through a colleague, it must be voiced through an institution, in this case, the education school, in order to be credible.

The freestyle rap assembly is interactionally coherent with this later description of non-day to day activities, and thereby qualifies as an exception to school norms. A rap event like this one is judged as existing outside of the everyday, further constructing school as a place where culturally relevant events are the exception rather than the norm. Similarly, “pulling a kid aside and doing chess practice” are also constructed as non-everyday events while completing worksheets under the threat of expulsion falls within the category of habitual occurrence. This further complicates the notion of how institutional norms influence the ways in which teachers interpret their roles and responsibilities. As a novice educator, does Pinkston struggle with whether or not he is able to create or promote experiences that transcend the everyday expectations? On one level, his education professors have endorsed the validity of non-everyday experiences as potentially beneficial and memorable, and, yet the school itself seems to keep these events confined to times and spaces which preclude them from occurring regularly.

In this final transcript, Pinkston continues to negotiate the interplay between the self and the institution, in some ways constructing a self that exists in opposition to dictated norms and expectations. In this first excerpt he discusses his process for preparing for the first day of school:

3           **Teacher:** That's what I was thinking. Actually, I can. Like everyone's always said that  
4           *no matter how old you get, you can't sleep the night before your first day,*  
5           which I don't believe for a second. I slept pretty well, actually.  
6           Because I had enough experience and everything that I felt very confident. Now I definitely  
7           remember it. In fact, we were supposed to, it was after a long weekend, we had a three-day  
8           weekend and I had a friend over for the weekend and we just hung out the whole time.  
9           And I got no work done. Everyone else was like,  
10          *you're crazy, how are you not preparing for your first week?*  
11          and I was (pause) I used to be very easy going.

Pinkston is quick to dismiss the notion that teachers will not be able to sleep the night before the first day of teaching; his own experience suggests that the opposite is, in fact, possible: "I slept pretty well, actually" (lines 5). In detailing his emotions and preparation for the start of the school year, Pinkston reports the advice and reactions of two distinct "everyone"(s), a form of contrastive individuation evident in the transcript (Agha, 2005, p. 43). The first use of the term "everyone" (lines 3) suggests an authority analogous to the one mentioned in the previous transcripts, perhaps the education professors or seasoned, veteran teachers. Here the use of the present tense "[ha]s" followed by the adverb "always" implies recurrent and repeated speech, the type which might occur in an institutional context. However, the next "everyone" Pinkston mentions (line 9) is distinct from the first; a less formal association is indexed by the use of "like." Moreover, the past tense "was" indicates a spontaneous, non-iterative response—one that occurs outside the studied, formalized speech of the institution. While the referent of everyone is not specified in either case, it is possible that in this second instance, it could refer to Pinkston's TFA peer group who were also attempting to prepare for the first day of school and disapproving of Pinkston's laissez-faire approach: "You're crazy, how are you not preparing for your first week?" (line 10). Pinkston seems to be rejecting both the formal and informal "advice" he has received concerning his entry into the teaching profession. Throughout the transcript Pinkston continues to narrate himself as different from other teachers:

29           So the first day, like the first thing that we talked about – I might have gone over  
30           my rules or whatever, but very quickly I was into this demonstration, where I built a bed of  
31           nails and laid on it, so then the rest of the day, everyone's like, they went home thinking,  
32           *this is really the coolest class.*  
33           Cause one of the things that I always remembered, it was for something else, I don't  
34           remember what it was, I think it was for performances, it was like,  
35           *if you begin well and you end well, no one really remembers the middle.*  
36           So like that was my philosophy, the first day I wanted to shock them into this is really the  
37           coolest thing ever and as long as I do that on the last day also, everything in between will  
38           just be a blur. SO that's what I did the first day – very little, like I gave them like a survey or



39 something to get their information and find out some stuff about them, maybe a diagnostic,  
 40 stuff like that, but I remember distinctly these demonstrations.

Like Barrett, Pinkston is involved in two simultaneous dialogic frames which both involve the act of remembering. The interviewer is asking him to remember the first day of school for the purposes of their interaction and Pinkston is speculating about what the students will remember based on their initial experiences in his classroom. Again, this transcript demonstrates lexical cohesion with the previous transcript, which also highlighted the theme of remembering. In this case, however, the conventional wisdom he is voicing on the topic is not sourced in the institution of schooling, but stems from the genre of theater: “if you begin well and you end well, no one really remembers the middle” (line 35). This piece of advice is something Pinkston himself remembered, though he is unable to pinpoint its precise origin, conjecturing that it might have something to do with “performance” (line 34). Furthermore, in the very last line of the transcript, Pinkston has trouble remembering what else he did the first day aside from the demonstrations: “but I remember distinctly these demonstrations” (line 40). Thus, because they are memorable to him, one might hypothesize that he expects them to be memorable to the students as well. In fact, according to Pinkston, the everyday (literally) of teaching is far less important than the exciting beginning which he has constructed: “The first day I wanted to shock them into this is really the coolest thing ever and as long as I do that on the last day also, everything in between will just be a blur” (line 36-37).

Pinkston justifies his decision to forego the typical first day of school by voicing the reaction of his students to these unusual and thereby memorable teaching methodologies. He starts with the predicate “like” but then interrupts himself and says instead, “they went home thinking” (line 31). This interruption and subsequent re-framing suggest that within the structure of the school day or the school building, students cannot voice their approval or disapproval of the demonstrations he conducted. Rather, only when they are on their way home or outside of the institutional constraints of everyday schooling can they offer the assessment: “This is really the coolest class” (line 32).

41 **Interviewer:** And how did you know to do that? Where do you think that comes from?  
 42 **Teacher:** It comes from my own frustration in terms of every single teacher your entire life  
 43 sits there and reads to you the syllabus. And I just, I guess it comes partially from my own  
 44 frustration with that and partially from my education background in terms of constructivist  
 45 education, where instead of going, like TFA teaches you exactly what to do the first day,  
 46 practice your rules and procedures, make them go over it, make them physically  
 47 do it, to exact order in your classroom.  
 48 And I chose the route of, if you get them interested and excited, in something that excites  
 49 you, that investment will carry you much farther.

In addition to presenting the school as a limiting institution, one which may not allow students to recognize refreshing pedagogical approaches, Pinkston also critiques TFA as an institution. Instead of adopting their prescribed formula for a successful first day, “Practice your rules and

procedures, make them go over it, make them physically do it, to exact order in your classroom” (lines 46-47), Pinkston lies down on a bed of nails. Thus, he continues to construct or narrate himself as different from the typical TFA teacher who bores the kids on the first day by reading the syllabus or detailing the rules and procedures. The command tone he uses in this excerpt of reported speech, accompanied by the use of imperative verbs, echoes his phrase from the previous transcript, “Do this worksheet or you’ll get kicked out” (line 21). Both instances might represent what Pinkston considers to be a TFA-style approach to education, one which he adheres to daily but philosophically rejects.

### Conclusion

First-year teachers must negotiate a range of circulating discourses about teaching and learning as they attempt to make sense of the profession and their individual roles within it. As these transcripts demonstrate, teachers may voice and enact discourses which stand in opposition to their personal philosophies. While Pinkston attempts to construct himself as distinct from a typical TFA teacher, he still relies on the TFA discourse to guide his everyday interactions with students. Similarly, Bidwell’s likening of urban teaching to a tour of duty in Iraq suggests a desire to construct a distinct self (the fearless teacher) while simultaneously maintaining the stereotypical depiction of urban spaces as both dysfunctional and violent. A natural extension of this study would include further exploration within the corpus in an effort to determine whether or not the experiences of Barrett and Pinkston are indicative of larger trends within the data set.

Both TFA and pre-service teacher education programs could benefit from drawing on teacher narratives as a resource for understanding the complexities inherent in learning to teach. In his extensive review of research on becoming a teacher, Robert Bullough (1997) notes the value of having new teachers revisit and revise previously held theories about teaching, schooling and students through both writing and talk. Without processes like these, problematic theories may likely be left unexamined and uninterrupted. Moreover teachers could glean valuable insights from engaging in a close analysis of their own narratives of teaching (Rymes, 2008). Such an analysis could allow teachers to examine the origins of the discourses they appropriate, question whether or not these discourses reflect their personal beliefs and philosophies, and assess to what extent certain discourses perpetuate the very inequities they are attempting to eradicate. Without ample time to talk through their experiences and critically examine assumptions, new teachers, whose stated intentions include a desire to work for social justice, may reify rather than interrupt societal norms.



## VOICING THE FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING

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