

# Writing Teacher Identities:

Teachers' Authoring of Their  
Professional and Personal  
Selves in Online Writing  
Environments

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Computers and Writing, 2011

# An Intersection of Fields

Teacher  
Identity

# Teacher Identity

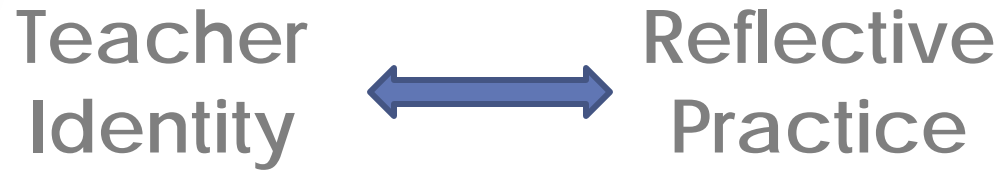
Teachers' lives are often  
“binarized” by the media  
and public discourse

Scholarship suggests  
that we should break  
down these binaries

Teachers' lives are in fact  
complex, multifaceted,  
multidimensional



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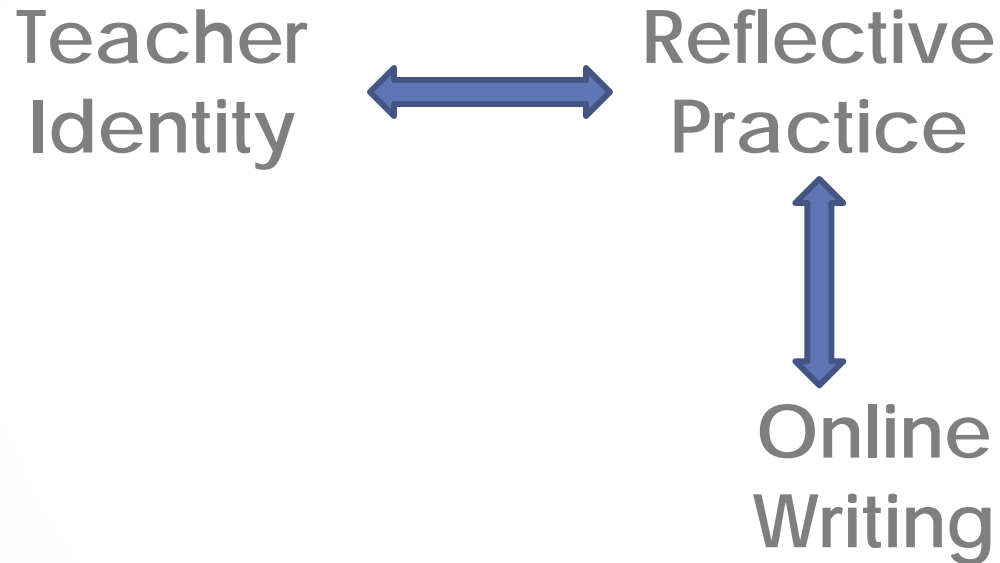
# Reflective Practice

Reflective practitioners, research shows, experience heightened self-efficacy and job satisfaction

Reflection gives teachers a space to critically consider their pedagogies, beliefs about education, and day-to-day work

Examinations of teacher reflections reveal a breakdown of identity binaries as teachers integrate their multiple selves

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# Online Writing

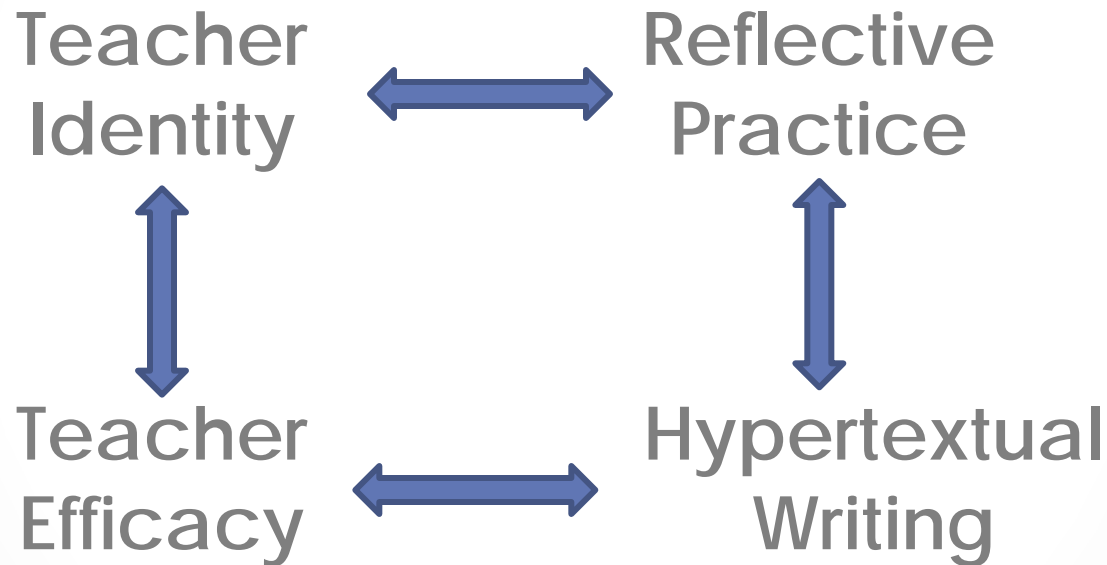
“In their intimacy and accessibility, in their seemingly unmediated state, [blogs] blur the distinction between online and offline lives, ‘virtual reality’ and ‘real life,’ ‘public and private,’ and [...] between the life and the text.”

Laurie McNeill, 2003

As spaces where teachers engage in reflective practice, then, these spaces can tell us much about teachers’ perceived and enacted identities and how those identities are informed by the multiple “others” of teachers’ lives



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# Teacher Efficacy

Rotter's Locus of Control (1966) leads to Bandura's Efficacy (1977)

Most efficacy research is quantitative, which undermines the role of *context* in teacher identity

Bandura: Efficacy is informed by four factors:

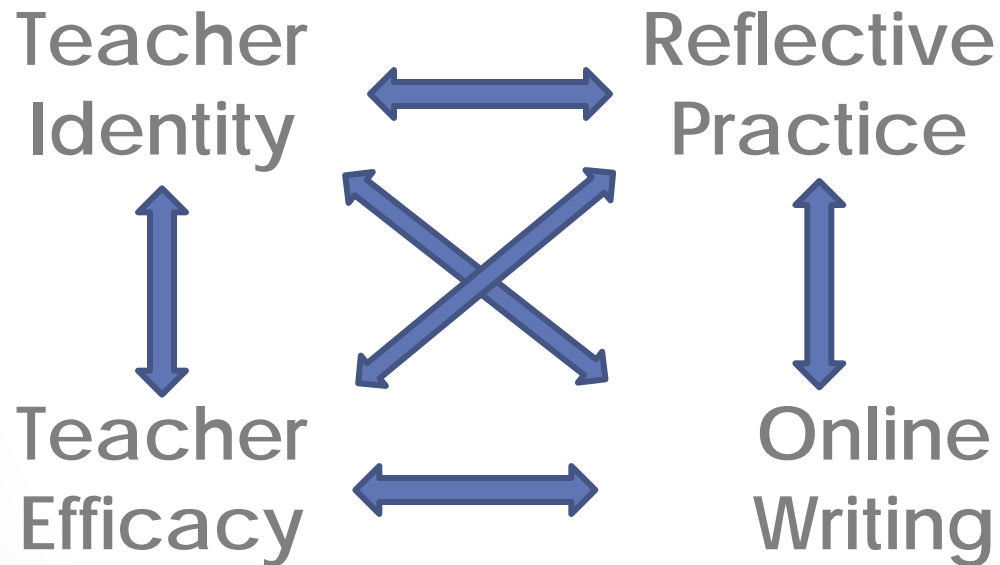
Performance Successes/Failures

Vicarious Experiences

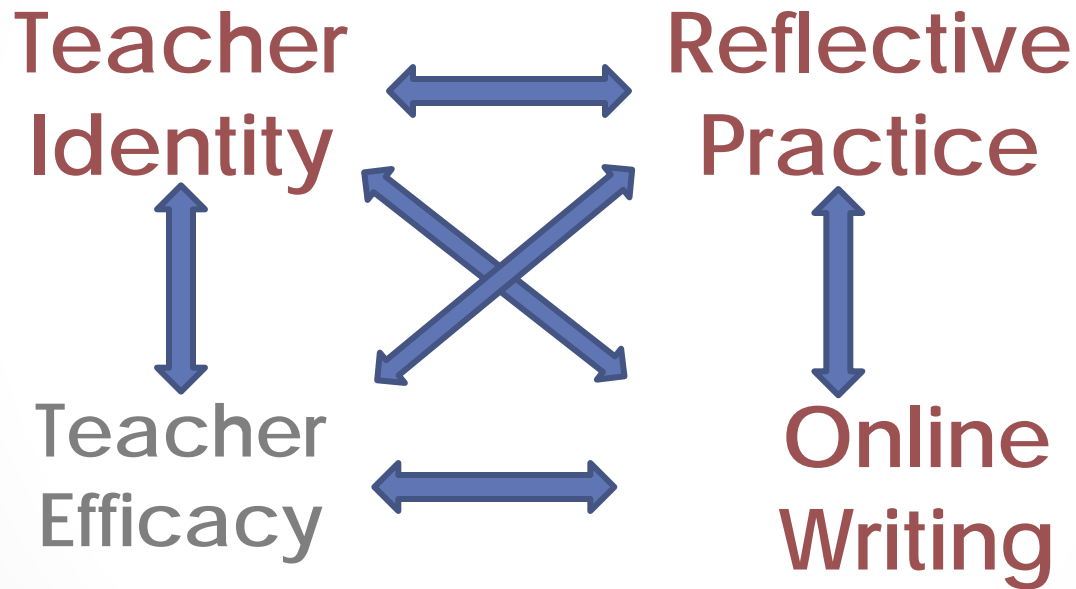
Verbal Persuasion

Affective Responses

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# A Pilot Study

**Examination of one teacher's (Sylvia's) online blog,  
*The Paper Graders***

Three hours of interviews with Sylvia

One and a half hours of observation in Sylvia's high school classroom

Thematic analysis of triangulated interview, observational, and textual data



# Identity and Reflection in One Teacher's Online Writing

...in a post entitled “Where did the Semester Go?”

“I wonder, actually, if we’re feeling the weight of doing more and more and more. Around here the abysmal budget situation has raised our class sizes. We’re being bombarded across the country (even in the major movie theaters now) with the message that all the problems in education are our fault so we need to prove ourselves in the court of public opinion.”



# Identity and Reflection in One Teacher's Online Writing

...in a blog post entitled “Storymap Homework Breakdown 2.0”

“I do not blame my daughter's teacher. The problem is so much bigger--it's more in the unchecked assumptions we all carry with us about what we are supposed to do with stories in school.”

# The Online Reflective Space: Challenging Binaries

In answer to the question, “What about people from your life? How does that influence what you write about?”

“Not much, I don’t think. Except for, I did write about a conversation I had with my dad. My dad frustrates me because I cannot get him to understand why the current move and policy is bad for education. So if I’ve had a frustrating conversation with somebody I might do that, you know. Or like I lost a student, and I blogged about that, so I suppose that stuff that happens in my day to day life, if is stuff that’s lingering and it’s something I want to think about I might, if it’s relevant to teaching, I might turn to the blog space and write about it.”



# The Online Reflective Space: An Agentive Environment?

...in an interview:

“I don’t know. Maybe it legitimizes it for myself, maybe it’s an accountability thing. If somebody’s missing us, I need to go and post something. So it’s a little bit of an accountability. And if I say to myself I’m going to post every day or every time I read this book I’m going to find something and I’m going to post to the blog, it’s going to force me to do that work of selecting from it the things that are important to the work I’m doing, you know?”



# Efficacy Questions

Do these online reflections help teachers feel more efficacious? In Sylvia's words, do they "legitimize" the work teachers find most important?

How do teachers like Sylvia, who narrated the conflicts she encountered twice as often as her victories (according to the analysis I've done so far), maintain a sense of self-efficacy in the face of so many obstacles?

Does the online space play a role in an efficacious teacher identity? If so, how can we use this space to change the way teachers are perceived, represented, and taught?



# Limitations & Future Directions

Case studies can tell us much, but they cannot tell us all. Further studies should engage more participants to determine whether themes are recurring.

However, qualitative analysis of teacher narratives raises significant and important questions about teacher identity and efficacy due to its inherent focus on context.

More triangulated qualitative research that includes interviews and observations is needed in order to explore teacher reflection and self-efficacy more thoroughly.

# Thank You!

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