

Guest Editors' Introduction: Lives of Teachers

By **Gerald J. Brunetti & Rae S. McCormick**

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The lives of teachers come in many shapes and colors. In countless settings, from pre-school to university, from private elementary to public high school, in villages and suburbs and cities throughout the world, these lives unfold—human beings engaged in the deeply human act of teaching, of helping others, particularly young people, gain the understanding and skills they and their societies need. This issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* is devoted to the lives of these teachers. The original call for papers invited submissions in four areas:

1. Empirical research on the development and dimensions of teachers' professional careers;
2. Teacher biography and autobiography, including teachers' reflections on their careers;
3. Images of teachers, including studies of the ways teachers are depicted in fiction, television, and film; and
4. The lives and work of teacher educators.

Introduction

Although we did not receive manuscripts representing every dimension of the four areas, we were pleased with the breadth and richness of the pieces that were submitted. With the assistance of our dedicated reviewers, we struggled with the difficult task of making choices. Ultimately, we settled on a collection of articles and accounts that, we believe, demonstrate some of the range and richness of this emerging area of scholarship, the study of teachers' lives.

Our collection begins with the personal—teachers' stories about their work. Two authors, Rebecca Akin and Rae S. McCormick, tell us stories that offer insights into the complexities of teachers' lives. Akin's story recounts her experiences as a kindergarten teacher struggling to implement structured conversations among her students, questioning the value of this activity even as she recognizes the importance of dialogue for learning. Compounding her reflection is her own sense of professional isolation.

McCormick is a teacher educator who has observed her daughter, a young elementary teacher, grappling with the ongoing demands of today's classrooms. McCormick recounts an experience she had in her daughter's classroom—an experience that caused her to reflect on her own work as a teacher educator.

Rasjidah Franklin examines a teacher's life through the voice of Berta Rantz, who was 99 years old when first interviewed. Berta was a part of the progressive education movement in the 1920s and continued her work as a devoted teacher for 62 years. Through the lenses of her memory, the reader can experience Berta's joy in teaching through several generations of American history and learn about her philosophy of education and her advice for new teachers.

The next three articles, by Barbara B. Levin, Gerald J. Brunetti, and Beverly Hardcastle Stanford, present research studies of experienced teachers. In the latest chapter of an ongoing longitudinal study, Levin reports on the continuing professional development of Rick, an elementary school teacher whom she has studied since he began his teacher education program some 14 years ago. Levin shared previous findings from her study, along with its theoretical underpinnings, in earlier issues of this journal. Combining *emic* and *etic* elements, this qualitative study provides unique insights into the ways a committed teacher continues to grow intellectually and professionally during the course of his career.

Brunetti reports on his study of a group of highly-experienced high school teachers and their motivations for remaining in the classroom. Based primarily on in-depth interviews with 28 teachers from a large urban/suburban school district, the study also incorporates quantitative survey data. Brunetti found a surprisingly high level of satisfaction among these veteran California teachers, despite some difficult working conditions.

Stanford's study of a group of experienced African-American teachers who worked in distressed urban elementary schools also focuses on motivations for teaching and sources of satisfaction. Like Brunetti, Stanford collected much of her data in personal interviews; and though her findings are similar to his in certain

respects, she discovered some quite different sources of teacher satisfaction.

James A. Muchmore and Lorraine C. Smith used life history methodology in exploring the professional work of their subjects. Muchmore offers not only a life history of Anna, an urban high school English teacher, but also an analysis of this methodology and a thoughtful examination of ethical considerations that arise in studies of teacher thinking.

Smith uses a life history approach in her study of three community college instructors who document their collaboration as they plan and teach the same cohorts of students.

And finally, James D. Trier provides an interesting analysis of how teachers are depicted in the popular films he shows to his student teaching practicum. He goes on to report how pre-service teachers respond to the depictions as they ponder the relationship between the personal and professional lives of teachers.

All nine of these pieces contribute to our appreciation of teachers' pedagogical understandings, the influences on their lives and work, and the complexities of the profession they have chosen. Although some of the articles provide an outside—or *etic*—perspective on teachers' lives, we were struck by the extent to which the collection as a whole emphasized the inside—or *emic*—perspective (Hutcheson & Ammon, 1986). Either way, we think your own perspective on teachers' lives will be enhanced and challenged by this issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly*. We invite you to read and enjoy these papers—a collection designed to explore, to probe, and, yes, to celebrate the lives of teachers.

Note

To a great extent, this issue is the outgrowth of a special interest group (SIG) of the California Council on the Education of Teachers (which sponsors *Teacher Education Quarterly*). Twice a year, this SIG brings together teachers and teacher educators from across California who are interested in studying the lives of teachers and sharing teacher stories. The California SIG led to the launching of a similar SIG within the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and to the planning of this special issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly*. Readers who are interested in the activities of either of the SIGs are invited to get in touch with Jerry Brunetti at <jbrunett@stmarys-ca.edu>.

Reference

Hutcheson, B.P., & Ammon, P. (1986). The development of teachers' conceptions as reflected in their journals. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.