*The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* *Vol. 54, No. 4, Winter 2008, 463-476*

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# Psychoanalytic Implications for the "Consulting Cure"

*From October 2004 to June 2006, I worked as a curriculum leader across 18 elementary schools as part of an Alberta Incentive for School Improvement project focused on the reform question: How does inquiry transform learning environments? As a curriculum leader, my role included, but was not limited to, the introduction, articulation, and development of the project's main tenets and goals among the teaching staffs of participating schools. In support of professional development, I worked closely with teachers in discussing, planning, and co-teaching from an inquiry-based perspective. As I developed close relationships with teacher practitioners, my position acted as a catalyst for pedagogical change in the classroom and supported broader institutional reform.*

*D'octobre 2004 à juin 2006, j'ai travaillé comme chef des programmes d'études pour 18 écoles primaires dans le contexte d'un projet albertain visant l'amélioration des écoles (Alberta Incentive for School Improvement Project) et reposant sur la question: Comme les enquêtes transforment-elles les milieux d'apprentissage ? En tant que chef des programmes d'études, mon rôle impliquait, entre autres, l'introduction, l'articulation et le développement des principes et des buts principaux du projet au sein du personnel enseignant des écoles participantes. Appuyant le développement professionnel, j'ai travaillé en étroite collaboration avec les enseignants pour discuter, planifier et co-enseigner dans une optique reposant sur l'enquête. Les rapports serrés que j'ai développés avec les enseignants ont servi de catalyseurs pour des changements pédagogiques dans la classe ainsi que pour une réforme institutionnelle plus globale.*

In this article I attempt to understand the role of curriculum leader, professional mentor, and school consultant from the unorthodox perspective(s) of Lacanian (1977, 1997) psychoanalytic theory. Although a substantial body of research has been developed around professional teaching and institutional reform, my particular approach focuses specifically on the relationships formed and pedagogies deployed in support of such reform practices. Further, my work attempts to address the significant roles of transference and desire in regard to teacher identity and institutional change. Thus I deploy Lacan's *four discourses* as a means of interrogating the often unarticulated desires and consequences of common consulting practices. Against this, and in consideration of my personal experience, I unfold an ethical and transformative pedagogy of consulting through Lacan's *Analyst discourse*. In returning the work of consulting to its "original difficulty," I provide curriculum leaders, policy-writers, and teacher mentors with a theoretical framework for analyzing their practices and their own desires as practitioners. Further, I hope that such a theoretical ap-

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proach will provide consultants with an impetus for their own self-exploration and professional development.

### *Introduction*

The 20th-century figure of the snake oil peddler haunts contemporary consulting practices, extending as a caricature from the Western horse opera to the work often undertaken by school board consultants and curriculum leaders. Portrayed as a charismatic character of dubious moral orientation, the snake oil peddler engages a particular desire in his audience for a supplementary remedy or cure-all. Pedagogically, this characterization finds its parallel in the external expert who offers a panacea for a plethora of institutional diseases.

The comparison of the school consultant to the snake oil peddler has achieved a cultural ubiquity, engendering a generalized xenophobia and critical skepticism toward the external expert. Across the 18 schools in which I worked, consultants had historically played a largely nugatory role, working with teachers for only a day or two at a time, ignorant of the particularities of each classroom and frequently encumbered by other administrative duties, which rendered longitudinal relations improbable. In this vein, my role as a curriculum consultant was met with warranted suspicion in each of the schools I visited, as all too often the presence of school consultants signified for teachers the impending interposition of yet one more system of institutional rhetoric and inconsequential reforms. Yet amid the justified skepticism of teacher practitioners, a concomitant tendency remained in the institutional desire for the *curative knowledge* offered by both snake oil peddler and consultant. As Taubman (1990) lucidly avers, the project of Western education is deeply invested in such curative supplements as an appeal to the rhetoric of mastery and hope, both of which maintain a cogent teleological force in contemporary Western pedagogical practice and policymaking.

### *Discourse of the Master*

The association of the snake oil peddler to the school consultant points to an expectation of the *expert* as much as it suggests a demand on behalf of the teacher for the knowledge of *the subject presumed to know* (Lacan, 1997). Indeed, the legitimation of the snake oil salesman is predicated on the fantasy of a master who embodies the promise of curative knowledge. In psychoanalytic terms, this curative knowledge constitutes an institutional *object a* or lost object, the retrieval of which connotes the remediation of lack and concomitant feelings of completeness and mastery. In school settings such lack is frequently encountered as a gap in knowledge, an inability to master a particular curriculum content or inconsolable difficulty in pinning down once and for all those instructional practices that correlate directly with students' learning. As an institutional object, a curative knowledge confers a sense of stability on the practitioner's identity as a connotation of his or her mastery and professional deftness. As the psychoanalytic insights of Lacan suggest, and frontline school workers know only too well, such lost objects tend to evade even the most insistent pursuit. It is at this level that the consultant typically intercedes as an expert, thereby inaugurating a relationship predicated on transference between the *lacking subject* and the *subject presumed to know*. As Lacan comments,

"As soon as there is somewhere a subject presumed to know, there is transference" (p. 210).

It is important to recognize that in psychoanalytic terms, knowledge is not an object, but "a structural dynamic … not *contained* by any individual but [born] of the mutual apprenticeship between two partially unconscious speeches that both say more than they know" (Felman, 1997, p. 29). As such, the *subject presumed to know* looks to the *other*[1] in confirmation of his of her values and beliefs. Participating in the Lacanian *discourse of the master*, the school consultant is inextricably bound in a relationship of transference and countertransference (jagodzinski, 2002). In this structure, the school consultant "offers himself as the primary object for … admiration and identification" (Bracher, 1999, p. 130). As an instructive mirror, the consultant as the subject presumed to know assumes a powerful symbolic position in relationship to teacher practitioners, constituting a parallel to traditional models of knowledge transmission in which the teacher assumes the position of the subject supposed to know against the fantasy of his or her student as desirous of such knowledge.

As Bracher (1999) suggests of the consequences of the Lacanian *discourse of the Master*, although the outcomes of such a relationship might seem positive "to the extent [the consultant and teacher] are engaged in it, they sacrifice parts of themselves … that conflict with the *master signifiers*[2] they have devoted themselves to" (p. 132). Further, in assuming the symbolic position of the master, a distance is introduced between consultant and teacher, teacher and student. In this scenario, the teacher looks to and fetishizes the consultant as the one presumed to know while the consultant looks to the teacher, who in adopting his or her master signifiers, confirms the former's position of privilege. Yet the adoption of such values cuts the teacher off from his or her own signifiers, alienating personal identity (Bracher, 1993). Further, as Taubman (2005) develops, the discourse of the Master produces a symbolic distance in which consultant and teacher assume a reciprocal yet *asymmetrical* relationship.

In the early phases of my work in schools, I was actively thrust into the position of the subject presumed to know. Evoking the contours of the discourse of the Master, this reciprocal yet asymmetrical relationship was less one that I actively played into than implicitly evoked. This bespeaks the haunt of a traditional form of consulting invested in the Lacanian discourse of the Master, the legacy of which remains as a potent trace in our schools today. Positioned as an inquiry expert, I became enraptured in the interminable play of desire and transference. As a catalyst for site-based reform and introduced as the subject presumed to know, I was inundated with questions about the project. Yet such questions took on particular forms in keeping with the Lacanian master discourse. Teachers and administrators looked to me for a totalizing definition of the project's master signifiers. As the subject presumed to know, I was charged with defining *inquiry-based learning, formative assessment*, and *essential questions* among many other concepts central to the project. Although the demand for unequivocal definitions of the project's master signifiers denied the fundamental purpose of the project in restoring teaching to its "original difficulty" and interminable site-based problematics, they served

effectively to produce a relationship predicated on the discourse of the Master wherein the assumption of a curative knowledge was eagerly sought. Early into the project, I would be caught off guard by the insistent entreaty "Just tell me what inquiry is!" Practitioners frequently looked to me to confirm their practices and assure them that they "were doing it right." As teachers looked to me, I too looked with a desiring gaze. Caught in the play of transference, I wished to acknowledge my values and beliefs reflected in the other, and similarly sought credibility through teachers' acknowledgment of my competence and expertise. Naïvely I deemed the adoption of my own views by the other a success and the refusal of such knowledge an unmitigated failure.

Like the snake oil salesman's, my complicity in the discourse of the Master engendered a mutual seduction in which curative knowledge took on a fetishized status. Yet located in this discourse, such relationships were premised on an implicit violence. In adopting the master signifiers of the inquiry project, many practitioners were necessarily driven to disavow aspects of their identities as intimately bound to familiar behaviors and practices. As Fink (1995) comments, the Master's discourse "is the fundamental matrix of the coming to be of the subject through alienation" (p. 130). This is how many teachers encountered the new pedagogical lexicon of inquiry-based learning, as a dissolution of long-held beliefs and assumptions about the *quality* of pedagogical practice and teacher methodology. Usurping the traditional institutional coordinates of long-range planning, summative evaluative measures, and the curriculum as a stable body of knowledge, the inquiry-based approach articulated to teachers became a locus of anxiety. Emphasizing the significance of emergent planning, formative evaluative measures, and the curriculum as a living, negotiable terrain, the lexicon of inquiry and its implications demanded for some practitioners a radical shift in pedagogical perspective. This is, of course, no easy task, particularly when pedagogical practice is understood not as an object to work on, but as part of a complex matrix in which teacher identity, fantasies, and fears are knotted.

As articulations of identity are bound to the symbolic field of language, so too is teacher identity bound to particular master signifiers that act to anchor and give legitimacy to our professional activities. As I was an agent of institutional reform, the upheaval in language that I introduced became a cite/sight/site of concomitant desire and trauma (jagodzinski, 2002). Self-understanding was severed as the new pedagogical lexicon of inquiry reoriented the field of professional discourse. Practitioners found themselves both destabilized and alienated as they sought to understand the theoretical and practical implications of inquiry-based learning in the classroom. For many teachers, such destabilization was marked by a sense of loss and foreignness in relation to practices and beliefs that had hitherto been certain and assured. Many teachers with whom I worked articulated that the master signifiers of inquiry had subverted their prior beliefs and knowledge, undoing the cornerstones of their personal pedagogical philosophies. In turn, many teachers invested themselves in the discourse of the Master as a means to mitigate such feeling of doubt. That is, in adopting the official inquiry discourse, practitioners once again felt whole, capable, and assured. As Lacan (1997) develops, the discourse of the Master involves a painful initiation in which the other is rendered

recognizable in the desirous gaze of the master. Engaged in traditional modes of pedagogical transference, the Lacanian discourse of the Master evoked in the early stages of the project created an alienating distance between myself as the subject supposed to know and the other as a lacking subject.

*Discourse of the University*

Similar to the project of many consultants devoted to institutional reform, a significant component of my role included an intervention in how teachers articulated their practice through language. As a significant component of the AISI inquiry initiative, numerous interventions at the symbolic level of language were enacted through the introduction of a new lexicon for thinking and talking about pedagogical practice. In relation to these new discursive coordinates, many practitioners encountered both their practice and experience as alien. Thus interventions in language were not merely semantic, but instead carried affective force, implicating identity, knowledge, and ideology. "Discourses … are not like hats that can be donned and doffed at will. The changing of discourses generally requires that certain conditions be met" (Fink, 1995, p. 130).

Discursive knowledge is not benign, but rather informed by rules of exclusion and inclusion: how we may and may not talk about certain topics (Foucault, 1975). As identity is principally constituted and articulated in language, so too our professional identities as teachers and consultants are bound to the limits and demands of particular professional discourses. Thus consulting practices often avoid the negative implications of the discourse of the Master by "initiating [students and teachers] into professional discourse … what Lacan [refers] to as the discourse of the University" (Bracher, 1999, p. 132). Whereas the discourse of the Master desires the transference of the Master's values, beliefs, and identity to the other, the Lacanian *discourse of the University* seeks to inaugurate the other into a disciplinary body of knowledge (Lacan, 1997). In this scenario the Master is supplemented by a professional discourse elevated to the status of a fetish. Institutional reforms aimed at inaugurating new ways of articulating and approaching practice are thus inextricably implicated in the discourse of the University.

The discourse of the University is less predicated on a master exerting control through the transference of ideology than the framing of practice and identity through teachers' willing participation in a discursive body of knowledge. By approximating the signifiers of the professional discourse, the teacher not only achieves social recognition, but further is socialized through participation into a type of *intellectual social club* (Graf, cited in Bracher, 1999). In a corollary scenario, the control and mastery of such professional discourses legitimize the practitioner as the subject presumed to know. Fluency in such professional discourses, particularly those seen/scene as *innovative* or *critical*, confer an "increase in security control and self-esteem" on the practitioner (Bracher, p. 134)[3]. Such an increase translates not only to a sense of control and affirmation of pedagogical practice, but further to a sense of intellectual camaraderie through participation in a shared professional discourse. The desire at work in the discourse of the University is thus concentrated on "a sense of order, security, and control that one gets from inhabiting a system,

possessing a body of knowledge, or moving fluently within a discourse" (Bracher, p. 132).

The seductive lure of the discourse of the University played a significant part in my work as a mentor to practicing teachers. With the introduction of a new lexicon for thinking and approaching practice, the teachers with whom I worked were implicitly encouraged to identify with a new set of master signifiers, including *inquiry-based learning, formative assessment, tasks*, and *intellectual rigor*. Although one might contend that the effect of such terms is merely semantic, I assert that such signifiers have productive implications not only for teacher identity, but for how we engage in intellectual communities and pedagogical practice. The introduction of a language of critical inquiry was initially received as a disjunction that alienated teacher practitioners from their personal systems of signification. Such disruptive slippage between personal meaning and institutional discourse was for many teachers distressing, severing their own self-constructed meanings for those of an institutional other.

Insofar as participation equates to institutional recognizability, practitioners were implicitly asked to adopt the discourse of critical inquiry as their own. Many teachers articulated this self-imposed alienation to me. Citing a sense of flagging ownership of the personal meanings ascribed to their practices, they paradoxically remarked on the recognition conferred via "willing" participation in inquiry discourses. As teacher mentors and school consultants, we must tread with particular care in lauding the other's investment in such discursive professional knowledge as an indicator of unmitigated success. As Bracher (1999) notes of "the good student," I assert that the "good teacher" is often "the most quickly and fully colonized, getting rid of their 'naïve,' 'biased,' or 'uncritical' ways of reading, thinking feeling, and perceiving and assuming the responses called for by the new system" (p. 133).

While conferring a sense of security and control over pedagogical practice and teacher identity, the colonizing force of the discourse of the University has the potential effect of alienating the subject's personal beliefs, values, resistances, and knowledge. Yet because the University discourse is enunciated as a *neutral* or benign knowledge, its hegemonic function is rarely interrogated. As participation in such discourse often accords an increase in institutional recognition and status, to complicate such knowledge concomitantly interrupts professional identity and the stability of pedagogical ideology. As curriculum leaders and school consultants are often messengers of broader policies or school board directives, such discourses must be informed, deformed, and transformed by the subjects whose practice and identities they are meant to describe.

*Discourse of the Hysteric*

Because both the Master and University establishment discourses entail the assumption of the Other's master signifier, thereby alienating the subject, what pedagogical potential remains for a discourse that attempts to recuperate subjective agency and resist subsumption under the Other's authority? This question poses a significant ethical dilemma for school consultants and teacher mentors, who often operate "as though there were no conflict between [their] aims and either their identity needs or their [colleague's] identity needs (Bracher, 2005, p. 2). The ethical contours of the mentoring relationship must be

informed by an acknowledgement of the hidden curriculum that operates to socialize educators, including how such pedagogies as Master and University discourses carry civilizing narratives about teacher identity and privileged instructional practices. In this vein, a protest pedagogy would actively dismantle the consultant's position as master or the one presumed to know, citing how such Master and University discourses are premised on the unequal dispersion of power and are thus institutionally oppressive. Similarly, a pedagogy of resistance would have the potential of quickly diffusing spaces of intellectual camaraderie by exposing the colonizing force of University discourses, hence illustrating how complicity in such discourses upholds the asymmetrical relationship of the subject presumed to know and the lacking subject. In this vein, Lacan (1977) describes a pedagogy of resistance through "the discourse of the Hysteric."

The Hysteric's discourse focuses on the alienation inaugurated through the master pedagogies of the University and Master discourses. More specifically, the Hysteric points to the colonizing force of the Master and University discourses through which the subject is split, accepting the Other's signifier above his or her own subjective desire. The Hysteric repudiates the Master's claim to know and name unequivocally, citing how master pedagogies fabricate an inauthentic lack projected on the other. Further, such lack concomitantly establishes the symbolic position of the subject presumed to know, thereby enabling an asymmetrical, inauthentic relationship constituted by the tyranny of institutional power.

Although a protest pedagogy is perhaps an institutionally untenable position for a consultant or teacher mentor to assume, I assert that the discourse of the Hysteric offers a means to address the significant resistance felt by many teacher practitioners who are so often reduced to "delivering someone else's mail," alienating them from their identity and practice in assumption of the Other's master signifier. As the discourse of the Hysteric focuses on the issue of subjective self-division, the practitioner's voice is mobilized such that it effectively challenges the conditions of such alienation. This necessarily implicates the interruption of institutional mandates and strategic directions articulated at the level of *it is said*. Further, the discourse of the Hysteric points to the inadequacy of Master discourses to address radical difference and the emergent particularities of classroom life. In turn, the Hysteric's discourse demands that the claim to universality articulated through master pedagogies be dispossessed through the formation of new signifiers that speak to local conditions, subjective fantasies, and an awareness of institutionally oppressive forces. For example, the role of the consultant working from the approach of a protest pedagogy might thus offer teacher practitioners an interpretation of inquiry-based learning more adequate to the particular conditions in which it is practiced.

In my own practice as a consultant, the development of such singular signifiers entailed my intimate involvement with school staff, students, and administrative operations. Following the protest pedagogy enacted by the discourse of the Hysteric, it was crucial that the relationship between consultant and practitioner be predicated on the unique desires of each specific classroom and not, as is commonly thought, a generalized approach that redeploys

the alienating Master and University discourses. By situating knowledge and practice at the local and singular level, generalized models of inquiry-based learning might be dismantled in lieu of locally relevant desires. In one specific school, students' concerns over the care of a public garden led to an inquiry into seasonal growth, local environmental factors, and personal advocacy for environmental change. Although not specifically impelled by the standardized curriculum, students ultimately addressed a vast array of cross-disciplinary topics through the personally significant exploration of local desires and concerns. Thus the impersonal lexicon of inquiry espoused through both Master and University discourses was derailed by its possession by local agents of change.

Throughout my work in schools I openly grappled with the difficulties of inquiry-based teaching and learning as a master pedagogy. Alongside a number of reticent practitioners, I questioned the often alienating language of inquiry, the ideal examples of inquiry practice against which many felt judged, and the relevance of what felt like *one more* district directive to "get done." Although my mandate as a curriculum leader suggested that such prolonged conversations be circumvented in lieu of focusing on inquiry teaching practice, I could not avoid how the alienation encountered by many teachers constituted an interpsychical barrier not merely to their participation, but further to their ability actively to create personal meanings of inquiry practice. Of course, this was a difficult position to assume, and for some practitioners this pedagogical approach was cause to rebuke my professional credibility. Indeed, the contemporary culture of education is so insistent about the primary position of its "experts" and "professional discourses" that questioning or weakening such master signifiers can induce an institutional knee-jerk reaction of denial toward alternative pedagogies and identity formations.

Enacting a pedagogy of resistance, I demonstrated a vulnerability in my own status as an expert. Indeed, I recognized early in the project that the generalized deployment of an inquiry discourse would deprive both myself and my teaching colleagues of a sense of vitality and personal agency so necessary to the success of such work. For many practitioners new to an inquiry approach, my vulnerable position not only opened a space of contestation and candid criticism, but further, addressed the self-division encountered by initiates to inquiry practice, hence producing "a new knowledge or system … to house [their] identity" (Bracher, 1999, p. 135). In my work as a consultant, this process entailed the ongoing critique of generalized inquiry discourses in lieu of collaboratively identifying the opportunity for inquiry already present in the turmoil of classroom life. In one such endeavor, teachers began to engage the slippage between an idealized version of inquiry-based practices and their own personal classroom experiences. This engagement encouraged them to begin developing a strong identity based not on lack, but rather a more robust acknowledgment of the specific challenges faced in relation to their student body, the broader community, and the historical contexts of local site-based reform initiatives. This collaborative process in turn informed how teachers and students began to understand and articulate inquiry as a personal experience. In this case, the privileged signifiers of the inquiry discourse were supplemented by more local signifiers. While teachers talked of best practices,

students began to articulate the importance of asking "difficult" questions as a means not merely to report, but to create meaning.

Although much of my productive influence in schools implicitly drew on a pedagogy of protest, this disposition is not without its downside. As Bracher (2000) develops, "such a pedagogy can be restrictive; or worse, can seem just like another form of authoritarian or establishment pedagogy" (p. 109). Just as Master and University discourses are bound to the mirror game of transference and counter-transference, so too the discourse of the Hysteric has the potential subtly to coerce the other to adopt "someone else's master signifiers" (Bracher, 1999, p. 136). In the Hysteric's discourse, this seduction is evidenced in the other's assumption of the position of protest or resistance espoused by the subject supposed to know. The difficulty and ethical dilemma of a pedagogy of protest lies in the dismantling of one master signifier for another. Perhaps more dangerous is the contestation involved in recoding institutional master signifiers. While enabling the voices of alienated practitioners, the discourse of the Hysteric could render institutional life increasingly difficult, further marginalizing the already self-divided practitioner. As Bracher (2002) develops, a second hazard of a protest pedagogy extends from its support of "socially destructive forms of identity politics that pit different groups against each other in a competition for recognition … including the tacit recognition embodied in concessions from the establishment (p. 109). In assuming a pedagogical position of resistance toward establishment signifiers, practitioners could be faced with an insurmountable struggle, ultimately paralyzing their ability to reconcile personal values and identities with institutional systems of knowledge.

*Discourse of the Analyst*

As articulated above, the pedagogies frequently employed by school consultants engage in "inculcating particular master signifiers (S1), or systems of knowledge or practice (S2)" (Bracher, 1999, p. 137). Whether this occurs overtly through the Lacanian Master discourse, covertly as an obscene supplement in the University discourse, or indirectly through the discourse of the Hysteric, the ethical questions of teacher empowerment, critical pedagogy, and "absolute difference" remain to be fully elucidated (Felman, 1997). In this vein Lacan (1982) articulates a fourth, critical pedagogical mode in the *discourse of the Analyst*.

The discourse of the Analyst aims ethically to approach transference such that the analysand or teacher is aided in producing new master signifiers. Although many protest pedagogies similarly attempt to redress the inductive effect of establishment master signifiers, the discourse of the Hysteric potentially, however indirectly, produces a new master signifier on behalf of the other, further alienating the subject it was supposed to liberate. In consideration of this ethical problematic, the discourse of the Analyst attempts to develop in the analysand or teacher the capacity to develop such signifiers himself or herself. Simply, whereas the pedagogical approach of many consultants seeks to confer a particular master signifier on the practices and identities of *the one who does not know,* the Analyst discourse claims that in the interests of subjective agency, it is ineluctably "the analysand, not the analyst, who produces the new master signifier" (Bracher, 1999, p. 137). Like Socratic pedagogy, the Analyst's dis-

course is a dialogic endeavor in which the consultant listens to teachers without circumventing their desire or attempting to rehabilitate their voices into established or institutionally recognizable discourses. In this vein, whereas the analysand or teacher might demand a particular master signifier from the subject presumed to know, the Analyst's discourse engages in ethical self-censorship, that is, a deferral of "knowing too soon" that would colonize the other's desire (McMahon, 1997). The Analyst consultant would thus desire not the assumption or adoption of his or her master signifier by the other, but instead the "strong identity" of the teacher in a manner that presupposes absolute difference: the enhancement of the analysand's identity as heterogeneous and potentially incongruous with that of the analyst (Bracher, 2002).

Working from a pedagogy of the Analyst, a consultant would attempt to enable teachers to recognize those desires and aspects of their identity that divide them from assuming personal agency and producing knowledge on their own. In my own experience, many practitioners embattled by the lexicon of critical inquiry were initially paralyzed by the alienating function of both University and Master discourses. It was thus necessary to spend significant time in face-to-face meetings with teachers in an effort to identify how practitioners were caught by certain signifiers that had in turn derailed their personal sense of identity in the classroom. For one group of teachers in particular, the self-imposed demand to mimic an idealized version of critical inquiry created an untenable situation in which they reflexively perceived themselves as lacking subjects. When the strong identity components of the teachers, their significant abilities in the arts, and their interest in creatively reframing the role of mathematics in the classroom were supported, they were better able to identify both their own specific desires for the course of classroom learning and how the master signifier of the Other had blocked their sense of personal agency. By traversing the fantasy of what the teachers perceived as a standardized inquiry methodology, they became more capable in meeting the emergent desires of their students and similarly increasingly open to experimental curriculum approaches. An Analyst approach to consulting necessitates that teachers not only consider how their professional identities are constituted, but also the implications of the location of identity and its consequences for self and other. The work of the Analyst includes identification of those aspects of identity and desire that offer potential openings for change and alternative identity formations (Taubman, 2005). Against the desire for subjective development according to the inculcation of an established master signifier, the discourse of the Analyst attempts to help the analysand develop according to his or her own desires and capacities for change. A consultant working from the Analyst discourse must be prepared to alter his or her own mode of teaching and approach to subject matter as a means of engaging in dialogue with another whose desire will inform the contours and character of inquiry practice. The discourse of the Analyst thus marks an encounter with internal otherness, that is, aspects of self-difference that provide opportunities for a critique of current identity and practices.

The discourse of the Analyst marks a mode of consulting out of step with established practices. Indeed its approach to pedagogy, desire, and trans-

ference seems almost unrecognizable in terms of the rhetoric of mastery, remedies, and standardization currently circulating in the culture of education. Yet in regard to the work of the AISI inquiry initiative, the discourse of the Analyst speaks of a productive approach through which practitioners were enabled to mitigate feelings of self-division or alienation. Further, the Analyst discourse marks an ethical stance toward the mentoring relationship in which transference is not denied, but mobilized in potentially transformative ways. For example, as opposed to the external expert of the Master and University discourses, my role in schools was that of co-inquirer and co-teacher. Thus although I was able to offer my experience to a given situation, I was also able to look to the classroom practitioner as an expert. The transferential relationship was thus reframed in a manner that derailed the symbolic roles of the master teacher and lacking subject. Further, what became apparent in such cooperative teaching relationships was the outright arrogance of the claim to have mastered teaching. This understanding provided the impetus for professional relations predicated on the difficult work of teaching rather than the pathologization of the teacher's ego from the standpoint of the subject supposed to know.

An analytic view of institutional reform presupposes singularity and *absolute difference* from establishment codification. Although a number of teachers sought to emulate the legitimized projects of other teachers working from an inquiry approach, their practices maintained a traditional demand for an a priori established outcome. This teleological attraction to a "proper" or "ideal" fantasy of inquiry implicitly demanded reliance on the discourse of the Master. Contrariwise, the Analyst pedagogy desired to aid teachers in coming to their own answers about the inquiry process, engaging with the anxiety felt in the often self-imposed demand to get it right and emulate specific examples. This anxiety required an Analytic approach to my practice as a teacher mentor and co-inquirer, and early in my work it became starkly apparent that in articulating *strong examples*, I was implicitly engaging in a mirror game of transference that would ultimately divide teachers from their own knowledge and insights on the nature of inquiry. Although the articulation of such strong examples was perhaps necessary in order to orient teachers to the character of inquiry, such a pedagogical device must be broached in an ethical manner whereby the consultant derails such exemplars as the terminable ideal of inquiry. In response to such an ethical problematic, I often drew on a supportive technique whereby I modeled not the ideal inquiry, but rather my own difficulties in understanding and practicing from an inquiry approach.

Much of my work as a mentor to teachers included ongoing dialogue focused on specific challenges, interpsychical anxieties, explorations of alternate identities, and "internal otherness." Opposed to locating such challenges outside the individual, in the policy of the school, the perceived demands of the community, or curricular mandates, for example, the role of the Analyst is directed toward helping "the analysand … remain focused in the conflict as his or her own" (Bracher, 2002, p. 116). In this vein, in my work with teachers I endeavored to give voice to their personal struggles and anxieties. Teachers regularly reflected on their perceived obstacles and anxieties through such expressive techniques as personal journaling, action research, artistic repre-

sentation, and in small-group or one-to-one dialogue. In giving voice to teachers' anxieties and struggles, I emphasized the difficult work of critical reflective practice and change. Whereas the Hysteric's discourse aims similarly to give voice to anxiety, alienation, and oppression, the discourse of the Analyst aims to direct such agency toward an understanding of which identity formations impede change and similarly which identity components productively support and motivate development. By giving voice to their interpsychical conflicts, I was better prepared to meet the specific needs of practitioners to engage successfully with the theoretical and practical character of an inquiry approach to teaching and learning.

To preserve the play of absolute difference, it is imperative to note that the production of new master signifiers by the teacher need not accord to the beliefs or knowledge of the consultant. The realization of inquiry according to the desire of particular practitioners will necessarily bear idiosyncratic contours that deform, deconstruct, and move asymmetrically to the consultant's own fantasy of pedagogical practice and identity. In the Analyst mode, it is critical that the space of absolute difference be maintained as a means of recognizing the heterogeneity of inquiry practices. Further, it is significant that practitioners are recognized not for the homogeneity of their efforts according to an a priori ideal object, but for their struggle to destratify establishment master signifiers and extend the boundaries of the pedagogically possible. This does not connote that "anything goes," but rather that an approach to inquiry that asserts one definitive ideal neglects to take into account not only the specific context of the school culture, but perhaps more critically in regard to the work of curriculum leaders, how the desires of distinct practitioners will engage and practice pedagogical reform in ways that are sensitive to their unique barriers, anxieties, and successes. After all, the work of the analyst is oriented toward aiding the other to gain access to his or her desires and not to impose the fantasy of normalcy or ideal teacher identity. It is at the level of attempting ethically to work through individual interpsychical conflict that I assert that the most significant reform successes were realized.

*Conclusion*

In directly engaging with the insights of psychoanalysis, I attempt to read the project of teaching teachers as intimately bound to transference, desire, and the specter of curative knowledge that haunts the contemporary culture of education. In approaching the project of consulting via psychoanalytic theory, I also endeavor to highlight often disavowed or overlooked aspects of the consultant-teacher relationship, including their consequences for both individual practitioners and broader reform movements. This is less the application of psychoanalytic theory to education than thinking psychoanalytically about pedagogy (Taubman, 2005). Such recognition observes both the interminability of pedagogy and further, the impossibility of a terminable, curative knowledge, returning the work of teaching teachers to its human(e) and difficult character.

Understanding that the four Lacanian discourses are not simply applicable, but immanent features of the pedagogical project requires a more complex understanding of the psychodynamic processes at work in the consultant-teacher relationship. In this vein, in this article I attempt to further the substan-

tial body of Lacanian psychoanalytic research in education by focusing solely on the underanalyzed professional relations of consultants and practicing teachers. Thus I articulate that such relationships are already bound in a play of transference and countertransference as an inevitable ramification of the privileged status of knowledge in education. Further, I also focus on the asymmetrical relations between the subject supposed to know and the lacking subject often evoked in the consultant-teacher relationship. Much as such relations are dependent on a desire for knowledge, they are also implicitly ignorant of what knowledge excludes. Such ignorance often extends to the complex of psychodynamic processes involved in consultant-teacher relations, for what has historically constituted the ostensibly successful work of the consultant remains potentially invested in alienating discursive structures. Indeed, I contend that although the traditional consultant-teacher relationship is functional, it is far from simply *good news*. As institutional funding is increasingly allocated to the creation of curriculum lead and consulting positions, we need to interrogate how such roles both support and discourage particular signifiers and teacher identities. As such, Lacan's four discourses provide a unique insight into how desire organizes and structures the consultant's role in schools. Similarly, the four discourses suggest that it is possible, if we are ethically inclined, to do less harm in such authorial roles.

Thinking psychoanalytically about the relationship of consultants to teacher practitioners entails not only a greater sensitivity to the function of knowledge, but also the structural relations mobilized therein. Thus it is imperative for consultants and curriculum leaders to understand how their own desires might impede or alienate those of the practitioners with whom they are working. Similarly, it is ethically necessary in such pedagogical relations to understand the transferential dynamic and the myriad ways it might interfere with or support the development of strong teacher identities and classroom practices. It is toward such ethical obligations that consultants and curriculum leaders must first be oriented as a means of supporting the diversities, differences, and desires of classroom life.

*Notes*

1. The use of the term *other* refers here to the subject and is offset by the Symbolic *Other* of language, law, demand, and desire.
2. Deployed frequently throughout this article, the Master Signifier (S1) is constitutive of a totalizing system of knowledge that props up, grounds, and organizes (stratifies) reality. Thus the Master Signifier gives structure and the impression of permanence to knowledge, identity, and meaning, stabilizing the process of signification as a *point de capiton*. This *point de capiton*, or upholstery button, refers to the symbolic site where signifier and signified are sutured. Such suturing not only binds meaning, but similarly acts to "prevent a shapeless mass of stuffing from moving too freely about" (Lacan, 1991, p. 74).
3. Indeed, many of the practitioners with whom I worked fervently pursued an intimate understanding of inquiry-based teaching and learning in confirmation of themselves as radical, nontraditional, and critical practitioners.

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