POSITIONING TEACHERS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN TEACHER IDENTITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGING NATIONAL ASSESSMENT MANDATES

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The purpose of the study was to uncover the cultural beliefs and values that underlie American and Russian teachers’ representations of their professional identities and their understanding of power in education in the context of globally disseminated education reforms and current educational mandates— the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) in America and the Unified State Exam of 2001 (USE) in Russia — through examining discourses that manifested themselves in their talk. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used both as a strategy of inquiry and a theoretical framework for analysis and interpretation of data.

Primary sources of data were semi-structured informal interviews of 11 American teachers from a Midwestern state in the United States and 11 Russian teachers from a Mid-Volga region Republic in Russia. Observations of teacher lessons were included in the study to see what discourses manifested themselves in their actual behavior in reality of classrooms. In addition, for the purpose of checking “analysis with a different group” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 79), three American and three Russian administrators, as well as three Russian teachers and three American Peace Corps volunteers who had been exposed to both systems of education were interviewed.
The findings revealed that teachers employed a number of discourses generated in relation to the Bright Future, Communism Discourse model, in the Russian case, and a number of discourses generated in relation to the American Dream Discourse model, in the American case, to (re)construct, contest, and negotiate their teacher identities in the context of educational reforms.
To My Mother
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Vilma Seeberg, for teaching me the importance of standing up for and believing in myself. I would like to thank my committee member, Dr. Natasha Levinson, for sparking my interest in the works of Michel Foucault and for providing me with helpful suggestions on the dissertation. My special thanks go to another member of my committee, Dr. Tricia Niesz, for being so generous with her time and for offering me insightful comments throughout the entire process. I would like to thank Dr. Dennis Hart for the philosophical debates that helped me think about the possible trajectories of development of this dissertation at its nascent stage.

I am also grateful to my participants for taking time out from their busy schedules for the interviews and letting me observe their lessons. I must acknowledge my friend, Betsy Justice, for always being there as a true friend in times of critical need. My appreciation also goes to numerous people who reached out to help me and support me at different times of the doctoral program. In conclusion, I recognize that this dissertation would not have been possible without the on-going support of the Cultural Foundations Program.
The 21st century citizen will work in media-, text-, and symbol-saturated environments. For the unemployed, under-employed, and employed alike, a great deal of service and information-based work, consumption, and leisure depends on their capacities to construct, control and manipulate texts and symbols. It should not be surprising, then, that many of the new social conflicts are about representation and subjectivity. In terms of representation, they involve the production and consumption of texts, and the rights to name, to construe, to depict and describe. In terms of subjectivity, they involve how one is being named, positioned, desired and described and in which language, texts and terms of reference. …Fighting words indeed: texts and identities, work and cultures. (Luke, as cited in MacLure, 2003, p. 5)
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

We live, as one writer has neatly put it, in an ‘information gap’. Between what our body tells and what we have to know in order to function, there is a vacuum we must fill ourselves, and we fill it with information (or misinformation) provided by our culture. The boundary between what is innately controlled and what is culturally controlled in human behavior is an ill-defined and wavering one. Some things are, for all intents and purposes, entirely controlled intrinsically: We need no more cultural guidance to learn how to breathe than a fish needs to learn how to swim. Others are almost certainly largely cultural; we do not attempt to explain on a genetic basis why some men put their trust in centralized planning and others in the free market. (Geertz, 1973, p. 50)

Locating My Self in the Study

The introduction chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, I locate my self in the study because it is important in the discourse analysis to question one's own subjectivity and positioning. Here, I explore what discourses shaped my identity and sense-making of my experiences of being a student in an American university. I also put these discourses into an historical context. Later in the dissertation, I apply the same method to the participants’ sense-making of their experiences of being a teacher in the context of educational and, in the case of Russia, also of societal reforms. I constantly go back and forth between macro-analysis and micro-analysis, and vice versa. I try to
combine teachers’ personal accounts with critical interrogation of cultural assumptions. The second part of this chapter consists of “traditional” sections for a dissertation introduction. The text I created in this “informal” introduction, I hope, will give the potential reader a better understanding of what this study entails.

I first briefly describe the events that led to the development of my interest in the topic of my dissertation and then explain my reaction as well as that of American teaching fellows to these events. To make sense of my reaction to the events, I use the concept of **kollektiv**, as explained by Zinoviev (1984). To make sense of American teaching fellows’ reaction, I employ the concept of **huddling**, as described by Gannon (2001). I treat these concepts as discourses because they provide unwritten rules about how to organize groups, and how to behave oneself in these groups. In addition, these discourses have certain desirable and undesirable subject positions inscribed within them. Both American and Russian people, I claim, afford these subject positions to each other without being aware of the workings of these discourses on them.

**My Interest in the Topic of the Study**

The topic of the dissertation is rooted in my personal educational and teaching experiences in Russia and America and my interest in poststructuralist interpretations of power, discourse, culture, and identity. I was a teacher from 1979 until 1994 in Russia. I studied in the U.S. from 1994 to 1995, and then I returned to Russia. In 2000, I came back to the U.S. to continue my studies. The 1990s in Russia were a period of what now is known as **perestroika** (restructuring). I write more about perestroika later but
perestroika for me, personally, meant opportunities that had not been there before. Had it not been for perestroika I would never have been able to come to the States.

During my first stay in America, American students and professors alike were surprised to hear how standardized the Soviet curriculum and life were in the Soviet Union. Then, I took it for granted that curriculum should be standardized and did not even think about the level of standardization of life in the Soviet Union. I was positioned in a certain way to think about both education and life in my country, just as Americans were positioned to think in a certain way about their life and education in their country. I accepted this view and found it strange that Americans do not have a standardized curriculum. I also found it strange and uncomfortable that the classes I took did not give me a comprehensive overview of the topics under discussion; that American students and professors were too preoccupied with mundane and trivial (in my view) issues, not with grand theories, per se. I could not fathom that Americans in all honesty believed that they could “make a difference” by engaging in activities like organizing grass-root movements, supporting charities of their choice, selling Girl Scout cookies to raise money for whatever cause, or building a well in some God-forgotten place because people had no access to fresh water there. Coming from a culture in which everything was thought of on a world scale and cosmic proportions, I found the focus on the mundane unworthy of one’s attention, too pragmatic and uninspiring. I simply did not believe that individual actions would make any difference on a grand scale. To tell the truth, I thought it was the government’s job to take care of its citizens, and wells, too.
Building a well in some place because they had no access to fresh water would not even have entered my mind as the way of changing the world.

When I came back to the States in 2000, I was surprised to see the standardization movement gaining force in the education system of the United States. The course that I taught in America as a teaching fellow was increasingly becoming more standardized over the years, too. This was particularly apparent when comparing my first year of teaching to my second year of teaching the same course. The second year was very different due to direct and indirect attempts to standardize instruction in addition to standardizing the content. Everything became much more formalized and more structured. The new level of standardization brought new power dynamics to the foreground. I felt that the only position available for me within this new development was not to ask questions and only to go along with the flow. I thought that this kind of positioning was not what America was about.

The position was too familiar for me from my experience of teaching in Russia before perestroika. After perestroika there was a brief period when teachers experienced an incredible sense of freedom in education. People in power were busy privatizing strategic resources such as oil, energy, and industry and left education in limbo. Teachers were not paid for months; however, they suddenly had a feeling that they could make decisions concerning their work. This time did not last long but I liked the sense of freedom.

During the classes I took in the College of Education in the U.S., I was introduced to the discourses of transformative, constructivist pedagogies. I found positions available
for teachers within these discourses appealing and more diverse than the positions available within the discourse of standardization. I thought standardization to be very restrictive and I displayed my “dislike” openly. The way American teaching fellows dealt with the situation was different from the way I did. This could have been partly due to personal traits, but cultural differences played a role as well. From private conversations with the teaching fellows I knew that they were far from being pleased with the situation. But they were careful in “picking their battles.” This was another “hurdle,” another “hoop” for them to jump through on their way to getting their degrees. They perceived the situation as a temporary one, while I was not used to thinking in such terms. In the Soviet Union private and collective lives had often blurred and one’s job was a continuation of one’s life, not some temporary state. There were no clear-cut boundaries between private and collective concerns because, as a rule, we could spend our whole lives in one collective. There were some unwritten rules about expressing disagreement in these collectives which I unconsciously transplanted into an American setting. Americans demonstrated their cooperation at the meetings and expressed their disagreement in private conversations. I could not understand why we could not openly discuss the issues at the meetings.

As a foreign student, I looked at everything through my cultural lens: My beliefs and values, deeply embedded in my culture, colored all my experiences, power relations included. The discourses Americans and I were using for thinking and dealing with the situation were different. I was not a “happy camper.” The perception was that I was not being a cooperative team member. My idea of being cooperative and the American idea
of being cooperative were different. Gannon’s (2001) concept of huddling can be used for understanding why Americans behaved as they did. As far as it concerns my behavior and sense-making of the situation, the concept of kollektiv, as described by Kharkhordin (1999) and Zinoviev (1984), provides a plausible explanation.

**Discourses of Huddling and Kollektiv**

It was the standardization of life in all its aspects right down to the level of elementary cell and the formation of a standardized cell structure for all areas and organs of the society as a whole which form the essence of the historical process whereby contemporary Communist society came into being. In many other countries history seems to have taken a different course from the one it took in the case of the Soviet Union, yet essentially the result has been the same: the formation of a standard structure and the standardization of life in all the cells as a whole. (Zinoviev, 1984, p. 59)

**Huddling.** Getting together to solve problems is common all over the world, but how and for what purposes people organize into groups, and how they build relations in these groups are culture specific. Gannon (2001) claims that huddling is the primary way of forming groups in America. According to him, the origin of the concept of huddling can be traced back to the times of movement westward, when Americans often came across problems that could not be dealt with individually. They had to form temporary groups or teams in order to handle these problems. A high level of cooperation was expected from the members of the temporary groups for the period when they were trying to achieve a goal as a group. Groups formed and dissolved, as the necessity arose. No
deep attachments were formed. Even today “most, if not all, groups and organizations in America employ huddling to handle their problems and achieve their objectives” (Gannon, 2001, p. 219). People are expected to “commit themselves intensely to a group effort” while tackling a problem. The whole purpose of huddling is to focus on the problem and solve it professionally, following “a specific number of steps” (Gannon, 2001, p. 220). Being non-cooperative is frowned upon. Gannon asserts that one can describe an American’s life as a movement from one temporary group to another.

**Kollektiv.** According to Zinoviev (1984), in the Soviet Union, a unit called kollektiv constituted “the most unshakable foundations of that society” (p. 59). A person was never outside a kollektiv in the Soviet Union. His or her whole life could be described as a movement from one kollektiv to another. But the kollektiv was not a mobile unit as was a huddle in America. Specific relations were created among the members of the kollektiv and between members of the kollektiv and managers (Zinoviev, 1984). In these kollektivs, direct questioning of authorities was quite a common phenomenon, which might be seen as a paradox, given the Russian history of oppression of freedom of speech and thought. However, there is an historical explanation for that, too. According to Kharkhordin (1999), who applied Foucauldian methods to his research on the relations between the kollektiv and the individual in Russia, the practice of direct questioning of authorities can be traced back to the practice of public confession (versus private confession in the West) that was customary up to the 18th century in the Russian Orthodox Church. The practice of public confession (and with it direct questioning of authority in public) lost its significance in the 19th century. However, it never entirely
disappeared in Russia: One could always unearth it in some disguised form. Kharkhordin (1999) claims that communists used the practice of public confession for their own purposes. During the Stalinist purges they transformed it into relentless public self-criticism, and public denunciation of individuals’ sins, including those of leaders and managers. Later, the practice was refined in numerous Soviet kollektivs. In the kollektiv, the manager and the subordinates knew even “the most minute and intimate details of the lives” of each other (Kharkhordin, 1999, p. 325). They were united “by collective responsibility and a joint plan” and if the managers were abusing power, the members of the kollektiv could speak up in the kollektiv or “appeal to the higher echelons” (Kharkhordin, 1999, p. 327). The practice was sanctioned from above and it had deep historic roots grounded in church practices, as Kharkhordin convincingly showed, through the study of numerous Communist Party and Russian Orthodox Church documents. It was in the interest of “the higher echelons” not to let the multitude of managers become too powerful. To counterbalance the power of managers, some form of open disagreement was built into the relations in the kollektiv.

In retrospect, my life in the Soviet Union was also a movement from one kollektiv to another in which I underwent “a systematic apprenticeship for the role of communal individuals” (Zinoviev, 1984, p. 61). This apprenticeship, among many other things, introduced me to specific power relations. Direct confrontation of authority figures was a common thing in kollektivs. This does not mean that everybody chose to confront authority figures. The majority was silent but, as a rule, supported those who dared to speak up, if not openly, in their hearts, at least. I had never thought about how much
relations in the kollektiv influenced my thinking and acting. It was so much common sense to me. I think Americans do not think about how much the concept of huddling influences their relations in a group either. It must be common sense for them, too, to expect to be “a happy camper.”

In sum, American life is standardized, too. This standardization is centered on producing individuals who firmly believe that they are in charge and that a group can impose only temporary restrictions based on agreement. Soviet standardization was centered on producing individuals who firmly believed that the kollektiv could exert restrictions indefinitely and have a considerable role even in private lives of individuals.

A number of discourses (besides the discourses of huddling and kollektiv) created and maintained by a host of institutions in each of these cultures provide a self with certain patterns of ideas and practices for understanding of self and for building relations of self to self and of self to others. For an outsider, who is familiar with Russian history, it might seem that Russians are always submissive and unquestioning, and for an outsider, who is familiar with another American discursive construct of “rugged individualism,” it might seem that Americans are always challenging authorities and doing their “own thing.” However, these stereotypes should be subjected to scrutiny, like any other stereotypes. Not all Russians are submissive and unquestioning and not all Americans are always doing their “own thing.” Neither are entirely free of or totally dependent on group/kollektiv influence and group/kollektiv restrictions. Inscribed within these discourses are unwritten rules about proper relations between the members of
huddles and kollektivs which legitimate certain forms of disagreement or curb certain impulses of individuals. For outsiders, these rules are not immediately accessible.

In conclusion, anyone reading my account of events should bear in mind that what I wrote above about my experiences in an American university is only a representation of events as I understood them. Other actors involved in these events, if asked, might give a different account of their experiences and might make sense of them differently. They will not be able to give an account from my position, just as I was not able to give an account from their position. In each case, it is only a representation of representation, which is never finite. It is only a partial “truth” which presents my side of the story.

Today, I am on the borderline of different cultures trying to make sense of both. Different culturally distinct discourses exist for “describing, judging, and directing” (Rose, 1996, p. 296) one’s conduct in different situations and contexts within these cultures. I think that interrogating the discourses that drive teachers’ conduct in different cultures in the context of current educational changes might make cultural values and beliefs underlying teachers’ assumptions about their professional selves and power in education more salient. It is also my belief that it is important to be aware of the processes by which we are constructed as certain types of subjectivities in and through discourses in order not to be mere pawns in “the games of truth” (Ball, 1990, p. 15), and in order to be able to offer meaningful resistance to asymmetrical power relations that permeate all social situations. It is this thinking that provided the grounding for this study which evolved into something that I had not anticipated.
My initial research interest was in teachers’ perceptions of power in education in the context of educational reforms. I was going to examine what discourses shaped American and Russian teachers’ perceptions about power in education. When I was compiling the interview questions, I had a very vague idea where this research would lead me. It was not my intention to focus on the discursive construction of teacher identities. As I was not sure that I would generate enough data, I did not limit myself to asking questions only about power and educational reforms. I asked them to talk about what the goals of education were, why they chose the teaching profession, what makes a good teacher, a student, and so forth. (See Appendix D, which contains interview questions). While transcribing the interviews and comparing the transcriptions of American and Russian corpus data, I became aware that power representations could be viewed as an important part of teachers’ struggles to name and describe themselves in particular ways. So the study evolved to focus on discourses that shape teacher identities. In the following, I introduce the rationale for the study, research questions, and the purpose of the study.

**Focus and Rationale for the Study**

Policy makers all over the world consistently adopt educational policies that prioritize the conceptualization of a teacher in terms of competencies and accountability (Day, 2007; Korthagen, 2004; Moore, 2004). This conceptualization of a teacher modeled according to the ideals of corporate management (Day, 2007) is part of drastic change occurring in the modern mass systems of education which came into being as a result of what is known as the Industrial Revolution. According to Cummings (2003), six
distinct educational models, employing the same blueprint, emerged in six core nations—Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the USA, Russia, and Japan—in the aftermath of this Revolution. Though the blueprint for the models was the same (they all had some state support, provided basic education to large segments of the population, bureaucratized the educational personnel, and standardized educational materials) these six core nations developed significant differences in educational practices due to the cultural models on which they were based.

Change in modern mass systems of education is part of a global debate about whether many public services, such as health care, social security, and education should be a publicly provided social good or they should be dismantled as social programs and handed over to private institutions through social and economic restructuring. Hence, modern mass systems of education are being transformed according to a new blueprint which has privatization through restructuring, choice, deregulation, and decentralization at its core. Standardized testing (ST) seems to have become a major mechanism for justifying restructuring of educational systems across nations. A system of national standards and assessment has already been introduced in many countries. The recent educational mandates, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) in America and Unified State Exam of 2001 (USE) in Russia, are part of the global education transformation project.

It should be noted that transforming educational systems is not merely about changing the ways schools are run and funded. Education has always been intricately connected to the project of fashioning a certain type of Homo sapiens (e.g., the project of
forging a New Soviet Man in Soviet schools, or the ongoing project of Americanization in American public schools). Foucault (1977) asserted that examination was the main technology of power that played a crucial role in the creation of “the man of modern humanism” (p. 141). In line with Foucault’s thinking, it might be argued that examination in the form of standardized testing, from the time of industrialization up until present, continues to be the main technology of power that is used for the fashioning of a certain type of a “man” across the globe.

Though the blueprint for new education models is the same, trajectories of development might be as unpredictable and unique to particular cultures as they were after the Industrial Revolution (Cummings, 2003). In this dissertation, I was interested in American and Russian teachers’ responses to the educational reforms according to the new blueprint. More specifically, I examined how American and Russian teachers used language to “signify” their professional world and their professional selves amidst the power struggles to have a stake in defining the goals of education and their profession in the context of current educational reforms in general and the recent educational mandates, NCLB of 2001 in America and USE of 2001 in Russia, in particular. The purpose of the study was to detect shared patterns of thinking and beliefs which were assumed to be embedded in Discourse models structuring the order of things in different cultures. It should be noted, that whenever I refer to culture in this study I have national cultures in mind because it is at the national level that shared meaning is created for the nation-states which are far from being homogenous entities.
I employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework and methodology in this study. The benefit of CDA is in its potential of bringing power relations to the surface (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). There is no one way of doing CDA and researchers employ various theories for theoretical grounding of their studies. The theoretical framework for this study draws upon (a) Saussure’s, Bakhtin’s and Lacan’s theories on language; (b) Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism and self; (c) Foucault’s conceptualizations of discourse, power/knowledge, and self; and (d) Gee’s (2005) notion of discourse with the capital letter “D” which he calls cultural or Discourse models. I used Gee’s term, Discourse model, to denote the overarching theoretical framework which structures the order of things in particular cultures and which consists of a number of discourses generated in relation to it.

Discourse analysis is basically an interpretation of a text that is based on the close study of the use of grammar, vocabulary, and textual structure. As discourse analysts treat what is produced both in written and spoken speech as a text, I examined the participants’ talk as a text produced in interviews. In this study, I dealt only with “representation through lexis” and pronouns (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 73). I compared the use of pronouns “we” in “we, teachers,” “they” in “they, teachers,” and “I” in “I, as a teacher,” statements on the level of grammar and examined the use of cultural key words that made frequent appearance in teachers’ talk across the interviews on the level of vocabulary in these statements. In addition, I examined the subject positions teachers assigned themselves, and the binary oppositions they set up to make certain
moral claims about their teacher selves. I chose these features of analysis as my “thinking devices” (Gee, 2005, p. 115) for helping me answer my research questions.

In this study, I subscribed to a particular notion of identity as being constructed within and by culturally specific discourses at the societal, institutional, and local levels (Barker, 2003; Shi-xu, 2005; Wortham & Rymes, 2003). While there are many discourses that shape teacher identities in both of these cultures, my interest was only in the discourses that were generated in regards to cultural or Discourse models with their particular sets of vocabularies, binary oppositions, and subject positions.

The primary method of data collection in this study was in-depth semi-structured interviews of 11 American teachers a Midwestern state in the United States and 11 Russian teachers from a republic in the Mid-Volga region in Russia. Observations of teacher lessons were included in the study to see which of the discourses that used and were used by the teachers in their talk would manifest themselves in teachers’ actual behaviors, in the reality of classrooms. In addition, for the purpose of checking “analysis with a different group” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 79), three American and three Russian administrators, as well as three Russian teachers and three American Peace Corps volunteers, who had been exposed to both systems of education, were interviewed. The data were collected in the period from January 2005 through June 2005.

**Statement of the Problem**

The last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have witnessed an “increasingly comprehensive, uniform, centralized, and professionally directed” system of education in America (Peterson & Campbell, 2001, p. 2) which,
historically, had probably enjoyed more local control than any other system in the world.

The NCLB Act marks a new stage in the American education system. Its opponents argue that it has a much greater potential than any other educational mandate in the history of American education to place considerable limits on decision-making at the local levels (Kennedy, 2003; Spring, 2008).

On the other hand, Russia’s education system was uniform, centralized, and tightly controlled since its inception. During the first years after the demise of the Soviet Union, the educational field was substantially diversified, due to the loosening of state control. This period of relative freedom did not last long, however. In 2001, the Putin administration approved a document entitled the *Conception of the Modernization of Russian Education for the Period to 2010*, which delineated the major course of development in Russian education nationwide (Borisenkov, 2007). The conception is based on the international blueprint which has standardized testing, choice, decentralization, and deregulation as its components. The USE is a cornerstone in the reforms.

A teacher, as “an historical, political, and social actor” (Welmond, 2002, p. 37) is placed right in the midst of power struggles over the goals, content, and modes of delivery of contemporary education and ultimately over concepts of a new person, a new teacher, and a new society. A teacher, being one of the most important key actors in reforms, provides “a particularly rich location for the study” (Welmond, 2002, p. 38) of competing and contradictory discourses circulating in national cultures. In light of the
events taking place in the society and in education, the issue of teacher professional selves and power in education comes to the foreground.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to uncover the cultural beliefs and values that underlie American and Russian teachers’ representations of their professional identities and their understanding of power in education in the context of globally disseminated education reforms and current educational mandates —the NCLB mandate in America and the USE mandate in Russia—through examining discourses that manifested themselves in their talk.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in that it contributes to cross-cultural literature on teacher identity and understanding of power, and uncovers underlying cultural assumptions on the part of teachers regarding their identity and power in education. I also hope that it will encourage the potential reader to ask questions why particular discourses are of more importance in one culture as compared to the other, and will “open . . . up to further questioning . . . the naturalness or inevitability” (MacLure, 2003, p. 9) of teachers’ representations of their professional selves and their understanding of power, possibly to look for ways to contribute to the construction of alternative discourses, and thus challenge the existing unbalanced power relations within a society.

Research Questions

The central question that guided this study was: What cultural or Discourse models shape teachers’ ways of being and acting as particular types of teachers in their
talk about their everyday experiences of being a teacher, power in education, and the
recent educational mandates the NCLB in America and the USE in Russia? The
following additional questions were developed from the central one:

1. “What kind” of a teacher “doing what will emerge” (Gee, 2005, p. 23) from
teachers’ talk?

2. What subject positions do they assign themselves in relation to
   (a) different actors involved in education, (b) recent educational mandates, (c)
   power and authority?

3. What notions of power (“sovereign” or “disciplinary”) do they subscribe to?

4. What kinds of power do they consciously exercise in their classrooms and
   what kinds of power do they think prevail in education?

**Assumptions**

A number of assumptions relating to the concepts of culture, language, and
identity underlie this study. Both the assumptions and the definitions in this study are
based on what is known as “linguistic turn” in humanities and social sciences. One of the
basic assumptions is that the study of culture, ultimately, is the study of “the signifying
practices of representation” (Barker, 2003, p. 8), that is, the study of how “people use
language to signify the world” (Lehtonen, 2000, p. 44), to create a shared social meaning.

In order to claim that what teachers say can be attributed to shared patterns of
thinking embedded in cultural models, one has to assume that people living in a particular
country “interpret the world roughly in the same ways” (Hall, as cited in Barker, 2003, p. 3). As I mentioned in the introduction, whenever I referred to culture in this study, I had
national cultures in mind. According to Hofstede (1997), nations are the only entities that are able to provide a ground for creating a shared cultural meaning for numerous diverse groups. In agreement with Hofstede (1997), I assume that representations which are believed to be cultural are produced at a national level. In addition, I look at national school systems as having significant impact on national cultures (Inkeles, 1997); at schools as being “a crucial device for writing and rewriting national consciousness” (Bernstein, 2000, p. xxiii) and a site for reproduction of culturally specific power relations between authority and an individual and between the state and an individual; and at teachers as being intimately involved in the process of “writing and rewriting of national consciousness” (Bernstein, 2000, p. xxiii).

Other assumptions that underlie this study are that:

1. Language is central to understanding both culture and identity.
2. Individuals are the focal point at which all meanings are created.
3. Identities are “culturally specific discursive constructions” (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 29).
4. Discourses animate certain ways of thinking and talking about the world and selves; however, they are appropriated differently by different people within a given culture depending on the situation and context, or using Bernstein’s term, they are “recontextualized” (Bernstein, 2000).
5. The study of discourses that manifest themselves in people’s talk can reveal how people make sense of the world and construct their identity.
6. A person’s agency can find its expression only within discourses.
7. Issues of language, identity and power are central to any study that undertakes the task of examining what is cultural in people’s sense-making processes (Barker, 2003).

Definitions

In the following paragraphs I explain some of the key terms used in this study.

Culture. Following discourse analysts, I define culture as distinct ways of capturing meanings and representing the world amidst power struggles to name and describe the world in a certain mode through language use as a social practice.

Cultural keywords. Riggoti & Rocci, (2005) define cultural keywords as “words that are particularly revealing of a value of a culture and can give access to inner workings of a culture as a whole, to its fundamental beliefs, values, institutions, and customs” (Riggoti & Rocci, 2005, pp. 125-126). Members of particular cultures are emotionally and cognitively attached to cultural keywords. The internal meanings ascribed to these words are not the meanings that can be found in dictionaries. Rather they are shrouded in history, culture, and politics and are not immediately accessible to outsiders. They are part and parcel of cultural or Discourse models.

Discourse. Discourse is defined as regulated ways of speaking, knowing, thinking, and acting which “constitute, position, make productive, regulate, moralize, and govern the citizen” (Doherty, 2007, p. 194). Discourse is understood as both as an abstract and a concrete concept.

Discursive practice. Discursive practice is “a social practice that shapes the social world” (Jørgenson, & Phillips, 2002, p. 18).
**Cultural or Discourse models.** The term cultural or Discourse models introduced by Gee (2005) means “a totally or partially unconscious explanatory theory or ‘storyline’ connected to a word or concept . . . that helps to explain” why the word has this particular culturally “situated” meaning (p. 61). I used his term, Discourse model to denote the overarching theoretical framework or cultural master narrative which (a) structures the order of things in particular cultures, (b) consists of a number of discourses generated in relation to it, (c) helps to explain particular meanings attached to words in particular cultures, and (d) contains an archetypal ideal of a “man” inscribed within it.

*Text* is any kind of symbolic representation, not only written and spoken speech. “Texts could be thought of as establishing, embodying, symbolizing or expressing . . . discourses” (Doherty, 2007, p. 194).

*Language.* Language is defined as a “medium for the formation of meanings and knowledge.” It is constitutive of the world it represents (Barker, 2003, p. 8). Hence, the focus is on the language use as a social practice.

*Teacher identity, self, and subjectivity.* The terms teacher identity, self, and subjectivity are used interchangeably and mean the core beliefs that teachers have about the ways of being and acting as a certain type of a teacher in a certain time, in a certain context and in a certain place, and that are informed by the available discourses within particular cultures.

*Subject positions.* Subject positions is a term created by discourse analysts to replace “traditional concepts such as role” with the purpose of stressing “selves as multiple and shifting” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p.100). “A subject position is a possibility
in known form of talk; position is what is created in and through talk as the speakers and hearers take themselves up as persons” (Davies & Harre, as cited in Wood & Kroger, 2000, p.100). Speakers can “adopt, resist and offer ‘subject positions’ that are made available in master narratives or discourses” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 140).

**Binary Opposition.** The binary opposition is the “means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined against what it is not” (Fogarty, 2005).

**Summary**

This study sought to identify cultural or Discourse models that shaped American and Russian teachers’ identities through examining their talk which was treated as text. The items of analysis were the use of pronouns, cultural key words, subject positions, and binary oppositions. It is my hope as a researcher that the study will encourage potential readers to examine the discourses that shape their identities and their understanding of reality, and find ways to contribute to the construction of alternative discourses.

Chapter II situates the study within the broader socio-political context by describing the assumptions underlying the new blueprint for a global education transformation project and the rationale for restructuring of public schools in America and Russia. It also provides background information on the history of standardized testing in America and Russia and a brief overview of societal change in Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Next, chapter II presents a review of studies on (a) teacher professional identity within the context of current educational reforms, (b) discursive
construction of teacher professional identity and the notion of the good teacher, and (c) power and authority in educational research.

Chapter III explains the methodology for the study. It starts with an overview of approaches to discourse analysis. Next, it details the theoretical framework employed for this study and explains some of the concepts used in the dissertation. Finally, it describes the design, procedures used in the collection, and analysis of data.

Chapters IV and V present the Russian and American data respectively, in conjunction with analysis, interpretation and discussions.

Chapter VI consists of comparisons, discussions, and summary of the Russian and American findings and implications for future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To situate the study within the broader socio-political context, I start the literature review with a brief overview of the basic premises behind global changes in education. Next, I describe how America and Russia responded to these changes. Finally, I review literature on teacher identity in the context of educational reforms, discursive construction of teacher identity, and power in education.

Globalization and Change in Education

The driving force behind the global processes is the free-market ideology. The dominant discourse justifying globalization is that public services as a commodity should be more cost-effective, more competitive, more responsive to local needs, less regulated, and less wasteful. Government is blamed “for a myriad of social ills” while privatization is seen “as a panacea for problems involving the production, distribution, and consumption of society” (Weil, 2002, p. 4). In tune with the spirit of free market ideology, the architects of modern restructuring of public schools through privatization argue that public education, being a monopoly, wastes resources, produces poor quality education, and is not held accountable in any way, and that increased competition will help get rid of poor schools without increasing public spending on education (Daun, 2002). Educational systems are blamed for “poorly meeting the needs of national economies, for being inadequate in equipping students with basic skills, and for providing a poor return on the money spent upon education” (Moutsios, 2000, p. 46). Terms such as “school effectiveness, accountability, efficiency, excellence, and value-added
education” have become an inseparable part of public discourse on education (Moutsios, 2000, p. 46).

The new blueprint is being introduced into the education systems of many countries through coordinated efforts of international organizations such as Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OCED) and the World Bank (Spring, 1998). According to Heyneman (2003), the World Bank with about three billion dollars in annual loans has grown into the world’s single largest source of financing of international education. In order to get loans, the recipient countries have to make a commitment for restructuring their education systems. The World Bank influences education policies in more than 100 countries in six regions by requiring the recipient countries to adopt neo-liberal ideas about the role of the state. Hence, modern mass systems of education all over the world are being changed according to a new blueprint at the heart of which is the discourse of privatization through restructuring, choice, deregulation, and decentralization.

The new blueprint might have far-reaching consequences as it might initiate social change. According to Fairclough (2007), “social change includes change in social structures, social practices, and social events” (p. 50). Privatization is aimed at dismantling the public system of education; hence, it means structural change. Standardized testing narrows the ways of delivery of instruction, certain ways of being and acting as teachers and students; hence, it means change in practices. Change is “discourse-led” (Fairclough, 2007, p. 51). It is introduced through new discourses which delineate which activities and what power relationships different actors in education
should be engaged in, what identities they should adopt, and how time and space should be used. According to neo-liberal theorizations, change in education can be “materialized,” through “constructions of space as a 'shopping mall’” (Fairclough, 2007, p. 51), both on the local and global levels. The idea is that consumers of education will be able to shop for better education as defined by standards. Hence, examination in the form of standardized testing is crucial in construction of educational space as “a shopping mall.” The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century witnessed a steady increase in the role of examination in the form of standardized testing.

Standardized testing (ST), which is used as justification for privatization of public schools, seems to play strategic significance in the new blueprint for education models all over the world. Moreover, there is a movement to subject teachers to standardized testing, too. Most U.S. states now require public school teachers to pass a standardized test such as the National Teacher Examination. The American Board for Certification and Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) is competing with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards for the right “to certify new teachers, primarily through a teacher testing approach” (Shaker & Heilman, 2004, p. 1456). ABCTE is supported by the U.S. Department of Education which “during lean budgetary times” found “$35 million in late 2003” for the ABCTE initiative (Shaker & Heilman, 2004, p. 1456).

Similarly, Russian teachers have to take standardized tests in the subject they teach, pedagogy, methods of teaching, and psychology in order to get a slight increase in their salaries. For that, every five years, they have to attend a few days of training in State Institutes for Raising of Teachers’ Qualifications and then take standardized tests.
National Responses to Global Changes in Education

In this section, I briefly introduce how America and Russia responded to global changes in education. To begin with, the “local root” for the new blueprint for education model can be found in the United States. The U.S. is seen as the chief architect of the new globally disseminated model of education. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1999) defined globalization as

the process by which a given local condition or entity succeeds in extending its reach over the globe and, by doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social condition or entity as local. . . . in the conditions of the Western capitalist world system there is no genuine globalization. What we call globalization is always the successful globalization of a given localism. In other words, there is no global condition for which we cannot find a local root, a specific cultural embeddedness. (de Sousa Santos, 1999, p. 216)

The basic elements of the new blueprint have been an integral part of an American education system for some time already. Standardized testing has been around since it was first introduced in urban schools in the 1850s (Cummings, 2003); the idea of a voucher system has been gathering momentum since 1955 (Weil, 2002); and the ideology of “servicing the labor market” and privatization as a means of addressing many public educational problems has been gaining strength since the 1980s in the U.K. and U.S. (Lawton, 1994). The rationale for change is that there is an urgent need for reforms because the American public school is doing a poor job of preparing America for competition in the global economy.
Current calls for reforms in education in America are driven by public discontent that is deeply embedded in economic, political, fiscal, and social pressures of modern times, as well as in “the deep structure of American life” (Cookson & Berger, 2002, p. 115). “When the future looks fearsome there is a tendency to look nostalgically to the past” (Lawton, 1994, p. 44). This past for Americans is associated with the times when the state regulation in all spheres of public life was kept at a minimum. There is a strong desire to revive those times. A strong “anti-government sentiment” has penetrated into the debates over educational issues, too. Government is seen as “part of the problem—not part of the solution” (Cookson & Berger, 2002, p. 115). As a result of this growing popular perception of government, school choice through privatization is seen by many as the means of diminishing state control and salvaging the educational system.

**A Brief Overview of Standardized Testing and the NCLB Act in the U.S.**

[In a way] there is something of the mystic in the typical American, with his belief in answers, [especially as deriving from] education. [It is for this reason that he insists on] exactness, and on making evaluations in finite terms, with definite figures. . . . expression must be quantitative. There is a pretence of extreme objectivity, of objective control of situations which cannot be [tangibly measured]. To make of society a machine, understand it, and then control it—this is the American idea. (Sapir, 1994, p. 33)

The scientific study of human behavior first started in Europe with the works of Francis Galton in England, Alfred Binet in France, and Wilhelm Wundt in Germany. They developed statistical methods for measuring mental and psychological performance.
Underlying their work was the premise that intelligence could be or should be tested (Schubert, 1986). James McKeen Cattell, the founder of American psychology, brought the idea of intelligence testing to America. Then, another American psychologist, Lewis Terman, coined the term intelligence quotient (IQ) for Binet’s test scoring system. IQ testing was first used in the U.S. Army during the First World War to sort draftees into different Army positions. After the war, U.S. companies used the test for hiring and promoting employees. IQ testing found its widest application in the schools where now it was used for ranking and sorting children along class and racial lines. Mandatory standardized testing found its way to schools soon after the adoption of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) by colleges for admission purposes in the 1920s. By the late 1960s, standardized testing had been introduced in most states (Kennedy, 2003).

American schools’ reliance on testing has continued to gain prominence in U.S. education despite severe criticisms from the opponents of high-stakes testing. Ever since the report, A Nation at Risk, was published, student achievement testing has become even more important: It was mandated in almost every state after this report. The peak of testing mania was reached, however, with the NCLB Act which made testing the cornerstone of American education in the new millennium. It required annual testing in reading and mathematics beginning with the 2005-2006 academic year and in science beginning with the 2007-2008 academic year in the state-developed standards. In addition, “a sample of 4th and 8th graders in each state must also participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress testing program in reading and math every other year to provide points of comparison for state test results” (“No child left behind,”
The mandate has an ambitious goal of bringing all student to the “‘proficient’ level on state tests by the 2013-2014 school year” (“No child left behind,” 2004, Academic progress section).

Tests have been criticized for not reflecting local curricular and providing “little information about the skills and abilities students actually had”; for leading “to questionable educational practices” (Kennedy, 2003, p. 5); for being used for ranking and sorting children; for measuring superficial thinking; for being biased (Cummings, 2003; Kohn, 2000); and for standardizing minds (Spring, 2005). However, these criticisms did not lead to the elimination of testing but merely to the emergence of different kinds of testing programs, such as criterion-referenced, minimum competency, and those reflecting the complexity of thinking. No other country has as many tests as the United States and no other country has the same level of computerization of the process of testing, analysis, and storage of test results as America does (Cummings, 2003).

The latest trend in standardized testing is referred to as the standards movement. The essence of the movement is

that not only should tests be more consistent with the ways in which people think and learn, but the content of the test and the criterion for performance should both reflect the highest standards with respect to national and international norms. (Kennedy, 2003, p. 6)

This movement finds its utmost expression in the NCLB Act. Critics argue that “a clear motive of these changes is for the private sector to have access to the $732 billion of annual education spending”; that education has for the first time in its history
become “central to the lobbying efforts of corporate interests” (Shaker & Heilman, 2004, p. 1446); and that standardized testing has nothing to do with providing equal access to quality education. The proponents argue that charges against ST are not well-founded, that tests meet resistance mainly within the education profession because they make educators look bad, and that the general public overwhelmingly supports it (Cizek, 2005).

President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law in January 2002. The professed purpose of the Act was to close the achievement gap existing among students from different backgrounds and at the same time raise achievement across the nation. The Act has ambitious goals of fostering broad changes in the American system of education by pushing three main agendas (a) school vouchers, (b) mandatory testing, and (c) allocation of funds based on the results of mandatory testing. There are a number of other important provisions in this Act but they are auxiliary to these primary ones (Dotterweich & McNeil, 2003).

The origins of the Act can be traced back to the publication of a well-known report, *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983. The general tone of this report was that American public schools were doing a poor job of preparing America for competition in the global economy and that there was an urgent need for reforms. Though critics of this report argued that the picture of “public schools as failure factories” presented by the Reagan administration was far from being true, that the test results were distorted, and that media contributed to creating “a legend of national educational apocalypse,” the idea that public schools were in a state of crisis was planted in the minds of the American public (Weil, 2002, p. 54).
A Nation at Risk was followed by America 2000, Goals 2000, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, documents commissioned by Presidents George Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, respectively. In the spirit of A Nation at Risk, they all emphasize measurable standards, accountability, school choice, and competition. The NCLB Act marks a new stage in educational reforms. Its effect on every aspect of education is unprecedented in the history of American education: teacher training, testing, curriculum, and a school’s very existence is determined by this Act. Probably, in no other country local communities have had such a degree of local control over education due to the unique funding system of American public education. This Act, its opponents fear, is going to considerably diminish the control of local communities over the education of their children (Kennedy, 2003; Spring, 2008).

Two important provisions in the NCLB Act threaten the very existence of the school. One is that parents have the choice of using federal money in the form of vouchers for sending their child to a better performing public school or a charter school if the school their child is attending fails to make adequate yearly progress (AYP). The other is that the school can be totally restructured based on the performance results.

There is much argument for and against the NCLB. Opponents argue that all of the above mentioned components affect the teachers’ job but standardized testing has the worst impact due to the sanctions attached to the results of the tests. They believe that behind the rhetoric about the decreasing achievement gap is the desire to tighten control on students, teaching, curricula, and knowledge production in general, that the language of control is becoming the language of educational reform. Concern expressed by
educators in relation “to a comprehensive testing program” is how it will be used because among the characteristics measured by tests are not only knowledge and skills, but “student personality profile, teacher aptitudes, school climate, and management styles” (Cummings, 2003, p. 202).

**Reforms in Russia**

Of the six core countries Russia was the last to introduce the modern mass system of education and it is also the last of the six core countries to join the recent education transformation project. The Russian education system was built within a short period of time after an enormous social upheaval, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (Cummings, 2003). Change in education in present-day Russia is taking place after another social upheaval which is known as perestroika or reconstructing. Perestroika, which was started at the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1986, literally changed the course of the country overnight. As before, Russia is trying to implement everything within a short period of time.

The Russian educational system was fairly well-developed. The problem was that it was “tailored to the needs of a centrally planned economy” and “had limited abilities to respond to the changing economic structures of a market economy” (Chowdhury & Verbina, 2003, para. 4). So the rationale for change in Russia is that its education system needs to be adapted to a market economy. However, the past for Russians is associated with the state regulation in all spheres of public life and despite their deep suspicion and mistrust of the government they see a strong state as the necessary condition for salvaging the education system, contrary to Americans’ beliefs. After decades of
socialism, people take it for granted that it is the state’s obligation to provide free education and other social services.

**The radical stage of reforms.** Karpov and Lisovskaya (2005) contend that perestroika can rightfully be called a social revolution because it brought “cataclysmic social change” (p. 24). In their view, like all revolutions, it had two stages of development: radical and conservative. The first, radical stage, they believed, can be described as the retreat of the state from all spheres of life.\(^1\) However, the retreat of the state happened at a neck-breaking speed and on such a massive scale that it resulted in “the looting of state resources and unprecedented corruption” (Karpov & Lisovskaya, 2005, p. 38). During the radical stage, while the Soviet Party *nomenklatura*\(^2\) was busy privatizing whatever could be privatized, health care, education, and all social services were at the brink of total collapse. These years “left teachers feeling *stranded* rather than *liberated*” (italics in original, Eklof & Seregny, 2005, p. 200). But, on the positive side, this was also the time of unprecedented freedom in education when, in the absence of ideological control and “a clear and consistent legal framework,” schools could be creative in their approach to instruction, choice of textbooks, and curricula (Karpov & Lisovskaya, 2005, p. 40). The time was “distinguished for its euphoria of reform, a feeling of complete renewal and freedom” when the unified educational space began rapidly to be diversified (Borisenkov, 2007, p. 9). Individuals with vision and initiative

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\(^1\) During the first years after perestroika, according to one of its leading architects Yakovlev

\(^2\) “the most important posts in the Party and government” (Holmes, Read, & Voskresenskaya, 1995, p. 24), or “appointment list controlled directly or indirectly by Party” (Churchward, 1973, p. xii).
were allowed to have the so-called ‘authorial’ schools (avtorskie shkoly). But freedom came at a price that not all schools could afford. The so-called specialized schools, which had been schools for the Soviet elite, were “more likely to become a gymnasium” that could attract alternative funding through their old and new connections and thus had a better chance for survival. The rest of the schools were left to sink or to swim (Karpov & Lisovskaya, 2005).³

**The conservative stage of reforms.** Freedom or, in some people’s perception, chaos and national degradation, came to an end when Putin was elected President in 2000. His ascendance to power marked the transition of revolution into its conservative stage in which the state saw its task as regaining all controlling functions lost to perestroika. The concern was no longer about liberating the society from the state supremacy, as had been proclaimed during the radical stage. In an interview given to the Internet editions *Gazeta Ru*, on March 6th, 2001, Putin expressed views that were shared by many people in Russia concerning the Soviet system of education: that it was a good system overall and some of its features were worth preserving (Karpov & Lisovskaya, 2005). One of the features worth preserving, in his opinion, was the state control over education with the purpose of fully integrating it “into the world educational space” and ensuring economic development of the country (Borisenkov, 2007, p. 21). A number of

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³ In this study, one of the schools is a gymnasium, the other is an “ordinary” school. Gymnasium is a kind of a magnet school which offers more selective courses and attracts students from different parts of the town. The gymnasium being a ‘prestigious’ school can generate alternative funding.
documents on education adopted from 2000 to 2002 attest to the fact that “education has become a priority of state policy”4 (Borisenkov, 2007, p. 15).

Borisenkov’s (2007) analysis of educational reforms in Russia from 1985 until 2005 reveals that the state fully embraced the model of restructuring Russian education according to the current globally disseminated blueprint of education, in which the USE is seen as “one of the most important directions of the reform” (p. 18). He believes that the state should not fully fund education as was the case in the Soviet Union. Instead, he contends, it should find ways “to create a manageable market and to shape a culture of market relations in education” (Borisenkov, 2007, p. 29).

Unified State Exam in Russia. The Unified State Test or Exam (UST or USE) is part of a long-term educational reform plan. It was signed on February 16, 2001 (The Chronicle, 2002). The Soviet system of education was known for standardized curriculum that ironically never had standardized testing. The Soviet Union ensured quality and standards “not by measuring learning outcomes but by strictly controlling the system’s inputs… and by establishing a culture of maximum commitment and effort both among pupils and teachers” (Alexander, 2001, p. 69). So standardized testing is a completely new phenomenon in the Russian education system. High school graduates’

admissions to higher education institutions prior to the USE were based on the grade point average of all the grades earned in school as well as written and oral university entry exams. According to Filippov, the Russian Education Minister, the aim of the USE was “to make higher education more accessible and to alleviate some of the stress of the current system, based on individual exams, both written and oral,” “to raise the status of teachers,” and to fight corruption in the admissions process (Yablokova, 2001, para.11). In addition, the Russian Education Minister was concerned that there were not enough jobs for university graduates. He wanted to limit the number of school graduates going to universities from 80% to 50% (Baker, 2004). How he was going to make universities more accessible by limiting the number of students going to universities so drastically is not clear.

The concepts of restructuring, vouchers, choice, decentralization, and standardized testing entered educational discourse in Russia in 2001, when the World Bank gave Russia a $50 million loan for reforming its system of education. The Education Reform Project started with “a set of reforms in three regions (Samara, Yaroslavl, and Chuvash Republic) with the goal of replicating successful experiences across the country at a later stage” (World Bank, 2001, para. 1). Mary Canning, leader of the Bank team working on the project, stated that among the professed goals is developing “a national system of measuring student outcomes” (italics in original, Canning, as cited in World Bank, 2001, para. 2). In 2005, 78 of Russia’s 89 regions took part in the project (Ivanova-Gladilshikova, 2005). In Russia, the proponents for the exam see it as the means “to tackle deeply entrenched corruption in higher-education
admissions,” as President Putin put it, and give an equal chance for students from remote areas to be admitted to prestigious universities (“Putin backs,” 2004, para. 2). At the time “the black market in bribes and cash payments made to lecturers from prospective students [was] estimated to be worth as much as U.S. $1.8 billion a year” (“Putin backs,” 2004, para. 3).

The final decision about the introduction of a Unified State Exam across Russia was made in 2009. It was supposed to be introduced nationally in 2006 but, because of the growing concern among well-known scientists, academicians, and teachers, it was still at the stage of an experiment (Ivanova-Gladilshikova, 2005). The polls conducted in 2005 showed that, while more people became aware of the exam, the number of people who supported the test remained “steady” and the number of people who opposed it had increased “from 20% to 29%.” The opposition was strongest among the respondents with higher education and higher income, and residents of Moscow and “other megalopolises,” because “the USE was mainly introduced for rural pupils.” Moreover, more respondents felt that the exam did not “objectively evaluate students’ knowledge” (Bovin, 2005, para. 2).

Research on Teacher Identity

Teacher Identity in the Context of Reforms

Though teacher professional identity has become an area of particular research interest only lately (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004), it has been the subject of numerous studies (Day, 2007). Studies have focused either on teacher professional
identity formation, characteristics of teacher professional identity, or teacher professional identity as represented by teacher stories (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Current “globally inspired” (Welmond, 2002, p. 38) educational policies have turned education researchers’ interest to teacher identity formation in the context of educational reforms. The findings of these studies, conducted in different countries in a variety of cultural, social, and historical contexts, revealed one commonality: Teachers’ pre-existing identities are often in conflict with teacher identities inscribed in current educational reforms. All these studies link effective change and policy implementation to acknowledging these pre-existing identities. Some of the studies claim that identities inscribed within the educational reforms run counter to culturally informed beliefs about what it means to be a teacher. For example, George, Mohammed, and Quamina-Aiyejina (2003), in their study of teacher identity in Trinidad and Tobago, found that there was incongruence between “existing teacher identity and those envisioned for the reformed system” (p. 191). Robinson and McMillan (2006), in their study of teacher educators’ identity in South Africa, came to the conclusion that “existing strands of identity” have to blend with the new ones in order for any innovation to take place “within a changing policy environment” (p. 327). Sloan (2006), in her study of three elementary teachers’ identities in Texas, in the USA, demonstrated that these teachers responded to test-driven curriculum and to “test-based systems of accountability” in unique, individual ways not only because of their identities but also because of “site-specific factors” (p. 146).

Welmond (2002), in his study of teacher identity in the Republic of Benin, found that teacher identity envisioned within “globally inspired” education policies was in stark
contrast with the teacher identity envisioned by teachers themselves (p. 38). He claims that teachers’ understanding of their professional identity is contingent upon culturally specific, historically grounded conflicting perspectives of teacher identity. His findings suggest that within these perspectives, the rights and responsibilities of teachers, their roles, and their notions of success and effectiveness are defined differently than in current education policies. These perspectives, he contends, are drawn upon what he called, “cultural schemata” which informs teacher understanding of their professional selves. Like Robinson and McMillan (2006), he links effective change and policy implementation to acknowledging these previously existing identities.

Similarly, Day (2007) drawing upon a literature review on professionalism and teacher identity in the context of school reforms, came to the same conclusion that current reforms undermine teachers’ beliefs and values about what it means to be a teacher; and that “the ways and extent to which reforms are received, adopted, adapted, and sustained or not sustained will be influenced by the extent to which they challenge existing identities” (p. 603). In addition, he states that increased government challenge of teacher professionalism through the current system of measuring achievement results in the loss of teacher autonomy and sense of agency.

In the case of Russia, while there has been no shortage of publications on Russian system of education and its possible trajectories of development after the break-up of the Soviet Union by both Russian and Western authors, little attention has been paid to how teachers (re)construct and negotiate their teacher selves in the process of making sense of change in education instigated by the drastic transformations in the society at large.
Extensive literature search did not produce substantive results on the topic of teacher professional identity in the context of current societal and educational reforms in Russia. I was able to locate only two comparative studies pertaining to the topic. One of these studies (Alapuro & Lonkila, 2000) compared Russian and Finnish teachers’ personal networks as the site for teacher professional identity construction and the other (Schweisfurth, 2002) focused on Russian and South African teachers’ experiences of educational reforms in post-communist Russia and post-apartheid South Africa. Alapuro and Lonkila (2000) argue that at the core of Russian and Finnish identity formation are two distinct culturally and historically grounded ways of organizing their personal networks: “community orientation anchored to workplace,” in the case of Russian teachers, and membership in professional associations and unions, in the case of Finnish teachers. Russian teachers’ community orientation, in these authors’ opinion, can serve as a plausible explanation for Russian teachers’ relatively weak sense of professional identity and their inability to wage “a professional interest struggle,” as is the case in Western democracies (Alapuro & Lonkila, 2000, p. 87).

Schweisfurth (2002) contends that long-held cultural beliefs that informed Russian and South African teachers thinking about the nature of teaching, relations between the main actors in education, goals of education, and so forth, are sometimes in direct contradiction with the beliefs underlying the reforms. He argues that in the case of these two countries, the tensions imposed by educational “competing imperatives” (Schweisfurth, 2002, p. 63) are compounded by the collapse of the old regimes which
forces teachers to “come to terms with a complete change in identity-shaping values” (Schweisfurth, 2002, p. 77).

**Discursive Construction of Teacher Identity**

Linguistic turn in humanities and social sciences ushered in not only a particular conceptualization of culture as working like language but also a particular notion of the identity as being constructed within and by culturally specific discourses at the societal, institutional, and local levels (Barker, 2003; Shi-xu, 2005; Wortham & Rymes, 2003). Lately, the notion of discursive construction of teacher professional identity has caught educational researchers’ attention. The following three studies I reviewed reflect this interest in teacher identity and the notion of the good teacher as being constructed in and through discourses. The researchers argue that the notion of the good teacher is at the heart both of teacher beliefs and values about their teacher selves and educational policies.

Alsup (2006), in her two and a half year study of six education pre-service teachers, investigated discourses that shaped their professional identity development in teacher education programs and how these discourses manifested themselves in actual classrooms. She contends that two cultural models of a teacher—either a hero or a villain—propagated in the Hollywood film industry or mass media are rooted in the history of American education and continue to provide this powerful binary opposition for perpetuating contradictory ideologies surrounding education. She argues that professional identity development takes place at the intersection of conflicting discourses and that how successful this development is depends on the integration of personal and
professional identities. She suggests the notion of a borderland discourse as a site for both critical exploration of existing discourses and creation of alternative discourses for effective teaching.

Cary (2006) investigated how social and educational discourses of *The Professional Development School Model* and *The Charter School Movement* frame the notion of the good teacher. She came to the conclusion that what constituted good teaching meant “a rejection of the historically feminized knowing in teaching and a celebration of a masculine scientific model” (Cary, 2006, p. 57). Drawing upon Labaree (1992) and Popkewitz and Simola (1996), Cary (2006) argues that the notion of the good teacher is constructed through discourses that define professional knowledge in terms of “masculinized scientific constructions” which require standardized “professional technical proficiency” (p. 67).

Moore (2004) examined discourses that shaped perspectives of British practicing and student teachers on teaching and teacher professional identities and the notion of the good teacher in his 12-year-long research projects: the *Autobiography Project*, the *Professional Identities Project*, and the *Reflective Practice Project*. He identified three discourses within and by which the notions of the good teacher and good teaching are constructed:

1. The discourse of *competent craftsmen* within which a teacher is conceptualized as someone who, through the efficient use of a set of skills and practices, teaches students certain *competences* identified by benchmarks and measurable standards.
2. The discourse of a reflective practitioner which defines good teaching as an enterprise involving “a highly complex set of activities and interrelations” that cannot be reduced to “discrete and finite lists of skills and practices” (Moore, 2004, p. 5). Hence, teachers should be engaged in “reflective practice,” that is, they should constantly reflect on what they do in the classroom and evaluate their practices (Moore, 2004, p. 5).

3. The discourse of charismatic and caring subjects which does not have the same status as the other two “official” discourses (Moore, 2004, p. 4). It is unofficial in the sense that it does not inform educational policies and is not seen as valid in books for teacher education. Its plane of existence is in popular beliefs about a teacher as being born, or self-made against all odds. These teachers would be good irrespective of the lack of professional education and training because they possess “the ‘right stuff’—the capacity to command enthusiasm, respect and even love through the sheer force of their classroom presence” (Moore, 2004, p. 5).

The combination of the “right stuff” and of a “deeply ‘caring’ orientation aimed very specifically at ‘making a difference in pupils’ lives’ cannot be something that is acquired by any number of years of education and training (Moore, 2004, p. 5). This notion of the charismatic teacher is constantly being reinforced and perpetuated through the film industry and other means of representation of good teaching. Teachers as self-made professionals discourse makes the other two discourses less of a value. Moore contends that all three discourses can weaken or undermine each other.
Power and Authority in Educational Research

Specialists in different fields of study “stress the centrality of power to any explanation of the human experience” (Barraclough & Stewart, 1992, p. 2). The problem of relation of self to authority and power has been of concern to philosophers, political scientists, psychologists, writers, and lay people alike throughout history. Sociologists believe that power is inherent in all social interaction. The ways societies address this problem impact “the functioning of societies, the groups within those societies, and of individuals within those groups” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 13).

According to Green (1998), there is a direct link between language and the recreation of “the very notion of authority itself” in “the figure of the Teacher.” In the classroom, we see clearly defined power relations that not only represent “a microcosm of social relations” but also serve as “a model for such relations” (p. 177). In this model, traditionally, the role assigned to the teacher is that of the speaker, and the role of the student is that of the listener, and when he or she writes it is that of a writer writing in silence. There should be made “an important connection . . . between the teacher’s ‘voice’ and social power and between the speaking and authority” (Green 1998, p. 177). In his opinion, this traditional disproportional voice distribution in the classroom reflects disproportional voice distribution in social settings: The teacher is entrusted with the task of introducing the students “into socially authorized relations of knowledge and power, and differential access to the universe of discourse” (Green, 1998, p. 177). The figure of the teacher becomes “an image of cultural authority,” a “representative of the organic
integrity of the state and, importantly and increasingly, of the nation . . . by way of a displaced identification” (Green, 1998, p. 183).

The nature, origins of teacher power, and uses of power by teachers have been matters of interest for researchers for a long time and numerous studies have been conducted on teacher authority, teacher/student relations, classroom management, and teacher/student communication. Richmond and McCroskey (1992) reviewed seminal studies on power and communication in the classrooms and came to the conclusion that these studies are based on the premise that (a) “the role of a teacher, almost by definition, involves a social influence”; (b) the use of power is built into the job of a teacher; (c) a teacher must have considerable amount of power to create the environment conducive to learning; and (d) “for teacher power to exist, it must be granted by the students” (Richmond & Roach, 1992, p. 58). The studies they reviewed showed that sources of teacher power are in effective classroom management, in being able to motivate the students, in personal charisma, in the knowledge of subject matter, and in the organization of classroom work (Staton, 1992).

Literature search produced only one study that dealt with teacher perceptions of power and control in their professional lives per se. Ingersoll (2003) conducted a field study of three schools in the U.S. involving in-depth interviews with teachers, observations of life in school cafeterias, halls, meetings, and classrooms; and examining school documents, faculty manuals, and policy handbooks with the purpose of finding an answer to the question, “Who controls schools?” His major findings were that (a) if teachers have any power and control over their jobs, it is “control over marginal and
nonessential issues” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 75); (b) principals are in control of key resources and key policies, hence, they exert considerable influence over teachers’ job inside the school; and (c) a teacher is delimited in decisions surrounding students’ behavior in the classroom, curriculum, and mode of instruction by standards that “largely had been established by others” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 97).

In sum, studies I reviewed demonstrated that teacher identity was constructed either within and by “cultural schemata” (Welmond, 2002), or discourses (Alsup, 2006; Cary, 2006; Moore, 2004). Research studies which focused on teacher identity within the context of the current global education transformation project revealed that (a) teacher pre-existing identities informed by “cultural schemata” or discourses were threatened by new discourses generated in relation to the new blueprint of education, and (b) these new discourses opened up “a new terrain for articulation and interaction of identities” (Smith, 2002, p. 117).

The studies that looked at the discursive construction of teacher professional identities and the notion of the good teacher also demonstrated that when one discourse became dominant over the other, it had the tendency to naturalize and essentialize the kind of teacher identity inscribed within it. The purpose of the discourse was to fix and stabilize a particular view of a teacher by providing a template or rubric for conceptualization of teacher identity thus limiting the possibilities of teacher development (Moore, 2004).

Seminal studies on power reviewed by Richmond and McCroskey (1992) demonstrated that these studies did not inquire into (a) how broader political, social, and
cultural contexts interfered with the power and authority of a teacher in the classroom; and (b) what teachers themselves thought of power and control in education. Instead, they treated the issue of power in education as something that existed separately from larger contexts and focused on teacher/student relations and communication. Moreover, research on power and control in education has often overlooked connections existing between the teacher/student relations in the classroom and cultural models of power relations (Green, 1998).

Summary

To sum up, the brief overview of global trends in education showed that the Free Market Discourse model has made deep inroads into education. This is most evident in re-conceptualization of (a) educational space as a “shopping mall”; (b) students, as products to be evaluated, measured, assessed, and brought to a required standard; and (c) teachers, as technicians who should be held accountable for a standardized outcome.

Examination in the form of standardized testing seems to have become a crucial instrument for re-shaping education both in America and in Russia. Despite the rhetoric of decentralization and deregulation standardized testing ensures more government interference with education in both of the countries. In the case of the U.S., though standardized testing is not something new, the NCLB mandate brings standardized testing to a new level. It allows historically unprecedented federal government interference with American public schools which have enjoyed more local control than public schools in other countries. In the case of Russia, the new blueprint is being introduced in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union. While standardized testing is a new
phenomenon in Russia, tight, centralized control is not. What is new is that the
government is eager to drop its funding functions while tightening the controlling
functions. Standardized testing in the form of the USE is crucial in ensuring the central
government role in education.

Implementation of the same blueprint globally offers a unique opportunity for
comparing how teachers in different cultures fashion their teacher identities, and what
culturally distinct discourses they employ to contest new identities inscribed within the
new discourses. However, a literature search produced only a few studies concerning
teacher identity formation in the context of current reforms. It also demonstrated that
there are very few comparative studies that look into teacher identity formation within the
context of transformational changes in society. In addition, to my knowledge, there are
no studies that compare teacher understanding of power in different cultures and there are
no studies that compare discursive construction of teacher identities across cultures.

The current study undertook the task of comparing discursive construction of
teacher identities and their understanding of power in the context of reforms in two vastly
different national cultures. The comparison allows us to (a) see with more clarity that
what is considered common sense is discursively constructed; and (b) question the
processes by which We, not only They, are also discursively constructed. In this respect,
I hope, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of how teachers make sense of the
reforms and (re)construct their teacher selves in the context of reforms, and how culture
influences their understanding of their teacher selves, power and reforms in education.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology for this study. The methodological question is often confused with methods. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) warn that when considering the methodological question, it is important to bear in mind that by methodology not the specific methods but “the general logic and theoretical perspective for a research project” is meant, and that “methods should be consistent with the logic embodied in the methodology” (p. 31). Methods refer to specific techniques of how a researcher actually collects data to test their theories. This involves the basic ways of data collection (questionnaires, interviews, experiments, participant observation and so forth). So this chapter provides both the theoretical perspective and methods used in this study. It starts with an overview of approaches to discourse analysis. Next, it details the theoretical framework employed for this study and explains some of the concepts used in the dissertation. Finally, it describes the design, procedures used in the collection and analysis of data.

A Brief Overview of Discourse Analysis

“Discourse analysis involves ways of thinking about discourse (theoretical and metatheoretical elements) and ways of treating discourse as data (methodological elements)” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 3). There is a wide range of opinions on both what discourse is and what counts as discourse analysis (DA). Discourse analysis (DA) is employed in many fields of study including linguistics, sociolinguistics, psychology, education, cultural studies, politics, history, literary studies, and cultural anthropology.
Gill (2000) claimed that “there are probably at least 57 varieties of discourse” (p. 173). Taylor (2001) identified four possible approaches to DA. The first is conversation analysis which examines how language as a system works for communication. The focus of this approach is on the analysis of “naturally occurring interaction” (Taylor, 2001, p. 47). The assumption is that in order for meaningful interaction to happen, the speakers must have “communicative competences” (Taylor, 2001, p. 47). These competences include the knowledge of tacit rules concerning taking turns, false starts, silences, greetings, utterance sequences, and so forth. The speakers are aware of these rules by the virtue of being a member “of a natural language speaking community” (Taylor 2001, p. 47).

In the second approach the interest is in the study of the “situated” use of language, that is, the use of language by different actors in different situations in the process of interaction. The focus is on the use of language, not on language itself or interaction. According to this approach, whatever the language user says or writes is “constrained by interactive context” (Taylor, 2001, p. 47). What he or she will say or write will totally depend on what has been said or written before (Taylor, 2001).

In the third approach the researcher examines how acquiring new terms not only enables people to talk about things they were unable to talk about prior to the acquisition of these terms but also to do new activities. The focus is on “how meanings are created and eroded as part of ongoing social change” (Taylor, 2001, p. 8). A vivid illustration would be technology developments which not only create new words and activities but
also add “alternative” meanings to already existing conventional ones, as, for example, to
the words “surfing” and “browsing” (Taylor, 2001, p. 8).

The fourth approach focuses on the “patterns of language within much larger
contexts, such as those referred to as ‘society’ and ‘culture’” (Taylor, 2001, p. 7). The
major theoretical influences on this approach are critical social theory, Michel Foucault’s
notions of power/knowledge and discourse, neo-Marxists’ claims of the significance of
culture rather than mere economy in the creation and reproduction of power relations in
the society, the linguistic theory of ideology of Bakhtin and Voloschinov, feminism and
postmodernism (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000). The most well-known
example of this approach is critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is far from being a
homogenous field but all critical discourse analysts share some basic premises. They all
agree that (a) “social and political inequalities are manifest in and reproduced through
discourse” (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 137); (b) discourses and texts reveal ideologies that
perpetuate existing power relations; (c) the goal of CDA is to investigate and reveal the
ways discourses produce and reproduce inequalities, uneven power relations, and
particular types of identities; and (d) any kind of symbolic representation, not only
written and spoken speech, can be considered to be a text. Critical discourse analysts try
to find connections between discourse and social, historical, cultural and political
contexts. But, they differ in the ways they do research and in their analytic focus
(Wooffitt, 2005).

Distinct within critical approaches to discourse analysis is Foucauldian discourse
analysis (FDA). Foucault’s idea that discourses enable and constrain the way we act and
think, Derrida’s idea about deconstructing texts by unpacking “the latent oppositional conceptions” (Wooffitt, 2005 p. 146), social constructivists’ claim that all knowledge has a social basis, and Wittgenstein’s and Austin’s ideas about language as “rooted in social practices and not determined by linguistic rules” were major influences on this approach. However, the goals of CDA and FDA are the same (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 147).

To sum up, the focus of DA as a strategy is on the analysis of discourse by asking different kinds of questions about language and communication. However, what makes DA distinct from other strategies is not the questions themselves but the ways discourse analysts answer them: “by analyzing discourse—that is, by examining aspects of the structure and function of language in use” (Johnstone, 2002, p. 3). The questions, depending on the approach to DA, might be asked about the language itself or language use in social relations. Discourse analysts can look at either (a) who is talking, (b) how structure is actively involved in sense-making, (c) what the speaker is doing with his or her utterances, (d) what functions a particular utterance serves in context, (e) ways of moving, (f) what social functions of particular linguistic grammatical patterns speakers of different social class or status are using, (g) normative ways of behavior, (h) the location of new information in a paragraph, (i) choice of words, or (j) creation of meanings and categories in institutions such as courts or schools. So, DA will mean different things to different researchers (Gee, 2005; Johnstone, 2002; Wood & Kroger, 2000). As Gee (2005) puts it, there is no “uniquely ‘right’” approach to DA and researchers are free to adapt and transform different approaches to “fit different issues” (p. 5). I employ CDA approach in this study because my concern is also about finding connections between
discourses and social, historical, cultural, and political contexts and examining existing power relations both on macro and micro levels.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon poststructuralist conceptions of self, language, culture, and power which in their turn are informed by Saussure’s and Bakhtin’s theorizations on language and self and Foucault’s notions of discourse, power/knowledge, and self. Post-structuralism is a widely contested area but what unites poststructuralist theorists is their thinking about knowledge, truth, reason, and self. For poststructuralists, what is considered to be truth depends on a certain mode of knowledge production at a particular historical time in particular cultural and social settings. All knowledge is partial and situated and no universal explanation of events is possible for them. They declare the end of the Cartesian liberated and autonomous self who (a) is in charge of himself or herself, (b) is able to control his or her passions, and (c) can rationally organize the world. Instead, discourses shape both people’s subjectivities and what counts as truth and knowledge (Lethonen, 2000; MacLure, 2003).

**Saussure’s and Bakhtin’s Theories of Language**

What language is has always intrigued people and different theorists came up with different theories of language. Two linguists’ views on language, Ferdinand Saussure’s and Mikhail Bakhtin’s, were the most influential in discourse analysis. Ferdinand Saussure, a Swiss linguist, coined the terms ‘langue’ for language as an abstract system and ‘parole,’ for concretization of abstraction, or actual speech. Saussure gave descriptions of the structures that make the meaning possible but the particular meanings
are of no interest to him. According to this view, language is in control of us; it shapes all our ideas of reality and of ourselves. Language is a system of relationships between the words based on a network of differences. Meanings people attach to words do not come from reality but rather are determined in a linguistic chain of signs. The relationships are significant only within this system (Holquist, 2002; Lethonen, 2000). Everything external to language is not important; hence, the focus of the study should be on the formal properties of the language, not on language-in-use, ‘parole.’ For Saussure, ‘parole’ cannot be studied systematically because it is used by individuals as it pleases them (Fairclough, 1992, p. 63).

The second approach to the study of language is associated with a Russian linguist, Mikhail Bakhtin. In Saussure’s view of language as langue, the word is static. In Bakhtin’s view, it is not:

At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other condition. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428)

For Bakhtin, language is not a realm of its own, independent of context. Language cannot exist without subjects, as some abstract system. Language is mostly a matter of an utterance, not of a sentence. It is made up by and through subjects and it is part of reality and is shaped by reality. Utterances do not occur in isolation, out of context: They are utterances only in relation to other utterances. In a real situation one has to look at who is talking, and to whom the speech is addressed. One always has to
look at how language is used by subjects. Language has propensity towards dialogue. An utterance is framed not only in terms of what one wants to say but also in terms of to whom one is going to talk. The notion of the Other is being involved in whatever is going on. Utterances are by their nature dialogic: Listeners, real and potential, shape the utterance from the start. Utterances are the foundation of all communication and extra-linguistic features are part of an utterance. There is a relationship between utterances and cultures, too. Dialogue determines culture. There is a constant dialogue among people and among cultures. A dialogic interaction takes place not only between individuals but also between cultures (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 2002).

Thus, according to Saussure, the linguistic sign (the word) is made up of the union of a sound image (signifier) and a concept (signified) and the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. For Bakthin, there is nothing arbitrary about the meaning created in this linguistic chain. The meaning of the signified is never fixed, never stable. It is always shifting, it is in constant flux because the signification system is embedded in human interaction which takes place in a particular time, in a particular place. Hence, meaning production cannot be based just on an abstract linguistic system of differential network. Meaning production involves more than a language.

The Concept of Discourse

At the basis of poststructuralists’ thinking about discourse are (a) Saussure’s idea that language shapes realities and that relationship of difference produces meanings, (b) Bakhtin’s ideas that words acquire meaning only in human interaction in particular contexts and situations and that language does not only shape reality but is also an
indispensable part of that reality and is also shaped by that reality (Lehtonen, 2000; MacLure, 2003), and (c) Foucault’s idea that a self is shaped through discourse in power relations. Discourse might be thought of both as an abstract and a concrete concept. French philosopher Michel Foucault was most influential in introducing both the abstract and concrete meanings. As an abstract concept, discourse denotes “a set of possible statements about a given area” that enable and constrain certain ways of talking and knowing “about a particular topic, object, process” (Kress, as cited in Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 19). A concrete individual is not “the cause, the origin or starting point” of a particular statement because the speaking individual’s perceptive capacity and his practical possibilities are determined by the rules of a given discourse (Foucault, 1974, p. 95).

As a concrete noun, discourses for Foucault are “practices for producing meaning, forming subjects and regulating conduct within particular societies and institutions, at particular historical times” (MacLure, 2003, p. 175). The surfaces of emergence of discourses are “institutions (the law, education, the family, etc.)” and “disciplines . . . psychology, medicine, science, psychotherapy, pedagogy, biomedicine, sciences, and so on)” (italics in original, MacLure, 2003, p. 176,). Discourses both enable and constrain. One cannot have “an active agency” outside discourses (MacLure, 2003, p. 176).

Discourse analysts view language as social practices and employ the concept of discourse “to examine those concrete mutable ways in which people use language to signify the world” (Lehtonen, 2000, p. 44). Here are a few definitions that reflect this point of view:
1. Discourse is “all spoken and written forms of language use (text and talk) as a social practice” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 19).

2. Discourse is “a group of ideas or patterned ways of thinking which can be identified in textual and verbal communication, and can be located in wider social structures” (Lupton, as cited in Powers, 2001, p. 5).

3. Discourse is “patterns of belief and habitual action as well as patterns of language” (Johnstone, 2002, p. 3).

As can be seen, the notion of discourse is based on three basic assumptions (a) discourse cannot be separated from language because no meaning can be created outside a linguistic chain of signs (Saussure’s idea); (b) meaning is never the product of language only, it is also the product of human interaction (Bakhtin’s idea); and (c) discourses are practices for producing meanings and certain types of subjectivities (Foucault’s idea).

**The Concept of Discourse Models**

I use Gee’s (2005) notion of cultural or Discourse models in this study because it incorporates all of the above-mentioned assumptions that underlie the theoretical underpinnings of discourse analysis. Gee (2005) calls language-in-use a “little ‘d’” discourse (p. 7). In agreement with other discourse analysts, he claims that it is not enough to study only language-in-use because “activities and identities are rarely ever enacted in language alone” (p. 7). “Non-language ‘stuff’” (Gee, 2005, p. 7) is involved in how we see ourselves and each other, what we do, and why we do things in a certain way. He calls this “non-language stuff” discourse big “D” discourse or cultural or Discourse models. They mean “ways of combining and integrating language, actions,
interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity” (Gee, 2005, p. 21).

I view his concept of Discourse models as being close to what Geertz (1985), called “master fictions” (p. 33); Hofstede (1997), “cultural programming or mental software” (p. 5); and Sapir (1994), “master ideas” (p. 30). All these terms have one thing in common: They all imply that in every culture there is an overarching theoretical framework that provides people with patterns for thinking and behaving as certain types of subjectivities. These models/fictions/ideas also shape people’s sense-making of the world in culturally distinct ways. They are usually taken for granted, used as a point of reference, and accepted as the norm. It is not until one finds himself or herself in a culture different from his or her own, that one is startled into seeing the cultural “master fictions” that shape values and beliefs about every single human construct, power included. People inevitably try to make sense of their new experiences using the “helpful rules” (Brislin, 1993, p. 173) readily available to them within these frameworks. How one makes sense of the world, how one constructs his or her sense of self, and how power is exercised and perceived is inscribed into “some deeper ordering” (Wilentz, 1985, p. 1) of cultural relations. This “deeper ordering” might be revealed in the assumptions and moral judgments people make through the use of language. They show how individuals in a given culture relate to power, how they build their relations with each other, how they cope with uncertainty, and what roles they assign to men and women (Hofstede, 1997).
I find Gee’s (2005) concept of Discourse models to be most useful for this study because it allows me to examine “the collective programming of mind” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 5), through the study of language-in-use. I use the term Discourse model from now on throughout the dissertation to connect what I detected in the participants’ interviews to overarching theoretical frameworks that order the world in culturally distinct ways and provide American and Russian people with patterns for thinking and behaving as certain types of subjectivities.

Finally, I want to clarify how I use Gee’s concept of Discourse model in this study. I want to specifically emphasize that I use the term Discourse model to denote an overarching theoretical framework that shapes people’s sense-making of the world in culturally distinct ways. These Discourse models consist of numerous other discourses generated in relation to it. Theoretically, these discourses should also be called Discourse models because they also deal with non-language stuff. I will call them discourses generated in relation to Discourse models to make a distinction between Discourse models as an overarching theoretical framework and “little” theories generated in relation to this overarching theoretical framework. They should not be confused with Gee’s (2005) notion of a “little ‘d’ discourse.”

The Concept of Power

The concept of power belongs to a set of complex “fiercely contested,” “value laden” concepts (Wrong, 1995, p. viii) which is mostly associated with its three uses (a) as a “near synonym for influence, control, rule and domination”; (b) “a fundamental object of human striving”; and (c) a phenomenon embedded in all human relations,
“activities and expression” (Wrong, 1995, p. ix). Control, rule, and domination are achieved through punishments, rewards, and the control of resources. Its second use is associated with a person’s authority through the position he or she holds or roles he or she plays in a group or society. According to the first and second uses of power, people who have access to resources and hold positions have the most power (Wrong, 1995). The third use of power implies that power is ubiquitous and that power relations permeate every aspect of human activity. According to this conception of power mostly associated with Foucault, power does not have a center from which it emanates. Rather, it pervades “all social relations in the form of a ‘micro-politics’” (Wrong, 1995, p. xxii).

Traditionally, when people think of power, they think of the State, the law and the relations between the subject and the law. In this line of thinking, people associate power with its “visible,” “particular and identifiable agents” (Covaleskie, n.d., Forms of Power section, para. 2). They look for the sources from which power emanates. In this case power is seen as an external force. The effects of this power are tangible. People know exactly when they were acted upon (Covaleskie, n.d., Forms of Power section, para. 2). This kind of power, associated with the figure of the King/Sovereign and with law and right, is termed as sovereign power by Foucault. Within this line of thinking, power is dominating and repressive. People know where to direct their resentment and resistance in case of sovereign power because of its concreteness and visibility. Foucault’s contention is that there is more to power than law enforcement. One has to think of power not as a domination of one group or individual over other groups and individuals, but as a network of relations “that invest the body, sexuality, technology, and so forth”
(Foucault, 1980, p. 122). The analysis of power should go “beyond the limits of the State” because it is unable “to occupy the whole field of actual power relations” and because it “can only operate on the basis of the other, already existing power relations” (Foucault, 1980, p. 122).

The sovereign form of power cannot exist without, what Foucault (1977) called, disciplinary power. This kind of power is not imposed from above: It reveals itself in strategies, and techniques such as examination and confession. These strategies and techniques are so much of our everyday life, so mundane that people do not question them. Disciplinary power manifests itself in every aspect of human activity. It is not easy to detect from where it originates. Though Foucault asserted that wherever there is power there is always resistance, it is more difficult to resist this form of power because its workings are subtle and obscured: People might not even be aware that they are being acted upon. Foucault invites us to look at power as diffused in the network of power relations in which everybody is caught up and which play a more critical role in the constitution of the modern human subject than sovereign power.

The existence of disciplinary power is possible due to the techniques of discipline, surveillance, and punishment that turn every person into a visible individual. These techniques or technologies of power, as Foucault called them, were first employed in prisons and then they permeated all modern societies. The human body as the physical “space” for the operation of these techniques of discipline becomes central in this form of power and the concept of docility becomes central in shaping “the man of modern humanism” through “a meticulous observation of detail” (Foucault, 1977, p. 14). In this
process not a single modern institution is seen as a separate entity functioning according to its own rules and regulations. In all of them “a machinery of power” works in the same way: it “explores” the body, it “breaks” the body down, and it “rearranges” the body (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). Manipulation and analysis of the body which create a modern human being is made possible thanks to such mechanisms of power as hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the examination. It is these mechanisms that created the introduction of the “new local, capillary form of power” which “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies, and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980, p. 39). This “machinery of power” makes it impossible to locate the origin of power and associate power with the figure of a king only. From now on, power cannot be viewed in terms of sovereignty only (Foucault, 1980, p. 95).

This “piece of machinery” (Foucault, 1977, p. 177) cannot be owned by anyone. It involves every individual in complex power relations that no one can escape and that turn each individual into both an object and subject of power thanks to its “dominating, overseeing gaze” (Foucault, 1980, p. 152). Each individual, no matter what his position or his belief is, under this overseeing gaze “will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer” and will exercise “this surveillance over and against, himself” (Foucault, 1980, p. 155). This non-stop observation becomes one of the instruments of power which places people into hierarchical categories.

Another great instrument of power which contributed to the formation of the disciplinary society is normalizing judgment. Normalization was achieved through
punishing any departure from the norm. Punishment, however, was now aimed not at exclusion or repression, but at normalizing by means of exercise. The norms were explicitly described in programs, sets of regulations, laws. If a pupil failed to learn his lesson, he was forced to repeat it without making a mistake the next day. A pupil could never be put into a level which was beyond his present mastery of the subject. Yet, if he failed to learn what was required of him according to the timetable, he would not be able to pass into the higher order. Foucault stressed the dual nature of the power of normalization: On the one hand it “imposes homogeneity,” on the other hand, “it individualizes” (Foucault, 1977, p. 184) through surveillance, observation, and “comparative measures that have the norm as reference” (Foucault, 1977, p. 193). Everybody has to conform to the same model; everybody has to practice the same duties. How successful one is in conforming (being homogenized) is measured in numbers. Individuals are differentiated from one another and placed in a hierarchical order in respect to the norm, the rule.

The next mechanism of power is the examination which combines the two aforementioned techniques and which found its ultimate expression in the hospital and the school. Foucault pointed out three functions that this mechanism fulfills in maintaining the knowledge-power relationship. First, it constantly subjectifies “the disciplined individual” (Foucault, 1977, p. 187). Subjectification is concerned with the process of self-formation and self-understanding. The process of organizing of self is under constant surveillance and examination is one of the techniques that help to maintain the visibility. The subject is a knowing subject but at the same time he or she is
an object of the field of knowledge. The individual is simultaneously subjectified and objectified. Thus the second function of the mechanism of power is objectification which makes the individual an object of meticulous documentation that helps to keep him under the constant gaze “of a permanent corpus of knowledge” with the aim of “maintaining him in his individual features” (Foucault, 1977, p. 190). Third, it turns the individual into “a case,” into “the object of individual descriptions and biographical accounts” so that each individual could get “as his status his individuality.” And these differences that are peculiar to his individuality “make him a ‘case’” (Foucault, 1977, p. 192).

Concepts of Discourse, Power, and Power/Knowledge

Critical discourse analysts’ thinking about power and discourse are heavily influenced by Foucault’s concepts of discourse, and power/knowledge. Power is a necessary condition for knowledge production. He termed these relations between power and knowledge “power/knowledge.” The discourses seen by the majority of the society as legitimate become hegemonic discourses and eventually are accepted, as the truth. The truth, or whatever is held to be the truth in modern societies, is derived from knowledge (Foucault, 1977). Power is derived from discourse: “Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). In this respect, discourse is always political. Some discourses are silenced and constrained. Discourses are socially controlled and occur according to certain rules which define who can speak, what one can say, and on what occasions (Foucault, 1974). What discourses are accepted/rejected or will be accepted/rejected is determined in the
struggles over recognition of certain ways of representing reality (Burman & Parker, 1993; Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2005; Lehtonen, 2000; MacLure, 2003; Wood & Kroger, 2000; Wooffitt, 2005).

Foucault’s concepts of power/knowledge and discourse help to view spoken and written speech as discursive practices that are deeply rooted in power relations. The questions of how to build better education systems, how to make them efficient and successful, how to enforce discipline, how to assess student achievement, how a teacher should exercise power in the classroom, and so forth, can all be examined as discursive practices that are part and parcel of social and political struggles within a particular society at certain historical times.

Self, Language, Discourse, Culture, and Power

If I tell the truth about myself . . . it is in part that I am constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over me and which I exert over others. (Foucault, 1990, p. 39)

The Cartesian self is an autonomous being making rational choices about his or her life. He or she is the source of meaning. For structuralists, who have adopted Saussure’s view of language as *langue*, self is at the mercy of the structure. The self has no control over the meaning. All meaning is determined by structural relationships and form. Structure invades all aspects of life. It is independent of the individual speaker’s choice. Hence, for structuralists, a self is a self only because of the system of relationships within this linguistic structure. In this line of thinking, self is just a node, a cog in this network. In *parole*, on the other hand, the self is in total control over the
meaning. Language is entirely inside an individual. For Bakhtin, on the other hand, neither “abstract objectivism” (the notion that language can exist outside the individual speaker) nor “individual subjectivism” (the notion that the individual speaker is in total control of language) is possible (Holquist, 2002, p. 42). A self is not a unique individual entity. Each word uttered implies a relation to the other. A dialogue occurs between self and self, and self and other. In his understanding, a self is only the self in relation to other selves, in a network of social relations. However, the self is not a passive recipient of all the messages with which he or she is bombarded. The self responds to all the stimuli, and life for Bakhtin is

An activity, the dialogue between events addressed to me in the particular place I occupy in existence, and my expression of a response to such events from that unique place. When I cease to respond, when there are . . . no signs of life I am dead. (Holquist, 2002, p. 49)

Self is the focal point where meaning is created “through the medium of sign” and both “the individual psyche” and “shared social experience” are involved in the process (Holquist, 2002, p. 49). Self and other are in constant dialogic relationship. The individual speaker is not entirely at the mercy of the structure, nor can he or she be entirely free of the structure.

Foucault’s Self is produced in and through discourses. His undertaking is to find out how discourses shape people into certain kinds of subjects. The ‘true’ self “with certain beliefs about him/herself” is nothing but a fabrication for him (Ball, 1990, p. 15). Examination is seen as playing a crucial role by him because
It determines not only whether a person is governable—that is likely to lead a docile, useful, and practical life—but also because it identifies to the individual the ‘true’self, whereby (s)he becomes classified as an object in various ways for others and is tied to the ‘true’ self as a subjected or politically dominated being. (Ball, 1990, p. 15)

For discourse analysts, influenced by works of aforementioned theories, language, discourse and subjectivity are inseparable. One cannot have subjectivity without language and discourse, but one cannot have language and discourse without subjectivity, either. Human subjects are basically constituted in and through language use as social practices deeply embedded in power relations. Language is the universal structure a subject enters into “at a certain point in his mental development” and identity is the subjectivity we find in using language (Lacan, 2002, p. 139). We are basically captured by language. Our identity comes only in discourse (in the process of differentiation, response to the question of who we are). Within the language there are elements for expressing of subjectivity and discourse brings it out. When discourse stops, there is a discontinuity, a rupture of the self. The speaking subject is not a continuous reality. It is only there when discourse takes place. Discourse happens according to the rule of language. There are different levels of signification in the utterance in discourse: Cultural codes are at work in discourse (Benveniste, 1996).

People are introduced to culture through language. According to Lacan (2002), they are also introduced to certain power relations existing in culture through language. Relation to power and authority is a complex phenomenon which involves both
“unconscious wishes and fears” and culturally determined ways of conceptualizing power relations (Inkeles, 1997, p. 45). Culture provides people with models for thinking through experiences, for conceptualizing abstract concepts such as democracy, justice, power. The models change with time and experiences; they are appropriated differently in different social and cultural groups within the national culture. People are unaware of them unless challenged by something which is incongruent with the cultural models. The meanings people create are not the meanings people can find in dictionaries. They are always “situated in specific cultural practices and continually transformed in these practices” (Gee, 2005, p. 65). Consequently, there might be a more or less tacit theory of power rooted in the practice of cultures people belong to, but in actual life it might mean different things in different situations and contexts for different social groups. The meanings attached to the concept of power are not constant within and across cultures. Different actors involved in education are positioned differently within discourses and can occupy only that position at that particular moment of speech producing different meanings concerning power and educational reforms depending on different discourses and cultural models.

When a child learns a particular language, he or she learns not some abstract language but the language of the community into which he or she was born. The local differences of the language, social status, race, gender, occupation, culture—all “produce different linguistic customs and identities” (Lehtonen, 2000, p. 30). Language not only produces; it also reproduces and justifies gender, occupation roles, social stratification, and the ways people perceive themselves as members of certain race, ethnicity, culture,
and nationality. People use language to reassert their power positions and roles in their communities while transmitting information and values to each other. In this respect, language and power intertwine. The speaking and writing subject is not only constrained in what he or she can say or write about the topics of concern by the rules of a particular discourse, but he or she is also assigned a specific position within the discourse from which he or she can speak as the subject of knowledge (Fairclough, 1992; Lehtonen, 2000; MacLure, 2003).

Thus within poststructuralism, self is not an autonomous, coherent, intentional being making rational choices but a being that is constructed amidst power relations in and through language use as social practices in particular social, historical, and cultural contexts. In this study, in keeping with a poststructuralist view of self, teacher identity is conceptualized as something constantly created and re-created in human interactions which occur in social and cultural contexts embedded in power relations. Teacher identity refers to the core beliefs a teacher has about the ways of being and acting as a certain type of a teacher in a certain time, in a certain context and in a certain place.

The Concepts of National Cultures and Cultural Essentialism

In the following, I explain in detail why I use the concept of national culture in this study. When I refer to culture, as I mentioned in the introduction chapter, I have national culture in mind in this study. I look at nations as “political formations” whose primary task is sustaining “systems of cultural representation through which national identity is continually reproduced as discursive action” (Barker, 2003, p. 189). In postmodernist critique of cultural essentialism, attempting to compare cultures on the
level of nations is criticized as reifying and essentializing difference. Yet, on a common-sense level, the first thing people are struck with, when they encounter national cultures, are tangible and intangible differences in ways of life, in ways of thinking, and in ways of acting. Though in reality, there is no such a thing as a homogenous nation, the differences are attributed to the whole nation because it is easier and more convenient than trying to get an in-depth understanding of the behavior of various groups that constitute a nation. In addition, it is easier to obtain data on nations (Hofstede, 1980) and, I would add, that it is easier to create knowledge about the “other” as distinct from “us” as a nation. Both America and Russia are “historically developed wholes” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 12) consisting of diverse groups. Both countries have all the integrating forces in place, both have ideological institutions such as family, organizations, and, above all, both have the national education systems for subjecting their citizens into “the collective programming of the mind” (italics in original, Hofstede, 1997, p. 5). National school systems have a considerable impact on national cultures and “continuity in national character” (Inkeles, 1997, p. x). Education is turned into a battleground for producing and reproducing “a specific national consciousness” and “culturally specific identities” (Bernstein, 2000, p. xxiii).

Postmodern critique of cultural essentialism also makes it difficult to provide an argument for a link between a national culture and identity because within the postmodern theoretical framework neither culture nor identity can be viewed as stable, coherent wholes. Instead, “we are asked to focus upon the diverse and often
incompatible range of cultural practices people engage in” (Featherstone & Lash, 1999, p. 1). In addition, it is argued that:

1. Globalization promotes further diversification rather than “the homogenization and unification of culture” (Featherstone & Lash, 1999, p. 1).

2. National cultures actually do not exist because “cultural production and dissemination” (Featherstone & Lash, 1999, p. 1) come from multiple sources and are not confined to either national borders or subcultures within national cultures. Hence, national cultures cannot be conceived as uniform and stable.

However, despite all the talk about eroding national borders and hybridization of cultures, nations are still in a constant struggle over maintaining their distinctness as nations and are preoccupied with so-called national ideas. So, it is premature, to my mind, to proclaim the death of the nation-state and the rise of “homogenized, world culture” (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004, p. 143) and to discard the idea that nations provide a ground “for a shared cultural world” (Featherstone & Lash, 1999, p. 1). The world is still a patchwork of political entities called nation states and “rightly or wrongly, collective properties are ascribed to the citizens of certain countries: People still refer to ‘typically American,’ ‘typically German,’ or ‘typically Japanese’ behavior” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 12). A considerable ideological work is going on, on a daily basis in numerous social institutions to perpetuate the myth of uniqueness of a nation with the purpose of holding together what Benedict Anderson (1991) called “imagined communities” (p. 6).

National cultures might not exist as stable, uniform wholes but they might be “imagined.” Though one might argue that there are no homogeneous categories such as
an American or Russian culture, as the names would imply, there are distinct major
storylines, master fictions, or cultural myths that are associated with these two cultures
and that are aimed at holding the American or Russian societies together. There might be
multiple competing discourses within a given national culture that shape people’s
subjectivities, but there are also dominant discourses that are associated with particular
national cultures.

**My Role as a Researcher**

This is a qualitative interpretive study. It examined how teachers constructed
particular understandings of their teacher selves in interviews which were treated as texts.
My identity as a researcher influenced everything in this study: the selection of the topic,
data collection, selection of data, and analysis of the data. The language user, including
the analyst, “is always located, immersed in this medium and struggling to take her or his
own social and cultural positioning into account” (Taylor, 2001, p. 9). Discourse is a
medium which is never static. The meanings in it are constantly being created and
recreated and contested. Issues of reliability and validity, as they pertain to other
research approaches, are of no relevance in DA because the basic premise on which DA
is based is that meanings are context-dependent, not stable, and that there are multiple
readings of a text. I make no attempt to generalize my findings to a larger population. I
do not claim that I captured the truth because I am guided by the following premises:

1. No researcher can give an account of all the complexity of the phenomenon
under investigation, and “all the knowledge obtained by research is partial,
situated (i.e. specific to particular situations and periods rather than
universally applicable) and relative (i.e. related to the researcher’s worldview and value system)” (Taylor, 2001, p. 16).

2. “No neutral single truth is possible in the social sciences” (Taylor, 2001, p. 16).

3. “There are multiple realities and multiple truths” (Taylor, 2001, p. 16).

For me, research is value-determined and both my values and participants’ values influenced both the process and the findings of the inquiry and both the researcher and the participants were involved in knowledge construction and changed in the process of knowledge construction. However, I was in a privileged position to have the final word in creating the written product. So, when reading the findings and analysis of the findings, one should bear in mind, that it is my representation of the participants’ accounts. Though I tried to use their own words as much as possible, by giving my version of their accounts, as an “author” of this text, I was in the position of power to position the participants in a certain way. In this sense, I had the power to represent “the reality” the way I “wanted,” using discourses available to me. I, as someone who made sense of their interviews in the written form, was in the privileged position of a writer and the interviewees had no power to contest my interpretations. But this does not mean that meanings were created entirely by me, a researcher. The meanings were created in the process of interaction; they were not there waiting to be uncovered. Both the interviewees and I were involved in meaning production from the vantage points of specific positions we occupied during the interviews. Though the participants introduced
their own topics, I as an interviewer, set the general tone and influenced the direction of the interviews, i.e., I was in a privileged position of an interviewer.

On the other hand, I, as my participants, was also in the power of patterned ways of thinking. For example, by asking such questions as what it was like to be a teacher before and after perestroika, and before and after the NCLB, I assumed that teachers’ accounts would be different. I was caught up in binary logic myself and after rereading the transcripts I realized that I, as a researcher, unconsciously was pushing them to reflect on their job as being different in the present and the past. Looking back, I realize, I thought that it was “natural” to think that the experiences would be different. And this is only one obvious example of how I actively influenced the direction of interviews, by being influenced, in turn, by common-sense logic. I do not believe that a researcher can avoid such “natural” ways of thinking because he or she is a member of a culture, too, and he or she also draws upon cultural ways of thinking and acting. The questions I asked, the ways I formulated the questions, the way I conducted the interviews, and so forth, undoubtedly influenced in subtle and not so subtle ways the teachers’ accounts.

In addition, both the interviewees and I were restrained in what we said by the genre of interviews, by our cultural backgrounds, and our personal adaptations of cultural discourses we employed in the process of production of our versions of “Truth.” In addition, the meaning of the text will be constructed in the process of reading by a reader (Lehtonen, 2000). I have no control over what discourses the reader will use to make sense of the text I created because “no one reads from a neutral or final position” (Clifford, 1986, p. 18).
Methods

Research Design

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used both as the strategy for inquiry and the theoretical framework. The aim of the researcher using this approach is “to provide interpretative claims based on the description of power relations in the context of historically specific situations” (Powers, 2001, p. 53). This approach allows one to explore how, for example, different concepts such as race and gender and certain subjectivities such as “an ideal teacher,” “a good student,” and so forth, are created; how they use language to construct these concepts in a certain historical and cultural context; and how the meaning creation is rooted in power relations.

Language does not exist in some abstract form. In reality, it exists in the form of recorded, digitized, printed, and recorded material (Lehtonen, 2000). So, the material discourse analysts work with are texts. Texts show how “members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and how they fit into the world in which they live” (McKee, 2003, p. 1). Texts provide us with “material” evidence that “allows for recovery and critical interrogation of discursive politics in an empirical form” (Hartley, as cited in McKee, 2003, p. 12).

There exists a wide range of opinions about the ways of treating discourse as data and what should be considered as data. Some discourse analysts recognize only spoken and written speech as a text. Some believe that any medium that uses signs and arranges them in a certain way for making sense of the world can be regarded as a text. Hence, what is produced either in spoken and written speech and, for some discourse analysts,
what is produced also in any other media (conversations, interviews, people’s talk, discussions, books, articles, body movements, sound images, pictures, etc.) is considered to be a text (Burman & Parker, 1993; Fairclough, 2003; Lehtonen, 2000; MacLure, 2003; Wood & Kroger, 2000; Wooffitt, 2005).

Some authors also use the concepts of discourse and text interchangeably. Texts are regarded as texts if the focus of the study is a particular case of a text but if the focus is on “more universal patterns and matters that link the texts to other texts and human practices,” they are regarded as discourses (Lehtonen, 2000, p. 42). I conducted semi-structured, informal interviews for this study. I considered any spoken and written speech as a text. Consequently, the transcriptions of what my respondents said in the interviews were examined as texts created in “conversational encounters” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 72). I examined texts with the purpose of connecting teachers’ talk “to other texts and human practices.” Thus texts and discourses were used interchangeably in this study.

The focus of analysis can be on purely linguistic features of particular texts, and those that focus on understanding “the social effects of discourse” through the study of particular texts. Linguistic analysis can include detailed study of the use of grammar, structure, form, and vocabulary. Claims about “the socially constructive effects of discourses” are done on the basis of the examination of dependence of texts on society, history, and culture (Fairclough, 2003, p. 24). In this dissertation, I gave an account of teachers’ subjectivities and representations on the basis of the study of (a) vocabulary choices, (b) binary oppositions, (c) the use of pronouns, and (d) the subject positions (See
the Analysis section). Although I did not do a full-blown CDA, nevertheless, I incorporated into my interpretive analysis both the analysis of linguistic features and intertextual analysis, that is, I examined the participants’ representations through a historical, social, and cultural lens to see “the social effects of discourse.” The ultimate purpose of my analysis was to see what discourses teachers used, and were used by them in their identity formation.

**Sampling**

The primary issue in DA is not about the number of participants but about “the size of the sample of discourse” because the focal point of the study is not participants but discourse (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 80). The selection of the sample in discourse analysis is done in two steps. The first step consists of identifying participants who might “produce the discourse of interest” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 78). As my interest in this study was the discursive construction of teacher professional identities, I chose teachers as my primary participants because they were more likely than other actors involved in education to produce discourses “relevant to the phenomenon of interest” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 79). It was a convenience, purposive sampling. My selection criteria was based on the availability and willingness of the participants to talk with me about the topic of interest. I used my network of friends and acquaintances to find the participants both in the U.S. and Russia. My initial contacts were very gracious to arrange interviews with other participants.

The second step involves the selection of texts produced in the interviews. The selection of the texts was limited in terms of what the participants said about the issue...
under investigation and the necessity to limit in some ways the body of the text produced in the interviews. Wood and Kroger (2000) contend that the texts produced in the interviews should provide “sufficient data for . . . arguments to be well grounded,” and advise “if there appears a great variability across the participants in the discourse of interest . . . to collect more texts,” and “if there appears to be a great deal of overlap”—to decrease the number of texts (p. 80). The issue for me was how to make the overwhelming volume of the texts manageable, not the lack of data. I had a dilemma whether to use or not to use all of the interviews in the production of my final text.

After transcribing all of the interviews, reading and re-reading the transcriptions multiple times, and identifying the key words, patterns, ideas, and themes, I decided to use all of the interviews as each participant had something to say about the issue of interest and because my ultimate interest was in discourses that “spoke” and “were spoken” by the participants. Though I chose to focus on patterns and themes that emerged across the interviews, I went back and forth from individual interviews to general patterns. In the process, I lost individual differences in teacher identity work but I was able to make claims about discursive construction of teacher identities by isolating recurring patterned thoughts and beliefs which were conditioned by the host cultures.

I did not do follow-up interviews with the participants. However, I selectively asked eight participants to check for the accuracy of the transcripts and the themes I identified in their interviews. Only three of them responded my emails: two were Peace Corps volunteers, and one was a Russian educator who at the time of the interview was teaching in the U.S. Though the Peace Corps volunteers agreed with my themes, they
wanted to clarify that though they were critical of some aspects of the Russian education system, they could also see its positive sides. They did not want to come across as being too negative. The Russian participant elaborated more on some of his answers. I decided not to pursue follow-up interviews because I had created rich data during the first interviews. I tried to be as attentive to individuals’ making sense of the reality. However, everyone reading the final text should be aware that my representations of teachers’ representations was achieved in the process of necessary omissions (obviously, I had to omit some of the information from the interviews, even if it was interesting) and were profoundly influenced by my identity.

**Ethical Concerns**

“Ethical concerns are always relevant” in any research project because “of the power relations between a researcher/analyst and the participants in a project” (Taylor, 2001, p. 20). The study was approved by Kent State University Institutional Review Board. (See Appendix A which contains IRB approval letter). A researcher has an obligation to protect the participants’ identities. So, in order to protect their identities I used pseudonyms for all the participants, American as well as Russian. The participants also need to be informed about the purpose of the study and how it will be used. Before the interviews, all of them signed the consent forms in which I explained the purpose of the study and asked for permission to audiotape the interviews and use the material for presentations. (See Appendices B & C which contain the consent forms). All the transcripts of the interviews are available upon request. I conducted the research and analyzed the data obtained with a full awareness that I, as a researcher, am answerable for
the way in which the research was conducted and analyzed. In order to give the potential reader a chance to make his or her own interpretation, and increase trustworthiness of my interpretation, I included as many of the data excerpts as possible in the presentations of the findings. I used the participants’ own words or, in some cases, summarized their statements for the sake of space.

Validity

Discourse analysis, Gee (2005) claims, constructs understandings of a reality, it does not assert that the data reflects the reality. “A discourse analysis argues that certain data support a given theme or point (hypotheses)” (Gee, 2005, p. 114). It is not concerned with generalizing the findings to other segments of the population and thus asserting the validity of the study. “Validity is as much, or more, in those social judgments and adjudications as it is in an individual piece of work” (Gee 2005, p. 115). Researchers should show that the features of language they chose to focus on support the analytical claims they make. They should also make connections to existing literature to increase the validity of an individual piece of work (Gee, 2005; Wood & Kroger, 2000). I tried to do both to the best of my abilities.

Participants

Russian participants. The Russian teachers in this study were from two secondary schools. Unlike schools in the U.S., elementary, middle, and high schools are all in one building in Russia. One of the schools was the so-called gymnasium. It attracted students from all over the town because it specialized in teaching English from the first grade and was considered to be a “prestigious” school. It was located in the
center of the town. The other school was located in the industrial part of the town. It was
obychnaya (an ordinary) school. This division was carried over from the Soviet times.
Though officially it had been proclaimed that everybody had equal educational
opportunities in the Soviet Union, the so-called specialized language and
physical/mathematical schools (shkola s uklonom) offered more advanced study of a
foreign language and of physics and mathematics than an ordinary school. Party elite and
intelligentsia children were overrepresented in these schools. They were renamed into
gymnasiums or lyceums after perestroika. The student population of these two schools
reflected the widening gap between the poor and the rich both between and within the
schools. In the Soviet Union, the gap between the poor and the rich was neither as
pronounced nor as noticeable as after the years following its break-up. I wanted to see
whether teachers’ experiences in these schools would be different.

The teachers’ ages ranged from 29 to 59 and their teaching experience from nine
to 34 years. All of them had a university education. Among the interviewed three were
elementary school teachers (Ksenia, Elena, Maria); one was a mathematics teacher
(Olesya); one a physics teacher (Nina); two taught history (Galina, Andrei); two taught
Russian language and literature (Anna, Lydia); and two were English teachers (Marina,
Natasha). Only one teacher was a male (Andrei). In addition, I interviewed an assistant
principal (Kristina), who also taught English; one former principal, Rimma, who was the
creator of the so-called ‘avtorskya’ (innovative) school in the wake of perestroika and at
the time of the interview was the director of an educational project and a researcher; and
the highest educational official in the republic, Anastasia. The reason why there is only
one male teacher in the study is because the teaching profession in Russia is overwhelmingly overrepresented by females. In the gymnasium, for example, only one teacher out of 80 teachers was a male. The other school had twelve male teachers out of 71, but only one of them agreed to be interviewed.

**American participants.** I interviewed American teachers from five schools: an inner-ring elementary and an inner-ring high school\(^5\), an inner-city urban high school, a blue ribbon suburban middle school, a blue ribbon suburban high school. These schools are representative of a much more diverse educational field and society in general in the U.S. Unlike Russia, the gap between the affluent schools and the poorer schools has been present for a long time in America.

Almost all of the teachers had a Master’s degree and one teacher had a Ph.D. Their ages ranged from 30 to 55 years; teaching experience ranged from seven to 29 years. Seven of them were males. Among the interviewed were four teachers from an inner-city urban high school (Melinda, an ESL teacher; Mathew, science and ESL teacher; Sarah, biology and special education teacher; Hillary, history and special education teacher); two teachers from an inner-ring elementary (Brandon and Jill), two teachers from an inner-ring high school (Hatcher, a mathematics teacher and Dustin, a history teacher); and two teachers from a blue ribbon suburban middle school (Dennis, social sciences teacher, and Michelle, language arts and special education teacher); and a history teacher, George, from a blue ribbon suburban high school. In addition, I

\(^5\) I defined the inner-ring school as a school located in close proximity to a city center, but which is not a part of the inner city.
interviewed the principal of the blue ribbon suburban middle school, Jim; the superintendent of the suburban school district, Caroline; and the Executive Director of Curriculum of the inner ring school district, Scott.

**Participants who had experience in America and Russia.** I interviewed three Russians and three Americans who had experience of teaching in both countries. The age range of the Russians is between 34 and 55. Eugene was a former English teacher in Russia. At the time of the interview he was teaching in an American University. Luda was a mathematics teacher in Russia and at the time of the interview was teaching mathematics in an inner-city high school. Tamara was a former French teacher in Russia. She was teaching in the same school as Luda.

The age range of Americans was between 32 and 63. They all were former Peace Corps volunteers. Betsy chose to join the Peace Corps and stay in Russia after the Russian government terminated the Peace Corps activities in Russia because she “fell out of love with teaching in America.” At the time of the interview she was volunteering her time in different educational settings in Russia. Jake and Nancy, a couple, joined the Peace Corps and chose to stay in Russia because they felt that they would have more opportunities both culturally and professionally in Russia. Jake had his own business in Russia and Nancy did charity work with a Russian orphanage at the time of the interview. She had worked with international agencies in the U.S. prior to joining the Peace Corps.

**Data Collection and Procedures**

The primary source of data was semi-structured, informal interviews which lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. Interviews are recommended with as many
participants as it is practical in DA (Powers, 2001, p. 53). I conducted 34 interviews in total. I interviewed 11 American teachers from a Midwestern state in the U.S.; 11 Russian teachers from a Mid-Volga republic in Russia. In addition, for the purpose of checking “analysis with a different group” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 79), three American and three Russian administrators, as well as three Russian teachers and three American Peace Corps volunteers who have been exposed to both systems of education were interviewed. I stopped conducting the interviews when I noticed that they were becoming repetitive. I conducted the interviews from the end of January until the end of February and the end of May and beginning of June in 2005 in the U.S. schools and from the end of February until the end of April in 2005 in Russian schools. All of the interviews with teachers, except three who invited me to their homes, were carried out in schools either in classrooms, faculty lounges, or cafeterias when teachers had a free period. I interviewed two former Peace Corps volunteers in a café and administrators in their offices. The interviews consisted of questions concerning general information about the participants, philosophy of teaching, trends in education, goals of education, standardized testing, and current educational mandates. I used the same core questions with all the participants. (See Appendix D, which contains the interview questions). I encouraged the participants to answer the questions extensively. I tried to interfere as little as possible. However, I, as a researcher, determined the structure of the interviews and set the general direction because I did not want the participants to divert their attention from the topic of interest.
Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed. The transcripts were part of the log that I kept throughout the study. I filed all the data electronically on my computer and also made a hard copy of all the transcripts. I always verified the transcripts by listening to the interviews again after I finished transcribing them. I listened to all of the interviews the day they were conducted and transcribed them verbatim as soon as possible. Unlike conversational analysts, I omitted such elements of talk as turn taking, false starts, pauses, speech intonations, silences, breath intakes, and hedges from the transcriptions because I was interested in how the participants constructed their identities, not in how they said what they said.

In addition to interviews, I also included observations wherever it was possible “on actions dictated by the discourse” (Powers, 2001, p. 53). I observed one lesson of each teacher except two Russian teachers who did not feel comfortable with my presence at their lessons. I observed the lessons because in DA “not only specific wordings but also specific actions” render material for additional insight into understanding of the phenomenon under study (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 77). During the lesson observations I primarily focused on the teachers’ words and practices in which he or she was engaged in the classroom while delivering the lessons. I included the notes on the lesson observations into the log, too. I used the notes on the lessons observations to compare what the teachers said to what I observed. While one lesson observation cannot be used to make generalizations about the ways teachers behave in the classroom, nevertheless, it gave me a chance to get a glimpse of classroom organization, teaching practices, and student-teacher interaction.
I translated the Russian interviews and checked the translation of some Russian words and phrases into English with a retired Kent State University professor who is fluent in Russian; and with a former English teacher in Russia who works in an American university currently. Both of them are highly qualified, competent English and Russian language users. I also borrowed translation of some of the Russian words and phrases into English from the literature on Russian education.

**Analysis**

The research question guiding this study was, What cultural or Discourse models shape teachers’ ways of being and acting as particular types of teachers in their talk about their everyday experiences of being a teacher, power in education, and the recent educational mandates No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) in America and Unified State Exams (USE, 2001) in Russia? The study also posed the following supplemental questions developed from the central one:

1. “What kind” of a teacher “doing what will emerge” (Gee, 2005, p. 23) from teachers’ talk?
2. What subject positions do they assign themselves in relation to (a) different actors involved in education, (b) recent educational mandates, (c) power and authority?
3. What notions of power (“sovereign” or “disciplinary”) do they subscribe to?
4. What kinds of power do they consciously exercise in their classrooms and what kinds of power do they think prevail in education?
To address these questions, I analyzed the interviews as texts created in “conversational encounters” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 72). The process of analysis started with the transcription. I tried to transcribe the recordings immediately after the interviews. While transcribing, I made mental notes about what was important for this particular participant and what were the common concerns or differences in the participants’ accounts. After I finished transcribing, I broke the interviews into stanzas, as Gee (2005) recommended. Gee writes that speech is composed of small spurts and that each spurt contains a piece of new information which, in their turn, can constitute a larger chunk of information. He calls a block of information about events, themes, and topics consisting of several lines *stanzas*. When a new topic or theme is introduced, then a new block of information is introduced. Breaking the data into stanzas helped me with the first reading of the data corpus and identifying the key words, phrases, and topics. I highlighted these key words and phrases and added my initial thoughts in the comments’ field when I was breaking the interviews into stanzas. Some of the examples of stanzas are “definitions of power,” “definitions of the teaching profession,” “definitions of a ‘good’ teacher,” “definition of mandates,” and “subject positions.” (See Appendices E & F, which contain examples of the respondents’ statements on power as an illustration of the analysis process).

Next, I followed Bogdan and Biklen’s (2003) advice on how to analyze the data. They recommend a researcher focus on one of three ways of coming up with the focus for the analysis: argumentation, theme, and topic. “A theme,” they write, “is conceptual; a topic is descriptive” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.189). I believed that focusing on the
descriptive topic would be the most beneficial in my case because discourse analysts advise including the entire text or as much as possible of the text under analysis into the final text, in order to demonstrate that a researcher’s arguments are based on the participants’ accounts (Wood & Kroger, 2000). One of the examples Bogdan and Biklen (2003) give of a descriptive topic is “What is a good teacher?” (p. 189). For this reason, following their suggestion, I selected the following descriptive topics for analysis (a) “What is a teacher by definition?”, (b) “What is Power?”, (c) “What is the NCLB?”; and so forth. Some of the topics were introduced by me, a researcher, some—by the participants.

I compiled all the statements from all the interviews concerning the particular topic in one file. In order to answer the first supplemental research question, I first compiled all the statements the participants made about the teaching profession, a “good” teacher, and goals of education. In order to answer the second, the third, and the fourth supplemental questions, I compiled all the statements the participants made about parents, educational bureaucrats, politicians, power and authority, and the recent educational mandates.

The next step involved identifying the units of analysis. Depending on the research questions and purposes of analysis, researchers create their own “thinking devices” (Gee, 2005, p. 115) for their interpretations. So, after several “trial and error” attempts and extensive literature review on discourse analysis, I decided to follow Gee’s advice and create my own “thinking device” that would help me answer my research questions. I decided to focus on the study of the following features:
1. **Vocabulary choices** because the choice of words by speakers “invests them with a particular identity” and shows their “political allegiances and identity” (MacLure, 2003, p. 10). Picking up “keywords and phrases in the data” is helpful in starting to see “*the situated meanings*” these words and phrases have within particular contexts and what “Discourse models” they can be a part of (Gee, 2005, p. 115). I particularly was interested in cultural keywords. The problem with cultural keywords is that “there is no objective discovery procedure for identifying key words in a culture” (Wierbicka, as cited in Rigotti & Rocci, 2005, p127). One way to identify cultural keywords is to examine “sheer frequency of occurrence, frequency of occurrence in a particular domain, frequency of occurrence in book titles, songs, proverbs, sayings, richness of the phraseological patterns in which the word occurs” (Rigotti & Rocci, 2005, p.127). For example, in this study, I identified the word *money* as a cultural keyword in the Russian case because it served as a pivotal point around which the teachers constructed the notion of intelligentsia. I identified the words *control* as a cultural keyword in the American case because it served as a focal point around which the American teachers constructed the concept of power.

2. **Binary oppositions** because discursive representations are often made through “‘binary’ structures-unfair pairs” in which one part of the pair is always seen as deficient “‘Other’” (MacLure, 2003, p. 11). “This kind of binary logic” is evident everywhere, including “the discourses in education.” The binary
oppositions might position everyone involved in education on the “bad ‘Other’ side” (MacLure, 2003, p. 11). They show the workings of discourses in the moral claims the speakers make by locating a person “within a particular moral universe” (MacLure, 2003, p. 9). I spotted these binary oppositions in teachers’ statements about power, other teachers, and parents.

3. *The use of pronouns* because linguists have long argued that there is a strong relation between social structure and pronoun usage (Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990). The use of pronouns can reveal how people relate to one another, and what roles and responsibilities they assign to themselves and to others within the given discourses (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

4. *The subject positions* because identity work “occurs through the identification by the individual with particular subject positions within discourses” (Weedon, 1997, p. 112). Different subject positions are available within different discourses. They serve as resources upon which people can draw in their identity work (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). People might strongly identify with some and resist other subject positions available within particular discourses (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). “Positioning takes place in a space defined by the moral order” and “societal expectations and prescriptions” influence it. However, it does not happen because of mere imposition from the society; it is validated in the process of “internal dialogues” about what is moral and what is not (Raggatt, 2006, p. 19).
After identifying the units of analysis I examined the key words and the use of pronouns in the statements I compiled in order to answer the research questions. I highlighted the use of the key words and phrases in the texts I compiled. I also identified the binary oppositions besides the binary oppositions I set up myself as a researcher in my questions. To study the use of pronouns, I also compiled all the (a) teachers’ “we” statements; (b) teachers’ “they” statements; (c) teachers’ “he” or “she” statements; (d) teachers’ “I” statements, and (e) teachers’ “they, authorities”, “they, power”; “they, parents”; “they, students” statements in each interview and looked how they positioned themselves, and others in these statements. I did this with the purpose of seeing how the participants positioned themselves in relation to different actors involved in education, what place they assigned themselves in the general order of things, and what differences and similarities emerged across and within the interviews.

I identified the subject positions by going back and forth between the vocabulary choices, binary oppositions, and the use of pronouns. In each unit of analysis I examined (a) how the participants positioned themselves; (b) which of the subject positions they were attracted to; and (c) which of them they contested, accepted, or rejected, and on what grounds. In addition, I continuously contrasted and compared the Russian and American data. Comparative analysis helped me identify culturally distinctive ways in which Russian and American teachers contested and negotiated their identities within and by the dominant discourses circulating in these cultures.

The final stage in the analysis was linking the findings to the larger cultures. In order to do that, I did a literature search focusing on the key words and phrases that I
identified in the interviews. While I started the research with the assumptions that there would be discourses that would shape teacher identity construction, I did not know which discourses exactly could account for particular subjectivities and representations. In fact, it took me a long time before I could “name” these discourses that were socially and culturally constraining and constitutive.

Summary

To sum up, I employed critical discourse analysis approach in this study because I was interested in connecting discourses to social, historical, cultural, and political contexts and existing power relations. I analyzed the participants’ talk as texts obtained through semi-structured interviews. I also situated this study within the qualitative interpretive tradition. I focused on such features of analysis as subject positions, key words, binary oppositions, and the use of pronouns. Central to the theoretical underpinnings of this study were the assumptions that:

1. Discourses determine the ways reality can be represented.
2. Different national cultures make sense of the world differently and within a single national culture there are varieties of subcultures which make sense of the world differently.
3. However, there are dominant discourses that are associated with particular national cultures. These dominant discourses are produced and maintained at national levels.
4. Every national culture has an overarching theoretical framework that orders the world in culturally distinct ways. I borrowed Gee’s (2005) term of Discourse model to denote this theoretical framework.

5. Discourse models consist of a number of discourses generated in relation to it. Inscribed within these discourses are culturally “proper” ways of being and acting as certain types of subjectivities and thinking about the world.

6. There is an ongoing struggle over meaning production and “different discourses…are engaged in a constant struggle with one another to achieve hegemony” (Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 7).

7. A speaking or writing subject makes sense of reality from a position that is produced for him or her by discourse models.

8. People negotiate their identities through talk.

9. People acquire identity and agency only within and by discourses.

10. “Texts are the actual media and instances through which their socially constructed and contested identity, or subjectivity, is made and remade” (Luke, as cited in MacLure, 2003, p. 8).

11. A researcher, as participants, is positioned in a certain way within discourses and should produce his or her version of representation by being fully aware of his or her own social and cultural positioning.
CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION OF RUSSIAN FINDINGS

Russian Teachers’ Struggles over Their Teacher Identities

As the title of this chapter suggests, I present, interpret, and discuss the Russian data around one unifying theme, the theme of the Russian teachers’ struggle over their teacher identities. As I mentioned in the Analysis section, I present the data using descriptive topics. After each topic, I describe the discourses that, I claim, the teachers drew upon in their talk about each topic. First, I present the topic using the most representative quotes from the teachers. Second, I explain what discourses they drew upon to produce particular versions of their understanding of the topics and not others. Following is the list of the topics and discourses I identified as critical in the Russian teachers’ fashioning of their teacher identities:

1. The topic, Should Teaching Be About Transmitting Knowledge or Transmitting Values?, is followed by the Obuchenie and Vospitanie discourse.

2. The topic, Should Teaching Be a Moral Duty or a Paid Job?, is followed by The Soviet Labor and Soviet Intelligentsia Discourses in Teachers’ Talk about Work and Money.

3. The topic, What Place Should a Teacher Occupy in a Society?, is followed by The Soviet Intelligentsia Discourse in Teachers’ Talk about Teacher Status.
4. The topic, *Russian Teachers’ Talk About Power*, is followed by *The Soviet Intelligentsia Discourse in Russian Teachers’ Talk about Power*

5. The topics, *I as a Teacher in my Mini-State* and *In the Reality of Classrooms: Disciplining Bodies*, are followed by *Discourses That Regulated Teachers’ Talk about Their Mini-States and Their Ways of Acting in These States.*

In each topic, I identify the key words the participants used to produce their particular accounts and the subject positions they assigned to themselves. Next, I connect these key words and subject positions to the discourses that informed their talk. I also describe the binary oppositions they set up to talk about power and differentiate between “good” and “bad” teachers. The topics, *I, in My Classroom as Mini-States,* (which is the teachers’ self-descriptions of how they envisioned themselves in the classrooms), and *In the Reality of Classrooms: Disciplining the Bodies,* (which is my description of their actual behavior in the classrooms derived from lesson observations) examine what Gee (2005) calls “the situated meaning” (p.59) of the appellation, a “Russian teacher.”

Discourses can set the culturally-sanctioned boundaries for the definitions of a teacher and provide the members of a particular culture with a set of particular vocabularies and subject positions for them to draw upon in their talk. However, words “take on quite specific meanings in specific contexts of use” (Gee, 2005, p. 58), as I have been reiterating throughout this dissertation.

In the concluding section, I (a) describe the Discourse model, in regards to which discourses that informed the Russian teachers’ talk were generated; (b) provide an overview of the subject positions they assigned themselves; (c) summarize the use of
binary oppositions and pronouns; and (d) show why gender served as an important identity marker for the Russian teachers. The Russian teachers’ voices are of primary importance. Other participants’ voices are used only to corroborate, contrast, or emphasize the teachers’ accounts.

**Should Teaching Be About Transmitting Knowledge or Transmitting Values?**

The first topic I identified as being important in the Russian teachers’ identity construction was defining the teaching profession. The key words that were critical in their definition of the profession were *obuchenie* (instruction) and *vospitanie* (upbringing). I treated these words as cultural key words because they served as “a focal point” around which a culturally specific definition of the profession was constructed. These words imply that a teacher should be engaged in two primary activities: transmitting knowledge and transmitting values. Accordingly, the Russian teachers’ definitions of the profession centered around the question of what these primary activities a teacher should be engaged in. Three points of view were expressed on the topic (a) five Russian participants (four teachers and the highest educational official in the republic) were convinced that a teacher, first and foremost, should be a value transmitter; (b) seven Russian participants (five teachers, the educational researcher and a former principal, and the assistant principal) believed that a teacher should be, first and foremost, a knowledge transmitter, and only then a value transmitter; and (c) two Russian teachers were of an opinion that a teacher should be only a knowledge transmitter. In the following, consider the most representative quotes, which illustrate each of the viewpoints.
Anastasia, the highest educational official in the republic, was convinced that “psychological and pedagogical functions” of a teacher were “more important than just teaching a subject.” Likewise, Anna, Olesya, Elena, and Andrei also valued vospitanie over obuchenie. Anna believed that the ultimate goal of education was creating “a decent human being.” Olesya thought that a good student was, first and foremost, “a good person,” not the one “who did well” in her subject. For Elena, “the task of a school” was “producing accomplished personalities (vypiskat’ gotovye lich’nosti) with a developed worldview and independent thinking, who can express themselves, who are responsible for their deeds, and who can think.” To this group of participants, teaching a subject per se was pointless. What good could a person who was well-educated but was not a ‘decent’ human being bring to the society?

The second group of the participants (Galina, Ksenia, Marina, Nina, Maria, Kristina and Rimma) believed that though vospitanie was important, it was secondary to obuchenie. Therefore Galina saw school as “a place where kids are given education first of all.” Ksenia believed that though “teachers are not only knowledge dispensers but also nositeli vechnyx zennostei (the carriers of eternal values), they give children knowledge first of all.” In Nina’s opinion, too, “a teacher first of all delivers a lesson” and only then “he is also vospitatel’ (an upbringer).” Galina believed that teachers could do little in terms of vospitanie because they “get a finished product, a child who has his or her own worldview.” In sum, to this group, transmitting knowledge was a primary activity a teacher should be engaged in because school by definition was an institution designed for knowledge transmission.
The third group of the participants (Lydia and Natasha) argued that a teacher should drop the function of bringing up altogether. Lydia argued that as it was “very difficult to do both things at a lesson” and that “specialists should deal with vospitanie.” Natasha thought that instead of trying to “both educate and bring up, maybe, school should only leave the function of educating and give up upbringing.” In this group’s opinion, the only allegiance of a teacher should be to the subject he or she taught because it was impossible to both teach and bring up.

The term vospitanie encompassed socialization, child development, and spirituality development. Hence, in some cases, its purpose was articulated as bringing up “good, kind, intelligent students who will work for the good of the society” (Elena); or bringing up a citizen who had “a desire to do something good for oneself, for others, for the society” (Maria). In other cases, its purpose was seen in developing children’s “best qualities” (Anastasia), their “talents,” “creativity and personalities” (Elena). And lastly, it was about shaping spirituality and morality. In this case, dusha6 (the soul) of a child was the object of vospitanie. “Working on the dusha of a person is good,” and “the function of a vospitatel’ is to bring up the dusha of a person,” said Lydia. Dusha was seen as “still growing, developing” by Ksenia and she was afraid that children might “lose their dushi,” would “be spiritually impoverished” if she did not teach them to like

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6 Dusha is another culturally-loaded word which served as an organizing principle in the construction of the uniqueness of Russian people by Russian intelligentsia. Russian dusha was depicted as “mysterious, enigmatic” and beginning with the mid-19th century the concept has secured a permanent place in the imagination of Russian intelligentsia and has become one of the most important symbols of Russian culture (Pesmen, 2000, p. 11).
reading while they were still in the elementary school. The concept of dusha was important for Andrei, a history teacher, too, because “well-educated people very often do bad things that uneducated people don’t do” and “that is why we need education with dusha,” he explained.

The obuchenie and vospitanie discourse in the definition of a teacher. Thus by definition a teacher was someone who was engaged in two primary activities: transmitting knowledge and transmitting values, and accordingly, within this definition, two subject positions available to him were those of a knowledge transmitter and a value transmitter. These subject positions were inscribed within, what I call, the Obuchenie and Vospitanie discourse that was carried over from the Soviet to post-perestroika times. From its inception, the Soviet education system fulfilled two important functions (a) serving the needs of industrialization, and (b) forging of the “New Soviet Man” (Eklof, 2005; Kourova & Ashmore, 2004; Long & Long, 1999). Consequently, education consisted of two basic components: “obuchenie (instruction), and vospitanie, usually translated as ‘upbringing’” (Kerr, 2005, p. 110).

There is no corresponding noun for vospitanie in English. It “refers to the general blueprints for character formation contrived by the Soviet authorities” (Pankurst, 1996, p. 139) who never gave up “systematic efforts . . . to formulate, shape, and enforce a certain personality type in the Soviet population” (Etkind, 1996, p. 101). Teachers, in the general scheme of things, were the foot soldiers on the ideological front whose task was to inculcate communist ideals. As a former English teacher in a Russian school and now a professor in an American University (using a cliché all too well-known to all Soviet
people) put it, “The major goal of education was to teach everybody ‘in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism’ and to train dedicated builders of communism” (Eugene). “The builder of communism was to be peace-loving, internationalist, patriotic, law-abiding, collectivistic, hard-working, and militantly atheist” (Pankurst, 1996, p. 139) and, above all, loyal to the Soviet regime (Holmes, Read, & Voskresenskaya, 1995). Hence, Soviet teachers had no doubts who they were supposed to bring up, what to teach and what the goals of education were, and what the primary activities of a teacher should be in pre-perestroika Russia.

During the first years of perestroika, the word upbringing reminded the Russian people too much of the communist past and it almost disappeared from “pedagogical usage” (Kraevskii, 2002, p. 82). However, there was a growing anxiety about “restoring upbringing to its rightful place” in later years of perestroika (Kraevskii, 2002, p. 82). This is hardly surprising because the concept of vospitanie was a matter of great concern for both the Russian pre-revolutionary pedagogical community and the Russian intellectuals. For example, the famous Russian writer, Lev Tolstoi, believed that “the development not of mind but of good character” should be the primary goal of education (Long & Long, 1999, p. 3). This binary opposition development of mind versus development of good character found its reflection in the Soviet Obuchenie and Vospitanie discourse. This discourse provided teachers with the resources to define the teaching profession in keeping with the cultural expectations placed upon them by the society that was gone. Having thought about teaching in terms of transmitting knowledge and transmitting values all their lives, the Russian teachers, even if they were ready to
drop the function of transmitting values, could not help but define the profession using this discourse. However, while in the Soviet Union, the unquestioned emphasis was on upbringing, the analysis of the teachers’ talk demonstrated that the post-perestroika times opened up the possibility of placing instruction above upbringing or entirely focusing on instruction only.

**Should Teaching Be a Moral Duty or a Paid Job?**

It is a duty, as well as an honor, for every able-bodied citizen in the USSR to work conscientiously in his chosen, socially useful activity, and strictly observe labor discipline. Evading socially useful work is incompatible with the principles of socialist society. (Soviet Constitution, article 60, p. 20, as cited in Magun, 1996, p. 280)

The next important topic in the Russian teachers’ identity work was their grappling with the question of what a teacher’s attitude toward material reward for his job should be. I treated the words *money* and *work* as cultural key words here because the Russian teachers attribute culturally specific meanings to them. The analysis of words and phrases associated with work and money demonstrated that it was important for all of the Russian teachers to present themselves as being extremely dedicated to their work while being indifferent to material reward. Thus in their accounts of their job before perestroika they, firstly, talked of their job as being more than a job to them. Work meant life itself to them. Secondly, it was not money that they were working for but for some greater cause. What is of interest, this attitude toward work and material reward was
characteristic of all the Russian teachers. Consider, for example, the following two almost identical comments which best illustrate these sentiments:

> I was not afraid of anything then, I tried many things. I think teaching was everything for me then. I devoted my whole being to it. It was life for me. I could work day and night then, I was young. And it was interesting. (Ksenia)

> We were all enthusiasts then, if you ask me now how much money I got then, I can’t even tell you. It was not important for me. It was interesting for me to go to my job. It was a way of life for me. My job was a priority for me and my personal life came after my job. (Anna)

The teachers’ accounts of their job after perestroika continued to be focused on the purpose and meaning of work and material reward. However, nobody described work as a way of life any more. Work was about earning a livelihood. They had to double the teaching load in order to survive but the salaries they got could not keep up with inflation. As a result, their idealistic conceptions of work and money carried over from the Soviet to post-perestroika times had to be reexamined. On the one hand, all of the teachers were deeply “humiliated” and “offended” by the teacher remuneration. They were frustrated by, what they called, a “consumer attitude”\(^7\) toward a teacher’s job. It

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\(^7\) Consumer attitude means “to consume without replenishing moral expenses, positive energy that a teacher is giving away, it means giving nothing back to a teacher” (Marina). Consumerism (potrebiteles'ostvo) was a derogatory term in the Soviet Union. Those who only consumed without giving anything back were equated with parasites.
was still important to them to portray themselves as being beyond material interest. They found it difficult to break away from thinking about teaching more as a moral obligation than a profession that required proper remuneration. For example, Marina “after a long consideration” came to the conclusion that if somebody worked at school, he should not “think about salary” and had to “adapt and earn money somewhere else” and “go to school with a positive mood, with some joy” because school was different from any other social institution in the society. Likewise, Anna also believed that school and childhood were “sacred concepts” and school should not be turned into “a source of personal profit” as was done by some principals and teachers. She, personally, would “rather get less money, stay honest, remain true to principles, and feel that” she was “a decent person.” Andrei, the only male teacher in this study also strongly identified with this image of a teacher who could place himself above material reward. Here is what he said:

I do not work for money. I am trying to live like Socrates. I go to the market and say to myself, ‘My goodness, there are so many things here that I will not need in my life.’ This is how I live. I don’t need much. I am satisfied with what I have.

In addition, this attitude toward work as an end in itself, as an ultimate value in life, was evident in the binary opposition a ‘good’ versus a ‘bad’ teacher, too. Thus a good Russian teacher was defined as the one who was “gluboko predannyi” (highly dedicated to his profession; Ksenia); who “prosto ne mozhit zhit bez svoei raboty” (simply could not live without his job; Elena); and who he gave “his entire self to his work” (Natasha, Marina).
All of the Russian teachers in this study believed that their job had never been about money and material reward and should not be. But after perestroika, “everything is about money, money and money. It was not like that before. Now, even in the first grade all talk is about money, money, money. Money should not be in the first place,” bitterly exclaimed Maria. However, money was indeed in the first place and not only in the first graders’ talk. The mere fact that the teachers mentioned teacher remuneration only four times when they talked about their work before perestroika and 106 times across the interviews when they talked about their work after perestroika reveals that money, whether the teachers liked it or not, was becoming a very important signifier of their professional identity.

The Soviet Labor and Soviet Intelligentsia discourses in the Russian teachers’ talk about work and money. Why the Russian teachers chose to speak about work and material reward in such a fashion can be explained by the Soviet Labor discourse and the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse. These discourses were two of the most important discourses in the Soviet teachers’ professional identity formation. Both of these discourses set the boundaries for speaking about work and material reward in culturally acceptable ways. Contempt for material reward and devotion to one’s profession were the staple ingredients in the construction of one’s professional identity within these discourses.

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8 Stranius (2001) also reported that it was a sign of bad manners in the Soviet Union to show interest in money for teachers and artists for whom “Status-self-image as the conscience of society, as the ‘Great Educator’ – was always more important than salary” (p. 46).
Work was “a central cultural value” in the Soviet Union which evolved to a “work society” (Arendt, as cited in Magun, 1996, p. 282). Work was turned into the most important signifier in the Soviet people’s lives (Kukhterin, 2000). It became “the principal source of satisfaction” in the Soviet Union (Yanowitch, 1985, p. 19). Generations of the Soviet people were raised with the belief that any work “was inherently meaningful and noble” (Ashwin, 2000, p. 10). And like almost every major concept in the Soviet Union, soviet labor was compared to capitalist labor and described as more meaningful than capitalist labor which was devoid of spiritual and moral dimensions and was performed for satisfaction derived from material acquisition.

Within both of these discourses, a model person was someone who put public interests over private ones, and “spiritual” matters over “material” ones. Ideally, this model person gave his or her entire self to work, abandoned his or her privacy and personal interests, derived a moral and spiritual satisfaction “from work well done,” and did not think about material reward (Magun, 1996, p. 282). A number of subject positions were available for the teachers who used these discourses in their sense making of their work and material reward for their work. However, all of them reflected this view of work as an end in itself, a moral duty that was to be performed not for money but for moral satisfaction. The teachers in this study could not help but afford themselves the subject positions that were “hailed” within these discourses. Consequently, they spoke of themselves as a *selfless* teacher, a *dedicated* teacher, an *enthusiastic* teacher, a *decent* teacher, an *honest* teacher. They did not work for money, devoted all their beings to their work and loved their work to the degree that they did not even know where their
professional and personal lives began or ended. The sheer vocabulary choices they made to describe their attitude toward work and money, and the binary oppositions they set up to differentiate between a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ teacher show that they were still in the grip of these two discourses. Moreover, the identification with the model person inscribed within these discourses happened not only on the level of words. In Marina’s assessment:

The whole situation in education has taken toll on teachers. They work under such stress that they fall ill. They are emotionally unstable because their job is not properly rewarded. Their job is not appreciated. It could be easier for a teacher to reconcile with the poor remuneration if power acknowledged the importance of a teacher’s job. Before perestroika a teacher could at least get a moral satisfaction from the job. Now they do not have even this.

But this was not going to last long, in Andrei’s opinion, who viewed his generation as “the last of Mohicans . . . the last generation that will work for the sake of an idea.” He believed that after his “generation is gone,” when “those who are now in their thirties and forties will soon be replaced by the younger generation, they will say, ‘First pay and then we will work.’” But for this generation of teachers, if they wanted to live up to the ideals of a good teacher, it was impossible to utter these words. How could a good teacher who was “part of intelligentsia” and who was “ochen’ kul’turny (very cultured)” (Nina) possibly think about his job in terms of material reward? He could not say that he was doing his job for a paycheck because a devotion to an idea was what set a member of the intelligentsia apart from other layers of society. However, as the next
section demonstrates, his readiness to serve the greater cause at the expense of his personal interest came with a price tag. In return for his selfless service he wanted to be granted a special place in the society.

**What Place Should a Teacher Occupy in a Society?**

It would be nice to return to the old ways. It would be nice to restore respect to the profession of a doctor and a teacher. Right now, we don’t have a profession that could be considered honorable. The teaching profession is a cornerstone profession. Teachers in all respects are so diminished, so humiliated, why is it so? (Galina)

Other important topics in the process of the Russian teachers’ fashioning of their teacher identity were teacher significance and teacher status in the society. Analysis of teacher significance and status related words and phrases and ‘we, teachers,’ ‘they, teachers’ statements demonstrated that a teacher’s place in the general order of things was one of the biggest concerns for teachers. The teachers’ nostalgic accounts of teacher significance and status in the past revealed that though they all were critical of the numerous faults of the Soviet education, and quite resentful of relentless “petty micromanagement” (Galina) of their job, they also had many positive things to say both about the system and the work in that system. They all liked that the system (a) was egalitarian in nature, (b) provided free access to education for all, (c) supported teachers, and (d) had many achievements in which they could take pride.

In addition, they all fondly remembered the Soviet period as the time when teachers were held in high esteem by the society and by the state. Here are some of the
examples that illustrate their sentiments about a teacher’s status in the Soviet Union. In Eugene’s opinion, “the society supported a teacher, needed him and officially it was proclaimed that a teacher was a very prestigious figure in Soviet society.” To convey the sense of cultural importance of a Soviet teacher Ksenia and Marina invoked a well-known cliché, “nositeli vechnogo, dobrogo, i svetlogo” (carriers of the eternal, the kind, and the bright). And Anna believed that “from a historical point of view, a teacher, especially in rural areas, was an authority in many matters. He was the centre of culture, upbringing. He was a kind of an ideal to live up to.” In Ksenia’s opinion, in the past, “by his behavior, his attitude to life, a teacher was a saint for kids and even for parents. He taught. He was a knowledge-bearer. He was respected.” Her grandmother personified this kind of a teacher for her and she used another widely known cliché of a “Teacher with the capital letter ‘T’” to characterize her as an exceptional teacher. Luda, a mathematics teacher from the former Soviet Union, who taught in an American inner-city high school at the time of the interview, pointed at the teacher’s unquestioned, taken-for-granted authority. “In our culture a teacher’s word was everything . . . even if you thought that the teacher was wrong. Even if he was disliked, a student had to obey and respect the teacher. No matter what kind of a teacher he was,”9 she said.

9 According to Webber (2001), “This amount of reverence shown towards teachers stemmed in part from the general culture of Soviet society, in which education, upbringing, the virtues of a good citizen, and the acquisition of knowledge were portrayed as noble matters which transcended the perspective of the individual, and were related directly to the development of the State and the progress towards communism” (p. 228).
After perestroika, teachers in Russia experienced a rapid decline in status in society. They were appalled by the lack of respect for their job and loss of status. However, they continued to work hard. The question is why, despite dismal working conditions, pathetic salaries, and emotional distress, teachers in this study did not quit their job and had no intention of quitting. Betsy, a former Peace Corps volunteer, confessed that she was not sure that she could be a teacher in Russia for “what you are paid and what you have to give. You really have to love teaching in order to be a teacher in Russia,” she said. And love of teaching, indeed, was one of the main reasons the interviewed teachers gave for staying in the teaching profession. When asked why they would not consider changing their profession, they said that they loved kids, liked teaching, liked learning, their job gave them a sense of accomplishment, and their job was still a way of life for them. Though the participants were appalled by the lack of respect for their job and loss of status in the society, they still held on to the notion that teaching was “a noble profession.” They were still convinced that they were doing a very important job. They could not quit their job because “these were kids” (Lydia) and because the future of the country depended on them. Teachers could “influence the situation in the country,” believed Nina. “We are the future” and “they’d better know it and turn to the teacher or else they would wish they had done something,” said Andrei.

However, their unwillingness to look for better opportunities can only partially be explained by their dedication to their job, love of kids, love of learning and teaching, their strong identification with the image of a teacher as a cultural worker, as a bearer of
spiritual values, and as a protector of “the most sacred” (Anna) in the society, the child.\textsuperscript{10} There were, of course, practical reasons for not quitting their job, too. But the participants did not mention them directly as an explanation for staying in the teaching profession. These practical reasons, implicitly stated in their talk, can be summarized as the following:

1. The reality was that there were not many job opportunities out there.
2. Teaching for some teachers was the only thing that they could do.
3. Some felt they had already invested too much into the teaching profession to change careers.
4. Some supplemented their symbolical wages with the money they got from tutoring.
5. Some worked hard because they were afraid to lose their job which still brought a steady income.
6. Their trust in private businesses was almost non-existent.

In addition, practical concerns and fear, for some to a greater degree than for others, were significant contributing factors in their choice to stay in the teaching profession. On the one hand, thinking about the teaching profession in terms of sacrifice, total dedication, selflessness, that is, idealization of the profession was no less important than practical concerns for the teachers in this study at the time of the interview. On the

\textsuperscript{10} Children were considered to “be the only ‘privileged class’ in Soviet society” (Stephenson, 2001, p. 187).
other hand, they realized that with the change of core values in the society, especially in regards to material acquisition and material reward, they had little chance of retaining this status of a cultural worker. They were forced to ask themselves the question of “What kind of influence can I have with my salary?” in Andrei’s words.

The Soviet Intelligentsia discourse in the Russian teachers’ talk about teacher status. These particular ways of speaking about a Soviet teacher’s status were not merely overinflated self-perceptions of humiliated and frustrated teachers. They used the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse both to speak about the elevated teacher status before perestroika and express their frustrations about the loss of that status after perestroika. Within this discourse, the archetypical identity for members of intelligentsia was that of a “Great Educator.” The Soviet Intelligentsia inherited this view of intelligentsia as a Great Educator from the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia.

The term intelligentsia first came into use in the 19th century in Russia. Originally, it was simply employed to denote educated and semi-educated people whose professional identity and professional functions did not fit into the descriptions of existing social categories. Over time, the term designated a group of people who saw their mission as enlightening the Russian people (narod) and freeing them from ignorance, servitude, and oppression (McDaniel, 1996; Nahirny, 1983; Pomper, 1970).

There were three distinct groups of the Russian intelligentsia which had different visions of a New World and a New Man in that New World. However, one particular vision promoted by a particular brand of the Russian intelligentsia known as populists became dominant by the end of the 19th century. Their vision of the New World was based on
equality of material conditions in which people were more concerned with spiritual matters than material acquisitions. The New Man was supposed to be “ever ready to renounce his personal identity in order to be consumed in the ideal moi commun —in humanity or narod” (Nahirny, 1983, p. 110). Their views of the New World and the New Man were later taken up by Russian Bolsheviks (see also pp. 247-251). The Bolsheviks replaced the concept of narod with the concept of proletariat and intelligentsia was assigned the position of “the temporary bearer of proletarian consciousness” (Halfin, 2000, p. 6). They saw the proletariat as a kind of vessel into which the intelligentsia’s consciousness could somehow be transferred (Halfin, 2000, p. 105). Consequently, the Russian Bolsheviks acted on the notion of the possibility of human engineering as a result of cross-breeding of proletariat and intelligentsia, which was defined as “intermediate stratum (prosloika)” between proletariat and peasants (Palat, 2001, p. 135).

The populists’ rejection of one’s personal identity in the name of salvation of humankind, their contempt for material reward, their commitment to the cause, and their self-assigned role of the enlightener of narod—all this found reflection in the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse. As a consequence, the Soviet Intelligentsia had distinct characteristics that set it apart both from other layers of the society and from the Western intelligentsia. It had a strong sense of service to the society, and in comparison with its Western counterpart, it was superior to it in that it was above material interests and more concerned with spiritual matters than earthly ones. Members of the Soviet Intelligentsia willingly embraced this part of the discourse and strongly identified with the special mission assigned to it and with the “self-image as the conscience of society, as the ‘Great
Educator’” (Stranius, 2001, p. 46). As the analysis of the teachers’ talk showed, they also strongly identified with the special mission assigned to the member of intelligentsia as a Great Educator.

The Russian Teachers’ Talk About Power

Crucial to the Russian teachers’ identity construction were also the ways they defined power. Two words—narod (people) and vlast’ (power)—served as pivotal points around which the Russian teachers constructed the concept of power. These words were also locked up in the binary opposition, vlast’ versus narod. I spotted this binary opposition in all of the teachers’ talk. In the following, consider how the Russian teachers defined power in the society at large, and power in education, and how they envisioned the relations between power and people, and between educational bureaucrats and teachers.

Vlast’ versus narod. To begin with, the analysis of the Russian teachers’ statements about power revealed that they thought about vlast’ (power) both as an abstract and a concrete force. As an abstract force, vlast’ was referred to as She. She was akin to a natural force that had mystical qualities. As a natural force, she was imagined as something “dark, incomprehensible, and secretive” (Ksenia). She was volatile, unpredictable, and She was “brewing something up there” (Marina). She was also “punitive, relentless, and unforgiving” (Lydia, Kristina). Lydia thought of vlast’ as “a merciless chain that does not like any interruptions and that does not forgive teachers” and Ksenia had a feeling of vlast’ being always there. To convey her sense of its
omnipresence, she compared it to “a sword of Damocles hanging over the teachers’ heads” (Ksenia).

When vlast’ was referred to as They, or vlasti, power was imagined as a concrete force. It referred to anyone who had access to resources and in some ways could make the teachers do something. Regardless whether power was referred to as She or They, it was always locked up, either explicitly or implicitly, in the binary opposition to “Us,” powerless, ordinary narod. Spatially, They were up there and narod somewhere down here. They were far removed from Us, narod, and our concerns. Narod became aware of vlast’ only from the mass media in relation to some political scandals (Ksenia). In Marina’s opinion, “at this particular moment Russia” was “such a bureaucratic state” in which “vlast’ wanted one thing, and society wanted many things.” She felt that both “those in power and the society” were “consolidating.” In her assessment, while “those in power were drifting further and further away from the society, detaching themselves more and more from the society, all kinds of organizations were appearing.” But “the system” was “entirely in the hands of vlast’, not of masses.” The society was “separated from vlast’.” She believed that the “same thing was happening on the level of schools.” Hence, “a student was on his own, a teacher—on his, the kollektiv—on its own.” Though vlast’ was far removed from narod, it needed narod to get things done but did not want to give narod anything in return. Thus Lydia thought that vlast’ needed her “only in the capacity of a cog in some kind of a process” and that They remembered about her only when They wanted her to do something. “Vlast’ never feels that it owes anybody anything,” she said. Likewise, Kristina used the metaphor of cogs to describe the
existing relations between vlast’ and narod in the society. Her envisioning of these relations is worth quoting at length because it neatly captures the Russian teachers’ sentiments towards power. Said she:

People are afraid of the state machine. They are just cogs in this machine. They are these little small mechanisms that help this machine work. A human being (chelovek) is born into this state machine and works for this machine. He can do very little for himself. He is afraid that this machine will crash him. We are parts of the machine but we are the mute parts.

Unlike other teachers, she thought that narod, a human being, and all of Us were part of the machine and could not exist outside that machine. Everybody was in the total grip of the structure into which they were born, and which existed only thanks to its parts. But the parts had no say in the decisions the machine made through the bureaucrats, or people in power, an anonymous army of They. They were introducing reforms that were against Us, narod, and “whatever is being done in our country is against people. All the reforms in utilities, education, and health care are aimed at making it impossible for people to afford housing, health care, and education,” she believed. They kept narod uninformed about the reforms and, because narod knew nothing “about the reforms in education, housing, and health care,” it did not voice its opinion about the reforms. “They just said that there would be terrible changes. . . . There were literally three sentences about the reforms in education and the words ‘terrible changes’ were used,” Kristina said in conclusion.
Vlasti, in all the teachers’ opinion, did not want to deal with everyday concerns of ordinary people and had an acute hearing problem. Even if narod voiced its opinion, They tended to ignore narod. “We don’t keep silent, We let Them know our opinion. True, They don’t hear Us. Power in Russia very often does not hear or pretends that it doesn’t. Social services exist only on paper,” complained Andrei. In addition, those in power did everything they wanted, because laws did not work. People were powerless, because even if there were “good laws,” they did not know the laws. In Galina’s opinion, the reason the laws did not work in Russia was because for “the selected ones, the rules could be bent,” and “certain forces in the country controlled the situation, and profited from this kind of politics.” Anna also believed that laws were created “for certain interest groups” and for other groups it was not good if these laws worked. So these groups did not want them implemented. She lamented that there was “no one in the government who would understand and protect teachers.” Though, “on the one hand, teachers are organizers, they cannot protect themselves on the state level and outside the school they are powerless,” in her opinion. She thought that if only laws worked in Russia, it would be better. “Though we are very critical about America sometimes, laws work there. And it is good,” she concluded. Galina gave the following explanation of the relations between power, people, religion, and law:

Russian people are law-abiding in relation to authority. They subscribe to a philosophy of three kinds of power residing in one person in authority. A person in authority for us is like a God. God cannot make mistakes. We take him as he is. Tsar’s authority, Church and Law cannot exist separately in our country . . .
and this connection has always existed and will always exist. It’s something eternal . . . It is a certain type of mentality.

And perestroika did not bring change to the relations between vlast’ and narod.

“But what has changed?” she asked. “Faces have changed, but the reverence to people in authority, to the positions they hold is the same,” she said. Marina, too, believed that an individual and the position he or she held were not differentiated from each other. As a result, “everything depends on a personality, on who has a chance to have that power in Russia. And this was true “on the level of president, ministers, teachers, and administration.” Power relations in the society were replicated in schools and one could always “draw a parallel between teacher-student, administration-teacher relations, and power relations existing in the society. At present, when reforms are under way, so much depends on the personality of a teacher,” she said. At the same time, Marina also believed that people in power and teachers occupied different planes of existence. They were “in the power system,” which was “a different system,” and in which “you have to obey.” In that system there existed “a hierarchical, top-down subordination” and They had to “implement the directives” that were “imposed on them.” They lived “a life of their own.” She would not even know that They existed if They did not often come to school with inspections. The inspections “irritated” her because during the inspections “school worked for them, not for students.” She doubted that someone who had never worked in school could be of any help to her. Their power was in their knowledge of instructions and documents but she believed that They had “no idea what a teaching
process in reality means.” She was convinced that teaching was such “a complex process that it can be harmful to influence this process with instructions and requirements.”

Elena and Lydia, too, thought that power and teachers occupied universes which were ordered differently. Elena said that as an elementary school teacher she spent all her time in “a very small world of children from age six ’til nine” and that she was “so distant from structures of power” which was “an entirely different world.” She was surprised that anyone would be interested “in this particular question” because it was “not power,” it was “children’s world.” Though she was “concerned about it” she would “never in [her] life study this question.” As she was “a very modest person” she could not “attract Their attention to teachers’ problems.” “They are on the top and people in power should know everything and do everything because we trust them,” she said.

Lydia also thought that teachers had a “world of their own.” In her opinion, teachers themselves were “like children.” They were “not ready for the world of grown-ups” because school was a place in which children created “a special atmosphere of work” and the relations were different at school.

**Teachers and educational bureaucrats.** The ways all of the teachers described educational bureaucrats showed that, in general, educational bureaucrats, just like vlast’ in the society at large, were far removed from the concerns of teachers and schools. Just like vlast’ in the society at large, vlast’ in education was not seen as performing any positive functions either. Here are some of the comments that illustrate the Russian teachers’ negative attitudes toward educational bureaucrats:
1. *They* were seen as incompetent: “It is easy to come up with theories, but it is difficult to apply them in reality in underfunded, poorly equipped schools. *They* tell us what to do though. *They* have no idea how to implement their theories,” complained Maria.

2. *They* had no understanding about what was happening in schools: “*They* have no clue about what is going on in schools,” believed Ksenia.

3. *They* increased teachers’ workload by demanding meaningless paperwork and, ultimately, were engaged in activities that did not make much sense to teachers: “*They* all consider themselves to be very important. *They* are busy with paperwork, some activities. And I don’t know what else they do,” said Marina. “What do *They* do? *They* organize Olympiads and demand paperwork in the spirit of the ’60s and ’70s. Quite a lot of paperwork,” stated Ksenia.

4. *They* could not solve any problems: “If those in power were solving school problems, then it would be a positive power,” believed Olesya. However, “simply gathering statistical data and occasionally informing teachers about how many schools were opened and repaired and how many prizes were won by each school” were, in her opinion, “useless and boring activities.”

5. *They* were of no help: “*We* get all kinds of instructions from them but, unfortunately, these instructions are not helpful either for school or teachers,” said Marina. “As a teacher, in my entire life as a teacher, (I don’t want to
offend them), I have never got any help from them. They haven’t been of any use to me,” she continued.

6. They came to school with the purpose of finding fault, not of helping: “They read complaint letters, and come to schools with the purpose of punishing not helping,” said Ksenia. “Moreover, after the inspections which are many, They write reports, then read aloud their comments about each teacher. It might be unpleasant for teachers,” and “They can always find something against you,” stated Elena.

7. They were unwilling to change: They did not understand that the times were different and They had to change their leadership styles in Ksenia’s and Rimma’s opinion.

In sum, the teachers leveled the same charges against the educational leadership that the highest ranking educational official, Anastasia, leveled against teachers. She accused them of not being partners in the educational process. In the teachers’ opinion, the educational administration did not see teachers as equal partners either. In Marina’s words, “power expects teachers to salute and accept any kind of reform without asking any questions.”

The Soviet Intelligentsia discourse in the Russian teachers’ talk about power.

These particular ways of the Russian teachers’ thinking about power was also informed by the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse within which ‘true’ intelligenty (members of the intelligentsia) should never be part of vlast’ but rather “perennial critics of their own society and culture” (Churchward, 1973, p. 1). This positioning of the intelligentsia in
relation to vlast’ is deeply rooted in Russian culture and history. Historically, the emergence of the intelligentsia in Russia was “an unintended consequence of actions taken by Russia’s rulers to establish Russia on equal footing with other European powers” either technologically or culturally (Pomper, 1970, p. 9). Its origins can be traced back to Peter the Great who turned Russia into “the pioneer society of forced modernization” (McDaniel, 1996, p. 22). Peter the Great’s reforms laid the foundation for the appearance of a new socially distinct group of people which was conceived as a countering force to tradition, and which was expected to renounce its roots in order to bring change to the society. On the one hand, they were assigned the role of reformers; on the other hand, all of the Russian tsars, starting with Peter the Great, though longing for change, never could stomach the reforms proposed by the group and severely restricted any of its independent action. From the start they were socially marginalized and put into the position of perpetually defending their existence. They could not help but create a system of thought in which they had to articulate their stance to both the state and narod (McDaniel, 1996; Nahirny, 1983; Pomper, 1970). They were neither part of narod nor part of the state from the start. However, both narod and the state needed the intelligentsia. While in relation to narod they assigned themselves the subject position of an educator, in relation to power, the Russian intelligenty based “their sense of self on a demonstrative non-involvement with the world of officialdom” (Uspenskii, as cited in Knight, 2006, p. 757) and assumed the subject position of a perpetual critic of power. Neither of the positions was entirely self-imposed but was a result of the interplay of
complex power relations between the intelligentsia and officialdom at concrete historical periods.

The Soviet regime’s attitude toward its intelligentsia has not been different from the attitude of Russian tsars. Depending on historical expediency, the regime used it for different purposes: as agents of modernization, as scapegoats for failures of the system, or as cultural workers whose role in the transformation of the society, validation, or perpetuation of the communist myths was invaluable (Halfin, 2000; Stranius, 2001). Thus, in relation to narod, members of the intelligentsia continued to imagine themselves to be the “enlightened few” whose mission was to educate the “unenlightened many” (Nahirny, 1983, p. 137). In relation to power, the Soviet Intelligentsia, like the Russian intelligentsia, assumed the subject position of a perpetual critic of power who was outside the power system. Though it was not part of narod, it imagined itself to be part of narod. When the intelligentsia identified with narod it was imagined to be a homogenous mass and it easily spoke in the voice of a victim who was oppressed by this system.

On the level of schools, teachers were far from being a homogeneous mass. They were divided into the majority of teachers versus a small group of individual teachers. The majority of teachers in relation to power were portrayed as an “invisible,” “inert” “silent mass” (Marina) which was “scared, not creative, not free” (Ksenia), “indifferent” (Anna, Galina), unable to “break through” (Ksenia), preoccupied merely with surviving, not wanting “to upset the apple cart” (Anna), playing “a secondary role or a very insignificant role,” expressing “their discontent in hallways” (Natasha), keeping “their
own points of view to themselves,” forming “cliques” and talking “about everything in their little groups” (Galina).

The small group of teachers, “unlike the silent mass, played a major role in school affairs” (Olesya), and “boleut dushoi sa obshee delo”\(^{11}\) (worried about the common good). These individual teachers spoke up and got punished for speaking up (Anna), expressed their point of view and “let the administration know their point of view” and tried “to change something by telling the administration publicly about their concerns” (Natasha). They were “creative, freer” (Ksenia, Marina), and were able to change. They were not afraid “proyavit’ sebya” (to reveal their selves) (Marina).

In relation to school administration, Ksenia thought that teachers were divided into those who sought favors from the principal, got favors, got rewards versus those who did not. Those who sought favors bowed and gave gifts on time, inflated the grades in order to get certified (Marina). Those who did not seek favors “quietly did their job,” “rebelled,” or “tried to change something at the cost of their health” (Ksenia) and did not inflate the grades (Galina, Marina).

In relation to students, teachers were seen as being dobrosocvestnye (good-willed with conscience) versus nedobrosovestnye (ill-willed without conscience). Nedobrosovestnye teachers abused power (Ksenia). They humiliated students in front of other students, abused them psychologically and emotionally, punished them by grades

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\(^{11}\) *Bolet’ dushoi za* is literally to be sick or pained in /with one’s *dusha* about something” (Pesmen, 2000, p. 54).
(Ksenia, Anna, Galina, Marina, Natasha, & Nina), kept “them under constant stress,” did not “actually teach but only” throw “test after test at them.” They were “like tyrants,” they were “sick” (Ksenia). But dodrosovestnye teachers also used grades as a source of power. The question was about giving a “5” or a “4”12 (Ksenia, Nina).

Thus the binary oppositions the teachers set up showed that in relation to power, teachers were on the wrong side of the opposition if they were not able to stand up for themselves and others and were afraid to express their opinion. Those who failed to assume the subject position of a critic did not live up to the ideals of the “true” intelligentsia. In fact, historically, only a few members of intelligentsia could be called “true” intelligenty. What distinguished the “true” intelligenty from “the majority of the professionally-trained specialists” was (a) their indifference to climbing up the career ladder and material reward, (b) their ability to stay outside the establishment (Churchward, 1973, p. 1), (c) their unbending will in the pursuit of “Truth” at any cost (Nahirny, 1983), (d) their ability to tell this “Truth” publicly, and (e) their unwillingness to compromise one’s sovest’ (conscience).13 Sovest’ is yet another concept that helps the Russian people to differentiate between what is moral and immoral. Compromising one’s sovest’ is akin to losing one’s soul (Pesmen, 2000). The death sentence for ‘true’

12 The Russian system of grading is numeric in which “5” means an excellent, superior performance, and “4” means a good performance.

13 “Conscience as a kind of centered moral evaluation aimed at self-improvement could be synonymous with dusha” (Pesmen, 2000, p. 54).
intelligentsia is becoming part of the system, not fulfilling its vital task of offering opposition to the system.

Teachers, being professionally-trained specialists, would not be classified as ‘true’ intelligentsia. However, this did not prevent the Russian teachers in this study from thinking that they were part of intelligentsia as their talk about power and their work both before and after perestroika showed. But, as the intelligentsia in general, teachers were divided into those who lived up to the ideals of ‘true’ intelligentsia versus those who did not. All the teachers in this study imagined themselves to be in opposition to power. Hence, they were part of the “true” intelligentsia.

**Reforms and Teacher Identity**

Now the Russian system of education can be compared to a stormy, murky, but also fascinating lake which contains a lot of secrets. Perhaps, it will clear some day or, perhaps, it will not. Now, it’s murky, though it is very appealing.

(Rimma)

I think so many teachers here have been kind of squashed already, now this test is squashing them even more. (Betsy)

This section introduces the Russian participants’ views on the reforms and the Unified State Exam. It (a) compares the highest ranking educational official’s views on the reforms to the teachers’ views, (b) presents the teachers’ definitions of the USE and their opinions on the impact it had on their job, and (c) describes which subject positions inscribed within the reforms the teachers found undesirable and which of the
aforementioned discourses they used to defend their arguments both against and for the reforms.

Reforms, market relations, the West, and teacher identity. This subsection compares Anastasia’s (the highest ranking educational official’s) opinion on the reforms to the teachers’ opinions. The key words in the teachers’ talk about reforms were *lack, deprivation, loss of status*; in Anastasia’s talk the key words were *opportunity, market economy, competition, and change*. In Anastasia’s opinion, though it was “difficult to characterize change with one word” she was sure that education was “more integrated into the society,” “oriented to educating the workforce” for the market economy. In her view, “unfortunately,” the public was not ready for the change in school management, and, “paradoxically,” the state was “more interested in sharing the functions than the public,” and the state was “imposing this model of management urging the public to take a more active part in school management.” She thought that in the new system, which was “more geared towards a market economy, and, hopefully, towards a more democratic society,” there was a need for a different type of school and different type of a teacher. Schools could no longer remain Soviet “temples of knowledge.” They had to be “competitive because the country [could] not afford to put schools outside the competition.” Though “education is a very specific sphere, and all the business rules—rules of profit and effectiveness—are not 100% applicable in education, we want competition among schools,” she said. She was convinced that the money “would go after the child and competition would win.” However, when asked how she imagined this process of money going after the child, she could not give any definitive answer. She
brushed off the question by saying that she did not think that it was “the main thing,” and that there was “no standardized criteria,” and that “all the points of views” were “moot.”

As neither the state was ready and willing to fully fund education, nor the majority of the society was ready and able to pay for education at any level, “the market model of the organization of education” meant that “raising the level of effectiveness of education” had “to be achieved by reducing the costs of education” (Borisenkov, 2007, p. 21). This, in its turn, among many other things, meant paying meager wages to Russia’s teachers who already worked “under almost unimaginable conditions” (Kerr, 2005, p. 122). No wonder that not a single teacher had a positive view of the reforms. A general feeling of frustration, anger, and helplessness pervaded their talk. They viewed themselves as being caught up in reforms, endless experiments which were ill-conceived, which worked against, not for people, and of which they were poorly informed. They were on the receiving end of the reforms and they had a long list of complaints about their working conditions and the state of education (a) overcrowded classes; (b) overloaded curriculum; (c) lack of teaching resources; (d) poorly equipped classrooms; (e) chronic lack of time for professional development and rest; (f) work overload; (g) stress and burn out; (h) lack of support from parents, the educational administration, and the state; (i) confusion and uncertainty about goals of education, about the reforms; (j) lack of direction; and (k) uneasiness about what to do about the widening gap between the poor and the rich and the effect of this gap on their job. They complained that they mainly learned “about current reforms through mass media” (Ksenia); that they got only “bits and pieces of news from rare articles, and TV programs about reforms,” that they
had to “make guesses about what is going to happen next” (Marina); and that mass media fed into their fear of reforms by telling people to expect “terrible changes in education” without specifying what these changes would be (Kristina).

The role of the West in the reforms was also brought up in the interviews. In Anastasia’s account, which reflected the official view, the World Bank was just “an organization that gives loans for certain educational programs” and “wants to gain profit from the investments.” According to her, the Russian Ministry of Education and regions created these educational programs and they had “to be accountable to the World Bank for the expenses. That’s it.” In the perceptions of the teachers in this study, the World Bank was yet another alien force that made their life more difficult. Present in some teachers’ talk were themes that recur with remarkable consistency in times of trouble in Russian history:

1. About Russia being distinct from the West and hence, its inability to be like the West: For example, Nina doubted that people in Russia, who “have a different mentality after all” and who “internalized the values of the system very well,” could do things “differently.”

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14 Anastasia thought that teachers themselves were to be blamed for being uninformed and that a teacher who was “active enough himself in search of information” knew everything about reforms.

15 However, her talk is replete with themes of restructuring, decentralizing, and competition, which shows that the Russian Ministry of Education has very little room for “creativity” in the reforms.
2. Uneasiness about blindly copying things from the West: “We are looking at the West,” said Maria, but “instead of taking the best from the West, Russia is mindlessly parroting the West,” believed Andrei.

3. The West’s desire to weaken Russia: Hence, reforms were viewed as a kind of conspiracy that was instigated by the West (namely, by the World Bank). As Kristina put it:

   This policy is coming from somewhere else. It is the politics of the World Bank. There are certain forces in the world for whom it is good to put us into this situation in health care, education, and housing. They dictate our country how we should live, on what money. When you are being told how to live, how much money you should spend, people are deprived of the right to express their opinion.

   Rimma, being a researcher and a leader of an educational project, liked the fact that education was “being invested,” that there was “an opportunity to take part in all kinds of programs.” However, she dreaded the idea that current investments and decisions might turn out to be not the right ones: “If we are not making the right decision, we will be buried under our debts. There is no free cheese,” she worried. But this was never discussed in the media. Instead, each time the World Bank representatives visited the republic, the official view was “how fortunate we were to have been chosen as part of the project,” said Marina.

   While the complaints about the working conditions and low wages were numerous, I would argue that the main complaint, however, was about a teacher identity, not the working conditions per se. Their teacher identity, which was informed by the
“old” discourses, was in a state of deep crisis that was exacerbated not only by the current educational reforms but also by the collapse of the Soviet system. The transition from a socialist society to a market society proved to be a painful process for the teachers not only because of the deterioration of their material conditions but also because the very foundations of their moral universe had been shattered to pieces. While Anastasia and the Russian officialdom fluently talked the language borrowed from the Free Market discourse, the teachers were hardly versed in this discourse. To argue against the reforms and to make certain identity claims they continued to hold on to the “old” discourses.

Unlike Anastasia, the interviewed teachers seemed to be unaware that the state was on a mission to create a culture of market relations in education. It is quite telling that she mentioned the word “competition,” “compete,” or “competitive” eight times and “market” and “marketable” six times during the interview to characterize change in education. And not a single teacher, except one,\(^\text{16}\) mentioned these words in any context. One might argue that the mere absence of these words in the interviewed teachers’ talk demonstrates that they were either unaware that competition and the culture of market relations were supposed to be the driving forces in education, or not willing to think of education in terms of market relations; or as they complained, they were not part of any debates concerning the reforms.

In Rimma’s assessment, teachers were “in a state of losing values” because, “on the one hand, they understand that they should be the ones who are the bearers of these values” but “on the other hand, . . . a teacher does not belong to the well-provided layer

\(^{16}\) Natasha wanted her students to be marketable.
of the society, or, to say it honestly, some teachers are unstable economically.” Teachers could no longer afford to be “the carriers of universal values” because “these universal values” were “not congruent with their material well-being.” They had to think of their families and giving education to their own children. That is why there was “a shift in the value system of a teacher,” she concluded.

What is noteworthy, the Soviet iconic image of a selfless teacher who abandons his private interests in the name of educating children and who continues to place dedication above practical considerations continues to shape the society’s expectations in regards to the teaching profession. People look down at the teacher for earning so little but expect him to continue working as hard as before and they get frustrated and angry if they see signs of erosion of teacher dedication. Consider the following two quotes which illustrate how deep-rooted are these beliefs about this particular type of a teacher in the society. The first quote blames the teachers for contributing to social injustice, the implication being that, no matter what, they have to rise above the circumstances and stop contributing to the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor:

While we do not wish to condemn teachers who find themselves in a situation where they have to survive by any means, nonetheless, whether willingly or not, these “sowers of what is wise and eternal” are becoming active participants in the social differentiation of young people. (Ziiatidinova, 2007, p. 54)

The second quote demonstrates the society’s anxiety over the loss of this particular type of a selfless, dedicated teacher: “We have lost a great deal; not least, we have also partially lost the traditions of a Russian teaching community that used to be
dedicated to its cause rather than pragmatic” (italics in original, “Reform of the System of Education,” 2002, p. 20). These quotes also demonstrate that A Teacher with the Capital Letter ‘T’ discourse was used not only by the teachers but was widely circulated in Russian society by people writing on the reforms. This discourse continued to impose cultural expectations about particular ways of being and acting as teachers.

What is USE? In the following, first consider what sense the Russian teachers made of the Unified State Exam mandate in the process of naming and describing it. The key words in their definitions were a good idea, an experiment, an objective tool for assessment. In their evaluation of what they turned into they used the words a sad story, a mistake, a departure from traditions. In the following, first consider some of their definitions and then what the teachers thought was wrong with its implementation. They defined the USE as:

1. A good idea in essence: It was “a good idea to create an opportunity for kids from peripheries.” The idea was that “well-prepared, truly well-prepared students will have a chance to be admitted into ‘normal’ universities, from all over the country” (Marina) “depending on the scores they got” (Natasha).

2. An experiment: “It’s an experiment that we take part in” (Elena). “It is an experiment which reflects certain values and on which certain amount of money was spent” (Anna).

3. An attempt to objectively assess teachers’ job and students’ knowledge (Marina, Maria).
4. A necessary response to the emergence of diverse educational programs and diverse educational outcomes (Maria).

5. A tool for authorities to evaluate teacher and school performance “using numbers” (Galina).

What it turned into was perceived as (a) “a sad story” (Marina); (b) “a mistake” (Marina, Andrei); (c) “a departure from our traditions, from humanistic principles” (Andrei); (d) “a one-sided assessment” that was not indicative of what a student knew (Ksenia, Anna, Natasha, Lydia, Kristina); and (e) harm. In Marina’s opinion it brought “only harm because it is imposed from the top by people who do not know the situation at the bottom.” It kept changing, evolving (Olesya, Nina). It impeded independent thinking and creativity. “The so-called Unified State Exam asks absolutely stupid questions, which require absolutely stupid answers. So stupid that a kid does not even try to think,” said Galina. “If you ask such silly questions as how many buttons Chichikov had on his jacket, three, four, or five, who cares? Why would you ask such questions? Chichikov will be Chichikov with any number of buttons on his jacket,” stated Ksenia.

All the teachers also believed that it was unfair to students who had a test anxiety, that it privileged students who could do tests in a limited time, and who were good test-takers, and left students who were gifted and non-standard thinkers behind. It was unfair because one exam determined the future of a child, in Ksenia’s and Anna’s opinions. Children, in Anna’s words, were turned into “rabbits for experiments” who, in Andrei’s

17 A character in N.V. Gogol’s novel, Dead Soul.
view, were “lost behind numbers.” “In the name of what all this is being done if a human being is lost behind numbers?” he wondered.

One of the professed aims of the exam, according to Putin (see p. 38) was to fight corruption in education. However, the exam did not eliminate corruption, in the teachers’ opinion. There was room for dishonesty for all actors involved in the procedure: students, parents, teachers, bureaucrats. Students continued cheating: “They copy each other’s tests and it is Ok,” said Nina. Teachers “helped” students to cheat (Ksenia, Olesya, Marina, Kristina). Dishonest bureaucrats made the exams available to parents for money: “There are dishonest bureaucrats…money buys everything,” believed Natasha. “They say that parents buy the answers usually in the Ministry of Education. There are people who know how to do it. I don’t know how they do it. I heard this from parents,” said Kristina. In sum, the teachers believed that the ways it was implemented and the ways the exam was appropriated by some parents, teachers, and students ran counter to its professed goals.

In addition, in Ksenia’s opinion, the exam made the teachers’ jobs more stressful, made them feel more insecure “because they don’t feel confident, because they themselves are under stress, because they themselves are being constantly checked. And after this test they will work even harder.” It meant more work for the same money complained Olesya and Lydia: “To get ready for the USE a teacher has to do a huge, huge amount of work….Their work is not compensated properly, they are squeezed in a juice squeezer” (Olesya); “You have to prepare the kids for the exam. This means that
you have to keep learning yourself. You have to work more for the same low salary” (Lydia).

It also meant distrust of a teacher in Andrei’s and Lydia’s opinion. “It is impossible to see lichnost’ (the personality) of the student in testing ….I was the witness of his growth. They don’t trust me as a teacher. I teach them, I work with them, and they send the test,” complained Andrei. “If before I taught a kid for five years and I myself assessed him and if I gave him an excellent grade, nobody wanted to question the credibility of my assessment,” said Lydia. Maria believed that it put a teacher into a “no-win” situation: No matter how hard he worked, “the teacher’s job is evaluated according to the results of the test,” she said. It meant teaching to the test, in Kristina’s view: “It’s more time spent on teaching to the test. Otherwise, students won’t be able to pass the test. The teacher will have to set time away for teaching to the test,” she said.

On the positive side, students could be admitted to universities without taking university entrance exams. It freed their time and they did not have to spend their whole summer taking tests. It gave them a chance to focus on the subjects they needed for their future professions, instead of trying to succeed in all the subjects, which was impossible (Anna, Galina, Natasha, Lydia). It set them free of the tyranny of some teachers “who graded not students’ knowledge but who got even with some of the students for the lack of discipline or for whatever reason” (Nina).

In conclusion, in the general scheme of things, the Unified State Exam was yet another force that posed a threat to the iconic image of a teacher as a Great Educator. It challenged their authority. It meant more work for the same money. It added to the
stress of their job. The themes of corruption, abuse of power, and material reward kept cropping up in the teachers’ talk about the USE. More important, however, was the fact that it was taking away either perceived or real teacher power in the classroom. It deprived them of their status of a cultural worker. It threatened the subject position of a knowledge and values bearer by reducing instruction to test-taking skills. While their job was creating independent, thinking personalities, the USE was turning students into rabbits for experiments. Therefore, I would argue, that all of the aforementioned discourses were used by the teachers to provide their arguments against the USE.

I as a Teacher in my Mini-State

This subsection shows how the Russian teachers envisioned themselves in their classrooms which they were asked to imagine as a mini-state, and what subject position they assigned themselves and their students in these mini-states. The key issue for them was whether they could claim that the relations with their students in their mini-states were different from the relations of vlast’ and narod in the society at large. Consider the summaries of how each teacher described their mini-states.

Ksenia, an elementary school teacher with 20 years of a teaching experience, believed that her classroom was not “a monarchy or tyranny but most likely a democratic state” in which students were “not afraid of” her, in which they lived by the rules they created together, in which all the students had “the right their voice to be heard,” in which students learned to be “considerate of each other” and “listen to grown-ups because they have something clever to say.” For her first graders she was “an ideal, an older friend.” They tried “to emulate” her. They were willing to live up to her
expectations and always thought whether she “would approve of their behavior.” She was “an advisor,” who was “kind” and had “no ill intentions.” She wanted her students to be “good” and helped them to study. She wanted to “give them knowledge, teach them to be learners” and “keep kids a little bit longer in their childhood” because “a grown-up life starts far too early for them,” and because “when they are still in childhood it is easier for them to learn.” She used fairy-tales to teach them “moral lessons.” In her opinion, it was important to teach kids moral lessons through fairy tales. The fairy tales “teach lessons and they give children hope that evil will be punished and justice will prevail that kindness is eternal, that there are more kind people on the earth than bad ones,” she said. She believed in “the power of a kollektiv in upbringing a person.” She was convinced that “if there is a strong, good kollektiv in the class, then even the most hopeless can make it with its help.”

Anna, a Russian language and literature teacher with 30 years of teaching experience, thought that she created an environment that was conducive for open discussions in her classroom and her mini-state was democratic. Everybody was “equal” in the classes she taught. Students had “a right” to have an opinion different from hers. She let them “voice their opinion.” She gave them “the right to make a mistake.” Students also had “the right to tell teachers that they made a mistake.” She was “a teacher and a mother, too” but “first of all” she was an “older friend for students.” She helped them “to get knowledge,” gave them advice, and “as a real friend,” she let students know if they were doing “something wrong.” She was “a kind of a manager”
who gave students tasks, told them what to do, and directed them. If her students
“became decent human beings” then, she felt, she fulfilled her “duty.”

Olesya, a mathematics teacher with 34 years of teaching experience, believed that
she was “an authoritarian teacher.” “You saw me at the lesson. I demand that everybody
listens to me, does everything I want. It is an authoritarian regime,” she said. But she
saw herself more of “a conductor, a leader, rather than a dictator.” She was “in front with
a flag, and showed “where to go, how best to get out of a deadlock.” In her class,
students sometimes could take on that role, too. In this case, they showed her where to
go. She wanted her students “to have a good level of knowledge” but she could teach
“only those who wanted to learn.” The most important thing for her was not so much
how well a student knew her subject but what kind of a human being he was.

Galina, a history teacher with 23 years of teaching experience, “would like to
believe that” she was “a president in her classroom” but she could not say this. She
hoped that she was “someone directing them.” Her class was “a safe place for students to
express their opinions.” She was not only a teacher who taught history but also “a pastor
and sometimes a parent” who listened to a student’s point of view “even if it might seem
ridiculous,” who did not insist on her point of view, and told them that they did not “have
to agree with [her] point of view,” and who urged students to speak their minds and let
the administration know their point of view about the school policies. She did not feel
“comfortable” in classes where students did not ask questions and did not move. She
said, “It is abnormal when kids don’t move. If he doesn’t move, then, he must be sick or
scared to death.” As she taught students whose parents held government positions, she
wanted them (if they were ever in a power position) to remember how they resisted when somebody “wanted to turn them into a cattle while they were at school.” She tried to influence them. She wanted them not to “make other people do what is against the very essence of human nature.” Her goal was “to bring up a citizen who has his own opinion, and who will not let anyone treat him as bydlo (cattle).”

Marina, an English teacher with teaching experience of 29 years, performed different roles in different classes. In a class where students did not trust her as a teacher, it was “a totalitarian state, not a slave society, of course, not a communist society,” but it was “a closed society,” where she fulfilled the role of “an administrator” which was “the worst role” for her. “To be an administrator for me is to come and fill in a vessel. As a teacher, I fulfilled the role of a leader. I gave instructions, and then accepted the responses,” she said. She could not do too much in such classes. “The teaching process is over for me in these classes because it is difficult to build trust and the students do not follow me in such classes,” she continued. In order to build trust, she needed “an emotional involvement” of students. Where there was no emotional involvement she used “traditional methods” and did not “go beyond what is required.” She did not like this kind of teaching because it led to “burnout.”

But in classes where “democratic relations” were built she saw herself as “a facilitator, a partner in education.” Children inspired her to be more creative in these classes. “You want to be creative with these groups. It is a mutually joyful process, but this can happen only where democratic relations are in place. So, it’s kind of mutual dependence. One depends on the other,” she said. She mostly saw herself in a
democratic country in which, if they had a problem, they solved it together, and students were “not afraid of the teacher,” the teacher was “approachable for students,” and the teacher and students worked “with pleasure because they pursued a common goal.” She liked to watch “the development of a human being.” A good student for her was “full of life,” and did not “sit still.” She liked to work with students who were “not disciplined,” because they were “interesting as people” for her. She wanted “them to learn to think, to make choices in their lives.”

Natasha, an English teacher with 20 years of teaching experience, felt she was “a moderator” whose purpose was to give students an opportunity to express themselves in English with as little interference as possible on her part. She did not feel she was “a president or a member of Politburo” at her lessons. It was mostly a democratic mini-state which was “not always good” because “kids too often express their discontent,” but “everybody has the right to express their opinion,” she did not “impose [her] authority on them.” She “never forbade them to tell what they think.” “If they could prove that they were right,” she agreed with them. Though she was “flexible enough,” she thought “there still must be a distance between a teacher and a student.” As an English teacher, she wanted “to teach them to speak English, but as a pedagogue” she wanted “to teach them to be real fighters, so that they could make their choices, could set priorities, focus on what was most important for them, reach their goals, not at any cost, but by civilized, socially accepted means.” She also wanted them to be “competent, marketable, and successful in their careers and in their private lives, too.”
Elena, an elementary school teacher with 18 years of teaching experience, thought she was “a mom, a vospitatel’, a teacher, a little bit of everything.” She tried “to be caring, thoughtful, understanding.” Her classroom was “a kind of a children’s country,” “a little organization,” in which “she was “a leader” who tried to be “kind” to her students and tried to teach them “to do good deeds.” She liked all children, even those “who because of their disposition might not do their homework, might be naughty.” She would rather be them naughty because “otherwise it would be boring if all the kids were obedient.” “They are like that by nature. They are not very organized. It is good that they are different,” she said. She wanted her students to become productive citizens.

Maria, an elementary school teacher, who had been teaching for nine years, felt that sometimes she fulfilled the role of a parent in her classroom because in the elementary school, “the second closest person to the kid after the mother” was a teacher. But her classroom was a monarchy in which students were “people who are ruled single-handedly by the tsar, the teacher, who establishes his own rules.” Students did not do what they wanted; they did what she wanted them to do. She felt “the responsibility before kids and their parents” and she wanted “to give kids as much as possible.” She did not “want to listen to what they want in the first grade.” She might listen to them if what they said coincided with her interests. Students should be given “the right to choose only when they become older,” she believed. She wanted “to bring up a kind, understanding person… who thinks not only of money but puts the joy of communion above money.”

Andrei, a history teacher with 10 years of teaching experience, imagined his class as “a democratic, humanistic, calm state.” Everyone was equal in this state. He was not
“a ruler” in it, and the students were “not subordinates.” He compared the class to a family, and himself, to Vladimir Monomach and Sergi Radonezhski (Russian Orthodox saints). As the majority of teachers were females, he felt he served as “a male role model” for many students from single-parent families. He wanted “in these times of uncertainty to ease the impact of reforms on kids; to help them see that the world isn’t as harsh as it seems.” He wanted “to teach them that no matter what, there are certain values in the world”. Each student was “a universe of its own” for him. All kinds of children came to his class: “kids whose lives are ok and whose lives are messed up, kids from the families of doctors and teachers who are paid very little but who retained their consciousness, decency, culture, and the joy of communion with others.” But there were also “kids who came to this world unwanted. Sadness and distrust is seen on their faces.” He had “to find words for everyone.” He had “to find a smile for everyone.” And when these kids came to his class they knew that they were “loved.”

Nina, a physics teacher, who had been teaching for 21 years, thought that she was an authoritarian teacher. “I am more of a dictator. You can be friends with kids but the kids should know subordination. There should be a distance between a teacher and students, they should have some fear of him, they should be afraid to misbehave,” she said. She envisioned her mini-state as an authoritarian regime. She wanted to be like another teacher in her school who instilled such fear in her kids that they “tremble at her lessons” but got “good knowledge.” In her opinion, without fear, students would not study because that was the way people were in Russia. She thought that “personally” she was too “soft.” Each student was “interesting” for her and “dear” to her heart. She liked
to work “with kids at risk” because she found “common language better with kids who have problems” because, in her view, there were “more possibilities to do something,” and because it was “always interesting to see the difference between what was in the beginning and how they changed in the end.”

Lydia, a Russian language and Russian literature teacher with 15 years of teaching, saw her class as a democratic state with some elements of totalitarianism. She used her “authority to restore justice” in it. She was a class teacher and an elected governing body ruled in her class. She was part of this body with a strong power of veto. She saw to it that everybody had their share of responsibilities because some kids only liked “to use other people’s work, criticize, and do nothing.” But this was “a state where kids ruled” and they did not always agree with what she wanted to do. “If they provided good arguments,” she agreed with them. “Of course, there is a distance between me and them, I am a teacher, older than them, but they understand that I am part of the governing body, they respect me and I respect them,” she said. She also believed that, “to some degree,” she had “to be a model” and though she did not “want to use the word emulation, but nevertheless, it happened.” She did not “want to be a second Mom for the kids.” She wanted them to “learn to overcome circumstances.” She would “at some point support them and then demand.”

In sum, the mini-states were either imagined as (a) democracies, (b) democracies with elements of totalitarianism, (c) authoritarian regimes, or (d) monarchies. Those teachers who believed that their mini-states were democracies or democracies with elements of totalitarian regime were concerned about creating conditions which would
allow students to express their opinion without fear of punishment. It was as if what they lacked most in the society, they wanted to have in their mini-states. The expressions, *free of fear, express one’s opinion, and have the right to voice one’s opinion* consistently cropped up in their talk. Those teachers who imagined their mini-states as monarchies were more preoccupied with demanding from students what they told them to do. The key words were *authoritarian, totalitarian, and fear* in their descriptions of their mini-states. However, no matter whether the teachers described their mini-states as monarchies or democracies, the power they had was positive. Consequently, unlike vlast’ in the society they were not trying to turn children into mute cogs, that is why they allowed children to freely voice their opinion if they imagined their mini-states as democracies. Unlike vlast’ they were caring of their subjects if they imagined their mini-states as monarchies.

The teachers also assigned themselves a wide range of subject positions. These subject positions can be lumped into several groups and reflect their beliefs about what being a teacher boils down to in the reality of the classrooms. They also cast students in certain ways. Thus:

1. The first group of subject positions of a tsar, an administrator, an authority figure, an authoritarian teacher imply that a teacher is someone who, using Maria’s words, single-handedly rules the classroom. The students are cast as subjects who obey the rules established by the teacher, in this case.

2. The second group of subject positions of an advisor, a leader, a conductor, a manager, a facilitator, a vospitatel’, an ideal, a role model, a pastor, a moderator imply that a teacher is someone who directs and leads students,
instills in them morals and serves as an ideal for students to emulate. Students are constructed as being in need of advice, direction, guidance, help, pastoral care, and of someone they could look up to, in this case.

3. The third group of subject positions of a Mom, the second closest person to the kid after the mother, a parent, and a friend show that in the reality of the classrooms, a teacher also should be able to serve as a parent and come down to the level of a student as a friend. The students are cast as being in need of parental protection and care, and in need of a friend whom they can trust but who can also tell them that they are wrong, in this case.

4. Finally, the subject position of a partner in education indicates that students and teachers can learn from each other and that students can teach teachers.

**In the Reality of Classrooms: Disciplining Bodies**

In this subsection, I juxtapose what the teachers said about their teacher selves to their actual behavior in the reality of classrooms. Alexander (2001) wrote that all the 16 Russian classrooms a team of researchers observed for a comparative study of elementary schools in five different countries looked exactly as they had been previously described in other studies of the Soviet schools. They saw the same “pair of desks aligned in rows . . . the teacher’s desk to one side, notices to the other, the blackboard in the center” and observed the same pattern of lessons in all the classrooms (Alexander, 2001, p. 185). Each lesson began with children standing by their desks and waiting for the teachers to let them sit. Classrooms were highly ordered spaces and a lot of information was taught in a short amount of time. If the same team of researchers had walked into the
classrooms I observed for this study, they would have found the same physical arrangement and the same lesson patterns, regardless of the grade level. Standard buildings, standard curriculum, standard teacher preparation, and standard textbooks resulted in the standard use of space and time and standard arrangement of physical bodies in space and time. The classrooms were still spaces of straight lines, aligned desks and chairs. Everything on the desks was still arranged in a predetermined fashion. A lot of information was still covered in the lessons also in a predetermined fashion. The focus was still on the whole class, movement was still limited “to standing up to answer questions and coming to the front to work at the blackboard,” one activity still was pursued at any given time, and a teacher was still in total control of students in the classroom which was a space “to work hard and to work together” (Alexander, 2001, p. 185)

Elementary school teachers’ preoccupation with lines and students’ bodies was remarkable. They all started their lessons with lining students up and would not let students sit until the lines were “beautiful” and “straight,” until everyone was in a straight line each directly behind one another, until everybody straightened the chairs and desks and put all the books and notebooks and pens in the right-hand corner of the desks. This concern with lines, proper posture, and proper arrangement of books and notebooks continued throughout the lessons. No slouching was allowed. Eyes had to be on the teacher each time she explained something or asked a question, eyes and fingers had to be on the book, the head and the chest had to be at a proper distance from the desk when writing and reading, the elbows—on the desk, the feet—on the floor. Everybody had to
open the books or notebooks, or take or put the pens down almost simultaneously. If somebody was not quick enough, teachers would say something such as, “Somebody is not ready yet, somebody has already written down the date”; “I am repeating the task for those who did not hear”; “It is so nice to look at Vanya’s desk. He is ready for the lesson”; “We are waiting for Kiril”; “We are waiting for you, girls.” The implication being that it is selfish and inconsiderate of a student or a group of students to make the whole class wait. There was also a constant comparison of a group of students to another group. Comments such as the following were commonly expressed in elementary grades, “Which row is the fastest and the most quiet?”; “OK, the second row is the fastest”; “Whose line is the best and the most beautiful?”; “The second row is too noisy”; “Are you ready, the third row?”; “Those on duty, show an example to the rest of the class.” These benign, at first glance, comments had far-reaching implications. They pressured students to define themselves as normal in relation to a kollektiv, regard themselves as members of a group at any time. If individual students were singled out, then it was with the purpose of showing the group, or the whole class kollektiv whether what they were doing was appropriate or not.

All the lessons I observed were highly structured, goal- and task-oriented. There was not a single minute that was not devoted to the goals the teachers set for their lessons. All the teachers demanded undivided attention of students throughout the lessons and were in total control of their bodies in all grades. Almost all of the talk was done by the teachers. If students talked, it was all in response to the questions the teachers asked. Students did not ask any questions. History teacher Galina asked
interesting, thought-provoking questions in the fifth grade history lesson, but she never
gave students a chance to answer them. Physics teacher Nina, Russian language teacher
Anna, and mathematics teacher Olesya were cramming as much information as possible
into students’ heads before the exam in a very short time. The pacing of the lessons was
fast in all the grades and while there were a few students who got distracted, in the
general scheme of things, one could not help having a sense of the whole class working
together for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. The lessons were neither teacher- nor
student-centered. They were knowledge-centered. The concern was about transmitting
knowledge. Students were vessels into which this knowledge could be poured. Teachers
were transmitters of knowledge who were able to transmit a lot of information in a short
time because they had a highly regulated, docile student body which worked as a piece of
machinery. In sum, contrary to the rhetoric, Russian teachers subconsciously enacted the
subject position of a technician quite effectively.

**Discourses that regulated the Russian teachers’ talk about their mini-states**

and their ways of acting in these states. The most persuasive discourses in the Russian
teachers’ talk about their mini-states and lesson observations were *Obuchenie* and
*Vospitanie* and the *Soviet Intelligentsia* discourses. Their representations of their mini-
states also showed that vospitanie overshadowed obuchenie. They all believed that the
end result of their efforts was creating a certain type of a human being, be it (a) a decent
human being (Anna, Olesya), (b) a well rounded personality with a soul (Ksenia, Andrei),
(c) a citizen who is able to stand up for himself or herself (Galina), (d) a citizen who also
contributes not only consumes (Lydia, Maria, Elena), (e) a real fighter who is able to make
choices and is marketable (Natasha), (f) a person who can think and make choices (Marina), or (g) a person who is afraid to misbehave (Nina). The citizens and the personalities were modeled mainly after a member of the intelligentsia with the exception of the qualities of being marketable and being able to make choices, which were borrowed from the *Free Market* discourse.

At first glance, one might think that obuchenie completely dominated teachers’ activities during the lessons. However, delivering the content could hardly be separated from transmitting certain values. Vospitanie took place, too, though on a much more subtle level. The main preoccupation in the process of vospitanie was disciplining the student body with the purpose of gaining maximum “docility-utility” (Foucault, 1977, p. 137). The maximum docility-utility was achieved through the work in unison, in complete abandonment of one’s self, in keeping with the *Soviet Labor* and *Soviet Kollektiv* discourses. So the bodies were treated in uniform ways. Drilling was important both in the arrangement of bodies and in the acquisition of knowledge. Having students line up, relentlessly correcting their’ postures can be interpreted as discursive practices that were used for creating a certain type of a student: a student who had to be aware of his or her body in relation to the social body of class kollektiv at any time. This awareness was achieved through constant comparison of an individual student to other bodies which were either ready/or not ready for the lesson, which were either standing “beautifully” in a line or were stepping out of the line, which were sitting with straight backs or not, and so on and so forth. An individual student had the eyes of the kollektiv fixed on him or her through the entire lesson. After five or six hours of hearing the same
comments over and over again, it is difficult to get rid of the “dominating, overseeing gaze” (Foucault, 1980, p. 152) of the kollektiv, even if one steps out of the classroom. Thus the Soviet Kollektiv discourse, which I described in the section, Locating My Self (see pp. 7-8) played a significant role in structuring the classrooms and initiating students into culturally sanctioned power relations. According to Kharkhordin (1999), the discursive practices that shaped a ‘good’ kollektiv and replicated power relations existing in the society at large were first refined in correctional education facilities by a renowned Soviet pedagogue, Anton Makarenko, and then found their way to virtually every single Soviet school. Lesson observations demonstrated that these practices were still important for organizing the social body of the class kollektivs.

**Summary and Interpretation of Russian Findings**

After reviewing the Russian data, I identified the following discourses as being important in the Russian teachers’ identity construction: Soviet Labor discourse, Soviet Kollektiv discourse, the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse, and Obuchenie and Vospitanie discourses. These discourses contained “historically conditioned attributes and models as well as patterns of behavior resulting from them” (Palat, 2001, p. 135). The focal points around which these attributes and patterns of behavior developed were work, material reward, narod, vlast’, and kollektiv. I considered all these concepts and all other words related to these words as cultural key words. I treated these discourses with their particular sets of vocabularies, subject positions, and binary oppositions inscribed within them as being part and parcel of the Soviet master narrative or The Bright Future, Communism Discourse model which had been structuring the Soviet people’s
understanding of the world and fashioning their identities for more than seventy years. In the following, I first introduce this Discourse model and then present *A Teacher with the Capital letter ‘T’* discourse which, I claim, is a profession-related discourse generated in regards to the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse, which, in its turn was generated in regards to the *The Bright Future, Communism* Discourse model. Then I move on to the summary of the use of binary oppositions and pronouns and subject positions. In the concluding section, I discuss how the speakers of the Russian language cannot escape the gendering of the world on the linguistic level in addition to the social gendering and how this is reflected in the Russian teachers’ talk. As critical discourse analysis is about grounding the data not only in social and cultural but also historical contexts, I also make brief historical references about the *Bright Future, Communism* (see more about the importance of connections between history and text in discourse analysis on p. 246).

**The Discourse Model of the Bright Future, Communism**

I grew up hearing the words the bright future, communism, Soviet intelligentsia, *trudovoi narod* (working people), heroic deeds of working people, *sovetski trud* (Soviet labor), *trudovoi* (labor) kollektiv, selfless, dedicated work in the name of the bright future, *sovetskaya vlast’* (Soviet power), and other Soviet terms. These terms were ubiquitous. They were part of everyday life. The Soviet people were literally bombarded with these terms. The “correct” understanding of these terms was important in creating the “correct” worldview. While in everyday speech nobody talked about work as Soviet labor, and kollektiv as labor kollektiv, Soviet people shared the “correct” meaning of these words.
When I was looking for the keywords in the Russian teachers’ talk, it was not
difficult to see that these words were also part of the teachers’ vocabulary. However, the
meanings they attached to work, material reward, and teacher’s status in the society were
so much common sense to me, as they were to the teachers, that it took me a long time
before I could make a connection between what is usually referred to as a communist
ideology (and what I call the Bright Future, Communism Discourse model) and the
particular ways of speaking about work and material reward, and teacher selves. It was
only after reading *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in
Revolutionary Russia* by Halfin (2000), while I was writing a paper for a presentation at a
conference, that I started thinking of these words as being part of what Gee (2005) calls
discourse with the capital letter “D” or Discourse model. So Gee (2005) was right: It was
indeed “a totally or partially unconscious explanatory theory or ‘storyline’ connected to a
word or concept” (p. 61).

The Discourse model is like a Russian nesting doll. It contains “smaller models
inside bigger ones” (Gee, 2005, p. 83). The “master” theory, the Bright Future,
Communism shaped and organized “large, important aspects of experience” (Gee, 2005,
p. 83) for Soviet people. The constructs Soviet labor, Soviet kollektiv, Soviet
intelligentsia, and the New Soviet Man were part and parcel of this framework. These
constructs can be considered as Discourse models on their own, too, but I treat them as
discourses generated in regards to the master narrative, the Bright Future, Communism,
with the purpose of making a distinction between the “master model” (Gee, 2005, p. 83)
and the “smaller” theories created within this theory (see p. 58). As I have shown in the
previous sections, these discourses “used” and “were used” by the Russian participants (see pp. 95-149).

The Soviet people had been reminded on a daily basis for more than 70 years that they were triumphantly marching towards the bright future, communism under the wise leadership of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Though in the Brezhnev times, the Soviet people relentlessly ridiculed this contention, the language played its trick: The word “march” created the image of the entire population of the Soviet Union marching in a single file, in unison to the bright future looming in the horizon, i.e. it helped to create what Benedict Anderson (1991) called “imagined communities” (p. 6). This Discourse model, alongside the discourses generated in regards to it, provided “scripts” for the ways of being and thinking in the world and building relations between an individual and kollektiv, vlast’ and kollektiv, and vlast’ and an individual. The fact that the system collapsed does not mean that the discourses created in regards to this master narrative have disappeared, or that the ways people order the world can be changed overnight. I elaborate more on this phenomenon by using Laclau’s (1993) notion of empty signifiers later in the dissertation (see pp. 279-283).

The story of the Soviet Union can be told as the story of an unsuccessful attempt to build a “just,” “classless society,” “the bright future, communism” in which a “New Soviet Man” lived happily ever after. Though this master narrative or Discourse model of the Soviet rule had to be adapted and adjusted to ever changing situations and contexts, and occasionally subjected to revision, the basic premise never changed: It was about building the bright future, communism. This Discourse depended heavily on the
explicitly stated binary oppositions: the virtues of socialism versus the vices of capitalism, the New Soviet Man versus backward masses, the Soviet Intelligentsia versus the Western intelligentsia, and a socialist way of life versus a capitalist way of life. As with all such binaries, they were not forged on equal terms, the latter always being on the “lacking” side of the opposition. As a consequence, the Soviet way of life was always depicted as superior to the Western way of life, the capitalist world was “rottening” and doomed to failure; while the socialist world was on the way to the “bright future,” the Soviet people were hailed as creatures morally superior to the Western petty bourgeoisie. And the list goes on. (See Etkind, 1996; Halfin, 2000; 1996; Kon, 1996; & Shalin, 1996).

Throughout its history, the system had to do a lot of ideological repair work to sustain this particular version of reality produced by these binary oppositions. However, by the 1980s, it was also increasingly more difficult to sell the population the idea that its leaders were serving the interests of people, and that the Soviet way of life was the best in the world, that the communist society was feasible in the nearest future, and that the Western world was declining (Long & Long, 1999; Shalin, 1996). Nevertheless, public space continued to be a space for announcing one’s commitment to the ideals of communism. The Soviet authorities in the Brezhnev era, which was dubbed as the “stagnation period,” did not mind its populace criticizing the system in private space but still could not tolerate open public dissent (Etkind, 1996; Shalin, 1996). As a result, the “double life” (Shalin, 1996, p. 5) and “double think” (Etkind, 1996, p. 121) became the hallmarks of the period. In public space, the New Soviet Man was depicted as a heroic figure of epic proportions accomplishing heroic deeds, in popular parlance, the New
Soviet Man was referred to as “Homo Sovieticus” or “Sovok” (Etkind, 1996; Kon, 1996). The derisive name “‘Sovok’—a little shovel handy for collecting dust or absorbing ideological garbage” (Etkind, 1996, p. 121) was used to describe “a model personality marked by conformism, laziness, inefficiency, hypocrisy, and irresponsibility” (Kon, 1996, p. 193). According to the official propaganda, the Soviet people were triumphantly marching towards the bright future. In private space, the inconsistencies between the official propaganda and reality were relentlessly ridiculed.

As a result, by the last decades before the demise of the Soviet Union it was clear that the projects of creating the New Soviet Man, and building the bright future were not taken seriously by anybody, even by the Party ideologists, according to Etkind (1996) and Kon (1996). However, my analysis of (a) the teachers’ nostalgic accounts of their job in the Soviet Union (see pp. 102-105), (b) their definitions of the teaching professions (see pp. 97-100), (c) their conceptualizations of the “good” and “bad” teacher (see p. 104), (d) their sense-making of educational reforms (see pp. 126-136), and (e) their attitude toward material reward (see pp. 102-105) revealed that “the regime’s hermetic and all-pervasive” (Ashwin, 1999, p. 7) discourse had left an indelible mark on their thinking of what kind of a social order they would like to have, what the place of a teacher in that order should be and what kind of qualities this teacher should possess. Though they spoke of the Bright Future, Communism and its builder, the New Soviet Man, only sarcastically, they also found some of the features of the Soviet system (see p. 108-109) and some of the characteristics of the New Soviet Man worth preserving in the new system. This was most evident in the particular meanings the teachers attached to
work, material reward (see pp. 102-108), and to teacher significance and status (see pp. 108-111). Though according to Etkind (1996), and Kon (1996), traits subscribed to the “Soviet man” were mere “ideological garbage” (Etkind, 1996, p. 121) or “ideological fiction” (Kon, 1996, p. 193) which Soviet people by the 1980s did not take seriously, my respondents’ accounts of their work call into question Etkind’s and Kon’s assertion. Work was far from being understood as empty propaganda and continued to be an important identity marker for Soviet people even after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Thus though the Discourse model of The Bright Future, Communism belonged to the society that is an historical anachronism, it still powerfully “spoke” and “was spoken” by the teachers through the discourses generated in regards to it.

The workings of this Discourse model were also evident in the ways some of its binary oppositions continued to play an important role in fashioning teacher identities. First, one might think that the binary opposition, the virtues of socialism versus the vices of capitalism, would no longer play a role. How could the Russian participants make a case that socialism was virtuous and capitalism not, and that the socialist way of life was better than the capitalist way of life when the socialist system had collapsed? Nonetheless, this binary opposition was evident in the statements about the past which was imagined to be a glorious time for the Soviet system of education. All of the teachers acknowledged its achievements, were anxious that the curricula were being watered down, that not everybody would have free access to education, and that the state did not want to continue funding of schools. In addition, in this glorious past, a teacher occupied an important place in the society (see pp.108-109). These were virtues of
socialism. The vices now came from the West in the form of reforms (see pp. 129-131).

There was an ambivalent attitude toward the West. As Andrew put it, “there, over the hills, in the West, which we don’t like. Honestly speaking we don’t like the West. I don’t like America.” but “if there is something better in America, let’s borrow this better.” Thus the West played a critical role in the Bright Future, Communism Discourse model, and it continued to play a critical role in the ways the teachers construed the world and their teacher selves.

The binary oppositions, the Soviet intelligentsia versus the Western intelligentsia and the New Soviet Man versus the backward masses, did not come up in the teachers’ talk directly but they were implicit in the special role assigned to the members of intelligentsia. The teachers’ anxiety about retaining the status and the symbolic significance of the Soviet Intelligentsia in the new reality shows that these binary oppositions continue to play an important role in fashioning the teacher identities (see pp. 105-112). The intelligentsia, as conceived by the Russian teachers, is meaningless as a construct without the “backward masses” and without the characteristic attributes assigned to the members of the intelligentsia, especially their elevation of the spiritual over the material, an attitude that distinguished the Soviet intelligentsia from the Western intelligentsia, according to the Russian perception.

In sum, in the absence of a new meaningful overarching Discourse model, the teachers tried to adapt bits and parts of the discourses generated in relation to the Soviet master narrative, The Bright Future, Communism, to new realities. The most important parts were the ones that allowed the teachers to imagine themselves as being a Great
Educator, a teacher with the capital letter “T,” that is, the ones that secured a teacher’s special status in the general order of things.

This teacher embodied all the proper characteristics of a “true” intelligent (a member of the intelligentsia) and was supposed to serve as a model to be emulated by all teachers. The iconic image of the ideal teacher inscribed within the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse was still dear to the hearts and minds of the Russian teachers in this study (see, pp. 108-109). However, the same parts disadvantaged teachers in the Free Market model adopted by the state. It asked teachers not to think about material reward, not to be pragmatic but idea-driven. The state, vlast’, conveniently appropriated the bits and parts from the Free Market model to the new realities. These were the parts that allowed the state to drop its protecting and caring functions but it was not willing to drop its controlling function. However, in the eyes of teachers, the state, vlast’, without a protecting, caring function had no legitimacy at all.

**A Teacher with the Capital Letter “T” Discourse**

The majority of the professions in the Soviet Union had their own profession-related discourses generated in regards to the Soviet master narrative. These discourses invariably stressed the idealistic part of the profession. For teachers, it was the discourse of the Teacher with the Capital Letter ‘T’ (uchitel s bolshoi bykvy). This teacher was hailed as a selfless, humble, highly dedicated, enthusiastic, cultured person of integrity and high morals who gave his entire self to his job, put public interest above personal ones, and worked not for material reward but for the moral satisfaction which was to be derived from achievements of his students. He embodied all the proper characteristics of
a “true” intelligent (a member of the intelligentsia) and was supposed to serve as a model to be emulated by all teachers. The iconic image of the ideal Soviet Teacher with the Capital Letter ‘T’ which was modeled after the Great Educator inscribed within the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse was still dear to the hearts and minds of the Russian teachers in this study. This discourse allowed the teachers to take up a number of subject positions: those of a cultural worker, a carrier of values, a knowledge-bearer, an authority in many matters, an ideal to be emulated, and even of a saint. More subject positions can be added to this list. However, these subject positions all should reflect this notion of the special mission assigned to intelligentsia.

**Binary Oppositions:** “Wedom,” “Theydom,” and “Idom”

McDaniel (1996), in his book *The Agony of the Russian Idea* wrote that, according to Yuri Lotman, a Soviet structuralist, not only are binary oppositions not forged on equal terms in Russian culture, but they are also presented as “absolute alternatives” among which one has to choose; “and in this choice either one or the other must be absolutely victorious” (p.17). In his opinion, the byproduct of such thinking is that Russians tend to believe that “the longed-for-new world can only be constructed on the utter ruins of the old, which was wholly corrupt” (McDaniel, 1996, p. 17). As the analysis of the Russian teachers’ talk demonstrated, they, too, were prone to represent their world in absolute alternatives. They drew upon a familiar set of binary oppositions which were meaningful within the discourses generated in relation to the Soviet cultural master narrative. These oppositions left no doubt about what kind of a teacher would be on the wrong side of the opposition. A “true” teacher who was modeled after the “true”
intelligentsia had no choice but to choose among the alternatives that were inherent in the aforementioned discourses.

Thus all of the teachers thought of power exclusively in binary oppositions: *vlast’* versus *society*; *state machine* versus *cogs*; *They* versus *We, narod*. *They, vlast’, state machine* were described as omnipotent, merciless, uncaring, unforgiving, relentless, indifferent and *narod, We, society* and *cogs*, as mute, scared, powerless parts that helped the machine work. *They* and *We* were imagined as occupying different planes of existence. *We* and *They* were far removed from each other, by which the teachers meant that the state had to provide social services, that the state had to see to the welfare of its citizens, the state machine had to take care of its parts, but it did not. It turned a deaf ear to the complaints of its parts. The relations between *They* and *We* were based on want, need, and desire. Those in power “possessed” what *narod* wanted and needed but *They* did not give *narod* anything.

In sum, there existed two opposing groups on the level of the Russian society: a group of *We, narod*, and a group of *They, vlasti*. In the educational system, *We, teachers* were locked up in the opposition to *They, educational bureaucrats*. All teachers were imagined to form a homogenous entity which was having the same experiences in relation to power when they spoke of themselves as part of *narod* in opposition to *vlast’*. The subject positions that were discursively available to *We*, as members of the teaching profession, were both of victims and morally superior beings in this binary opposition. *We*, as members of intelligentsia and the teaching profession, were superior to *They*, bureaucrats, morally and intellectually. *We*, as members of the teaching profession, as
part of *narod*, were mute, humiliated, and abused by power. The teachers strongly identified with these subject positions and talked of themselves as belonging to *We*, not *They*. In this case, they talked of all teachers in the entire country as having the same experience.

On the level of schools, teachers were no longer a homogenous mass. They were divided into the silent majority and a small group of teachers that was able to position itself as critics and thus live up to the ideals of the “true” intelligentsia. The silent majority of teachers could not be called the true intelligentsia because it did not offer any resistance to power. Therefore “*Wedom and Theydom*” (McKee, 2003, p. 43) were constructed on two levels: *We, members of the teaching profession*, as opposed to *They, vlast’, vlasti*, and *We, a small group of ‘true’ teachers*, versus *They*, the silent majority.

*Idom* was a different type of universe as compared to *Wedom and Theydom*. Quite a different image of a teacher emerged in the “I, as a teacher,” statements. While *We*, teachers, were afraid of *vlast’, and helpless in the face of* *vlast’, I*, as a teacher, stood up for myself and others, especially when *I* saw injustice. *I*, as a teacher, created a mini-state which was democratic. Even if *I* said that my mini-state was a monarchy, *I* had my students’ best interests in mind. *I* made all the decisions for them because *I* cared for them and *I* knew better what their needs were. And power relations in my mini-state were different than the power relations in the society at large where *We* were the mute parts of the state machine. *I* did not want my students to be mute parts in my mini-state. *I* wanted them to have the right to voice their opinion without fear of punishment. Relations in my mini-state were built on trust and pastoral care.
Consequently, on the level of my classroom, I was imagined as an autonomous individual making all the decisions. On the level of school, I was part of a group of “enlightened” individual teachers who were not afraid to speak up, were willing to change, could stand up for themselves, and thought about the common good. I was not part of the silent, inert, indifferent mass of teachers which was unable to change, which was scared and mute. Even if I made decisions, stood up for myself and others, and wanted to change, it was because I belonged to a group of such teachers. Not a single teacher set up an oppositional pair I versus the silent, scared mass. I was always opposed to the majority of teachers as part of a group of individual enlightened teachers who were different from the silent, scared mass. All of the interviewed teachers thought of themselves as being part of the positive opposite, not of the silent, indifferent majority. Being part of the mass would not be in keeping with the image of a critically thinking member of intelligentsia who does the right thing against all odds and represents the best part of intelligentsia.

Subject Positions

Within each discourse that was used by teachers there were only a limited number of subject positions available. The discourse of Obuchenie and Vospitanie offered only two generic subject positions—a knowledge transmitter, and a value transmitter—which did not take into account other subject positions with which teachers in this study strongly identified. These subject positions were made available to them within the discourses of Soviet Intelligentsia, Soviet Labor, and Labor Kollektiv. These discourses manifested themselves in Russian participants’ talk about the “good” and “bad” teacher,
their job before and after perestroika, reforms and the USE, and allowed them to tell who could be considered a “good” teacher and in what activities this teacher should be engaged. That is, these discourses allowed them to make certain moral claims. If nominally a teacher had to be a knowledge and value transmitter, a good teacher had to be “a good person” and “a good professional,” or “an expert.” As a professional or an expert, a good teacher had to be as devoted to his or her job as to place it above his or her personal life. He had to be well-educated and knowledgeable about the subject matter and have the gift of transmitting knowledge. He also had to be a lifelong learner. As a good person, a good teacher was expected to possess such characteristics as decency, humbleness, honesty, culturnost’ (being cultured) and intelligentnost’ (possessing the qualities of a member of intelligentsia). Another subject position was that of a strong, good-willed personality with a conscience (dobrosovestnaya lichnost’). This kind of personality did not seek favors from administration, was free of fear, stood up for himself, for students, and “Truth,” did not hesitate to speak his mind publicly and criticize the administration, and worried about the common good.

Both before and after perestroika teachers assigned themselves the subject positions that were mutually exclusive. On the one hand, the discourses they used allowed them to position themselves as knowledge-bearers, carriers and transmitters of values, respected figures of authority whose advice was sought after. They were nothing short of consecrated saints, who were dedicated, selfless, and above earthly interests and who did not care about money. They placed themselves right at the center of culture, and life revolved around them. On the other hand, these discourses also let them
conveniently ignore the undesirable positions of the docile objects of the Party ideology and technicians who did what the Party ordered them to.

After perestroika, they viewed themselves, first and foremost, as voiceless objects that were being acted upon. They were victims, who were caught up in the reforms, who were being pushed into the margins of the society, and who were disrespected and humiliated. They were stripped of their saints’ status. They were martyrs who, against all odds, continued to bear the burden of educating children in the times when nobody needed them. They also positioned themselves as defenseless, deeply hurt children, abandoned by their Father, the State. But at the same time, employing the same discourses, they claimed that they were a force with whom to be reckoned. In the best traditions of intelligentsia, they heroically continued to fulfill their duty while the State did not care about the children and its people. They were still dedicated workers, the carriers of universal values, working in the best interest of children, and the society. They were still cultural workers on whom the future of the country depended. In relation to power, as I have shown above, they had no choice but to identify with the subject positions of victims or critics.

Their descriptions of their mini-states showed that they replicated the same power relations in their classrooms. They positioned themselves as caring figures of authority who acted in the name of the best interests of their children. In this respect, they were what the state leader should be to teachers: care-givers and protectors. Other teachers could abuse power and be corrupt (just like vlast’ in the society at large); other teachers would not let students express their opinion but, personally, they were not those kinds of
teachers, even if they positioned themselves as a king, and even if they wanted to instill “fear” in students. However, the lesson observations showed that students had little chance to voice their opinions, just as teachers did not have a chance to voice their opinion in the society.

So in the reality of the classrooms, the Russian teachers were first and foremost “masters of discipline” and “technicians of rhythm and regular activities” (Foucault, 1977, p. 150) who meticulously manipulated, observed, and judged students’ body movements while teaching the subjects. What was even more important, they transmitted the tacit rules of proper behavior and proper power relations in a kollektiv. In this respect, they were cultural workers who instilled a proper sense of a kollektiv and the place of an individual in it. Other subject positions that they assigned themselves were secondary to these primary positions. It did not matter whether teachers imagined themselves as a king, a friend, or a saint in the classroom: In each case, they were molding the personality to the requirements of the kollektiv and were reproducing the relations between an individual and a kollektiv existing in the society at large.

Disciplining through manipulation of the body (Foucault, 1977) was most obvious and most critical in the elementary grades. The effect of this disciplining was evident in rituals and routines across the grades. Because there had been such strong emphasis in working fast and working as a single unit in the elementary grades, by the upper grades students had internalized the proper codes of behavior in the kollektiv. In upper grades teachers simply continued the routines which became ritualistic and part of normalcy. They enjoyed the fruits of elementary school teachers’ hard labor: Class kollektivs
worked as a piece of machinery, and a teacher only did some tweaking and tuning if it was necessary.

The subject positions available for teachers within the USE were those of victims who felt insecure, scared, distrusted, and who worked more for the same money and were either involved in cheating or worked harder in order to produce results. The second position was that of a technician whose job was to teach to a test and produce higher test scores. The position of a technician was not entirely new for them as their accounts of their work in the Soviet Union demonstrated. However, before perestroika, there was also the position of a Teacher with the Capital Letter “T” that put a teacher on an imaginary “pedestal,” and that allowed teachers to think of themselves as fulfilling an indispensable function in the society. The USE and reforms had nothing to counter the positions of a victim and technician. They did not offer an identity that they could claim.

In sum, the Russian teachers’ talk about the reforms and education after perestroika showed that they still strongly identified with the image of a Soviet teacher as a cultural worker and continued to talk about their profession using the discourses generated in relation to the master narrative of the society that was an historical anachronism. They were still emotionally and cognitively attached to the subject positions that were made available to them through the Soviet discourses. While the teachers were not willing to lose either the perceived or real status of a cultural worker, they could not afford to be above earthly concerns any more. Hence, much of the teacher identity construction centered around money, and teachers’ low status in the society. This low status was directly linked to low salaries, in the teachers’ perceptions. In the
highest ranking official’s and, to some degree, in the educational researcher’s perceptions, teachers’ inability and unwillingness to change contributed to their low status.

The Russian teachers turned to the familiar image of an ideal teacher inscribed within the “old” discourses because these discourses enabled them to make particular moral claims about their teacher selves, and justify both a special attitude toward teachers and proper remuneration. A teacher fulfilling a very important function in the society deserved a better attitude for his selfless work in the society. However, they turned to these discourses not only to rationalize why they needed better salaries but also because these discourses provided them with ideals, helped them connect to something bigger than themselves, and made their job more meaningful and fulfilling. Current educational reforms and the USE were not able to offer them any ideals they could identify with and, as the analysis of their talk demonstrated, certain idealism was needed to continue doing their job, especially when the attitude toward teachers was “at an all time low” and there was no money to properly reward their job.

A dedicated, competent teacher whose job was not just to teach a subject was still in demand within the new master narrative or Free Market Society Discourse model that was used by the highest ranking educational official in the republic. However, this teacher was no longer granted the positions of the knowledge and value bearers within this narrative. He had to realize that he was not the only source of knowledge, so he had to be a partner in education. Instead of the vague position of a value bearer, a variety of positions were available for a teacher within this Discourse: a coach, a drama teacher, a
social worker, a psychologist, and so forth. These positions all required special skills which teachers did not have. Previously, in the highly specialized Soviet education system, all these positions were for specialists who worked outside the schools in numerous children’s clubs and Palaces of Young Pioneers.

**Gendered World**

Finally, as all nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and verb forms are of either masculine, neuter, or feminine gender in Russian, Russian speakers cannot escape the gendering of the world on the linguistic level\(^{18}\). Gender was evident in their definitions of the teaching profession and the “good” and “bad” teacher, and their talk about power. Inherent in the images of “intelligent” (the member of intelligentsia) and the *Teacher with the Capital Letter “T”* is the gender disparity that is both linguistically and socially conditioned. “Intelligent” is of a masculine gender. As result, a “true intelligent” could be imagined only as a male. The female version of intelligent (*intelligentsha*) is hardly ever used unless someone wants to belittle the female engaged in intellectual activities. The same is true about professions. Diminutive suffixes, such as ‘*sha*’, ‘*niza*’ added to the names of professions to denote female specialists make them sound less of the male version of specialists, for example, professor/professorsha, vospitatel/vospitatelniza, kosmonavt/kosmonavtsha, doctor/doktrosha. According to Goscilo and Lanoux (2006), “the pervasiveness of the generic ‘unmarked’ masculine gender in Russian, especially in professions and politics, automatically relegates women to alterity in the public sphere” (p. 10).

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\(^{18}\) See also Barker & Galasinski (2001) about linguistic and social gendering in the Polish language.
Though the overwhelming majority of the teaching force in the Soviet Union consisted of female teachers, the ideal Soviet Teacher with the Capital Letter “T” was always referred to as *uchitel’* (a male teacher) not *uchitel’niza* (a female teacher) in both the official Soviet propaganda and popular parlance. In fact, *Uchitel’niza with the Capital Letter “T”* will sound strange to Russian ears, because of the diminutive suffix “*niza*” which instantly evokes the image of a petite female teacher in Russian speakers and listeners. Adding a capital letter to it will not repair the damage done by the language to its image. Hence, to challenge this linguistic and social gendering, on a subconscious level, the female teachers in this study also referred to themselves as *uchitel’,* not *uchitel’niza.* Not a single teacher referred to herself, “*I am uchitel’niza.*”

In addition, gender manifested itself in the Russian participants’ talk about power. As the noun, power, is of feminine gender, they could refer to it only as “*she.*” Though power is of feminine gender, the metaphors the teachers chose show that “the topos of masculine-feminine duality,” in which the masculine part was associated with temporality, rationality, and lucidity and the feminine—with timelessness, irrationality and ambiguity (Goscilo & Lanoux, 2006, p. 4), was an important part of the concept of power as conceptualized by the teachers. Hence the masculine aspect of power in the teachers’ talk can easily be concretized. One can, without difficulty, visualize the figure of a male with a sword in the metaphor Ksenia provided when she spoke of power as a Damocles sword hanging over the teachers’ heads. But it is not easy to concretize power as “*she*” in the metaphor of the merciless chain, provided by Lydia. No culturally recognizable particular female image can be associated with the mysterious, invisible,
incomprehensible aspect of power, vlast’, as a natural force or a chain. However, no matter whether it is concretized or not, it did not have a positive connotation. The sword (mech’, of masculine gender) was hanging over the teachers’ head and could be swift and lethal, the chain (zep’ of feminine gender) was merciless, unforgiving, relentless, and difficult to locate. Mech’ represented the language of law, hence Culture. Zep’ symbolized primordial forces, hence Nature. So another binary opposition the Russian teachers set up in their conceptualization of power was the binary opposition of culture versus nature. In this opposition, vlast’ as law/culture was favored over the vlast’ as a force of nature because vlast’ as law/culture, though it could be repressive, still could protect teachers.
CHAPTER V
PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION OF AMERICAN FINDINGS

The American Teachers’ Struggles over Their Teacher Identities

This chapter deals with the American teachers’ struggle over their teacher identities in the process of naming and describing the profession and goals of public education, defining power, and grappling with educational reforms. I present, interpret, and discuss the American data following the same format I employed in chapter IV to present, interpret, and discuss the Russian data. First I present the topic, and then the discourses that, I claim, the American teachers used as cultural resources to draw upon in their talk about each topic. Following is the list of topics and discourses I identified as important in the American teachers’ identity construction:

1. The topics, A Teacher is Not Just a Dispenser of Information, and Public Schools as the Foundation of the Society, are followed by a section on Discourses That Shaped the American Participants’ Definitions of Teaching, Goals of Education, and Their Talk about Teacher Status.

2. The topic, American Teachers’ Talk about Power, is followed by a section on Discourses that Shaped American Teachers’ Talk about Power.

3. The topics, I as a Teacher in My Mini-State and In the Reality of American Classrooms: Disciplining Bodies, are followed by a section on Discourses...
4. The topic, Reforms and Teacher Identity, is followed by Discourses that Shaped the American Teachers’ Talk about Reforms.

In each topic, I identify the key words the participants used to produce their particular accounts and the subject positions they assigned to themselves in their accounts and later connect these key words and the subject positions to particular discourses they belonged to. I also describe the binary oppositions they set up to talk about power and differentiate between “good” and “bad” teachers. I included the topics, I, in My Classroom as Mini-States, (which is the American teachers’ self-descriptions of how they envisioned themselves in the classroom), and In the Reality of Classrooms: Disciplining the Bodies, (which is my description of their actual behavior in the classrooms derived from the lesson observations) in order to examine “the situated meaning” of the appellation, an “American teacher.”

In the concluding section, I (a) describe the Discourse model the American Dream, in regards to which the discourses that informed the American teachers’ talk were generated; (b) provide an overview of the subject positions they assigned themselves; and (c) summarize the use of binary oppositions and pronouns. The American teachers’ voices are of primary importance. Other participants’ voices are used only to corroborate, contrast, or emphasize the teachers’ accounts.
A Teacher is Not Just a Dispenser of Information

Defining the teaching profession was important in the American teachers’ identity construction, too. The key words that were crucial in their definitions were citizenry, workforce, and development of students. Similar to the Russian participants, the American participants also focused on the question of what the primary activity of a teacher should be. The running theme across the interviews was that teaching could not be reduced to just teaching a subject though it was an important part of being a teacher. According to their definitions, a teacher was someone who was engaged, first and foremost, in (a) educating citizenry, (b) preparing the workforce, and (c) helping students develop. Six participants highlighted the importance of preparing the workforce as the primary function of a teacher. Thus Sarah believed that there were “many more things to it than just being a teacher standing up there and giving information,” and that the roles teachers performed were “definitely multilevel.” “Teachers are not just dispensers of information,” argued Brandon, too. He thought that teachers’ roles were “so multifaceted” that he had “yet to come up with the model that can explain… to an average person working in a business world what a teacher does all his day.” He compared a teacher to “an individual in a business who is in charge of human resources responsible for hiring, training, developing skills, constantly developing skills for new jobs… then evaluating performance.” In addition, teachers had to “give students tools to be independent, …help them make transitions and foster self-esteem along with independence, and help them learn how to deal with information, how to gather support and help from the peers and colleagues.”
From what he said, it seems that his main preoccupation was about teaching students life and work skills and self-reliance. Similarly, Dustin, Melinda, Sarah, and Hillary were also of an opinion that it was a teacher’s job to prepare students for life and teach them life and work skills, besides teaching subjects. Only one teacher, Jill, thought that “the primary activity of a teacher should be teaching language, arts and math.” However, she was quick to add that it was “impossible to limit a teacher’s job to teaching three R’s only,” because, in reality, a teacher had also to “prepare a child for real life: socializing, not just academics.”

Unlike teachers, the middle school principal, Jim, was convinced that a teacher’s job was first of all “to educate the kids, not to raise.” Though teachers had to be “the mother and the father to whom students come for advice and for everything under the sun,” the primary function of a teacher “still got to be instruction because that is what they are paid for,” he said. However, because “a lot of these kids do not have work ethic” it was the teachers’ job, “if the parents didn’t do that, to force a work ethic on them,” he concluded. Therefore for the majority of the American participants, preparing the future workforce, teaching life skills, and instilling a work ethic were the most important activities a teacher should be engaged in.

Four participants valued educating citizenry and one participant—development of students—over other goals of education. For example, Mathew, Dennis, and George thought that the most important task of a teacher was creating “independent thinkers and inquiring citizens.” Michelle, being a special education teacher, believed that for her “type of students,” the primary activity of a teacher should be preparing “good
functioning citizens that can contribute to society.” In Hatcher’s opinion, “though the material a teacher taught was important, what was more important than teaching was making students more complete, more whole.” He was convinced that the primary function of a teacher was to “be there for support, for nurturing, to help students grow…into …a particular part of their life, help them create selves.”

In sum, by definition, an American teacher, just like a Russian teacher, was engaged in two primary activities: teaching a subject and transmitting values. The American teachers chose to highlight either preparing the future workforce, educating citizenry, or helping students develop their selves as the primary activities a teacher should be engaged in. Of all the teachers, only one thought that teachers’ primary allegiance should be to the subject they taught.

**Public School as the Foundation of the Society**

I believe very much that school in the United States is an equalizing force. It’s a way for kids to change their economic status, and be able to improve. So, I see this being as an extremely important foundation in our society, but then when I look at what’s going on… and it seems that other people don’t have the same idea of it. So, it’s disheartening. (Melinda)

The definitions of the profession were closely linked to the definitions of the goals of public education. The key words and phrases in their definitions were *democracy, equal opportunity, and educating citizenry*. The participants identified five goals as the most important (a) ensuring equality of opportunity, (b) educating citizenry, (c) preparing the workforce, (d) teaching tolerance to differences, and (e) helping
students realize their dreams. While all of these goals were important for all of the participants, they valued some goals over the others or saw several goals to be equally important. Consider the most representative quotes which show how the participants defined the goals. To begin with, Melinda’s belief of education as “an equalizing force” was shared by all of the American participants. In America, “every person is given the opportunity for education….education is the leveler, the leveler of people,” stated Caroline. “Whether they take advantage of that opportunity or not is part of a decision-making process. At least, they are given that opportunity, not just the wealthy. What a sad world it would be if we couldn’t do that,” she continued. For Dennis, education was not only the means “to help remove barriers for kids” but also “to secure the sovereignty of the United States firmly in the people’s hands.” His philosophy, he believed, “often smashes against those whose philosophies are grounded in producing better engineers and chemists and teachers and factory workers and computer analysts.” Though it was “all important and all necessary” to prepare for all these professions, that was not “the primary purpose of American public education,” in his opinion. The primary purpose was to produce “an educated citizenry, one that can grapple with tough questions, work through disagreements and find ways to live with one another that can benefit everyone.” In addition, he was afraid of uniformity in thinking. “It is important to have all points of view, especially, those that disagree with me the most. What scares me is homogenizing our citizenry,” he said.

Likewise, George also believed that people “should have an equal opportunity and they should have equal rights.” But his main concern was about maintaining diversity of
opinions in education and questioning authority. The strongest feature of American education, in his view, was that it provided “variety,” taught “to look for differences and question the authority.” Questioning the authority was “a healthy thing in an American culture….Instead of saying ‘ok’, they say, ‘why’, try to explain to me, ‘why’.” In his opinion, what made the American system of public education unique, and “one advantage Americans always had in the U.S.” was the desire to “change, improve, or make it a little better, change….technology and social things, too.” It was not the system in which “the government in the capital city picked the same book and everybody was on the same page.” America had “a long tradition of independent schools.” So, “when the state school is teaching nonsense, we can always walk into a private school,” he said. However, he was disappointed that Americans “had a little of a problem with questioning authority lately” and that there was “a lesser inclination to want to correct the mistakes.”

For Hillary, it was discouraging that “the current administration was saying that it was not ‘ok’ to be tolerant on people, tolerant on different religions, tolerant about sexual preferences.” Being intolerant to differences was counter to her beliefs about what made America special. America was a country where “you can be whatever you want. That what our country was supposed to be,” and the purpose of education was to help students be what they wanted to be, she believed.

The notion that educated citizenry was crucial for democracy was either explicitly or implicitly stated by all of the participants. “Even going back to Jefferson, you see our democracy is based on educating citizenry,” said Scott. Teaching to think independently was the most critical thing in the project of educating citizenry because there was
“nothing more dangerous than a person who thinks,” and because “if teachers can produce children who think independently, make independent decisions based on facts, then they will create a generation of children that can actually stand up for themselves and take care of the work of this country, of the work of this world,” in Mathew’s opinion. Caroline believed that teaching “kids to be thinkers” was important “because there are bad people that get elected to positions.” Jim thought that students had “to be able to think for themselves” in order “to be able to make intelligent decisions” and “to be able to apply knowledge over here to a new situation.”

As can be seen from the definitions of teaching and the goals of education, without an exception, the American participants saw public school as “an extremely important foundation in American society,” as Melinda put it. For them, school was first of all a site where: (a) an educated citizenry was created, (b) the American workforce was prepared, and (c) students learned to live together and be tolerant of differences. They firmly believed in the soundness of the key principles on which American public education was based. In their view, the very existence of American democracy depended on this foundation. Ideally, the educated citizenry never hesitated to question authority, could think independently, made informed, independent decisions based on facts and research, was able to apply the acquired knowledge and coexist in a mutually beneficial way, and ensure that the government served the public interests, not its own.

**Teachers Deserve More Respect**

It seems doctors are respected much more because they are doing things that other people can’t do. People who have been to school, which is everyone,
think they can be a teacher, that it is an easy job. That is not at all true. The only way you know that is if you are a teacher. There are so many things that go into it… So many things to keep track of. I think teachers aren’t respected enough. (Jill)

The American teachers’ perceptions about teacher significance and teacher status in the society was an important theme in fashioning their teacher identity, too. The analysis of the statements “we, teachers,” “they, teachers,” “teachers are…” revealed that, in their opinion, the key words used by parents, politicians, and mass media to describe teachers were “lazy,” “overpaid,” “under worked,” “incompetent,” “impractical,” “uncaring.” They believed that, overall, (a) “teachers in the United States” did not have “a particularly high social standard” (George). (b) they were “not regarded highly” (George), (c) they were “not respected” (Dustin, Jill, Melinda, Sarah) for various reasons:

1. People saw teaching as “an easy job” (Jill, Dustin).
2. People thought that teachers had “a lot of days off” and were “overpaid” (Hatcher, Hillary, Melinda), and they were “not working super hard” (Hatcher).
3. “Politicians portrayed teachers as lazy, under worked people who work only two hundred fifty days out of a year and get overpaid” (Mathew).
4. People “have lost sight of all the hard work that teachers do” (Sarah).
5. Teachers were seen as incompetent people “who really don’t know what they were doing… don’t know the subject material very well…who are easily
distracted, easily confused, …stuck in the job they don’t really care about and they just sort of muddle through” (George).

6. Mass media chose to focus only on the negative stories concerning the public schools and teachers (Hatcher, George, Melinda) while there were “millions of other positive experiences from public school systems that just are not being noticed” (Jill).

7. Many people thought of a teacher as a “baby-sitter” (Brandon, Dustin, Michelle) “not as a professional” (Dustin).

8. In general, “intellectuals have a terrible status in the U.S.—they are portrayed as fools who have no practical experience” (George).

To counter these negative perceptions of a teacher, the teachers in this study argued that, in reality, a teacher’s job was “not easy.” The key words in their descriptions of a teacher’s job were “hard-working,” “dedicated,” “caring,” and “professional.” They treated their profession with respect and believed that (a) teachers were specifically trained to do their job, and (b) teaching was an honorable profession. The following two statements neatly capture the teachers’ sentiments about their profession. As Heather put it, “we all have things that we uniquely can do as having been trained to do and it’s not the easiest profession.” In Mathew’s words, teaching should be “a profession people want to go into… honored to be involved with.”

While all the teachers thought that teaching as a profession was not regarded highly, and that teachers did not enjoy a high status at the national level, they believed that whether teachers were respected or not depended on the school, the school district
where they worked, and on the teacher. Not a single teacher said that he or she came across as disrespected but they were convinced that they worked hard to earn that respect. There were some “bad” teachers out there, but I, as a teacher, was respected.

Finally, the question of money was important in all of the American teachers’ talk about teacher’ status and significance, too. Implicit in their statements about money was the belief that they were doing their difficult job by having made or making some personal choices concerning money, and that they also needed public recognition for their job which was very important for the society. The issue of money was brought up by all of the teachers, either to (a) emphasize that those who want to earn much money should not go into teaching, (b) complain about the lack of resources in their schools (mostly the inner-city high school teachers), or (c) express fear that they would not be able to live the middle-class lifestyle on a teacher’s salary.

Discourses That Shaped the American Teachers’ Definitions of Teaching, Goals of Education, and Their Talk about Teacher Status

In this section, I claim that the American teachers borrowed much of their vocabulary from what I will name *Educating Citizenry for Democracy, Preparing the Workforce* and *Education as a Great Equalizer* discourses to define the teaching profession and the goals of public education, and talk about teacher status and significance. According to Gill, Timpane, Ross, and Brewer (2001) Americans subscribe to three goals of education which are reflected in the common school model. Ideally, the model (a) “provides access to high-quality education for all children in the community,” (b) “involves a healthy social mixing of children from all races and classes,” and (c)
“educates in the virtues of democratic citizenship” (p.19). The model has been championed by its supporters “as a uniquely democratic American institution” that attended to the needs of diverse groups and helped “produce the world’s most productive, creative, and entrepreneurial economy” (Gill, et al., 2001, p.19). These professed goals of public education were held in high esteem by all of the American participants in this study, too, though some goals were thought to be more important than others. No matter in what order they ranked these goals, in any case, they were drawing upon the aforementioned discourses that informed American public thinking about public education.

**Educating citizenry for democracy discourse.** This discourse has been informing Americans’ thinking about education since the inception of public schooling in America. For Thomas Jefferson, whose name is most frequently associated with articulating the foundational principles of American public education most lucidly, the purpose of education was first of all educating the citizenry. He believed that the most critical goal of education in the new democratic republic was preparing “the rulers and the ruled in a complimentary fashion” because neither the rulers nor the ruled could be trusted entirely (Oaks, 1999, p.188). Education was supposed to (a) enlighten the masses about the natural rights of individuals and alert them against tyranny, and (b) awaken the elite to “the need to be watched by the people” (Pangle & Pangle, 1993, pp. 100-111). In his view, only an educated citizen was able to “exercise reason and moral common sense to make political decisions,” the most critical of which would be electing “republican leadership” (Spring, 2008, p. 57). The rulers had to be held in check by the ruled because
they were prone to corruption. In order to vote the rulers into the positions of authority, the ruled had to learn to read and understand what they were voting for and how to choose the leaders wisely.

Education was also the means for the ruled to “protect themselves in their liberty,” “understand and meet their obligations to the community and the nation,” and “know their rights and understand how to exercise them” (Oaks, 1999, p. 188). In short, the purpose of universal education was to develop “a bourgeois society in which social relations were grounded in contract rather than ascription” (Oaks, 1999, p. 188).

However, Thomas Jefferson never lost sight of the individual in the project of democracy and the government was the means to ensure that the natural rights of the individuals were not violated by those in power. He insisted on the centrality of natural rights of individuals in this contract (Pangle & Pangle, 1993; Oaks, 1999).

As the analysis of the American participants’ talk revealed, they used the same arguments for public schooling as Jefferson had done. For them, public education was still the best means to secure democracy and educate the citizenry. The subject position available within this discourse for a teacher is of someone who makes sure that a particular type of a citizen is the end product of their efforts: a citizen who questions authority and makes informed decisions, so that the power balance never tips in favor of the government power. In addition, a teacher has to encourage the citizen to be self-regulating, self-independent, and responsible for his or her own actions.

**Education as a great equalizer and preparing the workforce discourses.**

Central to the *Education as a Great Equalizer* discourse are the concepts of equality and
equal opportunity. Equality was the first thing that Thomas Jefferson mentioned in the
*Declaration of Independence*. Only after he stated that “all men are created equal,” he
proceeded to “certain unalienable rights” such as “life, liberty and the pursuit of
happiness” (Brewer, 1999, p. 52). What equality meant to him and other reformers in the
founding era was breaking away from the society that defined an individual’s place in
society based on inheritance and creating a society that would define an individual’s
place in it based on merit. Merit was to be determined “through a person’s or group’s
ability to exercise reason” (Brewer, 1999, p. 52). The purpose of education was to give
an opportunity to “the mass of the people of America” to learn “to think for themselves”
(Brewer, 1999, p. 54).

In the course of American history, the notions of equality and merit have
undergone considerable transformations. Though the notion of education being useful for
conducting business was part of Jefferson’s educational goals, it was auxiliary to the
primary goal of educating citizenry for him. He “had no intention of rendering” children
“fit for worthwhile employment or setting them on the road of upward mobility” (Oaks,
1999, p. 187). However, with the advent of Industrialism and due to the influx of
immigrants, public school became a major site not only for preparing citizenry but also
for preparing a workforce for businesses. The role of public schools expanded far
beyond only teaching to exercise reason. Merit was increasingly defined through an
individual’s ability to gain skills useful for businesses and the concept of equality was
increasingly tied to the notions of success and upward mobility and became synonymous
to the concept of equality of opportunity (Spring, 2008).
Equality of opportunity has become one of the most cherished American beliefs. According to Cullen (2008), Americans “cite the concept of equality of opportunity” because it helps them “square the difference between principle and reality” (italics in original, p. 108). They can “accept and even savor all kinds of inequalities” as long as the notion of equal opportunity is still alive. It helps them imagine that they “live in a reasonably fair country” (Cullen, 2003, p. 108). The overwhelming majority of Americans embrace the notion of equality as an equality of opportunity because it helps them reconcile with the glaring inequalities existing in society and gives them hope that everyone has a chance to move up the social ladder if one works hard enough. It also reaffirms the belief that it is up to an individual whether he or she can make it in the world and therefore, the system itself is sound (Cullen 2008; Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Johnson, 2006). This belief was reflected in the American participants’ talk, too.

In relation to public schooling, equal opportunity means that everybody in America, regardless of background, race, religion, and gender gets the same educational opportunity (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Spring, 2008). Throughout its history, the American public school system has been struggling to ensure equal educational opportunity by imposing different models: “the common-school model, the sorting-machine model, and the high-stakes testing model.” Regardless what model educational reformists subscribed to, surprisingly, all of them used the concept of the equality of educational opportunity to promote their reforms in education (Spring, 2008, p. 39).
Both *Education as a Great Equalizer* and *Preparing the Workforce* discourses in conjunction with the *Educating Citizenry for Democracy* discourse played an important role in how the American teachers fashioned their teacher selves and envisioned the public school in particular ways. These discourses enabled them to talk about (a) public school as a site where every child had an opportunity to overcome social inequalities and where an educated citizenry was created and learned to live together; and (b) teachers as change agents who made a difference through their hard work by arming students with work, life, and thinking skills. More subject positions can be added to this generic subject position inscribed within these discourses. A teacher can think of himself or herself as a nurturer, a caring teacher, a social worker, and as someone who is in charge of human resource development within these discourses. However, these subject positions all have to reflect this belief in a mission a teacher is assigned to accomplish: address the inequities built in within the structure by helping a student, no matter what his background, race, religion, and gender is, i.e. to rise above circumstances.

**The American Teachers’ Talk About Power**

The topic of power was important in the American teachers’ construction of their teacher identity, too. The key words around which they constructed the notion of power were control, make a difference, get things done, and access to resources. In the following consider how the American participants defined power, how they envisioned relations between educational administration and teachers, and what they thought was an abuse of power.
What is power about? The most frequently used word in association with power was control. All of the teachers were afraid to lose control over the working environment and the material they taught. The majority equated power with control. Thus, for example, Melinda said, “power and control seem synonymous to me. It’s knowing that you can be in control of a situation, that’s where power comes from.” A teacher did not have to use his or her power: The threat of use of power was enough, in her opinion. “The United States has so many weapons. We are powerful just by the threat of having those weapons. We don’t have to use them. And, I guess, that the same kind of thing is true of a teacher,” she explained. Likewise, Hatcher also thought of power as control. “It is control, not power. Power is exacting control, holding control over a body of students, the body of people to make sure things will be done,” he said. He did not see himself “as demanding authority that has to control every thought, every action.” He was “somebody who could help organize the process to make sure that things are getting done.”

Power meant the ability to get things done for Jill, too. She felt like she had “a lot of power” because when she wanted “things done they would get done” in her classroom. But she had to be in control to get things done. Control was the first word that came to Dustin’s mind in association with power, also. He believed he had “100% control in the classroom and control over discipline in the hall, and 100% control over how he teaches and not necessarily what he teaches.” Mathew, a teacher union representative, also equated power with control. He was convinced that “in general, without a union…teachers have no power at all.” To him, power was about the control over the working environment: “And you might work very hard and you might do a wonderful job
but you are not going to be able to get equity, and the control of your working environment. No union, no power,” he said.

Michelle thought of power “more as discipline.” She “wouldn’t define it more like power.” Similarly, Jim, the middle school principal, believed that there was “no education without discipline.” Power was “about the job getting done” and without discipline nothing could be accomplished. So he expected his “teachers to control the class.” However, Tamara and Luda, former teachers from the Soviet Union, who were working in an inner-city high school at the time of the interview, believed that it was much more difficult to maintain discipline in American schools due to the lack of respect for a teacher. Before coming to the U.S., Tamara had worked in a privileged specialized French language school in Moscow. In the U.S., she first taught in an experimental magnet school, then – in an alternative school, and at the time of the interview was teaching in the inner-city high school. She said that in the high school she finally felt that she was “a teacher” because, as she put it, “here, students at least listen to me, at least the appearance who is the boss is maintained.” In the magnet school she felt as if she were “a baby sitter,” in the alternative school—as “a hostage to the criminal elements who usurped the power in school.”

Besides control and discipline, the power of a teacher lay in his or her ability to influence students, to make a difference. All the teachers believed in the power of education to make a difference and in the power of individual teachers to make a difference. For example, Mathew was convinced that it was teachers who made a difference, not “little saviors who come and try to save all of humanity. And they go
away because they burn out quickly.” Unlike them, teachers were “here to make a difference.” They were not “here to implement one program until it’s done, ‘til the funds dry up.” Some of them “committed to be here thirty, thirty-five, forty years. Teachers make the biggest impact. That’s what I do. That’s my philosophy,” he concluded. The sense of making a difference was important for Brandon, too. Though he did not believe that his influence went “beyond this classroom,” nevertheless, he “would like to think” that he had “the power to make a difference in [his] sphere of influence” and he worked “on that premise most days.” “It gives us a purpose, why we live and why we work,” he said. The superintendent Caroline also thought that “education is what makes a difference in everybody’s life.” Education, in her opinion, was “a gift” the society gave “to young people in America.” She became a teacher because she wanted “to make a difference for kids” she was teaching and that was what she did her “whole career.” When she “taught second grade in an inner-city school” she “never felt powerless” because she knew she “was making a difference for those kids.”

Hillary and George also thought of teachers’ power in terms of their ability to influence students. “It is more influence….power, in a sense to make them understand that it is their life and that they are responsible for themselves…. you can just simply influence them,” said Hillary. George was aware that that he had “a certain amount of power to influence in a very limited way” but he had to “keep reminding [him]self of the limits.” Though, he thought that his influence was limited, he realized that he could tell students “what they should value in the future” by his “attitude and by the way” he looked at things, by what he thought was “important.” In this respect, his influence was
far-reaching: It went far beyond the classroom. He could “inspire students ....to want to be better, more productive citizens not only of the United States but of the world in general, because if they do, it’s good for the United States in general.”

In sum, the American participants subscribed to the notion of power that was associated, first and foremost, with a sense of control and influence. They believed that teachers’ power was in the ability to control the situation, the working environment, and the body of students. The teachers needed this sense of control in order to be able to get things done, to perform everyday activities as a teacher.

Power was also conceptualized as influence by the American teachers. A teacher could make a difference by influencing students’ minds, by teaching them to understand that their life was their responsibility, by making them want to become productive citizens. The thought that they made a difference, either small or big, by influencing individual students, teaching them work skills, and by educating citizens who could make a contribution not only to the country but to the whole world too (in some teachers’ opinion), was the driving force in their jobs. It gave them a comforting feeling that their job had more to it than just dispensing information and that, even if they believed that their influence could not extend beyond their classrooms, they could still make a difference by touching the lives of individual students in many different ways. An American teacher has a lot of power in this case: It is up to an individual teacher to provide an equal opportunity and to contribute to the project of democracy by, as George put it, “maximizing access to freedom of as many people as possible.”
**Teachers and abuse of power.** However, not all teachers were able to use power in a positive way. Jim thought that while teachers had a lot of power, not all teachers could use it to the benefit of students. They could “set up kids for success or failure,” he said. Teachers were divided into two opposing groups: those who set up students for success and those who set up students for failure, in his opinion. All of the interviewed teachers thought that they belonged to the group that did everything possible to help students succeed. In relation to power, I located the following binary opposition in their statements “they, teachers”, and “I, as a teacher” statements: “those teachers who abused power” versus “I, who did not abuse power.” This oppositional pair was evident in both explicit and implicit statements in all of the teachers’ talk. For example, George did not elaborate on power abuse but instead focused solely on the ability of a teacher to influence students’ minds. However, implicit in his statements about power is the belief that a teacher abused power by not letting students challenge a teacher’s authority. He was not that type of a teacher. He always urged them to look for other ways of explaining things. In all of the teachers’ statements I could discern this “there are some teachers who abused power but I am not that type of a teacher” attitude. In the following, I present some of the explicitly stated explanations some of the teachers provided to justify their claims that I, as a teacher, am different from those other teachers who abused power:

1. Some teachers abused power because they did not have good judgment and were afraid of transparency. Thus, Melinda wanted to think she had good judgment unlike some teachers “who, unfortunately, don’t have a good
judgment but also have a lot of say of what goes on… and who keep their doors closed.” Her doors were “open most of the times and people could come and see what was going on in her classroom “any time.”

2. Some teachers abused power by acting “in an inappropriate way” (Jill), by using fear (Hillary, Melinda). In Melinda’s opinion, some teachers intimidated “the kids for reasons that are selfish.” They thought that they could “scare kids into doing their work.” Unlike these kinds of teachers, Melinda did not “get pleasure out of making them afraid.”

3. Some teachers abused power by “setting rules and regulations and activities simply to feel like they were in charge.” Some also abused power by not doing anything, by allowing “the kids to do whatever they wanted,” by letting “chaos happen in the room.” Unlike those teachers, Mathew did not believe that a teacher could hope that students would “develop their own cooperative group… which in theory works fine” but there was “a difference between the theory, and the books, and the reality.” Students needed discipline, “the authority figure there ready to jump down,” they needed “to have Stalin or Hitler ready to pounce if they step out of line.” To him, both losing control of class and making kids do only what a teacher wanted were examples of power abuse. He was not that type of a teacher. He was ready “to step in where the need was and let it go when there was no need.”

4. Some teachers abused power by not following the school rules, in Mathew’s Melinda’s, Hillary’s and Jill’s opinion. They were not like those teachers,
they followed the rules. For example, Jill felt she always followed the rules and hoped that somebody noticed that she was following the rules unlike “one or two teachers” in the building who did not. She found these teachers to be abusing “other people who are following that policy.”

In sum, power abuse was associated with (a) the loss of control, (b) use of fear, (c) teachers’ poor compliance with the rules, (d) teachers’ use of rules to their benefit only, (e) teachers’ inappropriate use of teacher authority, (f) teachers’ inappropriate use of resources, and (g) teachers’ poor judgment. I, as a teacher, as opposed to some teachers, am cast in a positive light. I am in control of the classroom, I do not use fear, or if I do use fear, it is with the purpose of getting things done, not just for getting pleasure from making students scared. I follow the rules and use the rules to the benefit of students, and I have sound judgment.

**Teachers, politicians, and school administration.** In Brandon’s words, “the outside world only comes into our classroom to the extent that state and national government, along with local administration dictates what we teach.” All of the teachers, without exception, did not like this interference. Federal government interference was resented most of all because it was seen as the biggest threat to teacher autonomy, to diversity, and ultimately, to democracy. In this case, the government was equated with politicians. Teachers did not like the idea that politicians in Washington and on the local level told teachers what to teach, how to teach, and what books to use. So another binary opposition set up by the American participants was: *we, educational experts who understand all the complexity of teaching versus politicians both on the local and*
national levels who do not. The teachers also set up the binary opposition school administration versus teachers. However, their attitude toward school administration varied both between and within schools.

Jill and Brandon, teachers in the elementary school did not have much to say about the school administration. Jill thought that “as a teacher in the building” she still felt “somewhat powerful” because she had taken “a lot of leadership roles within the staff.” Brandon did not imagine himself in a leadership position and believed that the administration was supportive of teachers but expected teachers to use all their resources before it got to the point when teachers had to refer students.

Inner-ring, inner-city high school teachers Hatcher and Dustin believed that their school was democratic. Thus Hatcher thought that they were “pretty agreeable in this building” and that there was “a lot of work there before a decision was made,” i.e. teachers could have input in decision-making. Dustin, the only African-American teacher in the study, described the school as “a very, very free, very democratic state.” There were “a lot of freedoms” that were given to teachers. Teachers were “allowed to cover the curriculum any way they see it fit.” They were treated as professionals. However, he also believed that he had to be careful not to come too “close to the boundary.” He knew how to deal with the “school district mentality” and “how to fit to avoid the administration from coming down on” him. Both the local school district and school administration worked on the premise that the school district was integrated but he was convinced that “there is a black door and there’s a white door.” Being an advisor for the African-American Students Association he had to make sure that he did not “disturb
school district mentality” which did not like “too much controversy or too many emotions.” So he set up another binary opposition black people’s mentality versus white people’s mentality which, he thought, was evident in their different readings of American history, and in the fact that white students were overrepresented in AP classes.

Inner-city high school teachers, Melinda, Hillary, Sarah, and Mathew, had diametrically different opinions about the administration. Melinda saw the school she worked at as “a kind of a police state.” It was “almost a police department with the principal being the captain, the teachers being the police officers, having to go out and enforce whatever the captain tells, and realizing that there’s someone over the captain holding them to certain standards,” in her opinion. The teachers in her school thought that administrators were “out of touch and not always fair,” and they resented the administration. A lot of resentment came from the fact that teachers felt that they were not “evaluated correctly.” They felt that evaluation depended on personal likes and dislikes. “There are definite struggles because they have the power to write you up for something, in your permanent record and they could fire you if it becomes extreme. So you know…it’s a struggle between Them and Us,” though she, personally, “never had any problems with the administration,” she concluded. Mathew believed that there was a real incongruence between administrators’ needs and teachers’ needs. “Administrators’ needs generally tend to be high scores, standardized exams and clear hallways and very few referrals.” What teachers needed tended “to be the exact opposite.” They wanted the administration to deal with students who were out of control both in the classrooms and hallways, and enforce the rules. “That’s the administrator’s job to come down on people
who break the rules no matter what,” he said. So Melinda and Mathew set up another
binary opposition: school administration versus teachers.

Hillary, on the other hand, thought that though there could be “an abusive power
situation,” the school was “a little closer to democracy.” The principal was “fair” and
listened to teachers and she was “reasonable” and her comments were “logical.” Both
Sarah and Hillary were appreciative of the fact they had a union representative they could
go to if they had a problem. However, in Melinda’s opinion, teacher unions protected
bad teachers, too.

Dennis, who worked in a blue ribbon suburban middle school, believed that “a
military organization may be the best metaphor to use” to describe his school. In this
military organization, the principal was “nearly at the top,” teachers were “in the field
overseeing the immediate work of the troops.” Though there might be “conversations
about what ought to or ought not be done, but in the end if it is principal’s decision to
make, it is his alone,” though “sometimes, he will accept my advice or the advice of other
faculty, sometimes, he does not,” he said.

What George valued about his blue ribbon suburban high school was that it gave
him academic freedom. When he had an idea to offer a college level class, he went to the
administration and let them know about his idea. They approved of his idea and he
started teaching “these kids college level before they ever got out of high school.”
Things like that were “possible only when you have certain academic flexibility,” he said.
He worried that there would be less and less academic flexibility due to the current
reforms in education. He did not see the school administration as opposed to teachers.
In conclusion, the teachers’ statements about power showed that (a) teachers in all the school districts did not like politicians’ interference with education, (b) I, as a teacher, made every effort to disassociate myself from some teachers who abused power, and (c) race was an important factor in power struggles for the African American history teacher. It determined whose version of history prevailed and who had more access to AP classes.

**Discourses that shaped the American teachers’ talk about power.** This section describes *Power as Control, Management, and Efficiency* and *Government as a Threat to Freedom* discourses that informed the American teachers’ conceptualizations of power. *Power as Control, Management, and Efficiency* discourse, which Henry Giroux calls “the new conservatives’ discourse on authority,” gives power “a positive meaning something to be celebrated as representative of American Dream,” which is based on hard work, discipline, promptness, and cheerful obedience.” The subject position available within this discourse is that of “a clerk,” he asserts (Giroux, as cited in Thayer-Bacon, 2008, p. 65). Thayer-Bacon (2008) traces this view of power to American Puritans who believed that children could not be “left to their own devices” because without guidance they would “only get into trouble” (p. 128). This view of children as being unable to manage themselves has carried over to the present times. Within this view, adults, not children themselves, are responsible for their behavior. In the American society, adults “infringe upon children’s behavior” in the name of protection of children from any harm, because the society expects them to do so (Thayer-Bacon, 2008, p.153). America’s culture expects teachers to be “responsible for students’ safety and well-being and accountable for how much they learn (as can be seen in the current No Child Left Behind
policy)” (Thayer-Bacon, 2008, p. 128). To manage this amount of responsibility they have to be able to control and manage the classroom efficiently. Teachers cannot lose sight of children at any time and let them assume responsibility for their learning and behavior (Thayer-Bacon, 2008, p. 128). This means that teachers can assume not only the subject position of a clerk within the *Power as Control, Management, and Efficiency* discourse. They can also think of themselves as a figure of authority who makes decisions concerning students’ learning and safety within this discourse. As the analysis of the teachers’ talk about power showed, control, discipline, and efficient management of bodies in space and time was their major concern, too. However, they identified with the subject position of a figure of authority, not of a clerk, because the subject position of a clerk diminishes their significance as cultural workers.

Another discourse that was evident in the American teachers’ talk about power was *Government as a Threat to Freedom* discourse. This discourse reflects distrust of government, any authority, anyone in power. Within this discourse, “the best kind of government is a small one with limited powers” (Thayer-Bacon, 2008, p. 155), one that does not interfere with individuals’ lives. Ideally, the role of the government should be limited to protecting individuals from harm, and keeping others from violating individual rights. The distrust of the government is extended to any authority in America. Within this discourse neither individuals, nor groups, nor government can have the right to exercise power the way they want. This view of power relies on a system of checks and balances to keep everyone accountable, teachers included. As a result, none of the actors
involved in education are willing to give teachers too much authority (Thayer-Bacon, 2008).

As the American teachers’ talk about power revealed, they saw too much government interference as a threat to teacher autonomy, independent thinking, and diversity. They were also resentful of abuse of power by principals and some teachers. Implicit in their statements about power abuse were cultural expectations about the role of a leader in the society at large and about the nature of power. A ‘good’ leader was the one (a) who was in control, (b) who saw to it that everybody followed the rules, (c) who did not use fear to maintain control, (d) who had nothing to hide from the public, and (e) who was not afraid of transparency. Nobody was above the rules, leaders included. Neither the government, nor individuals can be given too much power because it can easily be abused and result in the loss of freedom. Interestingly, they did not believe that they personally were abusing power because, unlike those other teachers who abused power, they were in control, followed the rules, did not use fear, were not afraid to expose themselves to the overseeing eye of the public.

Of particular interest here is the emphasis on visibility. The system of checks and balances depends on visibility. Those who are afraid of visibility cannot be trusted because they might not have sound judgment and might be abusing power behind the closed doors. It is difficult to hold these teachers who keep the doors closed accountable. As it is physically impossible to watch over every single teacher, teachers should make a conscious effort to keep the doors open to demonstrate that they are not abusing the power given to them. That is, they should conform to the established cultural norm about
the proper use of power. The purpose of visibility is to answer the question of, using Gabbard’s (2000) words, “Are they [teachers] exercising that [teacher] authority in the expected manner? Are they satisfactorily pursuing the aims of power?” (p. 54).

According to Foucault (1977), modern institutions of disciplinary power, schools included, are built on the principles of Panopticon which turns each individual into both an object and subject of power thanks to the “dominating, overseeing gaze” (Foucault, in Gordon, 1980, p. 152). An individual is aware that he “is subjected to a field of visibility,” and he “assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (Foucault, 1977, pp. 202-203). Theoretically, the American teachers should not have been concerned whether others leave the doors open or not because the principles of panopticism should work even behind closed doors. However, the teachers in this study were concerned that some teachers were not willing to become “the principle of their own subjection.” These teachers’ anxiety over those other teachers’ non-compliance with the expectations of visibility attests to the fact that visibility has become so much part of taken-for-granted normalcy that it is seen as a necessary condition for proper use of power. Whether visibility necessarily ensures proper exercise of power and at what point visibility might turn into its exact opposite is not questioned. “Visibility is a trap” (Foucault, 1977, p. 200). It obscures how teachers are involved in complex power relations which go beyond the exercise of power by individuals, i.e sovereign power (see pp. 60-64).
Reforms and Teacher Identity

This section introduces the American participants’ views on education reforms, namely vouchers, school choice movement, and the NCLB Act. It shows (a) why they thought the vouchers were destroying the public schools and why it was wrong to destroy them, (b) how they defined the NCLB and what impact it had on a teacher’s job, (c) which subject positions inscribed within the reforms the American teachers found undesirable, and (d) which of the aforementioned discourses they used to defend their arguments both against and for the reforms. Their representations of the reforms are an important part in fashioning their teacher identities because the reforms challenge their self-images constructed by and within the available discourses.

Vouchers are killing the public schools. The theme of voucher and school choice as a threat to public schools was one of the most salient themes in all of the American participants’ talk about the reforms. The key words in their talk about vouchers were money, minorities, and federal government interference. The notion of “a private voucher system was first advocated in 1955” (Weil, 2002, p. 9) by Milton Friedman who believed that every family should get “a universal voucher of equal worth for each child who attended school” (Weil, 2002, p. 45). According to his line of thought, parents would be able to “shop around” for a better a school for their children. If they were not satisfied with the school, they had an option of changing schools. The idea of vouchers as an alternative to public schools was planted into public consciousness after a well-known report, A Nation at Risk, in 1983 presented “public schools as failure factories” and contributed to the creation of “a legend of national educational
apocalypse” (Weil, 2002, p. 54). Ever since, the idea has been steadily gaining popularity among various groups.

Both the administrators and teachers in this study believed that “shopping around” for better schools was actually destroying these better schools. They all disagreed both with depicting schools as failure factories and providing vouchers as a solution to all the problems public schools were facing. They provided the following arguments to support their belief that public school was doing well. For example, Caroline said, “I actually think that public education in America is doing very well because we believe that we can educate all children, even those with special needs.” Jim believed that “if that were the case, we wouldn’t be the richest nation in the world” and it was not that the entire public school system was a failure but “minorities are not being successful, the nation at risk is that the minority students are not performing.” Jill also thought that a lot of people had “negative feelings about school systems because mass media always chooses to highlight groups of minorities who do not do well in public schools.”

Taking money away from public schools was a big concern for both the administrators and teachers. Thus Jim, though he did not believe that any amount of money would help improve the achievement gap between the minority students and the white students, was convinced that vouchers and charter schools were not the answer and that they were “actually killing the public schools” by taking money from public schools. Scott also had a problem with “taking dollars from public schools.” He said while that he applauded “the idea of new initiatives, additional funds should be found for these kinds of experiments.” Taking money away, and “disbanding public schools like they are
doing is a mistake,” believed Melinda, too. She thought that the inner-city school where she worked needed more money because they had more problems than schools in other areas. “Some of the students” had “alcohol fetal syndrome,” many students came “from all over the world: from Eastern Europe, from South America, from Africa,” and they did not “have the same level of preparation and needs,” they were “not necessarily well prepared as they could be in math, in social studies, in English,” and they fell “through the cracks,” in Mathew’s opinion. The students were “tardy.” Up to “six hundred a day” could be late to school and there were “no consequences for this behavior” because the school did not “have the man power to enforce the rules,” explained Melinda. The inner-city was “just a mess” because the majority of parents in the inner city were “minorities,” and there was “a whole society in inner city where things are just given and rules are not followed,” in her opinion.

In comparison with charter schools, public schools were in a disadvantageous position because charter schools did not have to accommodate special education kids and they were not “held to the same standards,” in her opinion. George was convinced that there was “no chance for a parent from an inner-city school to bring his child to our community which is one of the best schools in Ohio,” and that the whole plan would result “in economic segregation.” Though teachers in inner-city schools might be “the really dedicated, really desperate teachers,” they worked with students who did not have the same values as students in a suburb with its “transplanted Americanized European culture.” In the inner city where “you have African culture, you have Hispanic culture, there is nobody around to tell me what I am doing is destructive to my society, is
destructive to my race, destructive to my culture,” he said. Their parents did not understand that “you have to make sacrifices to give your kids a really superior education.” So underachievement in these schools, in his opinion, was due, “at least partially,” to cultural differences. In addition, “government subsidies for their religious schools,” in his opinion, was “a terrible idea because if they give you money, they demand things from you.” Another reason he was against vouchers and the NCLB was because they had the potential of considerably homogenizing the American educational landscape by actually restricting choice and increasing federal government interference with instruction. “You will be a government employee, teaching the government test in the government way, out of the government book, which is why I am glad I am leaving teaching,” he concluded. As a consequence, he saw independent schools as the last haven where people could limit the government interference with instruction.

In conclusion, the American participants used *Education as a Great Equalizer, Educating Citizenry for Democracy, and Government as a Threat to Freedom* discourses to argue against the vouchers and school choice. The school choice was not a realistic program that could provide an equal opportunity for good education for all children. In reality, it destroyed the public school system which, though not perfect, still was perceived to better suit the task of equalizing through education. I would also argue that behind the talk about vouchers and school choice being a threat to public schools, there was also in some cases explicitly, and in some cases not so explicitly, stated anxiety about vouchers being a threat to teacher identities. In the previous sections I showed that the American teachers believed that they were some sort of cultural workers who fulfilled
very important functions in the society. Some of the teachers extended their influence far beyond their classrooms. Some of the teachers did not believe that their influence went beyond their classrooms. However, in each case, they all worked on the premise that they can make a difference.

Vouchers were a blow to teacher identities created by the teachers using the *Education as a Great Equalizer* and *Educating Citizenry for Democracy* discourses. Vouchers were showing them that what they believed in was not true. If the public schools were a failure, then, the teachers were a failure, too. Hence, the claims they made about their teacher selves were not true either. Interestingly, to defend their self-images, they used minorities as an excuse. They believed that the American public schools were doing well, and that it was the minority students who were to blame for the dire picture painted about American education. If it were not for the minorities, public schools would be doing just fine. Teachers work hard. Teachers do their job. They make a difference, in their sphere of influence, with the same minorities by fulfilling the functions of a social worker, a psychologist, a parent, and so forth. It is the minorities who do not measure up. If you let them come to our suburban schools, they will destroy them. They cannot succeed because they do not have the same cultural values as Americans of European descent. The minorities just do not “get it” that they have to make sacrifices. Things are just given to them and it is impossible to plan any consequences on them. It is not because of structural inequalities that the minorities are a failure but because of their cultural inferiority, and because they just do not take any individual responsibility for upholding their own culture.
Therefore, minorities are important in American teacher identity construction: They can be used to cast a teacher as making a difference in the lives of students or failing them, depending on the circumstances. The Great Equalizer discourse positions a teacher as someone making a difference, someone who makes strides to overcome inequalities by providing equal opportunities for the underprivileged. Educational policies, such as school choice, reports such as *A Nation at Risk*, and mandates, such as NCLB, position a teacher as someone who consistently fails students, and who should be held accountable for their failure. These policies put teachers on defense and make them speak about minorities as the “deficient Other” who cannot measure up to the mainstream cultural norms due to their cultural inferiority.

**What is the NCLB?** In the following, I present how the American teachers in this study defined the No Child Left Behind mandate. The key words in their definitions were *accountability, law, an excellent theory, a good idea, competition,* and *a political propaganda*. For example, Jill described the mandate as “a concrete measure for the state to hold teachers accountable.” Brandon saw it as “a national law,…an attempt to hold teachers accountable in the same way as the population in the business world is held accountable,” “an attempt to provide a consistent set of expectations all over the country regardless of the backgrounds students bring to the classroom.” Dustin believed it was “an excellent theory” the purpose of which was “to give all students the same educational opportunities,” “a structure put by non-education people, top-down perspective,” and it was about “accountability.”
In its essence, it was a good idea or might be a good idea: “Nothing is wrong with standardized testing,” contended George. “It is a good, sound idea,” said Michelle. For Hatcher, too it was “a good idea to collectively decide what is the minimum that we can say that a student has achieved certain competence” and “a good plan to make sure that we have kids meeting a common goal.” He also described it as “just another piece of a puzzle…part of a growth of a career.” “This is how part of the career is run. There will be measures, accountability, testing to measure how the students are learning,” he said. However, according to George and Dennis, the Act was based on “false premises that all children have equal abilities” (George), and that funding and “all other things that influence learning were equal,” too (Dennis). On the national level, in George’s view, it was “a very good political propaganda in the American history in the sense that it tells everybody out there that ‘I’, your president, am concerned about your children and want them to succeed.” This political propaganda, he believed, gave some kind of illusion to parents that they could, indeed, have a chance to provide a better education to their child.

On the global scale, it was about competing with other countries. The goal for America was “to achieve at a level beyond other countries that are economically compatible to America,...to achieve better than those who are looking at us, who are watching us,” believed Brandon. “They are competing with other countries,” stated Michelle. “I think, they really push people to focus on math and science, and competition with other countries, which boggles the mind,” said Mathew. George characterized it as “intellectual imperialism.” “The political agenda would be the ‘have- countries’ (western Europe and America, Japan) are trying to impose their cultural economic will on the
‘have-nots’. The northern hemisphere countries dominating the southern hemisphere countries,” he explained.

“The garden was wild and flourishing in all forms and fashion.” The following are the teachers’ accounts of their job before NCLB. For all of the American teachers’, the NCLB mandate clearly served as a dividing line that enabled them to talk about education and their work as being dramatically different. The key words in their descriptions of their job before the NCLB were a creative playground, carefree, enjoyable teaching, a wild, flourishing garden, intellectual freedom, control, individual students’ interests. Here are some of the most illustrative comments which show the teachers’ nostalgic accounts of their job before NCLB.

Before NCLB, “school was like a creative playground, because we used to do so many projects, more fun things,” believed Sarah. Hatcher thought that teaching was “easier, more carefree, more enjoyable” and teachers were “more relaxed, more confident” and “it was like getting up in the morning and taking a walk through the woods just to enjoy the woods.” It was more “fun to teach,” believed both Jill and Hatcher. And on the whole, all teachers in this study thought that they catered to the interests of each individual child more and created an environment in which each child could flourish, before NCLB. Brandon’s words best summarize the participants’ sentiments about their view of school, the role of a teacher, and the ultimate goal of education in that school before NCLB. Here is what he said:

I think we looked at students before the NCLB more as individuals. Ideally, we had a garden where individual students could grow and blossom based on how
much we fed and nurtured them. So that each flower in need and needing different types of feeding and nurture and care could more closely become the type of flower it was meant to be. Before the NCLB the garden was wild and flourishing in all forms and fashion…In the past the curriculum was a guide. In the past, I had a guide and I could use it to my strengths and the strengths of my student. I think as classroom teachers, we always had the motivation that individuals come first and then the whole class.

In addition, more money was available before the mandate and it was spent on kids, not on testing. “The monies used to go to the kids, for books and teaching materials, for chalk and notebooks, not to the testing,” said Mathew. There was more intellectual freedom believed George. “We were freer intellectually, and we had more chance to do different things and try different things,” he said. Hatcher thought that he “had more control over (his) work before” and Dustin believed that he “had more hope.”

“Now the garden is more like a vegetable garden.” After NCLB, things changed dramatically, in all of the teachers’ opinion. The key words in their descriptions of their job after NCLB were teaching to the test, no enjoyment, no fun, no flexibility, no money, a lot of pressure, punitive, standardized version of the world. Teaching to the test was one of the chief complaints. Teachers felt that after the NCLB teaching was all about getting ready for the test. Consider what the teachers said about how testing affected instruction: “With the NCLB, school is like preparing for a test” (Sarah); “Now, everything is geared to test” (George); “Now, we have to look at the tests as an accountable measure that is going to be shared with families, community, and the state,
and our jobs in response is to prepare students for these tests” (Hatcher); “I just need to drill them and drill them and drill them exactly the way the test wants them to be passed… I feel I am constantly matching to the test” (Jill); “I am going to try to teach to the test” (Dustin); “I feel a lot of pressure for those students to pass their OGT, and I look at how far behind they are” (Melinda); “They are trying to teach the standardized version of math, standardized version of history, etc. There is no flexibility, which is essential to learning... You must teach to the test” (George); “our job in response now is to prepare students to these tests. Test-taking skills, content, specified information, and graphic organizing exercise that allow students to be familiar with the test format, before they are actually given the test” (Brandon); “You certainly are very focused on making sure that they learn those skills to pass the test” (Hillary). Accordingly, “because of NCLB, the garden has become more structured and each row of plant is expected to grow and look ultimately similar in nature and form. Now the garden is more like a vegetable garden” (Brandon).

Yet another complaint was that the NCLB took away the enjoyment from learning because the focus was on the result, not the process: “Life is about learning. Not just learning but to learn and enjoy. That’s where we are now. This is no summer vacation, yet but to learn and enjoy, and when we get there then we’ll enjoy,” Hatcher explained. “I definitely had more fun last year, because you could use that two month period to give a more complete feel to it,” he added. In Jill’s opinion, too, constant matching to testing took “away the fun part of the school.” Students were “still writing, still doing the fun
writing projects,” but all this work matched “the test mostly.” “Matching to the test is not fun, kind of boring, for them, and for me,” she concluded.

The NCLB mandate also dictated a different approach to curriculum. In Brandon’s opinion, the curriculum was no longer “just a guide”: It was “a map, a destination.” He felt that he and students had to “follow the map, and if they get lost and do not get to the destination if they get off the map and are not at the destination where they need to be, according to the state of Ohio,” he would “be held accountable.” Neither students’ nor teachers’ strengths and interests mattered in this curriculum. It was all about getting to a destination. “Now, regardless of our strengths and interests, we all must move in that direction and somehow get to the same destination,” he said.

In addition, after the NCLB, there was more paperwork (Jill, Hillary, Caroline) and less money. “Resources just dried up,” said Mathew. “The NCLB could be OK if it were properly funded,” believed Melinda. However, “Bush is shoveling NCLB down our throat” while taking the money away from education, in Sarah’s opinion. “They say do this and then they don’t fund us, worse than that, they don’t fund it to begin with and then they take money away from us now,” complained Mathew. Hence, “stuff that influenced education, things that would remediate some of the early childhood problems are not funded. There is no money for Head Start but there is a great more money for testing,” explained George. What Mathew said about money is worth quoting at length because it summarizes best how teachers felt about funding and testing:

Look where the money is gone. The money’s gone to test companies, the money’s gone to test the kids, that’s where the money is in, that’s what NCLB
does: It takes the monies, that used to go to the kids, for books and teaching materials, for chalk and notebooks, …and it’s going to the testing. Companies are making out like bandits in the system. I hate to say this. I don’t want to involve you in a political discussion, but it is an overall theme of our politics in this country today. All money is going out to the big corporations and it is not going to individuals where the money is supposed to be going. The money wants to test the kids in the third grade; they want us to test the kids in the kindergarten. Why, in the name of God, you test a child in the kindergarten?

Not only was the money not going to individuals. The mandate was changing the ways individuals were viewed. Within the NCLB, an individual was worth only as much as he or she contributed to the whole. It introduced a way of looking at individuals “as subsets of bigger, larger school, or school community and as we break down… the differences in the achievement into subsets, we are not looking at individuals as much as we did in the past,” in Brandon’s opinion. He was puzzled by “such a different focus.” “With NCLB, we are being asked to look at the school as a whole and then by grade level, then by classroom, then by culture within the classroom, and then, finally, by the individual,” he concluded. However, at the same time, he said that education was becoming more individualized. He saw “the role of an educator moving in the direction of special education in America, where each student may eventually have their individualized education plan.” Here, unwittingly, Brandon pointed to both the homogenizing and individualizing effect of an exam of which Foucault (1977) wrote.
The teachers also felt this test put more pressure on teachers, added stress to their job and was punitive in nature. For example, Jill admitted that it put teachers’ jobs “in jeopardy” and made teachers’ job more stressful. Melinda thought that though she “always felt pressure of the state exams, but the threat was bigger with NCLB.” In Dustin’s opinion, NCLB also meant distrust of him as a teacher. He felt that the mandate placed “all the burden on teachers,” expected “teachers to do more for the same amount of money.” Both Dustin and Melinda pointed to the punitive nature of the Act. Dustin believed that it placed “the structure in which he will be smashed if the top person doesn’t get all.” Melinda complained that it “put her in a no-win situation” because it left no room for showing how hard she worked if her students did not score high enough. Said she:

But, like I said, I legitimately am working as hard as I can, and I don’t know what else I can do. You know, I can go to bed and sleep and look at myself in the mirror and know I’ve done the best I could do. But it is not good enough for them.

The mandate also took away the power from teachers by encroaching “on the power of teachers to assess and evaluate in a number of ways” (Brandon), by restricting academic freedom and forcing them to teach “a standardized version of the world” (George), and by controlling how teachers used time in the classroom and outside the classroom (all teachers). For example, Brandon worried that NCLB prescribed “how to use time,” that it left “no time for ‘what if’ questions, for outside experiences, for delving deeply into content.” Jill felt “such time constraints” that she had to “keep looking at the
clock” when a child wanted to tell her a story. There was no time left “for cute little stories, projects, field trips,” and a teacher’s job became “extremely time-consuming,” she complained. Time constraints imposed by the mandate were of great concern for Hatcher, Dustin, Hillary, and Michelle, too. “Timing is probably the most difficult thing, the schedule time of the test…We don’t have any input on that timing,” said Hatcher. “Timing puts constraints on what we can teach, takes control over my work…I believe some of the demands, or things they want you to do or want you to cover, we don’t have enough time for,” believed Dustin. The test “takes away the time to teach real life skills for special education kids,” in Michelle’s opinion. In addition, Hillary said that she did not “get to concentrate on what” she wants to do most: “teaching these kids.” Instead, she had to “spend [her] time getting these degrees, one after another.” Also, “all the paperwork, all the hoops they kept teachers going through,” took teachers “away from the work in the classroom,” she believed.

In sum, the interviewed teachers did not see the mandate in a positive light. Irrespective of the schools they worked in, they all dreaded the consequences it could have on public schools. They saw it as an assault launched by Republicans on public education, which, in Melinda’s opinion, was not a fair assessment. Though she agreed with other teachers that “it is impossible to meet the goals that have been set for teachers “with what they are given,” she believed that one could not “tell them that it is Ted Kennedy’s idea because the building tends to be extremely left politically.” However, it was not only teachers in her building who suspected that behind the rhetoric about giving an equal opportunity to every child, the real “Republican agenda” was “to get rid of
public education in this country” (Hillary). Dennis and George who worked in suburban blue ribbon schools, also believed that that was the case. Dennis, for example, thought that the mandate was “a way to hammer school systems in failed communities, another way for conservatives to beat up public education.”

While they thought that, in its essence, the theory was good, and they agreed with the philosophy behind it, they did not agree with the way it was being put into practice. Contrary to Phelps’ (2005) claim that teachers were against the current testing just because it made them look bad, the teachers’ accounts in the present study demonstrate that was not the case. Rather, they did not like “the consequential nature of current testing” (Cizek, 2005, p.27). “The problem is not with the Act but with its application,” said Dennis. “I think a lot of teachers would agree standardization to be a positive thing, but the application of standardization to be a negative thing,” stressed Mathew, too.

Above all, the NCLB mandate threatened the familiar subject positions inscribed within the Education as a Great Equalizer and Educating Citizenry for Democracy discourses. These subject positions were those of a nurturer, a gardener who catered to the interest of each individual student, and an autonomous, free professional who could decide what to teach and how to teach, and who found joy in the growth of each individual. The subject positions after NCLB were those of technicians whose teaching was reduced to teaching test-taking skills and of victims who (a) were told what to teach and how to teach, (b) deprived of the joy of teaching, (c) were under pressure and time constraints, (d) were asked to work more for the same money, and (e) were held accountable for things that were beyond their control.
I as a Teacher in My Mini-State

This section examines how the American teachers envisioned their classrooms which they were asked to imagine as mini-states. It shows what subject positions they assigned themselves and their students in these mini-states. The key word in the descriptions of their mini-states was democracy. The issue at stake was whether they could claim that their classrooms were democratic states or not and whether they lived up to the ideals inscribed within the aforementioned discourses. Consider the summaries of how each teacher described their mini-states.

Brandon, a second grade teacher with 12 years of teaching experience, confessed that “as much as” he hated “to admit it” he was “the king” in his classroom. “This means there isn’t much of a democracy here. It’s pretty autocratic, or it’s very much of a monarchy,” he said. If his “classroom were more of a democracy, students would have an input as to what part of the subject we would study, what resource we would use to study it, and how we might interpret, what we are learning,” he explained. Though students did not make those decisions in his classroom, he believed that “they hold power in [his] classroom as learners because they have so often, each day, opportunities for them to engage.” He wanted his students to “be able to initiate…participate in the process as much as they can.” He gave them “tools” and wanted “them to start building.” He “put a lot of emphasis on independence” and “it was a constant battle trying to balance the dependency level on the part of the student and the teacher,” for him. He did not want “to be the individual who acts like the parent or the social worker, or the psychologist, who constantly tells them what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and why
to do it.” In the classroom,” he also put “far too much effort on management, on behavior,” but “ideally” what he wanted to accomplish was “involving students in a variety of activities that matched the needs they had in terms of building skills.”

Jill, a second grade teacher with seven years of teaching experience, “always thought of a classroom as a mini-country or mini-world” because there are so many kids from different backgrounds” in it. She saw her classroom as “a kind of UN.” She fulfilled the “role as a facilitator, rather than a dictator” in it. She was “someone like the president.” She felt she had to be “a disciplinarian” because she was “in charge of them,” but she also believed that she had to do some “mothering” because “second graders are so young and still need things.” So, for her kids she was “a whole lot of different things: authority, for some of them may be a sort of a parent.” She was “in charge of their time” but she tried “to be somewhat open so that they might enjoy it, too.” She wanted “them to learn and to have fun as much as possible…to provide the experiences for the kids to learn and to grow” and tried “to touch them in many different ways, give the students an opportunity to make decisions.” She believed “in a lot of positive reinforcement.” She was “big on notes and home calls for nice things.”

Hatcher, a math teacher with 17 years of teaching experience, believed that it was his job as a teacher “to adapt to the needs of the classroom” and to see “when control could be relinquished and when the reins should be tight.” He fulfilled all kinds of roles “sometimes of a student himself, sometimes of a knowledgeable assistant in the classroom, and a diplomacy monitor, a facilitator.” He was “someone they can count on,” someone who saw to it that what they did every day was “best for their needs.” It
was most frustrating for him when students did not want to take control when he was “willing to give them control over” what they learned and did. His classroom was different depending on the day: “Sometimes they want you to be authoritarian that brings the rule down, sometimes they just need somebody to monitor the debates,” he said. So his mini-state contained both the elements of democratic and totalitarian states.

Dustin, a history teacher with 14 years of teaching experience, thought that he had multiple roles to fulfill, those of: “an educator, an actor, a disciplinarian, and, sometimes of a mother and a father.” He described himself as being “upfront” with his students. He let them know “in private” what he did not like. In his classroom, he was “the tsar, the president, the dictator” and he was “on the throne,” and the students were his “subjects.” People, in his opinion, were divided into two categories: those “who made it in the world and those who did not.” In order to make it in the world one had to be either “brilliant or know the system” and because not everybody could be brilliant, he wanted his students to learn to be disciplined. He wanted to teach them what they “have to do in order to make it.” So his mini-state was a monarchy, rather than a democracy.

Melinda, an ESL and history teacher, with 14 years of teaching experience, thought that “in the setting” she was in, she had to be “an educator, a child advocate, a nurse, a social worker, a Mom…a person to hook them up with community resources, a friend who is there to listen to them.” She believed that taking away any of these roles would result in the loss of effectiveness of a teacher because the roles were defined by the needs the students had. As the population of students she worked with had so many needs, she saw her primary task in helping them not only learn English and history but
also learn about life from her. In the classroom, though “the ultimate decision” was hers, she would “listen to what they say.” She was “not a control freak” but students knew that she could “mean business.” She was “a facilitator” who would “walk around and help and make sure” they were doing what they were “supposed to do” in her classroom. Her mini-state was also more of a democracy than a monarchy, though she was in charge.

Mathew, a science teacher, with 14 years of teaching experience, hoped he had “a democratic society, but the teacher had severe veto power in reality.” He saw himself as “a benevolent dictator” in his class. He had to be one “because…students tend to need discipline and structure.” He believed that ‘freedom works well as long as they understand what their goals are, and if they don’t understand what their goals are and what their limitations are, then they will lose control.” He wished “to see these kids work on their own. Just give them a question, let them work, be just the facilitator for their education. But that is nowhere near that point at that moment,” he concluded.

Sarah, a special education, biology and American history teacher, with 12 years of teaching experience, envisioned her class “more like a congregation, like a church sort of, with one person and then the congregation is expressing when it needs to express and writing when they need to write and doing what they need to do.” She was “basically guiding them along.” It was “nothing like dictatorship, nothing like that.” It was “more like a democracy, in which everybody partakes in the lessons, and planning, not just [her] always lecturing.” She wanted her students “to reach their goals.” She tried “to make the best match for each of the students in the classroom, as far as….the curriculum, state standards, and having them be able to relate to everything and apply in their own lives.”
So her democratic mini-state was modeled after a church in which she was sort of a pastor guiding students.

Hillary, a history and special education teacher, with 13 years of teaching experience, felt that sometimes she had to be “a dictator, though a pretty fair and thoroughly gentle dictator.” It was about what she told them to do and students had to listen to her and other people. She wanted “them to think, even if it was for a short while…to think about their place in the world, their place in the community, about their place in the United States …to understand that they did have influence.” Being a teacher involved “a certain amount of performing,” because she wanted “to draw them in.” She wanted “to bring it down to a real life.” “Regrettably” her mini-state had to be less democratic than she wished it to be.

Dennis, a history and social studies teacher with 12 years of teaching experience, thought that teaching was “the greatest job in the world,” though “the mundane things” such as “grading papers, assessing work, entering grades into a grade book, contacting parents who are angry that Sally or Jimmy are not doing as well as they would expect” occupied most of his time. He was “a role model, a scholar, not bookish per se, but demonstrating a need to know how the world works.” He showed “kindness, fairness and firmness when appropriate” and had “high expectations” of himself and wanted “to instill the desire to set high expectations” in his students. In his classroom he had “a total control over what the kids do but no control over money to provide the opportunities for learning.” All power resided in him, a teacher, who was “a benevolent despot trying to promote democratic principles.” Students took part in the process— they were “treated
with respect,” they had “a voice” but there was “always direction and guidance.” They were “consumers, and he was “a salesman, a history geek who is just crazy about things that happened a long time ago.” He wanted kids “to get excited about the promise of a democratic form of government.” His classroom was “a weird, not a true democracy.”

To Michelle, a special education and language arts teacher with 12 years teaching experience, it was vital to get the attention of her students in order to teach them something. Her classroom was structured, but she wanted it to be a place comfortable for students, where they could “voice their opinions.” She felt she had to “entertain them and as well as teach them” because “the kids are so used to the media, computer, video games, and all that kind of stuff that they need to be entertained.” So she was “an actor, a drama person” in her classroom. But she thought she also had to be “a dictator.” She had to be “in control and be able to steer the kids where” she wanted “them to be.” Overall, she believed that her classroom was more of a democracy than a monarchy.

George, a history teacher with 29 years of teaching experience, characterized himself as “a dinosaur” who was at the end of his teaching career. He was “the fellow in the back saying ‘don’t pay any attention to what they say. Look over here. Here is the alternative, here is the difference, check yourself.’” So the most important thing for him was to teach students to make connections, challenge the authority, “see the differences and other points of view.” His class was a place where students “get tools to survive in a more rigorous, harder academic system and are encouraged to think for themselves, not to bluntly accept what the authority figures told them.” He was “not a pope”: He was not “infallible” and he could make mistakes. He tried “to be as honest” as he could with his
students. Though it was “true” that he controlled what “they see and what they feel,” he always encouraged them to question what he told them. His mini-state was a democracy in which he encouraged his students to challenge all points of view, his views included.

In sum, the teachers’ representations of their classrooms showed that they were struggling with defining their mini-states as democracies. They saw them as either monarchies or as democracies with monarchial tendencies. The main reasons the teachers could not see their mini-states as democracies were because (a) students did not make decisions concerning their learning; (b) the teachers felt that they needed to be in control; and (c) all the power resided in them, in teachers. But they all believed that they used this power in their students’ best interests. Only George emphasized the importance of encouraging students to question what the authority figures tell them and believed that was what he was working at in his mini-state.

Similar to the Russian teachers, the American teachers also assigned themselves a wide range of subject positions in their mini-states. These subject positions can also be grouped into several categories. These subject positions reflect their beliefs about what being a teacher boils down to in the reality of the classrooms. They also cast students in certain ways. Thus:

1. The first group of subject positions of a *king, a tsar, a dictator, a despot, a disciplinarian, an authority figure, and a president* imply that a teacher is someone who brings the rule down, using Heather’s words. Students, in this case, are constructed as being in need of being ruled, managed, and introduced to the language of law.
2. The second group of subject positions of a guide, a manager, a diplomat, a monitor, a facilitator, an assistant, a pastor, and a role model imply that a teacher is someone who guides, directs, observes, assists students and serves as a model for students to emulate. Students are constructed as being in need of direction, guidance, help, pastoral care, and of someone they could look up to, in this case.

3. The third group of subject positions of a child advocate, a nurse, a social worker, a person to “hook them up” with community resources, and a psychologist points at another function a teacher fulfills: the function of support. In this case, students are constructed as being in need of all kinds of support. These subject positions were mentioned by a teacher in the inner-city high school only, because depending on the school, the students’ needs were different: In the inner-city school the emphasis was on getting life skills, in the blue-ribbon schools—on acquiring academic skills. In the blue-ribbon school, support was about teaching students to survive in more rigorous academic environment.

4. The fourth group of subject positions of a Mom, a mother and a father, a parent, and a friend show that in the reality of the classrooms, a teacher also should be able to serve as a parent and come down to the level of a student as a friend. The students are cast as being in need of parental protection and care, and in need of trusting relations with adults, in this case.
5. The fifth group of the subject positions of an actor, a drama person, and a performer and a salesman indicate that being a teacher also means being able to entertain, engage students and “sell” the subject. Students are constructed as being in need of entertainment, and as consumers in this case.

6. The subject positions of a student, a scholar but not bookish per se, a history geek, the fellow in the back saying ‘don’t pay any attention to what they say imply that a teacher has to be a lifelong learner, has to have intellectual curiosity but should not be divorced from reality, and be ever critical of what the authority figures say. In this case, students are cast as being able to teach teachers and in need of being able to question authority figures.

**In the Reality of American Classrooms: Disciplining Bodies**

In this subsection, I compare what American teachers said about their teacher selves to their actual behavior in the reality of classrooms and to the findings of a comparative study of elementary schools in five countries. The team of researchers conducting this study found that American elementary classrooms were (a) “most lavishly furnished and equipped,” (b) “characterized by a high degree of teacher and pupil mobility” (Alexander, 2001, p. 184), (c) pursuing “several activities… at any one time,” (d) focusing on “multiple several sub-groups rather than simply one class unit,” and (e) creating “multiple realities” (Alexander, 2001, p. 185) in comparison with elementary classrooms in other countries. If Russian classrooms were content-driven and were unequivocally “places in which to work, to work hard and to work together,” it was not clear whether an American classroom was a “place for work, for
play, for worship, or for rest and relaxation.” Consequently, the role of a teacher in the American classrooms was “similarly unconfined” (Alexander, 2001, p.185) and both the teaching space and the instruction “were individualized” (Alexander, 2001, p. 186).

Two American elementary classrooms I observed for this study would almost completely fit this description. Both Jill and Brandon also created “multiple realities,” focused on individual students, sub-groups, and several activities instead of pursuing one single activity and focusing on the whole class. Their classrooms were more than a place to work only, too. Though they were, probably, more focused on content than the classrooms described in the above-mentioned comparative study, the content was brought as close to real life situations as humanly possible. Thus Brandon taught punctuation and capitalization by using a traffic lights analogy for the story students wrote about their field trip, and Jill explained the difference between wants and needs, goods and services using real life examples given by students. I also observed their mathematics lessons in which students learned to manipulate the number, “100”. The lessons were entirely devoted to what they could do with 100 cents. So the purpose was not purely mathematical. Students learned many practical lessons: how to deal with money, how to be consumers, what the value of money was, and so forth.

Jill’s and Brandon’s classrooms were highly structured, orderly and rule-bound places, unlike some of the elementary classrooms in the comparative study. The seemingly effortless ways in which they moved students from one work-station to another, organized activities and student interaction indicated that they had probably spent a great deal of time on management and control of the student body, before they
reached this level of control. Their classrooms were spaces where students learned not to intrude into other people’s physical space, and be aware of consequences of misbehavior. In addition, both Jill and Brandon moved around the classroom; they did not have one fixed point from which to speak to their students. Their students’ movements were not confined to their desks, either. They were free to walk and get their snacks during the lessons quietly and without disturbing anyone. Considerable time was spent on pair or group work, during which students were given time to negotiate, express their views and come up with their versions of knowledge. Jill used parents a lot, while Brandon was against any help from anyone, parents included, because he wanted his students to be independent.

Both Jill and Brandon used a lot of positive reinforcement for any effort. Brandon would often comment on students’ performance by using phrases such as: “You’re a smart boy, I’m with you. Good job. Give yourselves what you think you deserve.” Jill, on the other hand, relied more on candies, notes, and smiley faces. “Teachers in the United States rely a great deal on rewards and praise as well as surveillance,” writes Thayer-Bacon (Thayer-Bacon, 2008, p.122). In my lesson observations, the reliance on rewards and praise was more characteristic of elementary school teachers. The higher the grade, the fewer were the praises and rewards. But surveillance, in many different forms (e.g. security, referrals, report cards) was present throughout the grades.

The teacher mobility and group work also considerably decreased the higher the grade was. Thus middle school history teacher, Dennis, made students work in pairs, in
groups, and individually. High school teachers in all three schools devoted hardly any
time to group work. Their focus was either on the whole class or individual students in
the lessons I observed. However, only one teacher had the same degree of command of
the classroom as the Russian teachers did. Only the history teacher in the blue-ribbon
high school could allow himself straight lecturing for ninety minutes in an AP class of
thirty-two students without making a single comment on his students’ behavior. The
lecture was very informative, and was interrupted only twice by students’ questions.

In conclusion, I cannot say that I noticed the same focus on sub-groups rather than
on the whole class, the same degree of teacher mobility and the same drive to create
multiple realities in all the grades as I noticed in the elementary classrooms. In the inner-
city high school, teachers were trying to divide their attention among those individuals
who were still trying to work and students who were constantly testing teacher authority.
In the inner-ring, inner-city high school, I observed the same pattern, though here
teachers were more in control than in the inner-city high school. Two outstanding
features observable across the American grades and schools were that (a) the figure of a
teacher was less domineering than in the Russian classrooms, and (b) not a single
American classroom worked as a piece of machinery in unison, at any given time, except
George’s AP classroom, in which all thirty-two students seemed to be involved.

Discourses that regulated the American teachers’ talk about their mini-states
and their ways of acting in these states. In their representations of their mini-states, the
American teachers continued to use the same discourses that they used to define the
teaching profession, as well as the goals of education and power. They tried to achieve
the same goals of preparing the workforce and educating citizenry in their mini-states.
However, when they measured their mini-states against the ideals inscribed within the
*Educating Citizenry* discourse, the majority of the teachers were hesitant to proclaim their
mini-states as democracies because they felt the need to control and discipline students.
They felt that students were not ready to take charge of their own learning and behavior.
In addition, to be a true democracy they felt their mini-states should be places where
students have as many opportunities to participate in decision-making as possible.
However, the teachers did not feel that they gave students enough opportunities to make
decisions.

Six teachers out of eleven described themselves as “despots,” “dictators,” or
“kings,” albeit “benevolent and gentle” ones. Though they allowed students to voice
their opinion, worked on fostering students’ independence and self-esteem, wanted
students to believe that they were not powerless, that they had influence, the teacher
made all the decisions. Hence, their democracies were “weird,” using Dennis’ words.
They felt that the figure of the King (that is sovereign power) was critical in achieving
whatever goals they set. Power, which they equated with control, emanated from a
teacher. Even if the teachers believed that they were more democracies than monarchies,
they believed that they had to be “in control” of students. So the *Power as Control,
Management, and Efficiency* discourse was the most persuasive in their representations of
their mini-states and in their lessons, too. The *Educating Citizenry for Democracy*
discourse was most prominent in George’s accounts of his mini-state, but his concern was
about encouraging students to question authority, not about letting them make decisions.
Summary and Interpretation of American Findings

After reviewing the American data, I identified the following discourses as being important in the American teachers’ identity construction: (a) *Educating Citizenry for Democracy*; (b) *Preparing the Workforce*; (c) *Education as a Great Equalizer*; (d) *Power as a Control, Management, and Efficiency*; and (e) *Government as a Threat to Freedom*. These discourses, like the Russian discourses, contained “historically conditioned attributes and models as well as patterns of behavior resulting from them” (Palat, 2001, p. 135). They manifested themselves in the American participants’ definitions of the teaching profession and the goals of public education, in their talk about what made a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teacher and their job before and after the NCLB. They provided the American participants with sets of vocabulary that drastically differed from the sets of vocabulary available to the Russian participants within the discourses they used. The American teachers used these discourses as their cultural resources upon which they drew to fashion their teacher identities. The focal points around which these attributes and patterns of behavior developed were democracy, educated citizenry, workforce, control and management, intellectual freedom, and teacher autonomy. I considered all these concepts and all other words related to these concepts as cultural key words. I treated these discourses with their particular sets of vocabularies and subject positions as being part and parcel of the American master narrative or Discourse model of the American Dream. In the following, I first introduce this Discourse model and then present *A Teacher as a Redemptive Agent* discourse which, I claim, is a profession-related discourse generated in regards to the Discourse model of the American Dream. Next, I
move on to the summary of the use of binary oppositions and pronouns and subject positions.

**Discourse Model of the American Dream.**

If America has stood for anything unique in the history of the world, it has been for the American Dream, the belief in a common man and insistence upon his having, as far as possible, equal opportunity in every way with the rich one.

(Adams, 1947, p.123)

To identify the American Discourse model, I followed the same method of tracing of the keywords in the American teachers’ talk and connecting them to an overarching theory that shaped the American people’s thinking about their selves and the world surrounding them. The keywords that led me to this model were *success, hard work, opportunity,* and *individualism.* Americans also grow up hearing certain words time after time. As Johnson (2006) writes, “Americans overwhelmingly believe that widespread opportunity exists for all individuals to succeed, that we achieve everything we deserve, and that the ideology of individualism is fundamentally strong” (p. 9). These beliefs are important in creating the “imagined community” of America. It was not hard to connect these words to the concept of the American Dream because the literature search on the keywords also showed the Dream as a related concept. Besides, I was not emotionally attached to these concepts and this made it easier for me to see how the “Other,” that is an American teacher, was constructed.

The “master” theory, the American Dream, “shapes and organizes large, important aspects of”(Gee, 2005, p. 83) American people’s experiences. The constructs
success, hard work, opportunity, democracy, educated citizenry, and education as a great equalizer are part and parcel of this master theory. They can also be considered as Discourse models on their own, but I treat them as discourses generated in regards to the master narrative the American Dream. As I have shown in the previous sections, these discourses “used” and “were used” by the American participants (see pp. 172-229). For Americans, this Discourse model, along with the discourses generated in regards to it, provides “scripts” for the ways of being and thinking in the world and building relations between an individual and a group, individual and government, and people and government.

In the following, I briefly describe how the concept came into being, i.e. I also make historical connections. I include a reference to the Puritans because they are credited with the “origin” of the concept. While in everyday life it is highly unlikely that an average American would say that he or she believes in success achieved through hard work because this notion of success was passed down to him from the Puritans, it is important to see how history “inserts” itself in people’s talk (see p. 246). As critical discourse analysis is about situating the particular understandings of concepts not only within social and cultural but also historical contexts, I believe, the historical references are justified. Historical references help us, using the cliché discourse analysts often use, “render the familiar strange and the strange familiar.” As with the Bright Future, Communism Discourse model, the American Dream Discourse model is “unthinkingly taken for granted and trivialized” (Cullen, 2003, p. 40). However, what it might mean now is different from what it meant at other historical times. It is fragile and prone to
fracture. There is a problem with sustaining it because the “routinized” (Gee, 2005, p. 67) ways of speaking about the Dream “do not just reside in individuals’ heads” but “very often they are negotiated between people in and through communicative social interaction” (italics in original, Gee, 2005, p. 67). The meanings of the words are never stable and fixed, as I have reiterated throughout the dissertation. According to Lacan, it is not even desirable to fix the meanings (see p. 282). This means, that the American Dream has never been a stable, fixed concept. It has been under a threat at every historical time, the present times included (see also the section on empty signifiers pp. 279-283).

The term American Dream came into use after James Truslow Adams’ publication of the book, *The Epic of America*, in 1931 (Cullen, 2003; Caldwell, 2006). He formulated the Dream as the belief in America as the land in which every person, regardless of his background, has an equal opportunity to develop to the fullest, his or her innate capabilities (Adams, 1947; Caldwell, 2006; Cullen, 2003). This belief, he claims, spoke forcefully not only to Americans but to people of all creeds across the globe and lured millions of immigrants to the New World who came to its shores in the hope of partaking in it (Adams, 1947; Cullen, 2003). While the concept of the American Dream had to be continually adjusted to new historical contingencies, the basic premise has remained the same: America is a land of opportunity in which everyone has a chance to start afresh “spiritually, economically, personally” (Hacht, 2007, p. 21). Historically, who was to be included in “everyone” has been a matter of contention as more and more marginalized groups demanded the right to participate in the Dream. As the analysis of
the American participants’ talk revealed, this basic premise also structured their understanding of their selves and the goals of American public education (see pp.176-179).

**The basic tenets of the American Dream.** There can be a lot of items on the “laundry list” of what makes the American Dream (Caldwell, 2006, p. 36), but hard work, success, and upward mobility are its basic tenets (Hochschild, 1995). These tenets are so entangled that they are difficult to separate from each other because one presupposes the other. Success means upward mobility, and upward mobility cannot be achieved without hard work, which is believed to be the basic condition for achieving the American Dream. And all these tenets are linked to another cherished cultural belief – American individualism.

The American success ethos and American individualism have their roots in Protestant beliefs (Cullen, 2003). Dedication to hard work, industriousness, and conscious avoidance of idleness were at the core of the Protestant ethic which, Weber (2002) claims, made possible the modern capitalist organization of labor. This way of organizing labor, he further asserts, would have been impossible without groups of people who strongly identified with the particular view of work as “the duty of the individual to increase his wealth, which is assumed to be self-defined interest in itself” (italics in original, Weber, 2002, p. 16). This view of work happened to firmly take root in New England colonies settled by European (mainly Anglo-Saxon) Puritans whose drive to lead “an organized life anchored in asceticism” (Weber 2002, p. 112) and whose hostility to authority, which had declared a war against their way of life in their home
countries, forced them to flee en masse to the New World. For Puritans, who believed in predestination, the question of salvation was the cause of great anxiety. They all wanted to be among the select few to be granted salvation. As nobody could know for sure upon whom God’s grace would be bestowed, everybody had to work hard “to increase God’s glory on earth” (Weber, 2002, p. 71). Thus the Puritans placed rationally organized, systematic work perceived as a calling at the center of their lives. God’s favor manifested itself in the opportunity he gave to the chosen few who, through methodical and systematic work, were able to gain profit. It was up to an individual to take the best advantage of this opportunity in fierce competition with his fellow men. (Competition is an important component in the current education mandate. However, it does not seem that the teachers are invested in these concepts as powerfully as in the concepts of opportunity and equity (see pp. 202-211)). However, wealth for them was not an end in itself but a religious virtue in their quest for personal salvation. While the pursuit of wealth was a legitimate, God-pleasing activity, indulgence in the fruits of one’s labor was unacceptable. Asceticism, frugality, and individual responsibility for one’s failure and success coupled with incessant hard work lie at the heart of the Protestant ethic (Weber, 2002).

Both the idealistic and material aspects of the Protestant ethic found their expression in the American dream. Salvation was replaced by the pursuit of “liberty, justice, democracy, freedom, equality, and self-realization”, while the material part is still about the pursuit of “wealth, material success, and property” (Caldwell, 2006, p. 39). The pursuit of wealth was stripped of its religious and ethical dimensions in the course of
history in the United States (DeVitis & Martin, 1996; Weber, 2002). The concepts of liberty, justice, democracy, freedom, equality and self-realization were part of teachers’ vocabulary, too. These concepts are part of the *Educating Citizenry for Democracy* and *Education as a Great Equalizer* discourses which powerfully “spoke” and “were spoken” by the American teachers. The material aspect of the Puritan Dream is reflected in the *Preparing the Workforce* discourse (see p. 184) and also “used” and “were used by the American teachers.

Success for a contemporary American is associated with upward mobility, which first and foremost means “social and economic advancement” (Cullen, 2003, p. 8). Not everybody will be able to achieve upward mobility, just as not all Puritans were granted salvation. As with Puritans, only those who work hard and succeed in competition can achieve the Dream of moving up. Since all have the same opportunity, those who do not succeed are to blame themselves because they either did not work hard enough or have some character flaws that prevented them from achieving it (DeVitis & Martin, 1996).

The American society had to create the *Education as a Great Equalizer* discourse in order to at least create an illusion that the Dream is livable for everybody because the discourses depend on how many people invest in them, on how many subscribe to a shared meaning of the Dream. This discourse also makes it possible to problematize achieving the Dream as an entirely individual enterprise. There are no intermediaries between the Dream and an individual, just as there were no intermediaries between God and a man for the Puritans in their quest for salvation. Though a Puritan was engaged in “this-worldly work…in service to the community as a whole” (Weber, 2002, p. 63), his
primary concern was about his own salvation. A Puritan was answerable directly to God in terms of salvation, and to the community in terms of “socially holding to one’s own” (Weber, 2002, p. 146). A Puritan’s spiritual journey was lonely and required relentless self-control and self-awareness and led to the weakening of bonds with the community and the development of inward individualism (Weber, 2002). This inward individualism was an unintended consequence of the doctrine of predestination that put a believer’s primary allegiance to God above his loyalty to any group or a man. It was “the forerunner of the political individualism of the Western European human rights” (Buss, 2000, p. 15).

Nowhere did the Protestant heritage play as significant a role as it did in the United States where the conditions were more conducive for gaining wealth than in any other country. In addition, American Puritans “did not need to chop off the head of their king” (Adams 1947, p. 91) and they had “the frontier” to pursue their dream. Though they knew that their fates were sealed from birth, they refused to passively surrender and “became masters of their own destiny,” which is what the American Dream is about (Cullen, 2003, p. 18). The belief that it was up to an individual to be in charge of one’s own destiny and that each individual “is an entity separate from every other and from the group and as such is endowed with natural rights” (Spence, 1985, p. 1288) has become central to both American conceptions of the self and the American Dream.

Both the American conceptions of the self and the American Dream depend on the existence of “a frontier,” because without it upward mobility, success, is impossible. With the closure of a geographic frontier DeVitis and Martin (1996) claim, one cannot
move up horizontally, one has to move up vertically. With the disappearance of the frontier around the end of the nineteenth century (Cullen, 2003), Americans can no longer move into “wilderness” and start anew. They have to create “new frontiers” in order to sustain the Dream. The new frontiers can be created in science, technology, and arts (DeVitis & Martin, 1996, p. 8). This means that public schools are increasingly becoming more critical for sustaining the American Dream than ever before (DeVitis & Martin 1996).

American public schools have become a battleground for asserting both the idealistic and materialistic aspects of the American Dream. On the one hand, public schools are sites where American children are taught the virtues of liberty, justice, democracy, freedom, and equality. On the other hand, these schools prepare a workforce that is able to compete nationally and globally. The idealistic or “radical” (Beach, 2007) part of the Dream is about creating “a level playing field, especially in regards to race, class, and gender” (Johnson, 2003, p. 3). It implies that individual merits are not enough for becoming a master of one’s destiny. It contradicts the second, materialistic or “conservative” aspect of the Dream which states that individual merits and self-reliance are a path to success; and race, class, and gender have nothing to do with individual achievement. These two competing notions have served as justification for school reforms since the inception of the American public school system (Beach, 2007). As the analysis of the American participants’ talk revealed, both the materialistic and idealistic parts of the Dream “spoke” and “were spoken” by them through the Educating Citizenry
for Democracy, Education as a Great Equalizer discourses (see pp. 182-183), and 
Preparing the Workforce discourse which were generated in regards to it (see pp. 184).

A Teacher as a Redemptive Agent Discourse

As in the Russian case, professions in America cannot but draw upon cultural discourses to create their own profession-related discourses. Depending on the profession, the balance is disproportionately shifted either towards idealistic or materialistic aspects of the American Dream. As the Education as a Great Equalizer discourse shows, the teaching profession tends to overemphasize the idealistic part of the Dream. An American teacher in regards to the idealistic part should be someone who (a) sees to it that everybody has an equal opportunity at achieving the American Dream (see pp. 175-177), (b) celebrates students’ diverse backgrounds, (see pp. 177-178) and (c) educates them in the virtues of democracy (see pp. 178-179). This teacher is endowed with the task of helping students transcend economic, racial, and social inequalities existing in the society.

In regards to the materialistic aspect, using Beach’s (2007) words, a teacher should be someone who focuses “on the improvement of the individual by making him/her more marketable for the corporate workplace” (p. 157). According to the idealistic aspect, a teacher should help a student overcome whatever barriers a student may have socially, racially, and economically. According to the materialistic aspect, a teacher should help a student hone skills and develop character traits needed in the job market. In both cases, as Popkewitz (1998) puts it, a teacher “functions as a redemptive agent” (p. 2).
While not a single American teacher in this study actually called a teacher a redemptive agent, nevertheless, the notion of saving a child was present across the interviews. Most prominently it was in their talk about the power a teacher has to make a difference in a child’s life, or influence a child in many different ways. In Brandon’s words, the belief that they were making a difference gave purpose to their lives. It was important for the American teachers to believe that they were making a difference, that is, redeeming at least one child at a time (see pp. 190-191).

**Binary Opposations: “Wedom,” “Theydom,” and “Idom”**

Binary oppositions that I located in the American participants’ “we, teachers,” “we, people,” and “they, politicians” statements, demonstrated that the pair of opposites *We, the people* versus *power*, which was always concretized as *government, or politicians*, played a considerable part in their envisioning of the world and their identity construction, too. In this pair *We, the people*, were not entirely powerless. *We* could vote politicians in and out of office. There was always a chance to vote into office those who might represent my interests better than the current politicians. And if *We* let the current government gain too much power, if it got abusive, *We, the people* had just to wake up and regain power. *We, the people* hold the power and the power is in our right to elect politicians in and out of office.

*Wedom* and *Theydom* were constructed on three levels (a) on the level of *We, teachers, as part of the people* versus *They, government, politicians, bureaucrats*; (b) *We, members of the teaching profession* versus *They, government, politicians, bureaucrats*; (c)*We, members of the teaching profession* versus *They, parents, mass media, and
*business people.* In the first pair, *We, teacher, as part of the people* had power to vote politicians in and out of office. In the second pair, *We, teachers,* were powerless. *They, government, politicians, bureaucrats* made decisions concerning education though they did not understand all the complexity of educational issues. The further away power was, the less favorable the impression about it was. The American participants did not trust politicians, in general, but the politicians in Washington were in the list of the least favorable groups holding power. *They* did not know much about education but *They* dictated to *Us* what to do. *We, teachers,* positioned *They,* politicians as incompetent outsiders who were encroaching on our autonomy and power. *We* were the experts, professionals who knew what to do. *We* did not need politicians to tell us how to teach and what to teach. In the third pair, *We, teachers, as members of the teaching profession,* were cast as competent, hard-working, caring, doing a very important job of instilling democratic values, work ethic, and tolerance in the younger generation, underappreciated for our work, disrespected, and wrongfully blamed for the ills of the society. *We* were not what *They,* some parents, politicians, mass media, and business people imagined *Us* to be. *We, teachers* deserved respect for our job, which was not the easiest job. In this case, *We* were powerful. Our power was in the symbolic significance attached to the teaching profession. In all these oppositional pairs, *We* were cast in the positive and *They*—in the negative light. The teachers talked of both *We* and *They* as a homogenous mass, in this case.

However, there were some “black sheep” among *We.* In this case, teachers were divided into two opposing groups: *We, teachers as members of the teaching profession*
who were competent, caring, knowledgeable versus They, some teachers who were incompetent, uncaring, abusive, and unethical. They undermined the positive work We, teachers, were doing. They got media attention and damaged the image of a teacher.

Another oppositional pair that was set up by the teachers was the pair I, as a teacher, versus some teachers. The quality of teachers depended on the school districts and schools where they worked. On the level of schools where the teachers worked, I was set against some teachers. In this binary opposition, I was not like some teachers who abused power by not following the rules, by failing to control the classroom, by letting students do whatever they wanted, and by being unprofessional. In addition, if We as members of the teaching profession were not respected on the level of the nation, I never came across as being disrespected because I was doing what I was supposed to do. I did not feel disrespected. In the mini-state I created, I was still in control of things though the outside the world came to me in the form of mandates. I was still trying to meet the children’s needs and I did my best to live up to the ideals inscribed within the aforementioned discourses. Thus Idom was different from both Wedom and Theydom.

Subject Positions

Similar to Russian discourses, American discourses also contained only a limited number of generic subject positions available for teachers. So within the Educating Citizenry discourse the subject position available for a teacher was of someone who educated a particular type of a citizen. Within Preparing the Workforce discourse it was of someone who instilled work habits in students and taught them work skills. Within the Education as a Great Equalizer discourse it was of someone who helped students to rise
above circumstances and move up the social ladder. Within the *Power as a Control, Management, and Efficiency* discourse, it was of someone who was in control, in charge of students and the working environment. That is, the subject position of a value transmitter was inscribed within these discourses. As the analysis of the American teachers’ talk demonstrated, they strongly identified with this subject position and viewed knowledge transmission as secondary to value transmission.

The American teachers’ descriptions of their mini-states, their statements about power, and the lesson observations showed that for the overwhelming majority the main concern was about control and management. Hence the subject position of a technician of behavior was not something they were unfamiliar with. In fact, the lesson observations demonstrated that in the reality of the classrooms, that was one of the most salient subject positions they assumed. However, this subject position was compensated by the subject position of someone making a difference. They were preoccupied with control and management in the name of making a difference. Within the NCLB mandate control and management was for the sake of passing the test. One might argue that teachers can make a difference by making sure that every child is able to pass the test. However, by holding teachers accountable for every child lagging behind, regardless of extenuating circumstances, the mandate undermines their efforts to make a difference if it is not shown in the test results. It is one thing to rescue one child at a time, but it is quite a different matter to save everybody, especially if saving is solely determined by the scores achieved on standardized testing. The mandate puts too much burden on an American teacher by demanding to leave no child behind. It makes it impossible for an
American teacher to live up to the ideals inscribed within the discourse of a *Teacher as a Redemptive Agent* because within NCLB redemption is measured by the test scores. As the analysis of the subject positions the teachers assigned themselves showed, standardized testing represented only a small fraction of what they were doing on a daily basis. The mandate, despite its rhetoric of leaving no child left behind, is a threat to the idea of redemption because this small fraction supersedes all other components of teachers’ work which do not show in test results. It privileges the subject position of a technician teaching to the test and makes other subject positions, with which the teachers strongly identified, less significant. How can one quantify what a teacher does when he or she assumes the role of a mother, a social worker, a psychologist, or of someone in charge of a human resources department? In sum, a redemptive agent can take on many identities, as this study demonstrated. However, the American teachers felt that these identities were under a threat within the current educational reforms.
CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, as “any educational instance of identity constitution should be now construed as ‘the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history’ (Kristeva, 1986, p. 39)” (Klerides, 2009, p. 1235), I first compare (a) the American and Russian versions of the New Worlds created within the respective Discourse models, (b) the American and Russian versions of the New Man who served as a model personality in these New Worlds, (d) the American and Russian versions of exceptionalism which served as justification for claiming a special place in the world for these countries and creating “the deficient Other,” and (e) the American and Russian versions of redemption which found reflection in both the educational systems and the cultural ideals of a teacher. The purpose of these historical comparisons is to show that common-sense, taken-for-granted understandings of the self and the world are “built out of available conventions from a society and its history” (Klerides, 2009, p. 1235).

Next, I compare and discuss the subject positions the American and Russian teachers assigned to themselves in their talk, and the ways American and Russian teachers’ conceptualized power. These comparisons demonstrate that the teacher identities the American and Russian teachers embraced, the subject positions with which they identified, the notions of power they subscribed to, and ultimately, the ways they construed the world, to a considerable extent, were inscribed within their Discourse models. These models are both constitutive and constraining. On the one hand, they
provide people with patterns for thinking and acting in certain ways, on the other hand, these patterns and “available conventions” are subject to subtle, hard-to-detect changes because meanings of conventions are (re)constructed and negotiated by speakers in a variety of social contexts in the process of being engaged in social practices. That is, speakers also participate in making history (Klerides, 2009). Discourse models do speak people powerfully, however, they are not written in stone, though they might seem rock-solid. A drop wears away a stone, but it takes a long time before the workings of the drop become visible.

**American and Russian Versions of the New World**

The stories of the United States and the Soviet Union are similar in some ways and are drastically different in others. One similarity lies in the fact that both of the countries had their own visions of the New World and the New Man in that world and went to great lengths to turn their visions into reality. Using Adam’s (1947) words, one can say that both stories can be told as stories of “a great act of faith, a courageous leap into the dark unknown” (p. 182). In both cases, the driving force behind these great acts of faith was the desire to break away from rigid class-based hierarchies and create a world in which *prostoi narod* (common people), in the case of Russia, and the common man, in the case of America, would have the potential to develop to their fullest. In both the American and the Russian cases, the images of the New Worlds were captured in metaphors which contained the notion of the breakthrough from darkness to light. Thus in the case of Russia, the future was imagined as the Bright Future, Communism, and in the case of America—as a shining City upon a Hill. Now canonized literature in both of
the countries traces back the origin of these visions to particular groups of people: in the Russian case—to a particular brand of the Russian Intelligentsia, populists (_narodniki_) who were made up of “the sons of commons,” and whose ideological commitments were shaped by the so-called _popovichi_, sons of Russian Orthodox parish clergymen\(^{19}\) (italics in original, Manchester, 2007, p. 717.); in the American case—to a group of Protestants known as the Puritans. In both the American and Russian cases religious beliefs of these groups had a profound effect on their conceptions of the New Worlds and the New Man.

Unlike the Russian communists who adopted the populists’ visions of the New World and the New Man, and who undertook the task of building the Bright Future, Communism by first destroying the country they lived in, the Puritans had a vast new land at their disposal for building their version of the bright future, “a City upon a Hill.” John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony is credited with the invention of this most enduring image of the American culture. According to Bercovitch (n.d.), Winthrop’s City upon a Hill performed the function of “a cultural totem designed

\(^{19}\) Popovichi entered “the noble-dominated culture” of Russian intelligentsia after the 1860s reforms and were forced to forge their collective identity on the basis of “their common social origin as well as a common foe: the nobility” Manchester, 2007, p. 717. Though in theory they broke up with the clerical world, and became atheists, they never were able to break away from the clerical culture they had been raised in. The populists’ conceptions of the new world based on equality of material conditions and of the hard-working, action-oriented new man reflected their clerical heritage (Manchester, 2007, p. 717). The conceptions of the Bright Future, Communism and the New Soviet Man strikingly resemble the _popovichi_’s conceptions of the New World and New Man.
both to infuse hope and to establish law and order” (para. 40) in a colony of “religious zealots” who had a strong dislike for a central government, and who hoped to restore “the harmonious, consensual, and independent life of the medieval village” (para. 25). The overwhelming majority (79%) of them were “youngish (thirty-something on the average), ambitious, mobile professionals” who, in addition to the desire to practice their faith the way they liked, also hoped to improve their economic and social status (Bercovitch, n.d., para. 25). In the absence of traditional structures of power to maintain discipline, Winthrop’s model provided a framework that appealed to both the spiritual and economic aspirations of these “middle-class dissidents” (Bercovitch, n.d., para. 25). Above all, it contained the promise of “rising in the world” for each individual in the new land which “they have come to claim by prophecy and (not or) legal patent” (Bercovitch, n.d., para. 24). In order for their City upon a Hill to be a success all these “militant sectarians” (Bercovitch, n.d., para. 25), whom Winthrop depicted as God-chosen people “under probation”, had to build a community that obeyed God’s commandments (Bercovitch, n.d. para. 38). The promise of rising in the world eventually evolved into what is now known as the American Dream.

**The American New Man and the Soviet New Man**

Both the City upon a Hill and the Bright Future, Communism depended on forging a New Man who could completely erase the past and start anew. The City upon a Hill was a place where “individuals of all nations were melted into a new race of men” (St. John de Crevecoeur, 1997, p. 44). The New American Man, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur mused in his eighteenth-century *Letters from an American Farmer*, “is an
European or the descendant of an European….who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, the new rank he holds…” (St. John de Crevecoeur, 1997, p. 44). The goal of education was to expedite the melting process of millions of immigrants. The premise that only “an European or the descendant of an European” can be called an American has been consistently contested by descendants of other races and ethnicities throughout the history of the United States. In the wake of the 1960s Civil Rights movement the concept of a melting pot was replaced by the concept of pluralism which unsettled the Eurocentric, monocultural vision of America and Americans. But the belief that Americans must be oriented to change and open to new ideas and opinions and that everybody has a chance to rise in the world has survived the test of time. However, it should be noted that not all change is welcome and embraced. “In American society innovation and modification are encouraged and sought but not when it comes to values and ideals… Equality of opportunity, independence, initiative, and self-reliance are some of those values that have remained as basic American ideas throughout history” (Gannon, 2001, p. 213).

Russia undertook the task of erasing class barriers by erasing distinctions between intellectual and manual work, between city and village. The end product of this process was envisioned as an improved version of both intelligentsia and proletariat, a kind of a hybrid “worker-intelligent,” a New Soviet Man, who would be resistant to the vices of both while possessing the virtues of both (Halfin, 2000, p. 6). The goal of education was “to mint” this New Man under the close supervision of the Communist Party (Halfin,
2000, p. 16). Anyone could become the New Soviet Man. One only had to display total commitment to the communist ideals. As the history of the Soviet Union demonstrates, anyone could find himself or herself on the wrong side of these ideals with dire consequences.

For the Russian teachers in this study who had been born into the Soviet Union, educated in its education system, and raised as the New Soviet Men, the communist ideals about a personality, relations between a kollektiv and an individual, and the protective role of the state still served as the basis for fashioning their teacher identities. The question at stake for them was how to live up to the ideal of a teacher who can continue to think of himself in terms of total commitment and personal sacrifice for the sake of the public good when the state did not do anything to support this kind of a teacher though the cultural expectation for this kind of a teacher was still present in the society.

**American Exceptionalism and The Russian Idea Discourses**

Both of the countries have developed their own versions of exceptionalism, i.e. their visions of what makes them unique and worthy of a special place in the world due to their uniqueness. Initially, the City upon a Hill was supposed to serve as a beacon of hope for a particular group of Christians, European Protestants, whose eyes Winthrop believed would be upon their city (Bercovitch, n.d.). Eventually, Winthrop’s image of America as “a ‘city upon a hill’ shining like a beacon of Christian ideals for the rest of the world to emulate took deep root in the new American soil,” and many politicians with opposing ideologies evoked it to make political claims that suited their purposes (Winston, n.d.,
In the beginning, America-to-be was defined exclusively in opposition to Europe, particularly England. In the course of history, it came to be defined what it is and what it is not in relation to the rest of the world. The underlying assumption in the binary opposition, *America versus the rest of the world*, is that America is an “elect” or a “redeemer nation” that is “charged with saving the world” while sustaining “a high level of spiritual, political, and moral commitment to this exceptional destiny” (Madsen, 1998, p. 2). This belief in American exceptionalism, Madsen (1998) claims, can be found in every period of American history and has had a profound effect on America and American identity. In the contemporary conceptualization of American exceptionalism what sets America apart is that, unlike any other country, it is held together not by social bonds but by a national commitment to liberty, equality, individualism, and laissez-faire (Lipset, 1996).

Both the belief that America is an exceptional country and that everybody has a chance to succeed found expression in the quintessential American discourse of the American Dream. Though the American participants in this study did not explicitly state that America is an exceptional country, and only one of them used the term, the American Dream, “the national commitment to liberty, equality, individualism, and laissez-faire” formed the basis for the sense of their teacher identities, too.

The Russian version of exceptionalism is explicitly articulated in the doctrine of the *Russian Idea* which took root in nineteenth-century Russia amidst the ideological debates about Russia’s future between two distinct groups of intelligentsia: the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. Both groups could not help but center their debates
about the nature of Russian civilization around the binary opposition *Russia versus the West*, no matter whether they saw the West as the embodiment of all evils or whether they readily embraced the technological and cultural advances of the West (McDaniel, 1996; Nahirny, 1996; Pomper, 1970). The Slavophiles unequivocally believed in Russian superiority over the West (McDaniel, 1996) and thought that “Russia’s destiny was not only to harmonize human societies all over the earth, but also to solve all human problems” (Shlapentokh, 1992, p. 201).

What set Russia apart, in the Slavophiles’ view, was that, Russian Orthodox Christianity, unlike Western Christianity, “was characterized by sobornost’; a symphonic unity among individual, family, and society, in which all elements contributed to the development of each other (McDaniel, 1996, p. 41). Hence, unlike the West, where everything was subject to calculation and fragmentation, Russia was not guided by spiritless materialism and retained the sense of wholeness and spirituality. Unlike the Western personality, the Russian “Orthodox personality” was able to keep “the Christian faith in its purity” (italics in original, Alyoshin, 2009, p. 78). It was morally superior to the Western personality which the Slavophiles defined as “a law-to-itself, autonomous, selfish, divided, separated, detached, isolated, disjointed, or solitary” (italics in original, Alyoshin, 2009, p. 78). Consequently, Russia had a special mission and a special place in the world by the virtue of being more spiritual than the materialistic, selfish West.

The Russian Communists successfully used the key elements of the *Russian Idea* discourse to assert the superiority of the Soviet regime. The Soviet intelligentsia by default was imagined to have the same exceptional qualities as the Russian intelligentsia,
which was modeled after the Russian Orthodox personality. Contempt for spiritless materialism was among one of the exceptional traits that set the Soviet intelligentsia apart from the Western intelligentsia. The problem was that, similar to the previous regimes, the Soviet Union found itself trapped in the same old game of “catching up with the West” because the rhetoric of superiority did not match the reality. The collapse of the Soviet Union reignited the debates over whether Russia should aspire to Western ideals or continue seeking its unique path in the world history in keeping with its own cultural values and traditions. The analysis of the Russian teachers’ talk demonstrated that, as many times before in Russian history, the Russian people were left out of the debates of which way to go. Rapidly “catching up with the West” through a “shock therapy,” reserved mainly forRootElement (common people), made the Russian people turn to the familiar images of the hostile West which wants to weaken Russia, and long for a strong state “with a paternal, caring father at the head, who is strict and fair, and who rules” and protects them (Pomper, 1970, p. 5).

The theme of the West was present in all of the Russian teachers’ talk. For some of the Russian teachers in this study, using McDaniel’s (1996) words, “evil comes from the West” (p. 10) in the form of reforms in education and social services and threatens their familiar ways of being and acting as certain kinds of teachers. Others welcome the opportunity to learn from the West. Thus the Russian teachers in this study, as the Russian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, were also divided into two camps: those who viewed the West as the source of their problems and those who did not mind learning from the West (see p. 128-130). But both camps, just as the Slavophiles and the
Westernizers, thought that Russia was not the West, that the Russians had a different mentality, after all.

On the surface, it might seem that the binary opposition, America versus the rest of the world, did not occupy as prominent a place in the American teachers’ talk as the binary opposition Russia versus the West did in the Russian teachers’ talk. Only three of the American teachers explicitly mentioned the rest of the world. They found it “mind-boggling” that standardized testing was used for competing with other countries. However, this binary opposition was present in their talk about the goals of public education and its achievements. In some cases implicitly and in some cases explicitly stated was their belief in American exceptionalism. Consequently, nowhere in the world teachers enjoyed such autonomy; no other country produced such entrepreneurs as America did; and no other country had such an enquiring public.

The Concept of Redemption, Teacher Identities, and the Mandates

The theme of redemption was important in both the American and Russian versions of the bright futures. In the most general sense, redemption is a deliverance from suffering to a better world (italics in original, McAdams, 2006, p. 7). According to McAdams (2006), America was conceived as “a land of redemption” (p. 6) and the theme of redemption has remained “dear to the American soul” throughout its history (p. 37). For Americans, culturally, thanks to the Puritans, redemption came to mean to be a man of one’s own destiny. Contrary to Weber (2002), who thought that a Puritan’s redemption was an entirely individual enterprise, McAdams (2006) asserts that that was not the entire story: “the Puritans talked a great deal about their faith, comparing
contrasting, sharing their stories‖ (p. 25). They were also concerned about helping their fellow men to achieve redemption. While the notion is rooted in religious traditions, it is widely used in everyday speech. In everyday life it means that something is wrong and should be corrected. People are prone to speak “in redemptive terms” (McAdams, 2006, p. 8). They overcome adversaries, transform their selves, and defy the odds. The theme of redemption can be found everywhere in American culture: in talk shows, self-help books, in soap-operas, in Hollywood movies, such as *Stand and Deliver* or *Dead Poets Society*. “There is no public narrative more potent today or throughout American history than the one about redemption” (McAdams, 2006, p. 21).

America’s redemptive culture is reflected in its educational reforms which aim at saving both the child and the teacher (Popkewitz, 1998). Reconstituting teacher identity has been an integral part of all educational reforms. A teacher is expected to have “multiple identities” and act “in a world that requires flexibility and fluidity rather than stability” (Popkewitz, 1998, p. 12). But the archetypal role “inscribed in the culture of redemption” (Popkewitz, 1998, p. 27) for a teacher is the role of a “redemptive agent who embodies and imparts the norms of policy and research” and rescues the child (Popkewitz, 1998, p. 14). Hence, the profession-related discourse generated in regards to the American Dream Discourse model is the discourse of *a Teacher as a Redemptive Agent*. The theme of redemption permeates all the activities American teachers are engaged in. It is also present in the NCLB mandate: Leaving no child behind means rescuing every child by giving him a good education that will turn him or her into a productive citizen.
The theme of redemption is as persuasive in Russian culture as it is in American culture. Halfin (2000) contends that behind the Marxist idea of a classless society one can unearth the old Christian notion of redemption, too: The oppressed were supposed to be rescued from the dark forces of capitalism and brought to a better bright future—a classless society. Culturally, Russians emphasize “redemption through suffering,” which “is absolutely fundamental to Russian culture and central to a great many views of Russian distinctiveness” (McDaniel, 1996, p. 34). Their concern is not about becoming a man of one’s own destiny. It is about the possibility of complete transformation, the notion which is deeply rooted in Russian orthodoxy: “Russian religion is at heart eschatological, interested in the complete and final transformation of human life rather than the ethical dimension of religion” (McDaniel, 1996, p. 34). It orients people toward the search for higher truth. McDaniel quotes a Russian artist in whose observation artists in the West seek “to be heard and understood” for creating something original within “an already existing cultural environment” as part of an ongoing dialogue, while in Russia “each artist claims to speak the final truth to the spectator, completely in isolation from others” (McDaniel, 1996, p. 34). “Enunciation of truth” (McDaniel, 1996, p. 34) is characteristic not only of artists. It is a Russian national pastime. It is also reflected in the profession-related discourse of a Teacher with the Capital Letter ‘T’ and the practices Russian teachers are engaged in. This discourse positions a Russian teacher as a holder of values and truth and influences the way they teach their subjects in subtle ways: Teaching is not about inquiry and discovery but about enunciation of truth. At the time of the interviews, the Russian teachers did not have another discourse that would allow
them to attend to their idealistic aspirations which were very important for performing a teacher’s job, as this study demonstrated.

In sum, both the American and Russian teachers continued to strongly identify with their profession-related discourses which both enabled them to imagine themselves as certain kind of teachers doing certain things and constrained them from being open to new possibilities. In both cases, the teachers have to find out how to fit their idealistic aspirations into the mandates.

**Teachers as Cultural Workers and the Mandates**

Dictionaries define a teacher as someone who is hired to instruct. They do not include transmitting values in the definition. As this study revealed, both the American and Russian teachers thought of a teacher fulfilling two primary functions: teaching a subject and transmitting values. However, while both the Russian and American teachers defined a teacher as more than someone who just teaches something, more Russian teachers were inclined to see the primary function of a teacher being teaching the subject first of all, and only then transmitting values. Some of them were ready to drop the function of transmitting values altogether. Unlike their Russian counterparts, none of the participating American teachers, but one, thought that their primary allegiance should be to the subjects they taught. The American teachers saw teaching subjects as secondary to transmitting values. Unlike the Russian teachers, the American teachers did not have a discourse that would allow them to talk about their primary allegiance being to the subjects they taught. Knowledge for knowledge’s sake had no value at all, for them. As Nancy, Peace Corps volunteer, put it, “how useful is it in the long run” to be able to
“recite twenty-five poems and talk about all the great American authors you know?” For the Russians this was a sign of being “cultured,” being part of true intelligentsia, and made perfect sense. A teacher had to possess all the characteristics assigned to intelligentsia. Unlike the Russian teachers, the American teachers did not have any desire to set themselves apart as belonging to intelligentsia, nor did they have a discourse that would allow them to talk as being part of a distinct group of intellectuals. In fact, they did not want to be labeled as being too “bookish” or too “scholarly” because being bookish and scholarly can be equated to being an intellectual. Being an intellectual is not a particularly attractive label in America because of its “endemic suspicion of anything that smacks of intellectual elitism” (Jacoby, 2008, p. xviii).

Neither did the American teachers have a discourse that would allow them to talk about teachers as bearers of cultural values. Nevertheless, the subject positions the American teachers could take up within the discourses they used leave no doubt that they, just as their Russian counterparts, had no misgivings about being cultural workers, though they did not define themselves as carriers and bearers of values at any time during the interviews. They all had a vision about what the end product of their teaching activities should entail: be it an educated citizen, a well-rounded personality, or a person with proper work and life skills. The American teachers could create their own versions of an ideal teacher taking up the positions of a teacher as a caring pastor, a teacher as a gardener tending to the needs of children, a teacher as a nurturer, and so forth. These subject positions were all in keeping with the generic subject positions inscribed within the discourses they used, as was the case with the Russian teachers, too. Though the
American teachers did not speak about teaching using the same lofty terms as the Russian teachers did, behind their talk about the lack of respect toward teachers in America was a belief that teaching was also an honorable profession.

At first glance, the descriptions of a “good” American teacher and a “good” Russian teacher seemed to be almost identical. Both a “good” American teacher and a “good” Russian teacher had to be “a good person” and “a professional,” or “an expert,” too. As a professional, an American teacher, like a Russian teacher, was someone who was dedicated to teaching and was knowledgeable, educated, and able to deliver information and think in a non-standard way. He had to keep up with current trends in education and be hard-working. As a good person, an American teacher was someone who was caring and fair, which was in keeping with what the Russian teachers expected from a good person, too. However, some of the characteristics of a “good” person or a “good” professional also reflect deeply held cultural beliefs not only about teachers. They also reflect cultural norms existing within the larger society about an individual and relations between an individual and a society, the norms that are inscribed in the dominant discourses of Soviet Kollektiv, in the Russian case, and American Individualism and Huddling, in the American case. For example, a “good” Russian teacher had to be “humble.” Being humble meant not putting oneself above the kollektiv. The American teachers would talk about being agreeable toward all actors involved in the field and stress the importance of being a good team-player rather than saying that somebody had to be humble. An American teacher is more likely “to help a student create self” (Hatcher), “interact an experience” (Michelle), whereas a Russian teacher is more likely
“to create something out of nothing” (Olesya), i.e. the former affords an active role to the student, the latter—a passive role. Being caring and fair also means different things in these two cultures. A Russian teacher is more likely to help a student cheat because he has to fulfill the function of a protector of a child in his mini-state. (What was “stunning” for Jake, the former Peace Corps volunteer, that teachers did not see it as “cheating,” that they saw it as “helping.”) The cultural expectation of vlast’ is first of all to protect its people. For an American teacher, being caring and fair means providing equal access to resources, reaching every child, and providing an equal opportunity to succeed. “The American idea of fairness, which implies equality of all people before the law and, in a more recent interpretation, equal opportunity” (Richmond, Yale, 1996, p. 34) is absent in Russian culture.

The descriptions of the mini-states revealed that both the American and Russian teachers afforded themselves sometimes mutually exclusive subject positions. But these contradictions were inherent in the discourses they used. For example, the subject position of a teacher as a controller in the Power as a Control, Management, and Efficiency discourse considerably undermines the subject position of a teacher as a promoter of democracy in the Educating Citizenry discourse. Constant preoccupation with control lives little room for letting students experience democratic principles in the classroom. As a result, the American teachers were hesitant to describe their mini-states as democracies because democracy meant not only expressing one’s opinion but also partaking in decision-making, for them. Paradoxically, the majority of the Russian teachers thought that their mini-states were democratic. They associated democracy, first
and foremost, with giving their students the right to voice their opinions, which they believed they did. Not a single Russian teacher mentioned participation in decision-making as a feature of democracy.

In addition, the seeds of controversy are planted within the discourses themselves. For example, the generic subject position within the Soviet Intelligentsia discourse for a member of intelligentsia would be of a totally selfless person who thinks only about the public good and is concerned with spiritual matters rather than material ones. However, the subject position of a Great Educator inscribed within this discourse undermines the subject position of a selfless person and shows that the Great Educator wanted to be granted a special position in the society in return for his selfless services. This means that, after all, he is not selfless. His special status, in a way, is a social contract that assures some privileges for him. He needs some kind of a reward for being selfless.

In regards to the NCLB and the USE mandates, both the American and the Russian teachers agreed with the basic premises of the mandates but disagreed with the ways they were put into practice. They had basically the same complaints about the mandates. In their opinion, the mandates (a) took time away from learning, (b) made a teachers’ job less enjoyable and meaningful, (c) took away teachers’ power, (d) made a teachers’ job more stressful, and (e) increased paperwork. One complaint which was absent in the Russian teachers’ talk about USE was that it restricted choice. The American teachers feared that NCLB would considerably restrict choice, which makes a lot of sense because, historically and culturally, choice has become one of the values that Americans believe, makes America different from other countries. Both the American
and the Russian teachers saw reforms in education as a threat to the familiar ways of being and acting as certain kinds of teachers. Both the American and Russian teachers resented the subject position of a technician teaching to the test inscribed within the mandates because this subject position undermined their symbolic significance as cultural workers. The mandates, above all, were a threat to the notion of redemption in both cultures: What counted as redemption was to be shown in test results in both cases. In the American case, NCLB permanently positioned teachers as scapegoats for the failure of the system to provide equal education for every child. It put them in a no-win situation because they could make all the difference in the world but if it did not show in the test results, their efforts to make a difference did not count. In the Russian case, the USE and other educational reforms deprived them of the special status of the Great Educator in their society, that is, USE was a threat to the archetypal image of a teacher as a knowledge and value bearer. NCLB in the U.S. and USE in Russia took away an important part of their teacher identities by rendering irrelevant their services as cultural workers, i.e. deprived them of their symbolic power.

In sum, the numerous subject positions the teachers afforded themselves were not a matter of the teachers’ individual preferences but demonstrated the effects the discourses had on the ways they fashioned their identities. This does not mean that the American and Russian teachers did not contest or negotiate these subject positions. They did, but they did so by always having the generic subject positions inscribed within the dominant discourses as a reference point. In the reality of the classrooms, it is not easy to live up to the ideals inscribed within the discourses. Nor can the generic subject positions
inscribed within these discourses encompass all the subject positions both the American and Russian teachers have to assume in the reality of classrooms. The current mandates make it even more difficult to live up to the ideals inscribed within the dominant discourses. Yet, these discourses continue to shape the teachers’ self-understandings in profound ways.

**Power and Teachers**

To begin with, the Russian teachers thought of power both as an abstract and concrete force. In both cases, power was negative and worked against people. They used and were used by the *Soviet Intelligentsia* discourse in their conceptualization of power. This discourse placed the member of intelligentsia in perpetual opposition to power. The Russian teachers did not have anything positive to say about those in power, but they expected the government to take care of them and protect them, i.e. to fulfill the role of a father and a provider. That was the only legitimate function of the government for them. This kind of thinking is informed by the *Fair and Just Tsar*-Batushka (father- tsar) discourse which reflects the historically grounded national myth about the special “bond between the tsar and people.” Since Peter the Great created a ruthless army of state bureaucrats, people often turned to tsar-batushka for protection who, in people’s imagination was in “absolute harmony with the spirit of the people” (Knight, 2006, p. 756) unlike the state bureaucrats who used their official positions for personal benefit. In the Soviet Union, the tsar-batushka was replaced by the General Secretary of the Communist Party, and “the state assumed the responsibility for the fulfillment of the traditional masculine roles of a father and provider, becoming in effect, a universal
patriarch to which both men and women were subject” (Ashwin, as cited in Goscilo & Lanoux, 2006, p. 7). The parent-child relationship was replicated in all Soviet institutions, schools included. Hence, in their classrooms, the teachers subconsciously replicated the same power relations. A good teacher to his or her students was what a good ruler, ideally, was to his people: someone who was fair and just and who fulfilled protective functions first and foremost.

Unlike the Russian teachers, the American teachers thought of power in concrete and pragmatic terms. Power resided in individuals, and it meant being able to get things done, control the situation, and make a difference. Totally absent from their talk was the notion of power as an abstract, mysterious, incomprehensible, overwhelming force of nature against which people were powerless. Neither did they have this sense of power being totally separate from people, not being accountable to people. They did not expect the government to protect them or fulfill the role of a father either. A good teacher to his or her students was what a good leader, ideally, was to citizens: someone who was in control, someone who did not let chaos happen, and who did not use rules to his or her benefit, first and foremost.

In comparison, this urgency to control the situation, the working environment, and students was totally absent in the Russian teachers’ talk about power. As the state controlled the situation and the working environment in Russia, what was left to the Russian teachers was controlling the students, which they did so effectively that they did not even mention controlling students as a problem. Teacher authority, like the state authority, was not questioned as long as the perception was there that they fulfilled the
protective function. As all of the three former Peace Corps volunteers noticed, it was easier to be a teacher in Russia because Russian classrooms were much more structured, teachers had much more authority, and students were much better behaved than American students. “Russia is an easier place to teach, in some ways,…because the teacher has much more authority there, the teacher says and the students do,” said Jake. Nancy thought that the formality level was much higher in Russia, and “it was much stricter in terms of not discipline, but in terms of following the order, and keeping on the agenda that the teacher has for the day.” Russian classrooms were not only much more structured but also “much more feared,” in Jake’s opinion. So, it was much more difficult for the American teachers to maintain control because of the ways the American classroom was run, and because a teacher’s authority was challenged on a daily basis, and because, in the former Russian teachers’ experiences, a teacher was not granted the same respect in the society, as was the case in Russia. Though the Russian teachers in this study complained about the loss of respect for teachers, all students still did what the teachers told them to do without questioning their authority.

While the American teachers had the same distrust of the government, and the same resentment of bureaucrats “who were telling me how to teach when they had no idea what it meant to be a teacher,” they did not have the same overwhelming sense of powerlessness in the face of reforms and changes taking place in their country. As George put it, even “if I don’t like W, but he was elected by the majority, I’ll get a shot, I’ll get a chance to get somebody in there next time.” Even Hillary—who of all the interviewed teachers was the most outspoken against the policies being introduced, who
was “scared to write a letter because of the current administration,” and who was “very disappointed and discouraged, and hopeless,” because her “generation were sheep, so to speak” and they “were schlepped along”—even she felt that things could be changed. “People need to wake up, to claim back our power,” she said.

Unlike the American teachers, the Russian teachers never felt that they had had that power to claim it back. They did not have a discourse which would provide them with the vocabulary about claiming power back. Nor did they have the experience of voting in or out of office of people in power and having a “fair shot.” The most they could do was to hope that there would be someone in the government who would understand what teachers do, and protect them. On the level of school, the strategies the Russian teachers employed to deal with the principal was to go to the principal’s office, “shout at the top” of their voice, “slam the door, and earn the right to be left alone” (Galina) and stay away from power. They wanted to be left alone by the government, too, but believed that it was the government’s job to protect people, to create a decent working environment, and to provide social security.

The lesson observations revealed that in both the American and Russian classrooms, the teachers, undoubtedly, were figures of authority, “visible agents of power” from whom power emanated (Covaleskie, n.d., Forms of Power section, para. 1). Hence, both the teachers and students acted upon the belief that a teacher had power. The power he or she consciously exercised was sovereign, and as such was “susceptible to effective resistance” at all times (Covaleskie, n.d., Teachers and Power section, para. 1). In my interpretation, the American teachers’ preoccupation with control,
management, and discipline indicate that they feel that the sovereign power they exercise is under constant threat. The absence of the words “control” and “discipline” in the Russian teachers’, on the other hand, suggests that they feel more secure in the exercise of sovereign power than the American teachers. My observations of the lessons also revealed that it was more difficult for the American teachers to exercise sovereign power than for the Russian teachers because the American teachers were generally more restricted in the display of their sovereign power by the discourses they were using. The Russian teachers, on the other hand, acted upon the belief that they were caring, protective fatherly (or motherly) figures who were in charge of their classrooms, and exercising of the sovereign power was something a fatherly (or motherly) figure would “naturally” do.

Disciplinary power manifested itself in the ways teachers distributed students in space and controlled their activities according to a timetable. There were remarkable differences in the ways the American and Russian teachers gained maximum docility-utility of the student body. These ways were most distinct in the elementary classrooms. The American elementary teachers were pre-occupied with reminding students to keep their hands, feet, and mouths quiet and breaking students into manageable groups, moving them safely around, giving students an opportunity to work in groups, and giving them time to talk through differences. In the American case, the classroom was a space where students learned not to intrude into other people’s physical space, to be aware of consequences of misbehavior because, as Alexander put it, “concern about personal safety, the management of anti-social behavior loomed large in teacher consciousness”
(Alexander, 2001, p. 233). In an American classroom, a student has to turn his or her gaze onto himself or herself in relation to other discrete selves. Consequently, he or she develops a sense of an atomistic self who sees others also as atomistic selves not as part of a collective. America, being a country where people move around a lot, needs people who are used to moving around and who have to think about themselves in relation to other selves in the spaces provided to them.

The Russian teachers gained maximum docility-utility of the student body by “fixing” students to their designated places. The Soviet Union was a highly organized space where each group had a permanent territory and moving around was not easy. So it needed people who would be able to function in their designated areas under the guidance of a leader. Hence, the Russian elementary teachers focused on lining bodies up in a single file and singling students out for both standing very beautifully in a line or stepping out of a line, sometimes to a point of obsession, to an outsider’s view. The time given to students was the time to arrive at one version of truth, often with one student in front and the whole class watching this student arrive at “truth” through teachers’ carefully crafted questions. In the Russian case, a student views himself or herself through the eyes of the kollektiv at any time. Hence, he or she develops a sense of the collective self and sees others as collective selves, too. In the Russian case, the teachers’ constant fixture of the eye of the collective on individual students’ posture and placement of hands and feet reinforced the importance of the collective in one’s life.

Therefore benign, at first glance, activities teachers are engaged in have far-reaching consequences. The teachers introduce students into certain culturally acceptable
ways of knowing and experiencing of one’s self and into certain power relations by subconsciously using the discourses of Soviet Kollektiv in the Russian case, and American Individualism in the American case. In both cases a student becomes “his own overseer” (Foucault, 1980, p. 155). These are vivid examples of how Foucault’s disciplinary machinery of power works through the meticulous observation and normalizing judgment of students’ bodies. Both the teachers and the students are involved in complex power/knowledge relations of which they are unaware (see pp. 60-64).

The power of the Soviet Kollektiv and American Individualism discourses was evident in the use of pronouns, too. The Russian teachers were more prone to make sweeping generalizations about whatever they discussed. They more often than the American counterparts collapsed themselves into a larger we, as part of narod; we, as members of the teaching profession; we, teachers in this republic, or teachers in this school. The American teachers, on the other hand, used this kind of identification sparingly in comparison with the Russian teachers because the American teachers are, culturally, conditioned to think of themselves as atomistic, unique selves.

Class, Gender, Race, and Teacher Identities

Class and social status attached to it were important identity markers in both the Russian and American teachers’ identity formation. While the Russian teachers’ were mainly concerned about retaining the position of a member of intelligentsia, the American teachers were anxious about being able to continue middle-class lifestyles. Neither the American teachers nor the Russian teachers felt that they were properly
compensated for their job. For both the American and Russian teachers, work served as a source of satisfaction: It gave purpose to their lives, and it was important in the establishment of their social status. The end product of their activities was important in their sense-making of their everyday jobs and the educational reforms for both the American and Russian teachers. Both the American and Russian teachers believed that teaching involved the ideal of self-sacrifice. To continue doing their work, both the American and Russian teachers had to turn to internal motivation which they got from the symbolic significance they attached to the job. Taking away the symbolic significance was a serious blow to their sense of teacher selves, though it was not as important for the Americans as for the Russian teachers who had been told all their conscious lives that the symbolic significance far outweighed practical concerns. The American teachers, though they said that they went into teaching knowing that there would not be big money in teaching, thought they did not ask for much by wanting to live a middle-class lifestyle.

Gender played a significant role in the Russian teachers’ identity work (a) because it is impossible to avoid the gendering of the world on the linguistic level, (b) because gender was “a key organizing principle in the Soviet system” which defined “the duties of citizens” (Goscilo & Lanoux, 2006, p. 6), and (c) because “masculine-feminine duality played a central role in national mythology as articulated by members of the Russian intelligentsia” (Goscilo & Lanoux, 2006, p. 4). As the analysis of the teachers’ talk demonstrated, the binary opposition, men versus women, continued to shape their self-understandings and the ordering of the world.
Race played an important role in the American teachers’ identity. Race was evident in their talk about vouchers and NCLB (see pp. 204-208). They did not use the word race, per se. The very avoidance of the word race is telling. It is a too emotionally charged concept in America. So the teachers preferred to use the words minorities, African-American culture, or Hispanic culture instead to vent their frustrations about vouchers and NCLB. Vouchers and NCLB were needed because of minorities who did not perform well. Race is important in American teacher identity construction because, [as I mentioned before (see p. 207)], it can be used to cast a teacher both positively and negatively. In the first case, a teacher is seen as making a difference in the life of a minority student: in the second case, as failing a minority student. In the first case, a teacher is a redemptive agent; in the second case, he or she fails to fulfill the cultural imperative of redemption. It was as inevitable to avoid mentioning race for the American teachers, as it was inevitable to avoid gender for the Russian teachers. Race is the key organizing principle in the United State, as gender is in Russia. According to West (2001), the U.S. was conceived as a “racist patriarchal” nation and race continues to structure everyday life in America (p. 27). Leonardo (2009) contends that the United States is “a color-centered nation” and that the NCLB mandate contains “a hidden referent of whiteness” by deeming “racial disparities… as stubborn cultural explanations of the inferiority of people of color” (p. 127). The theme of inferiority of people of color was evident in the American teachers’ talk, too (see pp. 204-208). The white race, by default, serves for minorities as a model to be emulated. Hence, NCLB “is not only…a
national policy” but also “an instantiation of whiteness” (italics in original, Leonardo, 2009, p. 128).

The fact that minorities were not an important identity marker in the Russian teachers’ talk does not mean that they are not important in their identity construction. The fact that gender was not evident in the American teachers’ talk does not mean that gender does not play a part in their identity construction either. Minorities did not come up as an issue for the Russian teachers and gender did not figure as an issue for the American teachers (a) because of the kind of questions I asked; (b) because, in this study, I did not focus on the “unspoken”; (c) because “masculine-feminine duality” is most important in the construction of the Russian symbolic order, and the white race versus people of color binary pair is most critical in the construction of the American symbolic order; and (d) because gender in Russia and race in America are a threat to the symbolic significance society and teachers attach to their profession. In order to have symbolic significance in Russia, a teacher has to cast the teaching profession in masculine terms, first and foremost and in America, the symbolic significance of a teacher is embedded in the notion of redemption. It is people of color who need redemption, first and foremost.

Summary

This study examined what cultural or Discourse models the Russian and American teachers who participated in this study drew upon to fashion their teacher identities and their understanding of power in education in the context of educational and, in the case of Russia, societal reforms, too. In order to address the research questions, I treated the participants’ talk as text generated through semi-structured informal
interviews. I focused on the analysis of the following features: vocabulary choices, binary oppositions; the use of pronouns, and the subject positions (see the Analysis section, pp. 86-92). I connected these features to particular discourses. Though the study was emergent at all stages and took me to an end I did not anticipate, I started with the pre-conceived assumptions that (a) different national cultures make sense of the world in very different ways, (b) these differences can be discerned through the study of language use as social practices, (c) shared patterns of thinking are embedded in cultural or Discourse models, and (d) discourses serve as cultural resources upon which members of a culture draw to create their versions of the world and their sense of selves. While there are numerous discourses (such as pedagogical, psychological, and medical) shaping teacher identities, I focused only on the discourses generated in regards to what Gee (2005) calls Discourse models, or other authors call master narratives, master fictions or ideas (see pp. 58-60). I did not focus on individual appropriations of these discourses because I was interested in patterned thinking across the interviews. Nor did I take into account psychological differences, i.e. I completely left nature out of the equation. I examined shared meanings the participants created using the discourses circulating in their respective cultures.

I have identified the Bright Future, Communism, City upon a Hill (the American version of the bright future), and the American Dream as cultural meta-narratives or Discourse models that served as a source for generating culture-specific discourses, which in their turn, served as a source for generating culturally-distinct profession-related discourses. In the Russian case, it was a Teacher with the Capital Letter ‘T’, in the
American case it was a Teacher as a Redemptive Agent. These profession-related discourses contained culturally-sanctioned archetypal ideals for teachers to draw upon in their teacher identity-work and allowed teachers to attach a considerable symbolic significance to their work, thereby contributing to their feelings of self-worth as professionals. That is, in my analysis I focused on how discourses that manifested themselves in the teachers’ talk were connected to each other and to broader cultural discourses. I demonstrated how “more abstract ‘depersonified’ discourses” (Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 20) were “spoken” by the teachers and how they shaped their identities in the context of educational reforms.

The study supports the findings on discursive construction of teacher identities (a) that teacher identities are fashioned by and within competing discourses (Alsup, 2006; Cary, 2006; Moore, 2004) which are infested with contradictions and which allow identification with mutually exclusive subject positions, and (b) that the scripts provided within the discourses both enable and constrain teacher identity-fashioning (Moore, 2004). Furthermore, the study shows that dominant discourses circulating in particular cultures, though they cannot account for all the complexity of the teaching profession in the variety of social contexts, serve as the anchoring points for identities. These discourses offer teachers subject positions from which to make certain culturally acceptable moral claims about their teacher selves. They provide a soothing, comforting feeling of stability and coherence in a world otherwise chaotic and incoherent; and perpetuate a sense of self that is coherent, stable, continuous, and that is engaged in certain practices and not others. As Hall (1996) put it, “Identities are thus points of
temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (p. 6).

The study also corroborates the findings of other studies conducted in the context of educational reforms that:

1. Teachers had pre-existing identities and that these pre-existing identities were in conflict with teacher identities inscribed within the current reforms (Alapuro & Lonkila, 2000; George, Mohammed, & Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003; Robinson & McMillan, 2006; Schweisfurth, 2002; Welmond, 2002).

2. Deeply held cultural beliefs inscribed within “cultural schemata” defined “the proper roles, rights, and responsibilities of a teacher” (Welmond, 2002, p. 43).

3. The importance of cultural values and beliefs are even more salient in countries which undergo major transformational changes (Schweisfurth, 2002).

This study claims that teachers’ pre-existing identities are “pieced together” out of subject positions available to them within a series of discourses generated in regards to cultural master narratives or Discourse models; and that the subject positions available within the current standardization discourse are incongruent with some of the cultural beliefs with which teachers strongly identify with. In addition, the study shows that the symbolic significance the teachers assigned to their job serves as a powerful intrinsic motivation in the absence (or lack) of extrinsic motivation. Depriving them of this significance can substantially diminish their “sense of vocation and existential dignity”
(Bell & Taylor, 2003, p. 330) and result in teacher frustration and burnout. The symbolic significance of a teacher is inscribed within the discourses circulating in cultures.

Finally, this study, unlike the research studies on power I reviewed for this dissertation, offers insight into why certain accounts of power and power relations are created and not others within different cultures. Most importantly, it shows how the sovereign power teachers consciously exercise obscures the effects of disciplinary forms of power they exercise subconsciously. For example, hidden from both the American and Russian teachers was the actual meaning of their pre-occupation with students’ hands, feet, eyes, and postures. Teachers do not have time to think beyond the immediate utilitarian purpose of the activities they are engaged in. They want to create an environment that would maximize the delivery of content. When I was a teacher, I also started a lesson with lining students up, but I never asked myself what was behind these rituals, what importance they had besides immediate significance. Though I often skipped them when nobody was observing my lessons, I knew that I would be reprimanded if I dared not to include them into the so-called “open” lessons. I wonder whether American teachers, if asked, would go beyond a common-sensical explanation of their preoccupation with keeping hands, feet, and mouths quiet; and what explanation Russian teachers, if asked, would give to their preoccupation with “beautiful” lines.

Examination, according to Foucault, is also an instrument of power (see p. 64). It is an extremely powerful disciplinary form of power because it does not let me, as a teacher, deviate from the norm at any time, even behind closed doors. Test scores will be at the back of my mind all the time because I, as a teacher, will be judged according to
the test results. It ensures that all teachers are engaged in the same activities. The current American current mandate, NCLB, with its adequate yearly progress (AYP) component, measures in numbers how successfully a teacher conforms to the imposed homogeneity. The Russian USE does not have this component, but it has the same effect: It imposes homogeneity. In both cases, the mandates reward conformity and punish non-conformity and offer the archetypal ideal of a teacher as a technician who is teaching to a test. It also standardizes thinking by prioritizing recognition of patterns rather than thinking. Both the American and Russian teachers feel that they are being acted upon and they resist by using the available discourses that enable them to contest the teacher identities inscribed within the mandates. They derive power from other discourses to counter the standardization discourse.

The power of discourses was evident in the definitions the teachers gave, in the descriptions of their classrooms, and in the activities in which they were engaged during their lessons. These discourses enabled them to describe themselves as certain kinds of teachers but the same discourses also constrained the teachers from envisioning themselves as different types of teachers. However, they were not mere pawns in the hands of discourses because of the contradictions inherent within or among the discourses themselves. They could use parts and bits from different discourses to make claims that suited their purposes most. On the other hand, they were not free “to speak” these discourses the way it pleased them. They could not ignore the cultural conventions and norms inscribed within these discourses.
In sum, though theoretically teachers could have produced a limitless number of utterances about their teacher selves, in reality, they were “remarkably repetitive” and “fairly predictable” because they had to “remain within socially agreed-upon boundaries,” though the choices they made seemed “personal” (italics in original, Mills, 2004, p. 62). The advantage of comparative discourse analysis is in its ability to more clearly demonstrate that what teachers say about their teachers selves, to a considerable extent, is culturally determined; and that “there is a finite number of sense-making positions available within a given culture at a different time” (McKee, 2003, p. 19).

**Empty Signifiers**

For my final thoughts on the findings, I would like to turn to the concept of *empty signifiers* introduced by Ernest Laclau (1993). According to him, “A signifier is emptied when it is disengaged from a particular signified and comes to symbolize a long chain of equivalent signifieds” (Laclau, 1993, p. 342). That is, it has no concrete referential meaning and is used for the production of other concepts. It serves as a *nodal point* to which meanings can be “partially fixed by reference” (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8) and has a unifying, totalizing effect (Szkudlarek, 2007). Concepts such as democracy and communism can serve as examples of empty signifiers. These empty signifiers “unified the totality” (Laclau, 1993, p. 329) of the historical experience of Americans and Russians for most of the 20th century. Each was defined in terms of what it is not in reference to each other and functioned as a nodal point for the other in creating partially fixed meanings.
While discourse theories deny any possibility of “the full closure of social field,” nevertheless, Laclau contends that any society is based on the premise that it is possible to achieve “the ideal of closure and fullness” (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8). Empty signifiers play a crucial role in the production of such ideals. Therefore, communism was crucial for imagining the Soviet Union as a society which one day would be a society of abundance where all people’s needs were met, and democracy is still important for imagining the United States as a society in which everybody one day will be able to achieve the American Dream. As with all cultural myths, sustaining the Dream is not an easy enterprise. Just a cursory overview of the titles of publications in Ohio Link on the American Dream revealed that the concept is under constant scrutiny. Its vitality is checked against racial, gender, and class distinctions. Its potency is reaffirmed in individual stories and questioned in regards to its accessibility by different groups. The choice of words shows that there is a great deal of national anxiety over its present and future state. It is proclaimed either dead or still alive. It can be usurped, taken away, and “outsourced.” It has not only to be “built,” “uncovered,” “achieved,” “promoted,” and “financed”; it also has to be “restored,” “redefined,” “redesigned,” “renewed,” “reclaimed,” “rescued,” and “seized.” In sum, the Dream is prone to deterioration, but it is very important for keeping up the national ethos and it is worth preserving. It is what America is about. Without it America will be just like other countries and will lose its special standing in the eyes not only of Americans but of the world community as well. The Dream is reflected in the Declaration of Independence and structures American people’s “minutiae of everyday existence” (Cullen, 2003, p. 38).
Though it consistently fails the majority of them, they stubbornly hold on to it (Caldwell, 2006). Though the American Dream, like the Bright Future Communism, is an unachievable ideal, it is still vital “for affirming the validity of” (Laclau, 1993, p. 343) the American project of democracy.

To make empty signifiers work, “particular rhetorical devices” should be employed (Szkudlarek, 2007, p. 239) because their effectiveness depends on “radical investment” (Laclou, as cited in Szkudlarek, 2007, p. 239). While America is still radically invested in their empty signifier, Russia is in search of another empty signifier. Meanwhile, the Russian teachers’ talk demonstrated that many of the themes inscribed within the Discourse model of the Bright Future, Communism were still dear to their hearts and souls. As this study demonstrated, “merely to proclaim an end to something is an empty gesture” (Laclau, 1993, p. 330). Discourse ends when it loses its effect on people, i.e. when people stop using it, just as language dies when there are no more people who speak it. Drawing upon Laclau’s argument against interpretation of postmodernity as “a simple rejection of modernity,” one can say that the end of communism in Russia is not a simple rejection of communism either. It merely means that it has lost its totalizing, hegemonic effect on the entire population. The fact that discourses generated in regards to this master narrative or empty signifier were still powerfully speaking through the Russian teachers in this study can be explained in three ways:

1. Teachers were the most politicized cultural workers in the Soviet Union.
2. The society still needed selfless, dedicated teachers who were ready to work enthusiastically with as little pay as possible.

3. Teachers did not have access to other discourses or did not recognize them as legitimate because the rest of the society had not endorsed them either.

If we are to believe Laclau, it is of vital importance that Russians create another empty signifier as soon as possible because

[I]n a situation of radical disorder, ‘order’ is present as that which is absent; it becomes an empty signifier, as the signifier of absence. In this sense, various political forces can compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack. To hegemonize something is exactly to carry out this filling function. (Laclau, as cited in Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, pp. 7-8)

Will Russia be able to come up with this empty signifier by engaging in a cultural dialogue or will it try to impose it as the ultimate truth? What kind of “deficient Other” will Russia create? Will Russia continue to define itself in terms of the binary opposition to the West? What role will the government play in the creation and sustaining of this empty signifier? Will it try to claim an exclusive right for fixing the signifiers to the signified and thus “win the battle and lose the war?” because pinning down the signifier to the signified “means trauma, psychosis and death,” according to Lacan (Minsky, 1998, p. 62).

What role will be assigned to education and to teachers within the “new” empty signifier? What will the “new” empty signifier carry over from the “old” signifier?
These questions are of no idle matter. They are not only about metaphysics. What the Russian people invest in radically will determine the kind of society they will create and live in. As Foucault points out, the substitution of one discursive formation with another does not mean alteration of all the constituent parts. It simply means that “statements are governed by new rules of formation” (Foucault, 1974, p. 175).

It might be argued that both in the American and Russian cases, the issue is about constructing “an entirely new social and philosophical ‘center’ for relationship among the state, individuals and the wider world” (Kerr, 2000, p. 132). In the American case, the struggles are about retaining democratic freedoms; and in the Russian case, the struggles are about building a new society based on democratic principles. These can be defined as evolutionary changes in America versus revolutionary ones in Russia. In each case, schools are important sites where the dominant cultural models for relationship “among the state, individuals and the wider world” (Kerr, 2000, p. 132) are enacted among different actors involved in education. Teachers play an important role in sustaining these relationships.

**Doing Comparative Discourse Analysis: Future Research Questions**

In his overview of research in comparative education (CE) on the concepts of identity, nation and culture, Klerides (2009), citing numerous authors, outlines how comparative research moved from the view of culture and identity as being fixed, immutable wholes to the “postmodern, post-structural and post-colonial” views of culture, identity, and nation as being “fractured, fluid and hybrid, a point of struggle and contestation, of ambiguity, dilemmas and paradoxes” (p. 1237). He asserts that “it is
necessary for CE to start interrogating notions of nationhood and cultural identity across national settings” taking into consideration these “new perspectives on identities and nationhood” (p. 1236) and that “the starting point of this process should be an interpretation of these notions as products of discourse and language” (p. 1236). He enlists a number of possible ways discourse analysis can be used in CE. “This mode of analysis,” he writes “can be extended to cover the ways in which teachers or writers of curricular material themselves are positioned in relation to discourses about the Self” (pp. 1236-1237). In addition, in agreement with the authors he cites, the value of discourse analysis, Klerides (2009) believes, is in its potential to build “bridges not only across the cultures but also between disciplines, micro and macro levels of analysis, theoretical and empirical study” (p. 1238). The current study supports his contentions. It also suggests that discourse analysis can be employed to show not only how teachers are positioned in relation to discourses about the Self but also to demonstrate that:

1. Discourses of the Self are part and parcel of cultural master narratives or Discourse models.

2. The study of Discourse models and discourses generated in regards to these models help ground teacher identity formation within historical, cultural, and social contexts.

3. Cross-cultural comparisons of discourses are particularly valuable for questioning “the naturalness or inevitability” (MacLure, 2003, p. 9) of the ways teachers construe the world and understand their teacher selves.
4. Doing comparative discourse analysis can give a plausible explanation for why educational policies are appropriated by teachers differently in different cultures.

5. Teachers’ understandings of power and their teacher selves in subtle ways affect the practices they are engaged in, in the reality of classrooms.

6. In order to effectively counter being named, described, and positioned in undesirable ways, as well as to question their own practices, teachers should be adept in recognizing and deconstructing discourses and be able to meaningfully participate in the construction of new discourses.

The study also raises a number of critical questions. For example, one of the findings of this study was the symbolic significance teachers attached to their profession. Then the question of “How would we begin to redefine and reframe, rebuild and rework the cultural and social capital of teachers at this particular historical moment?” (Luke, 2004, p. 1423) becomes critical in light of (using Ashwin’s (1999) words) the “hermetic and all-pervasive” (p. 7) Free Market Discourse model. This question is worth exploring for teachers, educational researchers, and politicians alike because, as Luke (2004) notes, (reminding readers of what Pierre Bourdieu wrote in *The Logic of Practice*) “trust, reputation, and honor are dependent on a profession’s symbolic capital in social fields of value” (Luke, 2004, p. 1423).

Another critical issue is how change happens. According to Fairclough (2007), social change happens through change in social structures and social practices. He also states that change is discourse-led (see p. 25). It would be of interest to examine whether
the Free Market Discourse model will speak teachers as forcefully as other Discourse models did in the course of time. What changes will take place eventually, especially in the Russian case? Will the Soviet discourses speak the younger generation of teachers as powerfully as they did this generation of teachers born and educated in the Soviet Union? Which parts and bits and from which Soviet discourses will find their way to new discourses? In the case of America, it will be of interest to see how the American Dream Discourse model will change in the future and how the changes in this master narrative will affect the conceptions of the Self.

Finally, given the paucity of research on teacher understandings of power and how these understandings are connected to master signifiers and result in reproduction of power relations existing in the society at large, I think this topic is worth researchers’ and teachers’ attention, too. It would be of particular interest to me, personally, to explore how the cultural imperative of visibility, in the American case, manifests itself in teachers’ understanding of the Self and the practices they are engaged in. What are the cultural demands on visibility in Russia and how they are different in comparison to American imperatives? What historically grounded discourses shape these understandings? In addition, more research is clearly in order to see which of the constituent parts of the *Bright Future, Communism* Discourse model will be carried over to the Russian version of the *Free Market* Discourse model and which of the constituent parts of the *American Dream* Discourse model will undergo drastic revisions under the pressure of global transformational changes.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter
Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

from Katherine Light <klight@kent.edu>
to rignatyev@kent.edu
cc vseeberg@att.net
date Fri, Oct 8, 2004 at 4:55 PM hide details 10/8/04
subject IRB Application
mailed-by kent.edu

Hello, Raissa Ignatieva!  
I've received your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants [IRB Log #05-131 "Inquiry into Teacher Sense-Making of Power and Control in Their Professional Lives in Post-Perestroika Russia and Post-NCLB America"] Thank you for the submission!  It has been approved as a Level I research project.  You may begin to collect data!  Good Luck with your research!  
Thanks!  
Katherine

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APPENDIX B

Consent Form
Appendix B

Consent Form

Tentative Title: Power and Control in Education: Cross-cultural Perspective

This is a research project asking what teachers think about power and control in their professional lives in Post-Perestroika Russia and Post-NCLB America. Reflecting on power manifestations in their professional lives and the role teachers are playing in the general scheme of power relations will help teachers reconsider their understanding of power and control in their professional lives and develop new ideas about transformative practices in education.

I would like you to take part in this project. If you decide to do this, you will be asked to participate in two one hour interviews over three months’ period. No financial compensation for participation in this project is available.

To protect your identity, pseudonyms and general descriptive information will be used. Taking part in this project is entirely up to you, and no one will hold it against you if you decide not to do it. If you take part, you may stop at any time.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me through Dr. Seeberg, my advisor, at (330)672-0604. The project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. John L. West, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies (Tel. 330-672-2704).

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

Raissa Ignatieva,
PhD candidate

B. CONSENT STATEMENT(S)

1. I agree to take part in this project. I know what I will have to do and that I can stop at any time.

__________________________  __________________________
Signature                        Date
APPENDIX C

Audio Tape Consent Form
Appendix C

Audio Tape Consent Form

I agree to audio taping the interviews at a place of mutual convenience (e.g. your school) on two occasions.

______________________________  ___________________________
Signature  Date

I have been told that I have the right to (hear)/(see) the (audio)/(video) tapes before they are used. I have decided that I:

_____ want to (hear)/(see) the tapes  _____ do not want to (hear)/(see) the tapes

Sign now below if you do not want to (hear)/(see) the tapes. If you want to (hear)/(see) the tapes, you will be asked to sign after (hearing)/(seeing) them.

Raissa Ignatieva and other researchers approved by Kent State University may / may not use the tapes made of (me). The original tapes or copies may be used for:

_____ this research project  _____ teacher education  _____ presentation at professional meetings

______________________________  ___________________________
Signature  Date

Address:
APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol
Appendix D

Interview Protocol

I. General Information

1. Please, tell me about yourself, first (education, teaching experience, age)

2. Why did you choose the teaching profession?

3. What do you think the purpose of education is?

4. Who is a teacher? How would you define a teacher?

5. What do you think makes a good student/a good teacher?

6. What is your philosophy of teaching?

7. What motivates your work?

8. What is the image of a teacher in the society?

9. What expectations of a teacher in the society?

10. What should be the primary activity of a teacher you think?

11. If I asked you to give a metaphor for schools in America/Russia, what would it be? Why have you chosen this metaphor?

II. Trends in Education

1. What are the current trends in education, you think?

2. What/how do you think/feel about them?

3. What was it like to be a teacher at the beginning of your teaching career?

4. What is it like to be a teacher today?

5. How did you find about NCLB/USE?

6. What do you think about standardized testing? NCLB? USE?
1. When I say power what comes to your mind?

2. How about power in education?

3. In what activities and decisions do you, as a teacher, have the most say?

4. In what activities do you have the least say?

5. In what activities would you like to have the most say?

6. How much control & influence do American/Russian teachers as a whole have over their work you think?

7. What do you think affects your work as a teacher most?

8. What are you, as a teacher, held accountable for?

9. What do you think they should be held accountable for?

10. What do you do when a student misbehaves?

III. Rounding up

1. What is your typical day like?

2. Is there anything you would like to change in this day? Why?

3. What do you enjoy doing most as a teacher?

4. What do you enjoy doing least?

5. If you were conducting this interview what questions would you have asked?

   Thank you very much for your time
APPENDIX E

Example of Russian Power Statements
Appendix E

Example of Russian Power Statements

Stanza 31 Definition of Power

[Power is] something dark, incomprehensible,
backrooms of power
I know nothing about it.
we learn about it from mass media mostly in relation to some political scandal.
Then we understand “this is power”

Stanza 32 Power in education

The same thing.
Now they are writing the law about education.
Who knows about it? Who asked us any questions?
Nobody knows anything. Nobody has seen it.
And then this law will be sent to us, and we will have to implement it.

Stanza 33 Power is the sword of Damocles

Power in education is the sword of Damocles.
For example, they introduced the native language into school curriculum.
First they said it would be taught just on the level of comprehension,
Just conversational basic language skills. Then they required teaching writing,
then they started giving exams. So now we teach both state languages: Russian
and native. Though most of the parents don’t know this language and cannot help
their child.
First it starts with an experiment and then it suddenly becomes a law
and nobody knows who adopted it.

**Stanza 34 Sources of Teacher power**

Yes, some do. The power of grading.

Stick and carrots. Divide and rule.

Some teachers use their power to give a failing grade to a kid
or humiliate a kid, abuse a kid emotionally and psychologically.

And psychological abuse is worse than physical abuse.

One can kill by a word.

And this happens all the time at school.

Ill-willed (nedobrosovestny) teacher without conscience will abuse power,
a good willed (dobrosovestny) teacher with conscience will not abuse power
though he has it.
Appendix F

Example of American Power Statements

**Stanza 30 Definition of power**

I am not sure I can define that.

I can identify individuals who have the power.

**Stanza 31 Students hold power**

I think students, ultimately, hold the power in my classroom, as learners, because they are so often, each day, opportunities for them to engage.

Sometimes I say to them, ‘You choose first, I choose second

You make a smart choice first,

you can move forward.

You make a choice not so smart, and

then we have to take a step back’.

So I think, ultimately, they hold power.

**Stanza 32 Premise that I have power**

I’d like to think that I have the power,

and I work on that premise most days..

When I step out of my classroom and work with my colleagues or administrators.

**Stanza 33 No power outside the classroom**

I don’t hold the power.
I am expected to teach. I am given a curriculum.

We vote one or two important people into a position of power into the senate and then these people stay on behalf of a great number of people.

We accept what those people decide in terms of laws for the rest of us.

I don’t think that I have an opportunity to change the laws that affect my classroom.

but if I stop to think about it

I can make a difference in my sphere of influence

but I don’t believe

that I have a bigger sphere of influence

that would affect many lives beyond this classroom.

**Stanza 34 NCLB & ST & teacher power**

But NCLB and ST are encroaching even on that power

that we have in the class
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