

## **The Role of Genre in Reflective Practice: Tracing the Development of a Beginning Teacher's Journaling Practice**

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*In this article, a teacher educator and a first-year teacher identify the role that genre, in a rhetorical sense, plays in reflective practice. As reflection in teacher education has been criticized for its potential to reinforce prior attitudes and dispositions within pre-service and beginning teachers, we see how meta-knowledge of genre is important to beginning teachers' successful practice of reflection. Throughout this article, we draw on examples from one beginning teacher's journaling practice as a way to illustrate that multiple genres of reflection co-exist within teachers' reflective practice.*

Zeichner's (1996) statement, "there is no such thing as an unreflective teacher," (p. 207) is powerful and true. At the same time that reflective practice within teacher education has been almost universally conceived of as beneficial to teachers' professional behavior and development (Zeichner & Liston, 1990; Schön, 1983, 1987), it has suffered marginalization, as a practice, due to its connotation with "free form" thinking and loosely defined goals. Despite work throughout the past two decades that has outlined the "how to" in reflective practice (e.g. Black, 2001; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) as well as work that has offered classifications of different types of reflection practiced by teachers and teacher educators (e.g., Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Gore, 1993; Zeichner & Liston, 1990; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991), reflective practice in teacher education still vacillates between associations with the personal and the pedagogical. Although Cochran-Smith (2003) has stressed that the divide between the personal and the professional in teaching is indeed a false dichotomy, as good teaching requires both "professional competence and personal connection" (Shoffner, 2009, p. 784), the mechanisms by which both of these goals are met needs more exploration.

Our response to the personal/ professional divide in teachers' reflective practice relies on the invitation of *genre*. We have found that the concept of *genre*, one that is usually refrained for

composition and writing studies, can be helpful in considering teachers' understanding and implementation of reflective practice. To illustrate the significance of genre in reflective practice, we draw from a study of one beginning teacher's practice of reflection. This beginning teacher's practice articulates and develops the role of *genre* as a pivotal piece of her reflections, thus supporting our claim that the field of teacher education has much to gain through understanding how *genre* plays an essential role in the study and act of reflective practice.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The term *genre* has been an important concept in the work of composition scholars (Devitt, 2000), yet the term itself is imbued with divergent connotations, ranging from *genre*, in a literary sense, referring to different forms of texts, such as poems, newspaper articles, or essays, and *genre*, in a rhetorical sense, referring to not just the forms of texts, but the work these texts actually *do* in discourse communities. The distinction between these two understandings of genre is important, as the latter definition, coined most generally as "new rhetorical genre theory," releases old notions of genre as merely form and text type and embraces new conceptions of genre, a newness that Devitt (1993) calls the "dynamic patterning of human experience" (p. 573). This new conception of genre shifts, then, from a focus on the formal features of a text to the sources of those features. Text and textual meaning are no longer objective and static, but formed based on the interaction between writer, reader, and context. Furthermore, viewing genre as only form of text divorces form and content; rather, a rhetorical conception of genre resonates with Bakhtin's (1981) views, where "form and content in discourse are one" (p. 259).

Despite a rhetorical theorization of genre coming to the fore in the field of composition studies, a rhetorical understanding of genre has not been taken up in the field of teacher education with regard to reflective practice. Instead, genre in reflective practice has consistently been linked to text form and convention. Margolis (2002), though acknowledging that different genres of expression lead to different types of thinking and reflecting, still locates the notion of genre primarily with text forms (citing different forms of text such as poetry, memoir, and song lyrics as constituting genre). Again, this static form of genre reinforces a "product" of text rather than the process by which text is produced. Yet, as we turn back to teacher education and

reflective practice, we can ask: Why does a concept like genre matter in teacher reflection? And, what does genre have to do with the way teachers understand their goals for reflective practice?

Models of reflective practice in teacher education exist to nurture both *depth* (nature) and *breadth* (content) in reflection; some exist as step-by-step procedures (Freese, 1999; Loughran, 1996), and others exist as typologies geared to assist teachers in coping with difficult aspects of their practice (Hatch, 1999; Lange & Burroughs-Lange, 1994). Despite the tandem goals of breadth and depth in reflective practice, there is also an assumed coherence between the two. However, Zeichner (1993) points out that breadth and depth of reflection may vary according to the domain. This, to us, is a starting place for our inquiry, for we assert that an important element of reflective practice is the reflector's meta-knowledge of the roles that *breadth* plays and *depth* take in his or her own practice of reflection. We see the concept of genre, in a rhetorical sense, as the mediator in this meta-knowledge and now move to illustrate how one beginning teacher's development of reflective practice was one steeped in genre. Furthermore, as we trace this teacher's understanding of genre in reflective practice, we move to situate awareness of genre as a key method by which this beginning educator processed her experience as a student teacher. We first describe the context of this beginning teacher's practice and then move toward articulating why genre in teacher reflection matters.

## **Methodology**

### ***Context and Participants***

We construct our discussion through a case study of one beginning teacher's reflective practice and the role that genre played in her practice. The teacher featured throughout this article, [Amy Rousselo Adam—who we will refer to as “Amy”]<sup>1</sup>, was, at the time of the study, enrolled in the English/ Language Arts teacher certification program at a large, research-oriented university in the Midwest that we call Green State University. Amy had started her college degree at Green State four years prior to her student teaching year and had been involved, throughout her time in the School of Education, in many education-related pursuits, including being a teaching assistant for two undergraduate courses, a student advisor for pre-education majors, and president of the School of Education Student Organization. In short, Amy

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<sup>1</sup> We have chosen to write about Author two – Amy Rousselo Adam – throughout the article in a “third person” manner.

ambitiously sought leadership opportunities in the School of Education throughout her time at Green State and took these challenges on willingly. Her purpose in taking on these responsibilities was to meet many different educators and expose herself to as many teaching situations as possible. This helped her prepare for the challenges of becoming a licensed teacher.

Heidi Hallman (Author one) was Amy's instructor and advisor at Green State University. Though she did not formally serve as Amy's student teaching supervisor, she assumed a mentoring role throughout Amy's yearlong student teaching experience. Heidi was also the director of the English Education program at the time of the study.

Green State University is located in a community of 80,000 people yet is only 45 miles from Marshall City, a large metropolitan area of just over 2 million. The relative proximity of Marshall City to Green State University offers teacher education students the ability to attend the state's flagship institution yet, if they wish, complete their student teaching experience in schools located in the state's largest metropolitan center. Green State's teacher education program, at the time in which Amy completed her student teaching, included an additional year beyond the undergraduate year to become a licensed teacher. This additional year, often referred to as the "professional year" or "5<sup>th</sup> year," is comprised of two distinct student teaching experiences and fifteen credits of post-baccalaureate coursework. The first student teaching experience, occurring in the fall semester of the professional year, includes eight weeks of student teaching. The second student teaching experience, occurring in the spring semester of the same professional year, includes thirteen weeks of student teaching. The data that we feature in this article was collected over the course of Amy's second student teaching experience.

2010 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of Green State University's School of Education. Though the professional year component of the elementary and secondary teacher education programs had existed since 1984, the program had been increasingly under pressure by state officials, university administration, parents, and community members to revise its professional year component, thus revising its current program. In response to this, Green State moved to a four-year teacher certification program in 2011. In the current context of teacher education reform, the School of Education at Green State was encouraged to provide longitudinal data as a way of documenting the necessity of training teachers beyond a traditional four-year model. The Secondary English/ Language Arts education program at Green State University, a licensure area within the Secondary education program, was constituted, at the time of this study, through a

two-year sequence of courses prior to the professional year designed to prompt preservice teachers to understand the context of schooling in the United States; the relationships between schools, society, and families; knowledge about curriculum and pedagogy within the field of English/ Language Arts; and knowledge about oneself as a teacher.

As previously mentioned, the data for the article was collected during Amy's second student teaching experience. Her placement at Brookside Middle School, located in the community of Harpersville of approximately 7,000 people, was situated in the first ring of Marshall City suburbs. The majority of Harpersville's citizens are white, yet there were representations of both African American and Hispanic students at Brookside Middle School. Twenty percent of students attending Brookside Middle School during the 2009-2010 school year received free and reduced lunch, and the school district also had a high number of "out of district" students, many of whom transferred from the nearby Marshall City school district.

### ***Data Generation***

Amy's journals were used as data sources for our discussion of genre and reflective practice. Her journals were structured throughout her student teaching semester through four "guiding questions" around four general topic areas: Curriculum, Student Achievement, Classroom Culture, and Professional Development and Relationships. We view these constructs in Amy's journals as adhering to the goal of reflection on breadth (content) within reflective practice, as each of these categories have a distinct focus on an observable domain of the classroom.

However, over the course of the semester, Amy developed what she felt was a more "authentic" journaling experience. She refers to this segment of her journals as the 'Stream of Consciousness' portion of her journal. Structuring this segment of her journal as completed immediately at the conclusion of each school day, Amy considered her 'Stream of Consciousness' journal entries to be spaces that allowed her to put down her thoughts, feelings, and reactions to teaching on paper. She wrote that this section of the journal was her "unfiltered, authentic reflection experience" (Author two, 2010, p.7). When she finished these 'Stream of Consciousness' thoughts, she moved on to the more specific, pointed domains of reflecting on the day. The complete format of Amy's journal is featured in Appendix A.

### ***Appendix A: Structure for Amy's journals***

Lesson/Date:

**Stream of Consciousness:** (This is the part of the journaling that is cathartic, helps me come back the next day, and helps me view myself as a researcher of education)

**Curriculum:** *What did I do today to connect my lesson to the larger context of the unit and the even larger context of state standards?*

What can I do tomorrow?

**Student Achievement:** *What did I do today that ensured my students met the learning objectives?*

What can I do tomorrow?

**Classroom Culture:** *What did I do today to make my classroom environment one that is positive, comfortable, and conducive to learning?*

What can I do tomorrow?

**Professional development and relationships:** *What did I do today to increase my own learning as an educator and/or further develop professional relationships with my colleagues?*

What can I do tomorrow?

Another important part of Amy's journal, kept over the course of one semester, was a one-sentence long prompt, and Amy considered this to be another one of the most powerful aspects of her semester-long inquiry. The question of "What can I do tomorrow?" prompted this part of her journal, and after reflecting upon each of the four domains: curriculum, student achievement, classroom culture, professional development and relationships, Amy responded to the question of "What can I do tomorrow?" Her answer to this question was absolutely essential in considering the ways in which she possessed agency in her teaching practice.

While the many benefits of the process of reflection have been long discussed in the literature (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993), Amy considered her practice of reflection could become stagnant if not followed by actions. Writing about the day, and then using this information to go forth into the next day as a better, more refined educator played a major part of what made the project so influential to Amy's teaching career. Amy also considered the timing

of when she wrote her journals to be important to the reflective process. She thought that the most authentic representation of the day took place as soon as it ended. Amy's entries, therefore, were written as close to the conclusion of the school day as possible. While it was not realistic to have the ability to journal at the same time every day, or exactly when school ended, most journal entries were written before another school day started.

Amy also recognized that teachers could be quickly discouraged by reflection that was based on the amount of work they are expected to do each day. Because of this, all reflections using the specific format featured in Figure 1 were one-page long, maximum. A one-page length limit helped to ensure that Amy would not be overwhelmed by the task but still achieved the value of completing it.

### ***Data Analysis***

We recognize that Amy's reflective practice encompassed multiple entries guided by different prompts, and through our analysis, we articulate how different sections of her journal exemplify how genre is a critical concept in reflective practice. In analyzing the role of genre in Amy's journal entries, we adhere to a constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). We first read through Amy's journal entries, writing memos about the content and function of each. This was an important first step as it allowed us to better understand the function of Amy's journal, as a whole. As a continuation of this inductive process, we shared our understandings with each other, comparing how we viewed the content and function of different sections of the journal. Next, we coded the journal entries in a deductive sense, meaning that we brought framings of the concept of genre to bear while reading the data. This deductive coding helped us more thoroughly understand how genre, in a rhetorical sense, meant valuing *content* as well as *context* in the journal entries. The recursive data analysis process brought to the surface the journal's purposes, its content, its writer, and its anticipated reader.

### **Findings**

We organize our findings by discussing three main themes that articulate the importance of genre in reflective practice, particularly gleaned from the analysis of Amy's journaling practice. These themes include: 1) Journaling through multigenres, 2) Genre choice as a mediator of the "personal" and the "professional", and 3) Meta-knowledge of genre as a method for

breaking the dichotomy of *breadth* (content) and *depth* (nature) in reflective practice. We elaborate on each of these themes in the following sections.

### ***Journaling through Multigenres***

“Genres develop, then, because they respond appropriately to situations that writers encounter repeatedly.” --Amy Devitt (1993, p. 576)

Amy spent thirteen weeks as a student teacher at Brookside Middle School near Marshall City and was placed with a cooperating teacher, Ms. Jensen, who did not refuse a student teacher for the spring semester. Yet, Amy saw that the practice of mentoring student teachers was not a typical practice throughout the school as a whole, and this, in Amy’s eyes, contributed to a mentoring relationship framed as a “burden” for Ms. Jensen rather than an opportunity. Amy felt that she was not recognized or encouraged to participate in school activities or staff meetings. In one instance, Amy was asked to leave a department meeting by the principal so that he could address the group without her present. Her exclusion due to her status as a student teacher contributed to her view that many aspects of the climate at Brookside Middle School and the professionals in the school were negative. Amy cited the lunch period as a consistently uncomfortable time for her due to the unprofessional way students, other staff members, and the administration were discussed by various members of the staff. Amy also felt that the negative climate affected the student body, and she witnessed hostile interactions between students. Instructionally, class time was often structured through students’ completion of worksheets for the duration of a class period. The combination of these factors at Brookside Middle School contributed to Amy’s perception that her placement embodied a negative teaching and learning environment for most.

As part of the journaling Amy completed over the semester and for her master’s degree project, Amy was able to “speak back” to the climate she experienced at Brookside. Amy wrote:

When I would write in my journal, I could express my frustrations with the negativity. Oftentimes I would write for several minutes without stopping in the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ section of my journal. This action of ‘venting’ helped me leave the previous school day behind, and move forward toward the next day. On one or two occasions, I was not able to write in my journal before returning to



school the next day. Right away, as I began teaching my first hour class, I could feel the ‘baggage’ from yesterday impacting my teaching, my mood, and my attitude. (Rousselo, 2010, p. 10)

As seen in the above excerpt, Amy lauded the ability of her journaling practice to assist her throughout her student teaching experience. Above, she specifically cites the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ section of the journal as important, and we view this section as a specific *genre* of her journaling practice. As a whole, we see her journals as composed through multiple genres of text, each responding differently to her student teaching experience at Brookside. These multiple genres—or *multigenres*—of writing are distinct rhetorical and textual forms that respond appropriately to an anticipated ‘other’ (Bakhtin, 1986). In Amy’s case, the anticipated ‘other’ was the climate she was encountering at Brookside Middle School.

Romano’s (1995; 2000) work with multigenre writing, the basis for our use of the term, has primarily been discussed with regard to middle and secondary students, who Romano (2000) encourages to use “many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic” (p. x) to write a paper on a given topic. Romano’s vision of multigenre writing is undergirded by narrative theory, and particularly, the work of Jerome Bruner (1986), which argues that we, as humans, arrange our understanding of our experiences through narratives, or stories. Narratives, in Bruner’s view, help us make sense of our place in society and the culture in which we live.

Inherently, we view the whole of Amy’s journaling practice as constituted through multigenres. Amy’s ‘Stream of Consciousness’ section of her journal is very different in terms of genre from some of her other journal sections focused on curriculum, students, and teaching processes. As a genre, the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ portion of the journal reacts and responds to Amy’s emotional landscape as well as to the climate of the school. We see this in Appendix B, which features a difficult experience Amy experienced while student teaching at Brookside.

***Appendix B: A difficult part of the day***

I don’t know WHY it makes me so angry but it makes me very angry when other teachers “make fun” of the student teacher by commenting on how much work they need to be doing and whatnot. I mean, weren’t they student teachers once?  
Today at lunch I was sort of lost in thought and I asked out loud “Oh, was that the

bell?” My teacher got a smirk on her face and said “Um that was YOUR bell,” and everyone joined in with laughter about how I need to step it up. These are people who barely know me and certainly know NOTHING about me. They spend their whole lunch period talking about sex, politics, and anything else that could make a person squirm. Never have they asked me how things or going...or my opinion on anything for that matter. I guess that is why it made me so mad. Either way, I simply left the room and didn’t respond. Writing about this situation helps put it into perspective because even though it was really upsetting, it is just a small part of my reflection today, which means I do have some successes to celebrate. (Rousselo, 2010, p. 10)

The situation above, while certainly frustrating, did not seem so “all consuming” as Amy further reflected on her day and wrote, “writing about this incident helped me to let it go. Answering [the journal prompts after the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ section] helped me to see that many important and positive elements of the day could be found in the area of student achievement” (Rousselo, 2010, p. 10). For example, an ongoing issue in Amy’s classroom was the quality of class discussions and getting as many students involved in the discussion as possible. However, Amy did not realize the way that great progress was being made in this area in her classroom because the hurtful incident featured in Figure 2 occurred the same day. Later, Amy commented on this by writing:

My mind was so clouded with frustration that I could not celebrate that success as it happened. Reflecting about it later, however, allowed me to push away the negative, and celebrate my success at home. (Author two, 2010, p. 11)

As a genre of her journaling practice, the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ portion of the journal assisted Amy in reflecting on many of the negative facets of her experience. As Devitt (1993) notes, genres emerge as responses to situations, and are therefore authentic in their ability to meet the challenges of these situations. We believe that Amy’s ‘Stream of Consciousness’ section of her journal was an innovative genre in her practice of reflection that contributed to her ability to contend with the challenges she faced in her student teaching placement.

## ***Genre Choice as a Mediator Between the “Personal” and the “Professional”***

Because of Amy’s awareness that her ‘Stream of Consciousness’ journaling was assisting her in meeting challenges, we also came to see this particular genre of journaling as a “bridge” to reflecting on other issues in her teaching practice. Appendix C features a journal entry Amy wrote about student achievement, written the same day as the entry featured in Appendix B.

### ***Appendix C: Students’ contribution to today’s discussion***

Journal prompt: Student Achievement

*What did I do today that ensured my students met the learning objectives?*

Today, I worked on making the discussion better. The hours I have today are less talkative and often need more prodding than the others. I decided to call on specific students who don’t usually participate on their own. This was successful and some of the quiet students have very profound things to say! They really contributed to the discussion!

*What can I do tomorrow?*

Tomorrow I can continue to work on the discussion, especially with the quieter students...focus on the quieter students. (Rousselo, 2010, p.11)

The next day, Amy was no longer thinking about the negative incident in the lunchroom that occurred immediately before her students engaged in class discussion. After setting her daily goal, Amy felt excited about working on the quality of the classroom discussions and noted this realization by writing:

[This realization] led to one of the most transforming aspects of my journal daily reflections. Writing about the negative aspects of each day made these aspects melt away as I wrote. It helped me to move forward and not dwell on those moments. This was incredibly effective for keeping my attitude positive, my mood happy, and my goals clear. On the other side, writing about the positive that happened throughout the day, highlighted that positive experience even more. It made me more excited for the next day. It made me see my goals clearly. The negative melts away, and the positive is further heightened by journaling. These two results of journaling made it incredibly important, and worth every extra

minute of time it took to write. If the conclusions stopped here, if no other connections could be made to document growth, I think it would have still been completely worthwhile to journal, based on the day-to-day encouragement it provided for me. (Rousselo, 2010, p. 11)

Through looking at the Amy's journals, it can certainly be noted that separating the personal and professional is nearly impossible. However, Amy noted that sometimes the personal aspects of teaching, whether negative or positive, hindered her ability to see her job in a professional light. She made the statement, "Ignoring the personal is not realistic." In framing the 'Stream of Consciousness' portion of her journaling practice as a genre dedicated to bridging the personal and the professional, we are able to see Amy's progress in thinking about the personal and the professional as interrelated. As a result of writing the 'Stream of Consciousness' section of her journals, Amy was able to work through her personal feelings and experiences in order to reflect on what she considered the "professional" part of the job.

After the semester ended, and when synthesizing the ways that the 'Stream of Consciousness' section of her journal was able to be a bridge between the personal and the professional, Amy recognized that her teacher education program had emphasized what she considered to be the "professional" aspects of teaching. While student teaching, she had already felt assured of her ability to think through these aspects of teaching. Yet, through her journaling, she had discovered a way to marry this "professional" body of knowledge to the "personal"—something she felt her teacher education program had not emphasized—and knew that her own practice would never improve if she could not wade through the personal at the same moment as she was synthesizing the professional. 'Stream of Consciousness' journaling was her innovation in valuing the personal nature of teaching as well as the professional, thus showing that the personal side of teaching must be acknowledged on the path to becoming a better educator.

Genres also construct and respond to recurring situations, such as the "personal" in the act of teaching (Devitt, 1993, p. 577). Devitt (1993) writes that "if genre not only responds to but also constructs recurring situation, then genre must be a dynamic rather than static concept" (p. 578). Genre, as dynamic, has the ability to urge teachers to view reflection as a dynamic process that leads to improvement in one's teaching practice. Scholars (e.g., Miller, 1984) who have embraced a rhetorical concept of genre in written text have linked meta-awareness of genre to

social action, thereby underscoring genre's link to agency. Amy, in the creation of 'Stream of Consciousness' journaling, linked genre to an ability to act. Reflecting on this development, we now see meta-knowledge of genre as a powerful method for beginning teachers' negotiation of their own agency within the complex systems of schooling.

### ***Meta-knowledge of Genre as a Method for Breaking the Dichotomy of Breadth (Content) and Depth (Nature) in Reflective Practice***

The literature in teacher education on reflective practice has clearly established a consensus that reflection should focus on both *breadth* (content) and *depth* (nature) (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). To parse out the distinction between breadth and depth, for example, Korthagen (2001) articulates five stages of reflection: action, retrospection, identification of essential aspects, development of alternatives, and experimentation. *Depth* of reflection, though, is generally achieved through a cumulative process of ongoing reflection, and *breadth* of reflection is associated primarily with the content upon which one reflects, as measured generally by the quantity of content. Any meta-knowledge of *how* depth is achieved is surprising absent from these discussions as are the tools by which teachers can achieve such depth.

Zeichner (1993) presents a useful suggestion, in that breadth and depth of reflection may vary according to the domain. This, to us, is why we view Amy's 'Stream of Consciousness' journaling as a different genre than her other, content-driven portions of the journal. Additionally, Amy, through her practice, began to see how an important element of reflective practice was her own meta-knowledge of the roles that *breadth* and *depth* played in her practice of reflection. We see the concept of genre, in a rhetorical sense, as the mediator of such meta-knowledge

After using the 'Stream of Consciousness' portion of her journal to bridge the "personal" to the "professional," Amy reflected on four domains: Curriculum, Student Achievement, Classroom Culture, and Professional Development and Relationships. We now move to address these sections as alternate genres to Amy's 'Stream of Consciousness' genre. Because these sections of her journal were intended to address particular content related to teaching, we see these sections as genres already constrained by a number of factors. For example, when thinking about the domain of 'Curriculum,' this section of Amy's journal was already imbued with connotations of what 'Curriculum' means, according to the teacher education program at Green

State. Additionally, Amy's journal on 'Curriculum' responded to connotations of curriculum embraced at Brookside Middle School. Amy's journal, therefore, as a genre, is responsive to these constraints.

To consider this, we look at one of Amy's journal entries about Curriculum, featured in Appendix D.

***Appendix D: Curriculum Entry***

The connecting that I did today was beginning to make sense of the pre-reading activities. And it was fabulous. The students said things like, "I can picture where he is standing because of the brochure I made on Curacao!" These comments make my heart sing. After we read the first chapter of the text, I felt like they knew why we had spent the last week doing those activities. I had doubts that it would connect so well...but it did! Tomorrow, I must continue to refer back to the pre-reading activities to ensure the students get the full impact. (Rousselo, 2010, p. 13).

Appendix D manifests why the dichotomy of *breadth* and *depth* is indeed a false dichotomy. Looking at the text in Appendix D, we see that Amy is focused on curriculum issues, specifically pre-reading activities before a novel unit. Amy takes time to reflect on being pleased that her students are responding well to her teaching. However, the *action* of the entry lies with curricular decision-making, thus connecting the genre of her entry to one of choices in curricular decision-making. Zeichner's (1993) suggestion that *breadth* and *depth* of reflection may vary according to the domain, then, is connected to the genre choices a writer makes in composing his or her written reflections. Thus, the genre that addresses each of these domains is specific and contextual to the particular domain. As we saw previously, Amy's 'Stream of Consciousness' journaling practice, as a specific genre, was weighted much more heavily in responding to the emotional aspects of teaching than were her other sections of her journal, framed more heavily toward specific content domains (e.g., Curriculum, Student Achievement, Classroom Culture, or Professional Development and Relationships).

As Amy neared the end of her semester, she reflected on the four categories she had established for herself in her journal and realized that she had already responded to the fourth

category within the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ section of her journal. In this way, the tandem goals of breadth and depth as related to ‘Professional Development and Relationships’ had already been addressed in specific ways unique to this domain. She had successfully integrated genre choice and action, thereby effectively using her journal to take action in her teaching practice.

As we think again about breadth and depth as related to a given domain in reflective practice, we can see these vary according to the purposes of reflection. As Luttenberg and Bergen (2008) have recently noted, “the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between the breadth and the content of reflection, on the one hand, and the depth and nature of reflection on the other hand, is a simplification of what reflection entails” (p. 546). Amy’s meta-knowledge of genre allowed her to respond to each domain in unique ways within her journaling practice, therefore making her understanding of genre connected to her ability to solve problems in her teaching. Her meta-knowledge of genre was essential to viewing reflective practice as meaning-making.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

In looking at how Amy used concepts of genre throughout her reflective practice, we return to the question: Why does genre matter in teacher reflection? To respond to this essential question, we turn back to what is at the heart of reflecting on one’s practice: action. We see that genre, and choice in genre, is also about action. At its core, genre signifies the reasons why writing changes according to its context of use and intended audience. At its core, genre theory embraces the idea that all writing exists as response—response to context, problem, person, or audience. This connection to purpose and action lies, to us, at the heart of teacher reflection.

The concept of *genre*, then, in a rhetorical sense, is instrumental in considering teachers’ understanding and implementation of reflective practice. As reflective practice is often framed by “how to” and technical visions of reflection, meta-knowledge of *genre* in writing enlivens the discussion of reflective practice by reconnecting reflection to action. Indeed, teacher reflection is always connected to action, and the rhetorical choices one makes in the act of reflecting matter.

Further, genre, when viewed as a rhetorical concept, positions reflection as a dynamic tool that teachers can use to solve problems, address connections between the “personal” and the “professional,” and improve practice. Written reflections of practice, produced by teachers,

become a multigenre syntheses that are responsive to teachers' contexts, rather than merely a productions or "objective" accounts of teaching experience.

As beginning teachers become socialized into various paradigms of teaching, learning, and reflecting throughout their teacher training and beyond, one of the few concrete assurances they may have about the act of teaching in today's schools is connected to their own ability to enact meta-knowledge of their own practice. Without this, they are left to consume others' definitions of best practice and equitable schooling. We believe that through inviting the recognition of the role *genre* plays in reflective practice, teachers will move to view their practices and decisions as even more purposeful and even more *in response to* the contexts in which they work. Because of this, genre does matter in the study of reflective practice in teacher education. Through attending to reflective practice through genre, teacher educators and teachers will be moved to view reflective practice as purposeful and connected to action.



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