

***Inside the Academy***  
**Interview with Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith**

Part I

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Hi, my name is Audrey-Amrein-Beardsley. I am an Associate Professor in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. We have developed a show titled *Inside the Academy* during which we interview some of the top educational scholars from the National Academy of Education and elsewhere. Today I have the honor of speaking with an interviewing, with pleasure, Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith. Welcome Dr. Cochran-Smith. Tell us about your family and childhood growing up.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well I grew up in the fifties. I had two sisters. I was born in Washington, Pennsylvania, which is outside of Pittsburgh in a what I learned later, or came to understand later, was a pretty economically-depressed area, in a working-class family. My dad worked in a factory my whole life. My mother stayed home and took care of us, so growing up there was interesting. I went to a school called First Ward (1:00) Elementary School. The other schools were called Second Ward, Third Ward. There was a real failure of imagination in terms of titles for these schools. But when I was 10, 11 we moved to New Jersey, and I spent the rest of my education in Plainfield, which is outside Newark, in New Jersey. So growing up both my parents, I think, were very interested in their daughters being educated. I don't remember there ever being a question about whether we would go to college; but we were the first in our family to do. So I'm not sure why that was sort of taken for granted. I think both my parents were intelligent people who were interested in learning and just hadn't really had the opportunities themselves to go to college. I loved to read as a kid and always did well in school, which is probably not surprising for (2:00) most academics who have succeeded. In a way the most dramatic part of my growing up was in my high school years. It was a tumultuous time to be in high school and to be an adolescent, so when I was a junior in high school, while the summer before when I was a junior high school were the race riots in the United States. They occurred in Newark, Detroit, some other places including, Plainfield, New Jersey, which is where I was so even though that's not a big city, it was a place that was really in transition racially. A policeman was actually killed, so it was a very sort of scary time. There were curfews at night for everybody in the town. And then my high school had riots that were related to race. The thing I remember the most about it is that none of the teachers talk to us about it. There weren't (3:00) adults who were really trying to help us understand what was going on here, and what this was about, and how we could really sort it out, and what it meant for us. When I was a junior in high school, Martin Luther King was assassinated and Robert Kennedy. So it was a it was a really, really complicated time. And then in '69 was my first year in college--a different kind of fuhrer in the country, or tumult maybe is the better word with all the protests against the Vietnam War and Kent State and I was in school and college in Wooster, Ohio. So this was a complicated time, and when people have asked me where my commitment over the years to issues about equity and social justice, where they came from, I've gone back to those things that were happening. They didn't come from being in a political family (4:00) the way some of my colleagues will talk about

growing up and their parents were active in various kinds of political groups or activist groups, or they were old socialists. It wasn't like that in my family, but I think early on I was really in a situation where it was clear there were inequities. My high school tracked educational system, so although there was a very large percentage are African-American students in my high school, in my classes, which were the top academic ones, there were no African-American students, and I think even as a teenager there was something about that that didn't seem right to me. I don't think I had the categories to figure it out or the. But that, I think, is one of the enduring aspects of my, at least my adolescence. I don't mean to suggest that I didn't have a wonderful childhood. I had childhood where my parents were very (5:00) involved in our lives and lots of family Christmases and Easters and Thanksgivings, and father or mother helping with your science project or your book report kind of thing. So we had very engaged parents. My mother was the Brownie leader, the Girl Scout leader, the youth group, the homeroom mother, all of that. But but I think the the idea of growing up at that time in the fifties and into the middle part of the sixties, which was such a changing time in our society, had a really huge impact, I think, and was the kernel, the beginning of where a lot of my later academic and professional commitments came from.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Particularly in the area of equity and social justice?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

That makes a lot of sense. And also reading because that was one of your loves.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yes.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Okay (6:00). In 1973 you were a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the College of Wooster, earning a BA in sociology and the certificate as an elementary teacher K-8. What prompted you to become a teacher?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

I don't know. When I was a little girl I wanted to be everything. I wanted to be a translator at the UN. I had this idea that would be a very romantic kind of job. I don't know where I got that idea. But there were there was something about books that I really loved as a kid, as a reader, and I wanted to make that love available to other kids; and I think that the idea of being a teacher and actively using literature with young kids was very appealing to me early on. So at my college you couldn't major in elementary education, which i think was a good thing.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Okay.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

So it was a very good thing for me I have a major in sociology (7:00). And a lot of sort of big sociological frameworks were introduced. I'd like to go back and sort of read all that stuff again later, but it was a good beginning and then we really did an elementary certification almost on the side. We took education courses, some but then things like teaching reading, these were all the standard courses then, this is in the late sixties, teaching reading, teaching math, we had to go elsewhere often to take those courses. So one summer I went and took a course in children's literature, which was required for us, and I really just loved it. It tapped into my own interest from childhood and just really the idea of literature as something that could transport you, that could in larger world, could allow you to travel in all the ways you weren't actually traveling, was very, very attractive to me, and I think that had a huge impact on my wanting to teach elementary school children (8:00). And I wanted to use literature to teach them reading, not what at the time were Basal reading programs, that spelled out the teacher's part in the script, and the kids' part in the script, and was a very direct instruction kind of approach. So right from the beginning these things sort of came together for me. My own love of literature, this class that I had had that I'd just loved, and that was also the beginning of my thinking that I could do that. I could teach a course like that. I could be a college professor. So my initial idea of being a college professor didn't have anything to do with research. It had to do with teacher and being able to ignite certain kinds of interests in teachers that wasn't a focus on all just the little skills of reading, which I thought was deadly boring, and I wanted kids to have a different kind of experience. So I sort of answered a bunch of different questions there (9:00).

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

That's exactly right.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

In 1975 you received the Outstanding Young Educator word. Tell us about that.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Well that was in my local school district, and that's funny because that was after only two years of teaching, and they had this award. I look back on it now and it's funny because the Outstanding "Young" Educator, I'm not sure what the age limit was, but it might have been, I don't know, it might well have been people under 30 or under 35. It was the first award I ever got in my professional life. It's hanging on the wall over there, and it had to do with, I think, I think my principal nominated me for it, and and it was because, I think, I was trying to do creative, exciting things in the class, and most of them were about, I was teaching the fifth and sixth graders, who can be a pretty interesting group. On the one hand they're very young children, on the other hand some of them, some days (10:00), are really emerging into adolescence, so it makes for a very complicated group. Fun--they can really do a lot of things, but interesting. And many of them were not very interested in reading, and so a whole big part of my focus was, how can I get these kids to love books, and to use books as a way to explore the world? So I did all sorts of projects and all sorts of things that weren't in the curriculum. And at the time, unlike now, there was a lot of room to do that. If there was good response from the kids, if the parents were pretty much with you. So one of the things I always did in those early days, I always read to kids from a novel, and I read some each day, maybe a chapter every day. I'll never forget, this was when I was teaching fifth grade, so one of the parents came at back to school and said, "Why are you reading to our children? They know how to read. They need you to teach (11:00) them

the more advanced skills. Why are you reading to them?" So you know I gave some answer, I think it was fairly good, about motivation, and interest, and so on; but I I didn't feel very, I didn't feel confident about what I said. At the end of the year that same parent came back to me, and she said, "Now I know why you read to them. My son has never been a reader, and now he is." So I wanted to both, I wanted to build a community in the classroom, so we had a shared experience around what was happening in the novels, and I wanted the kids to be readers; and so I did a whole lot of things that would try to get them to be readers, including one that was sorta ill ill-advised. I, at the time, those old-fashioned skateboards were very popular, and kids had homemade skateboards, and so we had a parade where everybody had a skateboard (12:00) with some kind of representation on the novel they had read built on top of their skateboards. So it would be sort of like a float.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Yes.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well these were falling apart. The wheels were coming off. It wasn't the world's greatest, but it was one other things that we did. I would dress up like characters from the book sometimes. I would leave the room, say, "I'll be right back, boys and girls." Get into this outfit and come in and talk to the kids in the guise of that character, and give a little excerpt or a little description of something that's happening. Then I'd say, "Anybody interested in reading that book?" And then I'd have a whole bunch of novels and pass them out. So I tried to do those kinds of things to get people interested. But then I also wanted them to read about complicated issues. So I did a unit once on death, and we used, we used two novels, I think, where a main character dies, and how do we think about that? How we talk about that? (13:00) Some more experienced teachers said, "You can't do that. Their parents are going to." So I sent a note home and got their permission, and all the parents agreed, and we had these really deep discussions about death. I had them read novels about, novels that included discussion about complicated racial issues, racial prejudice. What does it mean to live in a racist society? Now these were all fiction. But I found that that gave a really important and powerful vehicle for these young kids, 10, 11-years-old to talk about these issues.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Current issues.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah, so that was sort of my big, my big motivation, and it and it stayed with me as a teacher for the full time that I taught elementary school.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

How many years did you teach?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well if we count student teaching, I think I taught six years, which isn't very long (14:00), but was enough to sort of allow me I think to not just be talking in the abstract when you're talking in terms of teacher preparation.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And build a foundation for things to come.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Your husband, Larry Ludlow, notes that you're influential and listened to because you've been a teacher who can back up your positions with the most incredible ability to read everything that is written on anything related to teacher education, synthesize it, and make a summary, observation, and argument that convinces and helps people better understand and appreciate your position. This you do both for students and teachers. How do you think having been a teacher yourself has inspired the educational scholar you have ultimately become?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well this certainly relates to some of the kinds of things we've just been talking about. I think early on as a teacher I was, I was discouraged by this sort of (15:00) skills-based approach to teaching reading where it seemed like all of your time was spent working on the skills of reading, which if you already, if you could already read, I couldn't see the point in working on the skills. I wanted to work on the whole. And I think those issues have stayed with me, or stayed with me as a teacher educator, and in the early research I did. The early research I did had to do with the development of young children as readers. How does that happen? That very young children, these are children prior to when they really have formal reading instruction, what does it mean for them to begin to develop as a reader? So some of the early questions that I had really stayed with me, or at least were a part of my career as a researcher. The other thing in response to what Larry said, he loves to say these very generous and sort of (16:00) exaggerated things about me. It's nice to have a husband who...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Loves you?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yes, and who really respects your work.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Sure.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

But one of the reasons I think teachers and teacher educators listen to some of things I have to say is because of my enduring respect for and valuing of teachers' knowledge. I think sometimes when people come to graduate school and in our doctoral program, almost everybody has been a teacher and then they come in to get this PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. In some programs, I think, part of what the, part of what being a successful, a successful doctoral student means is putting aside those ideas you had, those things you knew, those experiences you had as a teacher and paying attention to more theoretical knowledge and more (17:00) formal knowledge--not

based on experience, based on empirical research, based on theory, and so on. And of course I think all those things are important, but a big part of my work and especially in my work with Susan Lytle, which you probably will come to later, part of what we were trying to do always was to value teachers' knowledge and identify teachers as no worse as people who generate knowledge based on their very intense, engaged, close-to-the-ground, everyday work in schools, working with parents, and families, and community members, and kids, and all those challenges. So I think there's a fundamental respect that comes through when I talk to others. When I talk to groups of teacher educators, which I do quite a lot, both in the US and internationally, and I'm I often speak as from the perspective us, us we teacher educators, we who have these challenges, we who are trying to address certain kinds of issues. Where I think in the US at least, in the current political milieu, teacher educators and teachers are just bashed all the time and they're blamed for everything that's wrong with the schools, and we don't have the kind of teacher quality we need, and why don't we? Well partly because teacher education isn't doing the job it ought to be doing. So there's an awful lot of that kind of assumption in the policy work, in the media, and a lot other research that gets done. So while I'm the first person to agree that there are weaknesses and problems in lots of teacher education (19:00) programs, I always work from the perspective that most teacher educators are quite committed, quite smart, trying to do the best they can in their work. I start from there, and I think people resonate to that.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

When you, what inspired you to go back to graduate school to get your doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well you know, it relates to what I was saying before. Part of what I wanted to do was I thought I could teach college, I could teach in the university. So for me, not growing up in an academic family, and not really having a whole lot experience with the whole aspect of research, to me that's what a professor did--teach, teach these classes, and I thought I'd like to do that. It would be an extension of the teaching that I had loved--teaching elementary school, about some the same topics but I could have a bigger (20:00) reach. Instead of the kids in my fifth-grade class, I could influence their teachers, and they would each have classes, so I think that really, that was the beginning of it, and that was when I had no clue that most of what university faculty did, depending on the kind of institution they were at, was not teach. It was research.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And you found interest in that?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

I found an interest in that; but I don't go in thinking that's what the work would be about. So which is pretty naive, but I didn't have that kind of family or set of contacts who sort of set me straight on that.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What did you study for your dissertation?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well my dissertation is called "The Making of a Reader," and it became a book, and it's about how young children are socialized into literacy, focusing primarily on the activity of story reading. (21:00) So we had we had work at the time that was suggesting that one of the factors on kids' development as readers was whether they had been read to by their parents, or by other adults in nursery school or childcare kinds of settings. So I was really interested in, if that's true, what is it that is happening in that interaction where adults are reading to kids? What's going on there that makes kids better readers later on? Is it just because they love stories? Or is there something else happening? So that was what I really wanted to find out about. So I spent about a year and a half observing in one nursery school three to five-year-olds at a Nursery School where every parent--and I interviewed every parent of all the kids--every parent said something about the fact that they had chosen that nursery school because they wanted their (22:00) kids to have a really positive social experience because they wanted them to be ready to like school and feel good about school and many of them said, "And I didn't want them to be in a program where they were doing, 'Now let's make A's today' and 'let's all draw K.'" They absolutely said they didn't want early literacy development; and yet what I found in my study was the emphasis in that program, which was not on formal instruction at all, was making readers--that's where the title of the dissertation came from--because they were using print all the time to make meaning. In the story reading sessions and all over the place, everywhere else. So these are kids, who can't read, who most of them didn't know the letters they were learning some of them--everything was labeled. Now what are these labels for if no one can read them? You know, and the teacher constantly would (23:00) point out, "Oh, look, this says this," and they were going on a little field trip and get on a bus--this teacher was really quite amazing--"Oh look, no, no, don't be upset that that bus driver didn't stop. On the front it says, 'Out of Service,' so that means that bus isn't available for us." Everything was a constant focus on print in all sorts of settings. And then in the reading setting, the story reading setting on the rug, there were there was a very interesting interaction that was really implicitly teaching kids how to make sense of text. And that's really the argument of the dissertatio--that that's what was happening in that particular nursery school, and perhaps that's part of what explains why kids who are read to often do very well in their own reading development.

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## Part II

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What brought you to your first academic position? Was that at Boston College?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Nope, it was at the University Pennsylvania. I was there a long time. I was a student there and.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

So that's right after you graduated?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah, but not immediately in a regular tenure track position and then and because I had my dissertation final hearing. I finished my dissertation and one week later my two sons arrived from Korea, so I adopted these two brothers from Korea, and so I needed to spend a little bit of time

with them. So now after I finished the PhD, I worked part-time at Penn for a little while and then was in a full-time position, but not in a tenure-track position because there were no tenure-track positions in teacher education.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Okay.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

At the time, and then eventually after a few years I eventually got that kind of position. But it's always a little different when you're a student at the place. But I was there a long time (1:00). I was there, I graduated in '82 and I was there until '95, so...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

13 years.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

And got tenure there.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And you got tenure there. Then you came to Boston College in 1996 as Professor of Education. What brought you to Boston College?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well there were two reasons. One is personal. I was sort of ready for a change in my life and kind of wanted to be in a different place. I'd been at the place where I had been a student, so I was looking for something else. But the second the reason it was Boston College is because Boston College has as stated historical institutional commitment to social justice.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Okay.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

So Boston College is a Jesuit University--Jesuit and Catholic. I'm not Catholic, but I was very, very interested in the social justice orientation. I think I've had that orientation for a long time, and when I was a Penn, there were others who shared those commitments and goals (2:00) in the teacher education program; but there was an institutional commitment to social justice. So I was very attracted to that. I the description the job description sounded like it had been written for me because it connected teacher education, innovation and leadership, policy, social justice, all the things that I was really in the middle of working on, and so I made this huge decision to make a move. I had lived in Philadelphia for 18 years, and then I moved to Boston and now been here almost 18 years now. So that's really what brought me here.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

In preparation for the show, I asked your family and friends a set of questions. Especially your former graduate students highlighted your commitment to them. Alan Amptzis notes that you're very early riser and recalled a period of about a month when he was deep in the thick of writing

(3:00) his dissertation and in need of a lot of advice, noted that you often had hour long phone meetings at 5am before anybody else in your household woke up. Alan is very telling that your commitment to your doctoral students and your very demanding schedule often require some very outside of the box advisement, and he appreciates that. Anna Maria Villegas seconds this, noting that she admires your commitment to mentoring new scholars. You work diligently with your doctoral students to prepare them to succeed in academic positions by involving them in your own research, giving them detailed feedback on their work, encouraging them to present their research at conferences, and co-authoring with them on journal articles and book chapters. On to big ideas. One of your big areas of research, of course, has been teacher preparation. How did you become involved in researching and contributing to current thought about teacher education in America? United States?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well as I was just saying, my, I started my (4:00) degree, my PhD is in language and literacy, and so my early research, the dissertation I was talking about, was really about how young children learned to be literate and learned to use language, written language. I did that work for a number of years and then I was working in a teacher education program. I was teaching courses about language and literacy, and I really became interested in how teacher candidates learned to work with young children to help them become literate, so was sort of the next, for me, it was the next step. At our program at Penn, our teacher education program, most of our teacher candidates were in Philadelphia public schools in urban areas, in challenging situations. They had many kinds of questions about classrooms, about how culture, and race (5:00), and ethnicity, and language background play out in children's learning to read, and write, and use numbers, and all the things that they do at the elementary level. So it, this move into teacher preparation, understanding learning to teach--how do people learn to teach?--that really, it felt like a very natural...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Transition

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Shift for to me. And it also, the tenure-track position that I got at Penn was in teacher education, so.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Well there you go. Another perfect fit.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

It became clear that if I was going to succeed in that area, well actually, this is kind of interesting. On the one hand it became clear that if I were going to succeed in that area, which was very competitive and big, I needed to figure out and niche for myself and publish in that area and make a name. On the other hand, some of my colleagues, men I must say, in my (6:00) department when I first had that position I was the only woman so that was very interesting. Basically a couple of people took me aside and said, "Look, if you ever want to get tenure at Penn, you should get as far away from teacher education as you can as fast as you can. You will never make it in that field."

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And you did the exact opposite?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

I did the exact opposite. And when I look back, I think that they they weren't intending to be mean; they thought they were giving good advice, and they thought they were saying this is a low status field. Education can be low status within a university. Teacher education can be the lowest rung on the education ladder, so if you want to get tenure here, you better move away.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

I wonder what they think now. You're one of the most foundational people in terms of teacher education research.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well on some (7:00).

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

They scared you into it.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Exactly! And on some days when I'm feel really good about my work, or for example the day I learned I had been elected into the National Academy of Education, it was like so haha, look what I did! But that's where my commitment was. By then I was really, really committed to trying to help people learn to be teachers, and a be good teachers in these really challenging times, these times that have only gotten more and more challenging.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Tell us about, on that note, tell us about Teachers for a New Era.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Oh, Teachers for a New Era. So Teachers for a New Era was a national project intended to reform teacher education. It was a competitive, invitational competitive grant kind of situation. We were invited to be one of those who applied, and 11 institutions were selected across the country. The idea was to (8:00) improve teacher preparation in universities by having closer collaborations with arts and sciences, better clinical arrangements in the schools, and developing a what Dan Fallon and other founders of that project called respect for evidence. So at the time I had a lot of questions about that perspective, but it was, this was 2002, I think was the very beginning, three maybe, but it seemed to me that this was going to be one of the major reforms, the major projects in teacher education on the national level, and if you wanted to have anything to say about you should try to be at the table. So that was why I was interested in our institution becoming involved. We did, and we formed a number of key committees, but (9:00) the one that I was the chair of was called the Evidence Team. So for five years with funding from TNE, which was funded primarily by Carnegie Corporation, and then for two more years we had an extended grant from the Ford Foundation. So for seven years formally and a few more after that, I worked with a team of colleagues here, some in teacher ed, but many not in teacher ed,

including my husband who was part of the quantitative research group. So we had quantitative and qualitative people, we had people from psychology and political science, we had a guy from geology, colleague here at BC. We really, and a bunch of graduate students, a big group of graduate students, and our work was really what would, what does it mean to do teacher education with respect for evidence? What kind of evidence would we need to be able to have to be able to say that teacher education programs (10:00) are effective and successful? How do we avoid the narrow, it's only effective if we can show an impact on test scores kind of, which of course is where we are.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Yes, right.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

And, is there any way that we can. develop evidence in keeping with our goals about social justice? So in other words, is there a way to reconcile those apparently contradictory kinds of goals. So we developed a number of instruments that were original. We borrowed and adapted others. We had a whole series of research projects and efforts, some of which were much more successful than others. But we, I think we kept in, we kept in the conversation, now of course the way the conversation has gone in this country has gone all in that direction, which I have serious concerns and questions about (11:00). But I felt that the work we did was important. It made a contribution. We developed a scale about learning teach for social justice and the beliefs that are part of that, and it's now used by lots of institutions around the country and internationally. That was one of the important things we did, I think. We established a lot of data gathering procedures that are still used in the school that we count on to be able to make statements about our programs.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Did you do that internally, as well at BC?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Oh, this was at BC.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

But you still continue to use these instruments as well?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

We do, yes. So it was a complicated project, and there were disagreements about what the goals really should be. We were trying to take what TNE wanted us to do and bend it so it would fit with our goals as well and that's (12:00) a that's a complicated thing, you know that's a complicated thing to do.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Did test scores of the graduates end up anywhere in that framework?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

It's not even test scores of the graduates. Its test scores up the students of the graduates. So I

mean it's very far removed, which is in my view one of the problems with that approach. We tried to develop, we tried to see if we could do that using data from Boston Public Schools because there isn't a system in the state in Massachusetts that links all those things. We did get some data from the Boston Public Schools, and we tried to compare BC, the test scores up the graduates of BC candidates with the test scores graduates of other first-year students who had not gone to BC. Now that's really hard thing to do.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Absolutely.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
And the question is, if you really think about it, look at who else we have in the Boston area (13:00). At the time at least we had teacher preparation programs at Harvard, at Lesley, MIT even has a teacher preparation program, Boston University. I mean there are a whole bunch. Now why would we think that Boston College teacher candidates would be better than any of the rest those? That doesn't really make sense. So what you would really want to compare would be those in our program to those who didn't have teacher preparation. That was the big question nationally at the time.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Alternative cert.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
Yeah, and that was almost impossible to do because Boston didn't have, Boston Public Schools didn't have teachers in that situation.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Right.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
There hasn't really been a teacher shortage in Boston, so they don't, they don't have people who aren't prepared. Now there's more diversity now, there are some alternate routes now. But so that was it was a hard thing to do (14:00). We never really were able to pull it off completely, partly also because of just sheer numbers. We didn't have enough. Boston College actually is the institution that provides the largest number of new teachers to BPS each year, but even that isn't really, it's not a huge number.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Right.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
So, you know just the numbers and then people fall off after a year, they're gone or they're not in a grade level where they do standardized test, or they're a co-teacher.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Not a core teacher. So it makes a lot more sense at the policy level than the applied research.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Exactly, so we tried. We did our best to do something that we could feel was ethical given our beliefs in

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And you got a holistic system.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

We did.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Your friend and colleague at the University of Auckland, Lexie Grudnoff, truly admires your steadfast commitment to practitioner perspectives and your scholarly advocacy (15:00) for practitioner research. Your insistence that prospective teachers should learn to teach against the grain and teach for social justice is an inspiration to her, also as a new teacher educator. Tell us more about what she means by learning to teach against the grain, which was also one of the titles of your books.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

It was actually the title on article that I published in Harvard Review in 1990 or '91, so a long time ago. It was the first sort of big piece, I think, where I was trying to get this idea out there, and it's not complete, I'm not the only person who's ever said this certainly. But trying to get this idea out there that teaching is a political activity, and whether by design or by default, people, teachers, teacher candidates, and then teachers have something to do with the status quo. Either they're working to challenge it, and they're working to raise questions about the parts of it that are inequitable for kids, or they're kind of going along. So if they're just going along and not challenging inequities, then they are essentially helping to perpetuate the status quo, so that was the argument. Again, I'm not the only person who's ever said this. It wasn't very popular at the time to say teaching is a political activity, and it doesn't mean a Republican or Democratic activity. It has to do with this is about power and access, and who who has access to learning opportunities, and then to say that teacher candidates, not just teachers, but teacher candidates should be part of raising questions. That's a really hard thing to do, and there's a way in which some people said, "Is it really reasonable to expect (17:00) the newest teachers, the very beginning people to raise these questions about the system?" And I have mixed feelings about it. I mean, it certainly doesn't do any good if we prepare our people to go out and complain so much about the system and point out every issue that they get fired. Or that they don't continue as teachers. But for those who say, "You really can't do that until you have three or five years experience," I think it's too late by then. I think people get entrenched into the current system by then then. So I think part of what I was trying to do with the program that I was running at Penn was to think about what would it mean to have as a goal learning to teach against the grain. What would it look like? How what would be the social and intellectual and organizational context that would support that? And could we (18:00) could we, could we elaborate on that? Could we show what people talk about and what it takes? So in that earlier article it was all based on data from the group these groups of teachers, teacher candidates and teachers who met every week in schools as a teacher research group and talked about hard issues, and so it was very grounded in

the work in schools. It was grounded in the idea that everybody is learning to teach always, whether they are whether they've been teaching 20 years, or whether they've been teaching 20 minutes that, you know, learning to teach is a lifetime process. So if you want to learn to teach against the grain, you have to do it in the company of other people who are trying to work against the grain. So that's what we tried to do. We tried to set up cooperating teachers who were raising questions and challenging, and again I think that would (19:00) be harder to do today given so many places where there's so much increased surveillance of teachers and monitoring.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And management.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah and very, very tight scripts and with severe penalties for it. But that's what it was about.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

In a similar vein, tell us about reinventing student teaching.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Reinventing student teaching. I think I've probably used that term, now are you talking about Project Right at Auckland or?

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

This is after your Auckland, yes.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

So we're we're working on a project with our colleagues in Auckland, my husband and I from Boston College, and a group of colleagues including Lexie Grudnoff and several other people at Auckland, and we're trying to reinvent or rethink, we've used a lot of different R words, reinvent, rethink, reconsider, reimagine.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Not reject?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Not reject. Initial teacher education, and what we're doing in that project is working from a a framework of complexity theory, is based on the assumption that part of the reason we don't know what we need to know about how to improve teacher preparation and learning in schools, and part of the reason we continue to have disappointing outcomes, like teachers, first-year teachers who don't seem to be able to do what we thought we taught them to do in teacher preparation, and continued inequities in the opportunities and outcomes with students of color. Why we continue to have these disappointing outcomes is partly because we've assume this sort of linear relationship. So the idea that here's teacher education, and you do whatever you do there and teach people things, and then now you have improved teacher quality, and it's just going to the schools and we'll have better outcomes for students. But it's really so much more complicated than that or more complex than that (21:00). It relates back to what we were saying about what's wrong with thinking we can just have test scores that'll show us something about the quality of

the teacher preparation programs because there are so many other things that happen, and schools are complex systems, and teacher candidates, in a sense, are complex systems as learners, and programs are complex systems. So if you take this much more complex view, what can you know? And that's what we're working on this Project Right with our colleagues, and it's a matter of, so it's rethinking the theoretical frame, which is hard. But it's also saying well they're actually different kinds questions. We're going to ask questions that aren't linear in their basis, and we're probably going to need some different research methods. So that's what this project is all bound up with. It's very challenging. It's also really challenging to be working with, have a research team where the people are (22:00) thousands and thousands of miles away from each other. Lexie once said, "We have this problem of rhythm and blues." Which really means we're on totally different rhythms in terms of our work lives, in terms the calendar year, and the semester, when it's winter, here it's summer there, when it's day, here it's night there. There are 18 hours time difference, so they're on tomorrow, and we're on the evening. It's really, that has turned out to be a much bigger aspect of the work than I ever would have imagined because there are so many things we assume about when are the peak times to work, in the winter there is a bit more down time, and in the summer it's different. Students are not available to answer surveys or participate, so that is all, that's all been quite a challenge. And there are just different (23:00) cultural situations. You know, New Zealand is a bicultural country by law and includes Maori and then European New Zealanders. United States is a multicultural, you know, so there, we just make a lot of different kinds of assumptions. But it's been a wonderful experience.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Eye-opening experience.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

We love New Zealand--it's a fabulous place to go, and it's wonderful to have gone there enough times that we've really become friends with people, not just research colleagues. So that's been wonderful.

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Part III

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Your former doctoral student in assistant Kelly Demers agrees that your most significant professional accomplishment is the work you have done around social justice in teacher education. Tell us about teaching for social justice in the context of teacher preparation and also the discourse of race in the curriculum.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well, we've been talking, I think we've been talking about that quite a bit. It's interesting that Kelly talks about that because her dissertation was on this topic as well, and it sort of grew out of this mutual interest and work that we did together. Her its, if it's okay to mention, talk about her work a little bit, she was really interested in how issues a race play out in the work of teachers, particularly white teachers who have classes that are almost entirely students of color So her dissertation looked at two white teachers over a long period of time with a (1:00) successive

interviews and conversations overtime that really went back to people's autobiographical experiences, their ideologies, the discourses they have grown up in. And how does this play out in your day-to-day work, in the opportunities you give students, and so on? It was very nice piece of work that I think uncovered aspects of these issues that we don't, that we don't think about all the time.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Now so is where the title came from, *Unlearning Racism*?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

What is that the title of?

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Unlearning Racism is what she wrote.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well I have an article with that title. I can't remember if she used it in her dissertation or not.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Just that your work about how to unlearn racism.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yes, the idea of unlearning racism is really that all of us who grow have grown up in a racist society, which is (2:00) all of us, have incorporated an internalized racist ideas, whether we like it or not, whether we think we're racist or not, and so on, and that as teacher educators we, and teachers, we have to work really hard all the time to be unlearning those kinds of things. So unlearning is sort of recognizing, digging deeper, questioning, and really owning the fact that we make mistakes. That we, that we think we have learned particular kinds have lessons about race, but then it may turn out that we really haven't. I mean part of the unlearning racism idea was for me was realizing that growing up the way I did, I had some insights about gender and about class, in terms of working class and middle and upper-class because of my own experience growing up; and I had some insights there. But as a person who grew up in the privileged racial group, and not to mention a lot of other things about you know our multiple identities. There were aspects race that even though I like to think I'm a pretty liberal, you know, person who has these progressive kinds of commitments, that there were times when I just didn't get it and made mistakes, and and I've written about some of those things under this concept a of unlearning racism. It's a hard, it's a hard thing to get.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And it's continuous.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yes.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

So, what are your current thoughts about the current critiques of teacher education?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well that question we could certainly be here all night. Teacher education has been critiqued forever. (4:00) That's probably one of the most enduring aspects of its history. I think along the way some of those critiques are legitimate. I think some of them aren't. And I think we are in a time now, I really believe teacher education at colleges and universities in 2013 is at a crossroads, and I think it's possible that in the next 10-15 years we we won't have the kind of teacher preparation programs very much that we have now.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Okay, so we've gone through this before in the 80s, and now you're thinking that this might be the one that's really going to make some serious changes?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yes, but some serious changes that might mean just fewer and fewer college and university-based teacher preparation programs. I mean, I think the whole a lot of, there are certainly very, very legitimate criticisms of teacher preparation programs, and I think that's probably true of (5:00) professional preparation in lots of areas. There are legitimate criticisms

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What do you think those legitimate criticisms are?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well, I think in some places there isn't, hasn't been enough of an emphasis on closely supervised experiences in the schools where people are placed with really good, strong teachers as role models, and where they have an opportunity to ask questions and try out things. So I think a legitimate criticism is that some programs have not focused enough on that. Some people say now that one of the criticisms is that we focus too much on beliefs, even knowledge, and not enough on action. I think that's probably a very unfortunate dichotomy. I think if we only focus on beliefs and never focus on what do beliefs have to do with practice and with action, then it's a problem (6:00). But I think we can't ignore beliefs. I think beliefs matter a lot in what people do. Susan Lytle and I have talked about practice isn't just what people do in classrooms, or how, when, and where they do it. It's about how they think about what they do. How do they make decisions? What do they see as problematic? What are the interpretive frames they use to make sense of what's going on? So all of that has a lot to do with beliefs and frameworks and perceptions. So I think that criticism that we focus too much on beliefs can be true, but its only true if you really understand it in this more complex way. So I think, I think that's part of it. There are there lots of other criticisms, I mean I think it's certainly true that, some people would suggest that teacher education would be better if we had stronger (7:00) teacher candidates. I don't know any program that's saying, "Well, let's not take the strongest ones. Let's go for the weaker ones." People are taking the strongest candidates who apply for their particular programs. And why can't we be like other countries, some other countries, that do so well in the international comparisons and where teaching is one of the most popular professions that people want to go into? In Korea, I think, it's, teaching is like in the top five percent of what people want to do. Finland, you know all these countries.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Yea, all these examples of top international test scores.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah, why don't we do that? It's a complicated thing. We have all this media bashing of teachers. We have real and not real criticisms, so legitimate and not so legitimate criticisms. I think we hold teachers and teacher educators accountable for a great deal (8:00) of what's wrong with the schools. We act like it is school factors that make the difference. So we do all these things that make teaching not a very attractive career, and then we wonder why we're not necessarily getting the strongest people who are interested in teaching. So I think, you know, we look with envy at Finland, and Korea, and Singapore, and places that do so well. But you you can't just make a direct translation. So we would have to change a lot of the culture and put much more of an emphasis on professionalism. Morale in teaching is very low these days according to surveys.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

And everywhere.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Everywhere, right. In this country, that's right.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Yes it's one that's consistent research findings across studies.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

So, and then we wonder why people aren't so, you know, chomping at the bit to go into that career where morale is so very low.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Teachers themselves (9:00) are telling their own children now, "You don't want to go into teaching." That's a new phenomenon. We didn't have that for even my generation.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

So until we start I think to look at larger factors about why we have enduring achievement gaps, and why we have enduring inequities in outcomes and opportunities that include teachers, but don't stop at teachers. You know, school factors matter, teachers matter perhaps the most in among school factors, but there are all these other, you know this very well from your own work and the work of your mentor, you know poverty matters. You know the kinds of services that are available to people, housing, transportation, jobs, all those things matter. So I think if we continue to just act as if, if we hold teachers and teacher education more and more accountable, it will fix everything. I don't think that's so likely to happen.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What are your thoughts about the current push towards alternative certification programs?  
(10:00)

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well one thing that is good, I think, is that in the research we have, I think gotten beyond what I and some others have referred to as the horse race approach--you know we'll do these studies that will compare traditional programs and alternate program, and we'll see which one gets there first and which one's better. These studies went on for a pretty long time, even though a lot of work had been done making the argument that those two categories are not useful. That there's more variation within this category of traditional or alternate, maybe then between these just aren't useful categories, but people continued to use them. So I think we are somewhat beyond that now, and I, in the research that I have seen lately in the last 3-4 years, I think people are trying to really have a much more nuanced view of what's (11:00) effective. So what are the ingredients within teacher preparation, of any kind?

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Across the board?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Based on any entry pathway. What are the aspects that seem to have, that seem to have an impact on students' learning; that seem to have an impact on retention of teachers; that seem to have an impact on the quality of practice. So I think that's a good thing. I think there are some alternate "alternate" you know I'm using the term as if there's one thing, but I think there are some programs that have a number of good aspects. So I think there are multiple ways to enter teaching that can be good. The thing that I think is very bad is what seems to be this sort of new normal, where what we do is we have this revolving door of new teachers into--especially schools that are under-resourced with large numbers of kids who are low-income and minority--and we have this revolving group of new teachers who come in and (12:00) stay a short amount of time as if that's sort of our system for those kids and for those teachers. I think that's...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Goes back to social justice.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Unsustainable. Yes. It's never...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

It's what those kids deserve. Is it really? But that's what they're getting.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Year, after year, after year. Meanwhile, kids who are in more affluent school districts, they have teachers who are well prepared, and who have good subject matter degrees, and they're smart, and they stay awhile. Now that's a stark comparison. It's not entirely true, but I think the fact that we're sort of moving into this arrangement is a real problem.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Tell us about the National Agenda in Teacher Education Reform.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

That was published (13:00) in the early 2000's, 2000, 2001 or so; and what we tried to do there

was to, at the time look at these two big agendas for the reform of teacher preparation, professionalization, and deregulation. So this was at the time when more and more alternate routes were on the horizon, and there was a really big debate about, and was even prior to the horse race studies. This is when the it was mostly this debate in the media or this in debate, the actual physical debates between advocates of these approaches. What we tried to do that in “Sticks, Stones and Ideology” article was say, “Well let's look at how these two agendas actually make their arguments.” Looking at similar aspects of like, what did they say about evidence, and documentation, and accountability? And what kind of argument were they trying to make? So what we were really trying to do is unpack the arguments on the two sides; and we were trying to be as objective as possible. Now that's, and we said that in the peace. Of course both of us were teacher educators at universities, so we weren't objective about alternate routes or deregulation at the time. Where the idea, which is really what we have in place now, to a certain extent, all sorts of programs that are deemed effective or not based on this relentless focus on outcomes in the form of test scores. So we were trying to unpack all that and then raise questions. The “Sticks, Stones and Ideology” idea was that part of what we found was true on both sides of that (15:00) argument was that people use the word "ideology" as a kind of epithet. And actually you hear this in politics all the time. Somebody will say, "Well that's just an ideological argument," or and Obama will say, "We need to get beyond ideology." We were trying to make the argument that ideology is not in and of itself a bad thing. Ideology has to do with beliefs and values and, and it's not like an ideologue where it's a closed system, and you never want to hear anything except your own beliefs. But that this was one of the strategies, one of the rhetorical strategies that was being used on both sides of the argument. So we try to do that kind of thing in the article. In a sense, not quite demystifying, but certainly unpacking and scrutinizing what these arguments were at the time and really connecting particular (16:00) kinds of arguments with professionalization and with deregulation. So that's what that piece was doing.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

When you served as the editor of the journal *Teacher Education* from 2000-2006, you illustrated how emerging practice shapes policy, but more often how policy trumps practice. Your friend and colleague Susan Lytle notes that your work here is marked by a steady stream of concise, provocative, and elegant arguments in editorials that ultimately became a classic. How can we reverse those trends?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

If I only knew.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Yes.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

If I only knew how we could reverse those trends, I think I could get rich and famous. What she's talking about are the editorials that I wrote in the journal *Teacher Education*. In every issue, for six years, so I wrote thirty editorials it was a I (17:00). I liked doing that, looking back. The first one I ever wrote, I realized I didn't know how to write an editorial. You know, what's an editorial? What we really, what does that really mean in an academic journal? So I think the first few were sort of blood, sweat, and tears about really learning to write in a new genre where I

wanted to be scholarly in the sense that I wanted to say smart things and use evidence, and not just be popping off "I think" you know, "this is my opinion." But it wasn't an article, wasn't an academic article, so I forget the adjectives you use or that she used, but I was trying to be sort of pithy, and crystallized

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Provocative?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
Provocative, yes.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Elegant?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
That is a really good word.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
I definitely was elegant.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
Yes (18:00). But I mean, I think that's what I was aiming for with those editorials. I couldn't have told you that at the beginning when I was first writing them; but I'd tried to take some current issue or some new report that had just come out, which was not hard to find because there was a new report every other month or some pending policy proposal or some big controversial thing and in a relatively short number of words, try to say something that would be helpful to people. It wasn't unlike what Kim and I were trying to do in the "Sticks, Stones and Ideology" unpack the arguments. Say well about this, and what about this, and this assumes this, and here's the way this argument is made. And I got a wonderful response to those. People would write to me--some people I knew and some people and didn't know--who would write to me and say, I look forward to reading this every time the new issue comes out. It really does help me understand what's going on."

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
I think that's great. I think we could use a lot about the unpacking of the assumptions, especially in terms of educational policies, especially in terms of current issues right now. That is, maybe that answers partly the question in terms of rebridging this link between research and policy, these assumptions that are being made, and the ideology, you can't dismiss them. Dudley-Marling, your friend and colleague, describes your pioneering work on teacher research as helping to change the field thinks about the relationship between teachers and research as well, and said instead of teachers as mere implementers of research conducted at distant universities, your work with Susan Lytle, again, has repositioned teachers as producers and partners in educational research. Tell us about your work and values on practitioner inquiry.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH  
Well the first piece that Susan Lytle and I wrote, which I think was published in 1990 (20:00) in

ER was called "Research on Teaching and Teacher Research: The Issues that Divide," and what we had been struck by was in reading the third handbook on research and teaching, which came out in 1986, and you know sort of the Bible of what we know about research and teaching, and on the book jacket, I remember, it said, "This a handbook contains everything we need to know about teaching and learning," or something like that. You know that's a pretty big claim.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Bold.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

What we were really struck by was that none of the work that was cited in all of those research reviews in that volume that was over a thousand pages long, none of it referred to any work by teachers, or really accounted for what teachers might know. So our work at that point was: can this be right? Can it be right that this is everything we need to know, ideas (21:00), and concepts, and facts, and knowledge developed by outside researchers? So the first book that we wrote was called *Inside-Outside: Teacher Research and Knowledge*, and we were trying to say it's not going to work to fix the schools and fix teachers and fix students if we just have outside knowledge that's transported in with the assumption that it will be used in schools. We need that kind of work. It can be helpful. But we also need inside knowledge, knowledge generated by people who have this on-the-ground, every day, close working relationship with students and families and communities. So we started what, we didn't originate this idea, but we started writing about teacher research and what kind of knowledge is it that teachers generate? And we were not working from the assumption that everything teachers say is knowledge (22:00), or everything that teachers might call knowledge is knowledge. So it's not teacher beliefs are knowledge. But what do we mean if we call it knowledge, and what do we mean if we call what people are doing research? Eventually, many years later, we wrote what we called the sequel to that first book. Now it took sixteen years to come out, so that was a long sequel. It came just out a few years ago in 2009.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

*Inquiry as Stance?*

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

*Inquiry as Stance.* We didn't just write about teacher research. We now refer to it as practitioner researcher or practitioner inquiry because over the years it was clear it wasn't just teachers. It was other people who are engaged as practitioners in educational settings, so school principals, supervisors, tutors, it might be the people in some other kind of educational setting. We have people who work in prisons as teachers or tutors or (23:00) instructors, a museum. So any kind educational setting. And we worked, talked more about practitioner research.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

So how do you guarantee that as a teacher educator and then how do you try to instill that once people go out into the field?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well, we can't guarantee it. That's for sure. But you can try to instill it. In the teacher ed program

that I ran at Penn and in our program here at Boston College, we have inquiry as a centerpiece of the work. So the idea is trying to help teacher candidates understand that what we call this "inquiry as stance" is a kind of worldview on how to make sense of this shifting world of educational practice and policy and research, and how do you make sense of what somebody comes in and says this is the new best practice, this is what everybody should be doing, this is the latest thing (24:00). What is a teacher supposed to do with that? So the idea of "inquiry as stance" is partly that you raise questions about it; you connect it to what you're already doing; you work with other people in the community to look at whatever this knowledge that is supposedly being brought in is doing. But you also raise questions about your own work, so you generate a question that you want to explore, and how are you going to explore it? Using data, now construed in a very broad way. Could be kids' written work. It could be conversations in the class. It could be the materials a teacher produces--a lesson plan, a hand-out, a test, an assignment. But all of that work is sort of the data of practice, and the idea is that practitioners come together and raise their questions and look at the data of practice, and generate insights that are useful,

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
Locally-based.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

For the local context. (25:00) But might also be useful and helpful more broadly. So that's kind of what this local knowledge more public knowledge we've tried to work with that concept for many years. It gets complicated. Some people think you can't call that knowledge. You can't call that research not with a capital K or with a capital R. So we've had a lot of interesting back and forths with people along those lines.

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#### Part IV

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Your extensive publishing career includes to date nine books, five of which have won national awards and recognition, and more than 175 articles, chapters, and editorials on social justice, practitioner research, and teacher education research, practice, and policy. What else would you like to accomplish that you have not done yet?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well, you know one of the questions that I didn't really answer that you asked me a few minutes ago was, you know, how could we reverse some of the policies that are in place that are not going in the direction

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY  
In a research-based way.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah, that you and I have been talking about. And one thing I would love to do, and I of course, this is beyond any individual, but to write something so powerful that people would see the insanity of some of what is now going on and some of what is now being emphasized (1:00) in

the policy world, in the sense for example, in equating students' learning with test scores, and equating teacher effectiveness with test scores, and equating the quality of teacher preparation programs with test scores. I'm not questioning accountability. I'm questioning that equation. I think it's way too simplistic. I think it doesn't, it doesn't have a broad view of what students' learning is. It's not just test scores. What about preparing people to live and work in a democratic society? What about preparing students to think about issues of equity and justice? And how do they live with other people in our so diverse, increasingly diverse society? I mean I just think the narrowness of where we're going policy-wise is really, really problematic. And it's as if we (2:00) at it's as if we think accountability, let's lead with accountability, and if we just have more accountability, stricter accountability, better accountability, better data systems, that's going to solve everything. It's like data will save us. I don't think data will save us, and I'm not opposed to gathering evidence, and asking important questions, and using data and evidence to explore those questions. But I think we're really going in the wrong direction in this country. You know it as far as teacher preparation goes, and as far as teacher quality goes, we ought to have more emphasis on professionalism, and teacher development over time, and inquiry communities that work to wrestle with their hardest, toughest questions, and people being willing to unlearn some of the biases that they come with because we all come with those (3:00). So that's what I'd like to do. I've been struggling with this actually for several years to, what is a project to that I could undertake that would somehow, it will not be so powerful that it will change everybody's mind obviously, but is there some...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Three big...

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Is there some small piece that would make people go you know that's really, that's really, we need to think about that. I don't know if that's possible given where we are in this country where...

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

It must be possible.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

You think?

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

I don't think there could be more a dire need for that. We've gotta figure out a way to do that. What impact has your research had of which you're most proud?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well, there are probably two things, or maybe three, going back to things we've already talked about. One is the work I've done with Susan on teacher research and inquiry. We've had many people who've written to us saying this has changed my life; this made it possible for me to continue to be a teacher; this helped to raise new questions I hadn't thought of; this gave me--and I don't mean like this had this miraculous effect--but that these ideas allowed me to work with others and really do that, that's one. The whole idea of social justice and equity and diversity

issues, and in teacher education over a long period of time, you know, including the scale we developed, but including the idea of teaching against the grain from almost thirty years ago now, that whole body of work. And then the third area is a lot of the work that I concentrate on now, which has more to do with policy and trying to unpack these current policies; and the kind of writing I did in some of those editorials. Where people say this really helped me understand. I mean those are, those are things I think that I'm proud I of and hope to continue to do more of.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What inspires you?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well, really good writing inspires me. Really clear writing about complicated things. I think that's so much of what you read in the educational world is filled with jargon, is filled with convoluted sentences, and is and what almost appear sometimes to be sort of intentional obfuscation. So good, clear, strong writing about really important ideas and complex ideas inspire me. I tell my students all the time, "You don't have to, you don't have to write in a dense, hard to understand way just because you're dealing with complex, important ideas. You can write about complex things in clear way." So (6:00) that in part inspires me. People who can write with imagination, creativity, and clarity about complicated things.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What do you find uninspiring?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Uninspiring. I think a lot of this sort of same ol same ol rhetoric. Work that is, and I don't just mean academic work, but work in the media work in the policy, deliberations among politicians, where it's sort of intentionally constructing, here's the enemy, here's the bad guy, here's the thing that this is the status quo, which is it is almost intentionally ignoring the the much more complex picture of things (7:00). I think we've had so much of that now for so long, and some of the same people use the same sort of rhetorical strategies to construct a group as the anti-reform. When we all know, or some of us know, it's a lot different from that.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

A further embedded assumption.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

That I certainly find not just uninspiring but frustrating and depressing.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Yes. What is your favorite word?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

My favorite word. Well for now I think I'll say complexity.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What is your favorite curse word?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

This is going to be in the interview?

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

It's up to you.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well I suppose the F word is

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

One of top favorites?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well it has so many uses. Sort of an all-purpose, multi-purpose word.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

For complex (8:00) purposes.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yes.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

What profession, other than your own, would you have liked to attempt?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

I used to say, and I've still said this recently, I think if I hadn't been what I am, hadn't become I have become, think I would have been interested in constitutional law because I think, again, there's, and I don't know that much about the work, but what I know about it, analysis in that area seems to involve unpacking and trying to get at the core of arguments, and how arguments are built, and what kind of precedence they have, and how they connect. And also has to do with issues related to justice and equity.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

That's at your core. What profession, other than your own, would you have not liked to attempt?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Probably regular lawyering. Anything involving sales. For a long time people have (9:00) asked me, "Why haven't you become a dean? Why aren't you a dean somewhere?" And I have always answered, "One of the reasons is, when I was a little girl, I never liked to sell Girl Scout cookies, and I still don't." You may or may not know what I mean by that, but as I understand from many of my friends who are deans, in most institutions, at least in the US, much of the work is about fundraising; and I'm not a fundraiser. No, I'm not going to sell those Girl Scout cookies.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

If you could tell President Obama one thing, what would it be?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Have more complicated understandings of what is going on. Don't think teachers and schools can fix everything. Because some of the time he acts like he knows that. You know sometimes we want to put more into early childhood, and even prenatal healthcare, and all of that. And other times it seems like when it comes to education, then (10:00) the vision shifts. So Race to the Top is doing a lot of harm. Let's think in a little more complex way about what's really going on.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

If you could have dinner with anybody, dead or alive, who would it be?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Well I'd love to have the challenge of having dinner with John Dewey, and see if, you know, maybe he would be easier to talk to than he is to read, but certainly his ideas are enduring and powerful and everyone in education cites him, and seems to have been even those who probably never read anything he wrote.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Influenced by him in some way.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Yeah, so that that would be, that would certainly be interesting.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

If Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

All your friends are here waiting.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

Welcome aboard! Finally, what advice might you offer to graduate students and beginning researchers who hope to make a contribution like you (11:00) someday?

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

I was actually asked this, and I was asked to give a presentation about some of these issues at one point, and I told them that story that I told you about how colleagues early in my assistant professor days said if you want to get tenure, you better get out of teacher education; and I use that and then make the point that you need to do what you believe in. You need to do research about the questions that are at your core, and you need to stick with those questions, even if they're not the most popular questions or the most easily funded grant projects because you're going to spend an awful lot of time with those questions over the years. So it has to be what you really care about, what you're passionate about, and what you believe in.

AUDREY AMREIN-BEARDSLEY

When asked to capture the essence in nature Marilyn Cochran-Smith, your close friend (12:00) and former graduate student, Alan Amtzis, describes your willingness to graciously host

receptions for graduate students at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. As we know, AERA, and you've done this over the years, always greeting each student personally at the door. He notes that this illustrates how you're able to combine professional and personal experiences in ways that help people find inviting, encouraging, and authentic. Your friend and colleague, Curt Dudley-Marling, writes that you're one of the most generous people he has ever known. You're generous to friends and colleagues alike, your professional accomplishments are significant, significant, but you have touched more lives with her generosity than ever. Your friend and colleague, Anna Maria Villegas, echoes this sentiment, writing about your personal and professional qualities, including deeply felt convictions about social issues, issues of social justice, clear thinking, a strong sense of professionalism (13:00), boundless energy, collegial style, and a warm personality. You have also, you also have a very playful side. You thoroughly enjoy social situations especially after long days of meetings and intense work. You've had much fun together I understand. Your friend and colleague from New Zealand, Lexie Grudnoff, describes you as stylish in manner and appearance in the sense of being chic, elegant, and classy. You also are a very stylish communicator as well. Your writing is beautiful, polished, accessible, but not simplistic, with clear and compelling arguments. Similarly, your oral presentations are lessons in how to present with style and persuasion. Your friend and colleague from Israel, Lily Orland-Barack describes you as an exceptional human being, gifted with the brilliant intellect and a magical soul, sharp and soft, critical and sensitive, strong-minded and tolerant, caring, compassionate, and driven by a (14:00) true belief that educational research must be educational. Susan Lytle reflects on your work, explaining that you have always been concerned about interrogating and making sense to the relationships of educational theory, research, policy, and practice, as enacted in schools and universities and again from a social justice perspective. Finally, Kelly Demers, your former doctoral student, notes that you helped her make the transition from a curious classroom teacher to a competent and committed teacher educator and that in short, her relationship with the you has been one of the most transformative experiences in her professional life. Those are your colleagues and friends, then on to your family. Your son Brad describes your role as a grandmother to his 2-year-old daughter, Riley, explaining that you love her very much and make every effort to have her know you. To Brad this exemplifies who you are. He adds that every second of your time is dedicated to something. When you're (15:00) visiting with him, him and his family, you're 100 percent with them. When you're working you're 100 percent making a difference. He also said your most significant accomplishment is truly that he and his siblings do not have any criminal record, are not wanted by the IRS or the FBI, and have not had to spend any significant time in any sort of therapy. He thanks you for being a foundational, wonderful mother in that regard. He also thanks you for the eternal gift you give him every Christmas, foreign mustard? Your son, Michael, agrees, noting that you work hard and have earned everything you have received, but that you still have compassion and empathy for those less fortunate. He recalls a similar time when he wanted to play the saxophone, and you made sure that that was to happen, even though there wasn't enough room for saxophones in the class (16:00). That was the first time he realized in awe, how truly awesome you are. And finally, your husband, Larry, summarizes your dedication, writing that your belief in what you're defending and promoting underlies all of your research, writing, teaching, conversation, and political actions. He adds that you are not an ardent, shrill, firebrand in your various a teacher education and research roles. Larry praises your commitment to defending and promoting respect and dignity for teachers, teaching, and teacher education, and a commitment to prompting and defending equity in access to education every

day, every hour, and every minute. Well there is no doubt that in the words of one every other colleagues, we view you as one of a small group of elite scholars who have changed the face a teacher education, not only here in the United States, but across the world. Your influence has been felt in universities and school systems across the country and the world, as you have to traversed the globe in an effort to improve the quality of scholarly reflection (17:00) and day-to-day practice in teacher education. So on behalf of all of us, educators, scholars, future educationists, educational researchers and the like, we thank you, Dr. Marilyn Cochran-Smith for everything you do, and mostly for being you. Thank you so much for the interview.

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH

Thank you.