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Being and becoming a mentor: school-based teacher educators and teacher educator identity

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Abstract

Drawing on Gee's (Social linguistics and literacies: ideology in discourses, RoutledgeFalmer, New York, 1996) categories of "ways" to view identity, a case study is constructed of a secondary school teacher's struggle to move beyond her identity as a teacher to assume a mentor's identity in her year-long work with two English-teaching interns. Data of various kinds were gathered: from the interns, weekly e-mails and a paired peer interview, and from the teacher, interview, a peer interview, a mentoring log, and transcripts of a mentoring seminar. Based on these data, the author argues for the importance of attending to identity in teacher education and mentoring and describes conditions that would facilitate mentor identity formation.

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1. Introduction

Acknowledged or not, questions of character and identity and not only technical skill have always been center stage in teacher education.

Students rightfully expect instructional and content competence from their teachers, but they also expect to be greeted by a whole person, a caring person, one who knows who and what he is, who has moral standing, and who can be counted on to continue

standing, face to face, with students. (Bullough & Baughman, 1997, p. 24)

What is true for public school teachers, is also true for teacher educators: "Teaching," Palmer (1998, p. 2) argues, "like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life." Patterson (1991) extends the point: "those of us who are teachers cannot stand before a class without standing for something... teaching is testimony" (p. 16).

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The things teachers stand for define who they are, how they are oriented toward the good. Indeed, as Taylor (1989) has argued, one's identity "is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose" (p. 27). Formed in "agreement or struggle" for recognition (Taylor, 1991, p. 45), identity is the way one is with and for others; it is the basis of an individual's claims both to dignity and to authenticity; it is a framework for action and the personal grounding of practice.

By the very nature of the pedagogical relationship, teacher identity is easily called into question (van Manen, 1994), and it is for this reason that teaching is often experienced as a "daily exercise in vulnerability" (Palmer, 1998, p. 17), a persistent challenge to one's sense of self. Self-knowledge is thus central to being and becoming a teacher and teacher educator and the issue is much greater than the challenges associated with induction, of assuming a teacher's or teacher educator's professional identity, but also of determining how one will be for and with others. Such matters are morally weighty and deserve careful consideration for the results open or close opportunities for those one teaches to be and to become. Put differently, who one is, is integral to determining what subject positions are made available and how they are made available for others' occupation and self-definition. It is for these reasons that the significance of identity and identity formation as areas of research and inquiry in teacher education is rapidly growing (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Bullough, *in press*).

The purpose of this article and the case study that follows is twofold, to (1) explore issues related to the identity formation of one class of teacher educators, school-based mentors; and (2) highlight identity as an important topic for study and research. My intention also is to locate in the case opportunities for building a sense of belonging and commitment, the basis for forming a community of teacher educator practice (Wenger, 1999) and of professional identity, and to identify opportunities missed.

2. Field-based teacher educators

The prominence of field-experience in teacher education has dramatically increased in the past several years in both North America and Europe (Buchberger, Campos, Kallos, & Stephenson, 2000; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). Increased responsibility for teacher education is on public school teachers (Cope & Stephen, 2001). But even as this shift in responsibilities is taking place and commitment to public school/university partnership is growing as well (see Goodlad, 1994), it appears that the school and the university remain "two largely separate worlds [that] exist side by side" (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 7), often characterized by distrust and misunderstanding (Bullough, Hobbs, Kauchak, Crow, & Stokes, 1997; Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Birrell, 2004).

In the hope of bridging this gap and improving communication, various new teacher educator roles have been created for what Sandholtz and Finan (1998) call "boundary spanners" (p. 24), individuals who have one foot in the schools and the other in the university. But simply declaring teachers to be teacher educators or mentors, as is so often done, and occasionally meeting with them on campus to discuss problems and programs does very little to improve the situation. As Feiman-Nemser (2001) has suggested, good teachers are not necessarily good teacher educators. Indeed, good teachers may know remarkably little about beginning teacher development and may even "withhold assistance due to the enduring belief that teaching is a highly personalized practice of finding one's own style" (p. 1033). The result is that the "primacy of practice" (Tillema, 2000) is assured, and reflection about good teaching, which is central to teacher improvement, is rare (Korthagen, 2004). It would appear that as long as boundary spanners' primary and perhaps sole identification is with teachers and school children, not university-based teacher educators and beginning teachers, it is highly likely that teacher education will remain little more than a weak exercise in vocational socialisation. In part, the problem arises from inattention to identity formation.

3. Context and data set

Brigham Young University operates a very large internship program. Interns are beginning teachers who have completed all of their teacher education course work except student teaching; in lieu of student teaching they are employed for a year by a school district full time for half salary and full benefits. When two interns are hired in a school, a regular teacher is freed to serve as a mentor, a site-based teacher educator, for the interns. In the elementary school this model has proven to be very effective. Only recently has it been extended on a trial basis to a few secondary schools where finding appropriate placements has proven more difficult.

The current study draws on data from a mentor and two interns who were part of a larger study involving 9 mentors and 14 secondary education interns in mathematics, English, history and social studies, and the biological sciences. The primary focus is on Barbara (all names are pseudonyms), a secondary school English teacher in her early 40s, as she has attempted to make sense of her school experience, to be recognized, and to form an identity as a mentor as well maintain her identity as a teacher. Contrary to the agreement reached between the university and the school district, Barbara was only freed from two of six periods of teaching. In effect, by taking this action, and taking advantage of Barbara, the school district got 2/3 of a teacher for free. This action also had the effect of dramatically increasing the difficulty of forming an identity as a mentor.

Various kinds of data were gathered from both mentors and proteges across the year. First, six times during the year the mentors met and discussed mentoring issues and mentoring-related research.¹ Four of these meetings were audiotaped and the tapes transcribed for analysis. Second, each mentor produced a case record for each intern, a double-entry log describing intern activities and mentor responses. Third, near the end of the year mentors were paired and asked to tell stories about their year's work with the interns.

These conversations, which were also audio taped and the tapes transcribed, were intended to reveal “well remembered events” (Carter & Gonzalez, 1993, p. 223) and important concerns. Finally, each mentor was individually interviewed to gain additional insight into the mentors' experience of mentoring and how they understood their roles and responsibilities.

Two types of data were gathered from the interns. Each intern responded to a weekly e-mail protocol for which they were paid \$7.00 per response. The interns were asked to identify both high and low points from the week of teaching and to review their relationship with their mentor. Also, every term they were asked to summarize how they thought they were doing as beginning teachers, to evaluate—grade—the quality of the help given by their mentors, and to express any concerns they had about their relationship. Second, as with the mentors, each intern participated in a paired discussion with another intern within which they were asked to “tell stories” of their internship year.

The data set for each mentor was rich, interesting, and complex. The data from Barbara and her two interns were selected for presentation here because Barbara was a new mentor (although she had earlier served as a cooperating teacher for student teachers); both of her interns responded faithfully to the e-mail protocols; she was unusually open and forthright in expressing her thoughts and opinions; she took mentoring very seriously, as indicated by the extent and depth of her involvement with the two interns and the quality of her logs; and her interns judged her an exemplary mentor, even though she struggled with the role.

3.1. Analytic lens

Gee's (2000–2001) conceptualization of identity provides the primary analytic lens. Individually most humans have a sense of continuity and a storied life-trajectory that stands as an interpretative backdrop for the flow of daily events, a core self or identity, an “I.” What is of interest here, however, is not this enduring, albeit often beleaguered, sense of self, but rather the “kind of

¹Professor Roni Jo Draper and I shared responsibilities for the seminar and for data gathering.

person' one is recognized as 'being,' at a given time and place," in a classroom, with children or with beginning teachers (Gee, 2000–2001, p. 99). James (1892) made the point nicely: "if from the one point of view I am one self, from another I am quite as truly many" (p. 202). A brief description of each of the four perspectives Gee offers on being recognized as a certain "kind of person," which will be used to organize and present the data, follows. But first, it is important to underscore a fundamental general point, that identity formation is not a passive but a dynamic affair, that involves a giving and a withholding which simultaneously alters oneself and one's context, with the result that alternative identities may form. It is, as Zembylas (2003) states, and as it was for Barbara, a "non-linear, unstable process...by which an individual confirms or problematizes who she/he is/becomes" (p. 221).

Gee describes four interrelated "perspectives," "ways to view identity," or "what it means to be a certain kind of person":

- (1) Nature-Identity (N-Identities or NI), that we are "what we are primarily because of our 'natures'" (p. 101);
- (2) Institution-Identity (I-Identities or II), that "we are what we are primarily because of the positions we occupy in society" (p. 101);
- (3), Discourse-Identity (as an individual trait) (D-Identities, or DI), that we "are what we are primarily because of our individual accomplishments as they are interactionally recognized by others" (p. 101) and;
- (4) Affinity-Identity (A-Identities or AI), that we "are what we are because of the experiences we have had within certain sorts of 'affinity groups'" (p. 101). Each "way" is embedded in a set of social valuations and locations that shape the form an identity takes.

To begin with N-Identities: to be tall, obese, white, black, intellectually bright represent "states" of being that are not chosen. However, how the state is developed depends on how it is recognized, so that based on nature a person is assumed to be and treated as being a certain kind of person. At this point, the other "ways" quickly enter as institutions and affinity groups shape Nature-Identities.

Institutional-Identities are "authorized" by institutional authorities. Being a teacher, for example, means that one occupies a position composed of rights, duties and obligations (see Harre & van Langenhove, 1999) that are sustained formally by school boards, parent associations, teacher unions, legislatures, universities, laws, and accrediting agencies. Each of these institutions brings its weight to bear in determining what sort of person is allowed to teach and in defining what sorts of actions count as teaching. To "teach" outside of established definitions is to threaten one's standing as teacher. Gee observes that "I-Identities can be put on a continuum in terms of how actively or passively the occupant of a position fills or fulfills his or her role or duties.... [One] can see an I-Identity as either a *calling* or an *imposition*" (Gee, 2000–2001, p. 103). Thus one may joyfully embrace an institutional identity or resist it (such responses point toward the place of one's core identity in shaping institutional life), and in resisting form an oppositional identity.

Discourse-Identities are more difficult to describe. The central notion is that an identity may be formed around a "trait" that is recognized in *interaction* as specific to the individual. Others recognize one as happy, clever, witty, charming, helpful, hard-headed, or perhaps nasty, and respond accordingly: She is a nasty person, avoid her. He is charming, engage him in conversation. Gee observes that while "institutions have to rely on discursive practices to construct and sustain I-Identities...people can construct and sustain identities through discourse and dialogue (D-Identities) without the overt sanction and support of 'official' institutions that come, on some sense, to 'own' those identities" (p. 103). The result is that persons can be recognized differently within the same institution and be viewed as one kind of person by administrators and another kind of person by one's peers. Finally, Gee notes that D-Identities, like I-Identities "can be placed on a continuum in terms of how active or passive one is in 'recruiting' them, that is, in terms of how much such identities can be viewed as merely ascribed to a person versus an active achievement or accomplishment of that person" (p. 104). A teacher might actively seek to be recognized as one kind of

person and not another, a leader, a child-advocate, a defender of academic standards, a pal or, for Barbara, a kind nurturer.

The fourth “way” is what Gee calls the “affinity perspective.” A person chooses to join in a “set of distinctive *practices*” (p. 105) and by joining is recognized as a certain kind of person with specific allegiances and as someone who belongs. “A focus on A-Identities is a focus on distinctive social practices that create and sustain group affiliations, rather than on institutions or discourse/dialogue directly” (p. 105). One chooses one’s affinity groups and is chosen, although choice may be institutionally manipulated, as, for example, by shrewd administrators who have a new program to implement or, more generally, by marketing interests of advanced capitalism. Often ways to identity interact: for instance, as Barbara affiliated with and participated in discussions with other teachers in the English department, her institutional, discourse, and affinity-based identities became inextricably knotted together.

Like Taylor, Gee argues that *recognition* is foundational to identity formation, regardless of the perspective: “human beings must see each other in certain ways and not others if there are to be identities of any sort” (p. 109). He asserts that “people can accept, contest, and negotiate identities in terms of whether they will be seen primarily...as N-, I-, D-, or A-Identities. What is at issue...is always how and by whom a particular identity is to be *recognized*” (p. 109). Thus one may actively seek one form of recognition and of identity over another, just as institutions and affinity groups promote some identities but not others.

4. Data analysis

The data set was analyzed to identify episodes involving *recognition* and including, where possible, Barbara’s response to the forms of recognition given. While any and all forms of human interaction involve recognition, usually identity is submerged and taken for granted. My interest, however, was to identify moments when identity issues surfaced. At such times something—one’s

sense of self however vaguely felt—is put at risk or pleasantly confirmed. Such moments are emotionally loaded, since identity and emotion are so intimately intertwined, with identity speaking to one’s “investments” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 227) and commitments. An episode is “any sequence of happenings in which human beings engage which has some principle of unity” (Harre & Secord, 1972, p. 10). Episodes involve not only an accounting of what actors do, but also “the thoughts, feelings, intentions, plans and so on of all those who participate” (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 5). These episodes will be explored in relationship to the kind of person Barbara sought to be or was becoming (her identity quest) and the kind of person she was pressed or invited to become by those whose recognition was given or sought. In the section that follows, for the sake of clarity, I necessarily depart from the order of Identities set by Gee.

5. Episodes: recognition and response

5.1. I-identity

A very strong institutional message was sent to the mentors, Barbara included, about the value of mentoring when the district administrators decided that mentors would be freed from only a small portion of their daily teaching responsibilities in order to assume this new role. Disappointed, Barbara remarked in an early seminar that the district was “filling a spot and didn’t want to pay a full time teacher.” Interns were thought of as cheap labor, which Barbara resented. She also had been misled: “I didn’t have as much free time as I was supposed to [for mentoring].” But, rather than respond to this strong message, as some of the other mentors did, by minimizing her involvement with the interns, Barbara invested heavily in the mentoring role, hoping that if she did so the value of the work would be acknowledged and appreciated. More importantly, her D-identity as a competent teacher and strong nurturer disallowed disengagement. Barbara is not a person who does anything half way. Her interns recognized and respected her commitment to them and their

development: “She’s a cheer advisor, she’s in the PTA [Parent Teacher Association], she’s like in every part of the school, and so she has had to take extra time [to mentor]. I feel like she’s gone way beyond what the requirements have been. I know that [another] mentor has exactly met the requirement. She has been fine, you know, [but] she hasn’t done anything more than [the minimum]. I don’t think that she’s really provided the same [quality] experience that Barbara has for us as English interns.”

Recognizing that mentoring was not highly valued, Barbara was guarded around administrators, never sharing a concern or doubt about either of the interns: “I’m always guarded [around administrators]. I’m not going to openly say, ‘You know, I’m having these big problems.’” No doubt part of her intent was to portray herself as competent to the administrators, but it was also a reflection of her strong belief in the importance and value of mentoring beginning teachers. Hers was a deep professional commitment and concern. She cared deeply about the quality of teachers and wanted to do her part in improving that quality.

Underscoring the relative institutional unimportance of mentoring, expectations given to mentors by the university and by the school district were, Barbara said, “overall general” and the work went unrecognized. Other teachers thought mentoring must be easy, a hiatus from the real work of schools, teaching children. Some, Barbara said, expressed a “bit of jealousy” that she presumably had been given a break from teaching. Interns were not given a clear sense of what to expect of their role or of their mentors either. As Hannah remarked, “Honestly... I had no idea what it meant to have a mentor.... I thought it would be somebody that could help me answer questions [but] I wasn’t sure if she was going to just straight out hand me lesson plans. I didn’t think so.” In short, there was no institutionally defined mentor role with which Barbara could identify. Instead, for guidance she recalled her own experience learning to teach and remarked that “I know what makes a good mentor and I want to be that kind of mentor myself.” She identified with her own mentor, or at least with the memories of that relationship, as the basis for taking action.

5.2. *N-identity*

Barbara’s nature (NI) expressed itself in one overwhelming characteristic: she was a “mom.” To think of this in terms of Gee’s N-identity requires a slight stretching of the category, but the manner in which Barbara spoke of herself and of the kind of person she was suggests that she thought of mothering as a state to which she was born, like being tall or smart. Had she not given birth, she still would have been a mother. “Mentoring,” she remarked in interview, “is... a mom thing.... I feel like a mom.” On their part, the interns often responded to her like children who needed assistance and comfort, and their demands were constant.

The data set is replete with examples of Barbara comforting the interns, seeking to protect them and support them emotionally. Mary described in e-mail a terribly upsetting confrontation she had had with a student that produced an “emotional meltdown.” Mary was badly shaken, tearful. Recognizing the situation, Barbara sat Mary down for a long mother/daughter-like chat that helped Mary “put [the situation] into perspective” and gave her comfort and courage to go on. Afterwards, Barbara observed several of Mary’s classes, lingered after school so they could talk more, gave her materials to help her prepare for an upcoming lesson, “offered invaluable moral support...and allowed [her] to observe in her class.” Thinking back on this and other, roughly similar situations, Barbara concluded that she had to “deal with that emotional problem before [dealing] with the academic teaching problem. If [the interns] are emotionally shot, it doesn’t matter how good their teaching is.” Barbara’s first responsibility was to love, protect, and support the interns, as she would her own children.

Mary, reflecting in the paired interview on Barbara’s success as a mentor, noted that she thought it was because of her “personal qualities.... The ability to nurture.” From Mary’s and Hannah’s viewpoints, this was Barbara’s nature, the kind of person she was. At this point, Barbara’s N-identity blends into her D-identity.

5.3. *D-identity*

Being recognized by both Mary and Hannah as a nurturer confirmed Barbara's sense of herself as a person and as a teacher. She actively sought to be recognized in this way—as supportive, non-judgmental, responsive, generous, “nice” (her word) and kind, and the more she sought recognition of this kind the more the interns responded to her as just this sort of person. On one particularly busy Friday, Hannah dropped by Barbara's classroom for advice on how to solve a sticky problem with a student. In seminar, Barbara described how she responded to Hannah's request:

She told me she didn't want to worry me [and then described the situation]. I thought, ‘Oh, it's good that she doesn't realize...how hard [mentoring] is, that it's Friday, [late], and I had to get home. It's good that she doesn't know all of these things because it would cause more concern on her part. She already was very concerned.... [Interns] already have enough to worry about. I told her, ‘that's all right, that's what I'm supposed to do. This is my job and it's all right that you are here.’”

Barbara actively sought opportunities to be helpful, believing that it was her responsibility to give assistance even if the interns were hesitant to ask for it. “I try,” she said in an early seminar, “to do a little more than they ask for because they are afraid to ask... I give help that is not asked for all the time. I think I do that probably everywhere.” When the interns sought her help, she gave it, never withholding her advice, time, or materials.

Seeking to be recognized in this way brought with it a cost, although Barbara did not complain. From the initial uncertainty over roles and responsibilities, along with hesitation to request assistance, the interns became increasingly demanding, but still Barbara set no boundaries. Writing in an e-mail in late November:

[Barbara] worked with me in the library as a co-teacher while the students worked for days on research. She was so awesome! I have 32 rambunctious students in that period, and I literally would NOT have made it without

her.... Sometimes one teacher isn't enough. She knew this and sacrificed an hour and twenty minutes every other day last week to help me get through the library work-days for research. That's a huge sacrifice. A fourth of her day! Yet, she offered it willingly. I didn't even have to ask.

Mostly, the interns appreciated Barbara's efforts, although occasionally they complained in their e-mails (not to Barbara) that she was not doing enough: “There are lots of times when before school where I need like scissors or something or just a last minute thing, or even after school... I often feel like I have no help to do it... [But it's really my fault]”

Within the school, Barbara had a long established *D-identity* as an exceptional teacher, probably, as Mary remarked, “the most popular English teacher [in the school]. She's really cool.” Barbara strove to maintain that identity and be seen as competent, but she sometimes struggled with feelings of inadequacy. For example, in late January she invited one of the interns to observe her teaching. “I was nervous. I thought, this is stupid. Why are you nervous? You know this girl. You talk to her every day, and there's nothing to be scared about.” Still she worried about the intern's judgment, even as she knew the intern thought her to be an extraordinary teacher. Similarly, she worried how other faculty members in the school viewed her and her work as a mentor. She sought to be recognized as competent within this role and emerging identity as well. Standing at the copy machine, waiting to make copies, a colleague remarked that she must be enjoying the break from teaching. This comment upset her: “I wanted to smack him,” she said.

I just feel like there sometimes [is an] attitude of teachers that being a mentor is easy. I get the feeling that people think you're getting time off. I just wish that [they would] respect [me]. I do a good job... I hope that the feeling in our building has been that those two English interns did a good job this year.

She fretted over what other teachers were thinking and saying about her and her interns.

The success of the interns became crucial to her sense of self as competent. If they failed, she said in seminar, “It would be, ‘Wow, Barbara must not know what she is doing.’ I was concerned that people would think I wasn’t doing my job and I wanted to be doing my job, you know.” Recognition of the intern’s competence doubled as recognition of Barbara’s ability, as validation of her D-identity as competent and nurturing.

5.4. *A-identity*

Barbara sought affiliation with other teachers, the university supervisors, other mentors, and the interns. Episodes related to each will be considered in turn.

5.4.1. *Other teachers*

It is in part because teaching and being a teacher is so central to the kind of person Barbara is and seeks to be, that she found the remarks made at the copy machine so disturbing. The comments suggest not only that her colleague knew little about the demands of mentoring but, more importantly, that he thought of Barbara as having moved in some respects outside of the group of teachers. She was recognized as different, and this disturbed Barbara, who was and remained first and foremost a teacher. In frustration, Barbara remarked in an early mentor seminar meeting, “I don’t think there is anybody [in the school] who really knows or understands what I am trying to do or what is taking place. I really think that’s true.” She felt outside of her primary affinity group, even as she thought of herself as still belonging.

Affiliations and identifications may clash. The teacher and mentor roles sometimes tugged at Barbara from opposite directions, indicating conflicting memberships (Gee, 1996), and she had to make a choice. For example, Mary came to her one afternoon and explained that she was a little behind in finishing the research unit. She wondered if she could move the due date for the final project back a week. “At first,” Barbara wrote in her intern log, “I did not think this change was okay. We had gone over a time frame and schedule for teaching research. All juniors [are on the same

schedule]. My concern was more that the department would be upset with Mary not sticking with the schedule. And yes, that would reflect [negatively] on the [interns] and [on] me. Then, I stepped back for a moment and realized that my concern should be about students not appearances. For students, learning the process and having time to complete a rough draft and final draft was more important than appearances. So together we went over [Mary’s] time frame again and decided that her papers would be due the week after the end of the term.” Barbara was right, other teachers were unhappy with the decision. The approval of her teacher affiliation group had been sacrificed to her teacher educator responsibilities.

5.4.2. *University supervisors*

Early in the school year Barbara e-mailed both of her interns’ supervisors, asking, “Will you contact me the next time you come [to school] and we can talk?” Three weeks later, one of the supervisors responded and told Barbara when she would be visiting the school and observing the intern. Barbara suggested that they observe a class together, then meet to talk. “It was wonderful. Good discussion. She thought the same things [about the lesson]... We had a three-way conversation that was very good. I felt like we were sharing ideas.” Afterwards, Barbara felt confirmed (“It was confirming”), that what she was doing as a school-based teacher educator was appropriate and valued by the university-based teacher educators. She then commented that she wished she had “contacted [the supervisors] from the very beginning. I wish I would have known to do that quickly. But, I was afraid.... What if we’re having problems that I don’t know [about and the supervisors] are trying some things different from [what I do with the interns]?”

Following this initial meeting, Barbara desired additional interaction with the supervisors, thinking that they could work most effectively with the interns as a team of teacher educators. Based on the initial meeting, she was optimistic: “Our philosophies matched very well, and the things that I was concerned with were the same things for the university supervisor. We were almost right on.” Despite her request, no additional meetings

took place although several e-mails were exchanged within which they discussed each intern's development. By late January, Barbara concluded that her work as a mentor and the work of the supervisors were different and accepted that they would not be working closely together:

The world of the supervisor is to evaluate. I realize that that's not the job description but that's the feeling I've gotten... Their job is to evaluate. I feel like my job as a mentor is to help them, support them, be their advocate, help them with whatever they need. I don't think they feel the pressure when I'm there because I have made it very clear that I am only there to help them.... Yeah, I'm going to write them an evaluation, but that's not [my central] role.

She was pleased that she was not a supervisor even though she was disappointed that she would not be part of an ongoing conversation about teaching and learning to teach with the supervisors. The affiliation she had sought had been rebuffed, though she was able to reconcile it.

5.4.3. *Other mentors*

There was one other intern mentor in the school, Sally, a math teacher. Barbara and Sally did not know one another well, but their practice as mentors brought them together. For Barbara, this connection was extremely important, as she commented in seminar: "Having [another mentor in the building helps]. I needed emotional support, and it's nice to have her [nearby]. I have come to her a lot: 'What's going on with you?' 'What's happening?' 'What should I do?' It's been nice to have emotional support [from] someone else who is mentoring." The seminar provided a means for Barbara, Sally and the other mentors to meet and chat about their work. Each mentor valued the seminar, and although friendships formed or were strengthened, it met too infrequently to become an affinity group. Of this, more will be said shortly. Most of the mentors, Barbara included, felt they were on their own as mentors.

5.4.4. *Interns*

A tight bond formed between Barbara, Mary and Hannah. They belonged to each other, but in

very different ways, and how they experienced their relationship differed radically. As noted, for Barbara the interns often seemed like children. She loved them, identified deeply with their successes and failures, and took how they responded to her as constitutive of the kind of person she was. Their success was also hers. Similarly, the interns saw themselves in Barbara's eyes and in her actions. Each looked to the other for recognition. Thus Barbara was uneasy about having Mary observe her teaching, as mentioned earlier. But the interns did not think of themselves as children. In interview, Hannah remarked, "I felt from the beginning comfortable with Barbara, that she was a colleague. I didn't feel like that with my university supervisor." In an e-mail, she characterized their relationship in more intimate terms: "I really love my mentor. We have become friends, and I feel like I can go to her for help, that she will help me in a practical and kind way." In the paired interview, Hannah said that "Barbara makes me feel like I'm a good teacher and an equal. I never feel like, well, you know, 'you're only an intern.'" Mary did not feel quite so close to Barbara, which troubled Barbara. "I just feel Hannah got a better end of the deal because [we had more time together]. With Mary, we never had a shared prep period." Although scheduling difficulties prevented development of the kind of relationship with Mary that formed with Hannah, Mary was nevertheless thrilled with their relationship: "It exceeded my expectations.... What [Barbara] did was great!"

That Hannah could think of herself as a friend, colleague, and as equal to Barbara, is quite remarkable. If they were friends, it was a decidedly one-sided friendship: Barbara giving, Hannah mostly taking. They were colleagues only in a very loose sense of the term although being recognized by one another as teachers was of great importance to Barbara and to the interns and central to their Affiliation-Identities and sense of belonging. However, in no strong sense were they equals, as Mary noted when she troubled over the realization that had Barbara been teaching her classes the students likely would have performed better. Barbara helped the interns feel valued, cared for, and competent. Their views of Barbara

appear distorted, but twisted just as Barbara wanted them to be: “[Interns] have no idea what [mentors] do for them, they don’t know what you are doing.” As noted above—and acting like a parent—she did not want nor need them to know how difficult it is to mentor. Protecting them from this knowledge was important to Barbara, part of her identity; protecting them from it did not prevent them from recognizing her as she wanted to be recognized, as a competent nurturer. For that they did not need to know what transpired backstage.

Protecting the interns in this way produced some surprising consequences. For one, Barbara struggled mightily with how to give feedback and what sort of feedback to give, fearing that if she was critical of some aspect of their performance her relationship with the interns would deteriorate: “I don’t want to offend them, [make it] so they won’t come to me. But I want to make them better teachers. Relationships are [so] important, way too important [to risk].” In saying this, she echoes a view widely held by teachers: Teaching is all about relationships (Oberski, Ford, Higgins, & Fisher, 1999). Had the interns stopped seeking her assistance, she would have lost recognition and her quest for a mentoring identity would have been badly sidetracked. Yet sometimes Barbara concluded she had to be critical of the interns because, as she said, “I have to protect the students. They deserve good teachers.” Once again we see how affiliations and identities can pull against one another, producing a kind of double-mindedness: Barbara the protective and nurturing mentor and Barbara the teacher. As a mentor, Barbara’s greatest joy came when the interns phoned to share a positive event or outcome, like her own children would do. “They say, ‘This kid is finally doing his homework. Remember, the one that I’ve been having so much trouble with.’” Then, they would celebrate together, having been confirmed as the sorts of people they wanted to be: the interns by their students and Barbara by the interns.

6. Making sense of the data

Barbara wanted to be recognized not only as a competent teacher—a view supported by her

selection by the university and the school administrations as a mentor—but also as a competent mentor and educator of beginning teachers. The recognition she sought was not limited to competence, however. Barbara wanted to be recognized as the kind of teacher and mentor who is nurturing and caring. Recognition of this professional identity came from the interns and from Sally, her mathematics colleague who was also serving as a mentor. Emphatically, she did not recognize herself in the comments made by her colleague at the copy machine—as a teacher who took breaks from teaching and shirked her duty. She had sought recognition by the university supervisors as a fellow teacher educator, but she had been turned away after an initial confirming glance. From the university supervisors, Barbara wanted to know if her work with the interns was satisfactory; apparently it was since nothing was said to the contrary, so she continued as before. She was open to and desirous of learning more about teacher education and mentoring from the supervisors, but she was not invited into such a conversation. As a mentor, Barbara did not feel competent, but, consistent with her D-Identity as a teacher, she wanted to be: “As far as I’m concerned, I’m not competent, or not as much as I would like to be.” In seminar, she further stated,

I don’t know about the rest of you, but I can promise you that everyday something goes far beyond my reach. Every day [the interns] bring something to me that’s interesting and [that] I’ve never seen before. I have a lot of experience to share, [but] I can’t share expertise I don’t have.”

Her attempts at engagement were simply ignored, but surely not for any malicious reason on the part of the supervisors, who were very busy people and who likely did not include working with mentors as part of their responsibilities, I-identity or D-identity, a point noted by Koster, Korthagen, and Wubbels (1998) as a serious failure of university-based teacher educators. Barbara’s role was to be strictly limited to working with the interns, alone, even though formally she represented the interests of teacher education and the university within the school. Given this

situation, Barbara found recognition where she could and hoped that the quality of her service as a mentor would at some point be understood and appreciated.

That mentoring was little valued in Barbara's school is not usual. Often it is not highly valued by the university, either (Zeichner, 2002). Being mostly abandoned by the university and given no guidance from building administrators, she was left alone to develop a mentoring relationship with the interns. Given her N- and D-identities, it is not surprising that the relationship represented, as Darling (2001) describes, the values and commitments of a "community of compassion" and not of inquiry. A community of compassion is a retreat from the world. "A community may support individual flourishing (at least in the sense of offering protection), but it is not the agent of, or catalyst for, growth. At best, community is the backdrop that makes it possible for students (read, interns) to pursue learning; although learning goes on alongside the community, it is not generated by it. The purpose of the community is defined by its role as a support group, not by the learning that is taking place" (p. 12). In contrast, a "community of inquiry" involves individuals learning to respectfully disagree, "argue their positions with conviction, and make judgements about the worth and truth of others' claims" just the sorts of actions that Barbara feared would jeopardize her relationship with the interns. An individual's duty in a community of inquirers, in contrast to a benevolent community of compassion, "is to the inquirers, but also to the inquiry and to uphold the standards of inquiry" (p. 16). It is, in short, to be thoughtfully and helpfully critical.

Barbara's N- and D-identities as teacher shaped the role she would perform as mentor: to create a community of compassion as befitting a nurturer—a mother. An alternative vision and identity could only have emerged had she been given access to and sought membership in affinity groups based on a different set of practices, such as inquiry, or if there had been clearly established and contrary institutional expectations for mentoring and for the interns, which there were not. Lacking these may be one reason that, as Martin (1997) has argued, mentor practices frequently

resemble teaching practices: Teachers do what they know and mentor as they teach. In effect, mentor identities are subsumed under teacher identities.

Potentially the mentor seminar could have developed into an affinity group, organized around the practice of mentoring, a group that would have supported formation of a strong professional identity separate from teaching and teaching affinity groups and closely related to teacher education and other teacher educators. It did not. Largely because of the district decision to minimize the time set aside for mentoring, meetings were too infrequent. But, more importantly, as a seminar leader I did not see grappling with questions of identity formation and recognition as a mentor to be seminar tasks, yet they could and should have been. Only later did this issue emerge as important, only when data analysis was well underway.

To achieve identity as a mentor and school-based teacher educator requires what Williams, Prestage, and Bedward (2001) call "structural collaboration" (p. 260), arrangements that support sustained interaction about teaching and that have the potential to produce, over time, collegial collaboration and subject positions supportive of collaboration. To this end, Barbara and the other mentors needed to be joined in seminar by the university supervisors where they could together develop a discourse and set of relationships including both the practice of teacher education and the assignment of facilitating beginning teacher development, distinct from other practices, duties and obligations. That Barbara longed for such interaction and affiliation is evident not only in her disappointment with not working more closely with the supervisors, but also in her expression of appreciation for Sally's support and advice.

Frequently one reads of programs that aim at "training" mentors, which, no doubt, have a valuable place in teacher induction and education. But a more important purpose of mentoring programs, at least for mentors like Barbara, as Korthagen (2004) suggests, is educational. It is also relational, about belonging: not just a matter of developing specific skills but of helping those who work in schools with beginning teachers to

(re)conceive of themselves as mentors and of mentoring as distinct from teaching. This is an important task for university-based teacher educators to embrace (Koster et al., 1998). Ultimately, the challenge, as Zeichner (2002) states, is to “[integrate] clinical faculty and staff into the mainstream of programs” (p. 63) and, in this way, to develop new forms of affiliation and identity that will better serve beginning teachers and offer opportunities for those who mentor to expand and enrich their senses of self as teacher educators. How to do this requires the careful and systematic attention of university-based teacher educators for whom questions of identity-formation are necessarily of growing importance.

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