Student Teachers Negotiating Identity, Role, and Agency

By Dena M. Sexton

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.

—Robert Frost

Learning how to teach depends on the dynamic inter-relationships among many parts and people; however, research on learning how to teach has typically focused on confined aspects of teacher education (e.g., a specific methods course) over short periods of time (such as one semester). In response, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998), in their review of the literature on teacher education, called for an ecological approach to studying the learning-to-teach phenomena. They argued that, "only when all players and landscapes that comprise the learning-to-teach environment are considered in concert will we gain a full appreciation for the inseparable web of relationships that constitutes the learning-to-teach ecosystem (p. 170)." An ecological design for research on learning how to teach should reveal teacher education as a complex set of interconnected systems. As Frost reminds us, we must be careful when drawing boundaries, as we are never sure what we are leaving out. To investigate the 'learning-to-teach ecosystem', researchers (individually and jointly) should therefore attend to the wide range of those involved—supervisors,

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university faculty, cooperating teachers, students, and families—as well the landscapes of individual student teachers who bring their own social and cultural positionings, lived biographies, and understandings of teachers' work to the study of teaching.

This article reports on a qualitative study of one cohort of elementary student teachers in a public university in California over the course of one year. Applying an ecological approach to studying the process of learning to teach, this research focuses on intersections among identity, role, and agency across the systems of teacher education.

Research Questions

Two central questions guided the research. The first prompted an exploration of the intersections between teacher identity and teacher role, while the second permitted a focus on teacher role as a heuristic to explore teacher resistance. The questions were these:

1. How do preservice teachers' professional identities mediate their 'teacher roles' within the various contexts of teacher education?

2. In what ways can a focus on 'teacher role' deepen understandings of teacher agency?

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism guided the study both theoretically and methodologically. Blumer coined the termed 'Symbolic Interaction,' building on the work of Mead (1964/1932), to outline the field. He wrote that,

> Symbolic interaction rests in the last analysis on three simple premises. The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they have for them … The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

Symbolic interactionism focuses on the construction and mediation of shared meanings. Teaching is unique in that prospective teachers have extensive opportunities to observe the profession from their time as a student (consider Lortie's (1975/2002) "apprenticeship of observation"). These biographical understandings of teaching continue to develop and become modified as a student teacher interacts with a variety of people and contexts across the ecosystem of education, further refining and shaping the student teacher's understanding of teaching. There is no end-point to this development; rather, it is an ongoing process as understandings of what it means to be a teacher are constantly, though perhaps subtly, reshaped through interactions with new people and contexts.

For this study, taking an interactionist perspective meant attending to both (1) understandings of teaching constructed and promoted through the formalized systems of teacher education (referred to as *teacher role*) and (2) the resources that student teachers drew upon to mediate these formalized understandings (referred to as *teacher identity*).

Teacher Role

Teacher role is the set of understandings of what it means to be a teacher in a given context. It is sociohistorically constructed, institutionally maintained, and contextualized at the school level in response to the needs of the community (Bullough, Gitlin, & Goldstein, 1984). "Teachers occupy an institutional position that has been shaped by the simultaneous demands of technocratic mindedness and the public servant ideals" (Bullough, et al., 1984, p. 346). Teaching is often seen narrowly as technical, caring, and/or service work. The commonly posited understandings of teachers' work pervade educational institutions and constrain, but do not determine, the roles available for teachers.

Teacher Identity

Teachers play an active role in developing a professional identity; Florio-Ruane (2002) maintained that teaching is not just observable patterns or invisible scripts; the observable "norms [of teaching] are not determinative. Teachers retain sufficient agency to act in new, creative ways … teaching is both ordered and responsive to norms and standards and also improvisational and responsive to other participants" (pp. 209-210). Preservice teachers, embodying specific identities, understandings, and early enactments of teaching, engage with the systems of teacher education to create a professional identity.

Teacher identity, as an analytical lens, permits a focus on the complex, situated, and fluid attributes that individuals bring with them to the study and practice of teaching. Building on scholarship from the domains of anthropology, literary studies, and social psychology, *teacher identity* is treated as the relationship between one's inherited traits and those that emerge through macro- and micro-social structures (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Bakhtin in Holquist, 1990; Mead, 1964/1932). However, "macro" and "micro" are not so easily separated in actual daily interactions; instead, race, class, and gender are large structural categories that are nevertheless intricately woven into the fabric of our daily experiences. As Woods (1996) points out, "[p]eople do not act towards social class or social systems; they act toward situations" (p.34).

Identity highlights how an individual mediates teaching—drawing upon different arrays of social positioning, experiences, and resources to enact their professional selves in particular ways. Individuals are authored by these structures while they also author themselves, choosing to act in ways that align with their own self-understandings (Goffman, 1959; Linde, 1993). Teacher identity "illuminates levers

for active agency in individual teachers and it reveals a process—a path, of sorts—by which individuals can become more conscious, and in more control, of the contours of their own professional development" (Olsen, in preparation, 14-15).

The Program

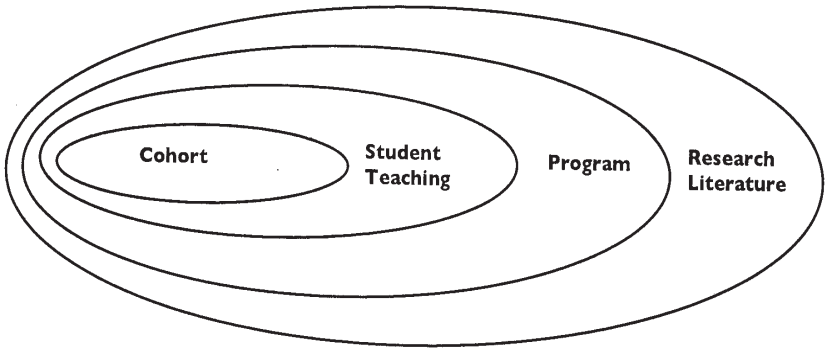
The teacher education program is situated in a public university in Northern California. The one-year program offers candidates a teaching credential and Master's of Arts in Teaching. According to program materials, there is an emphasis on preparing teachers to serve the needs of diverse student populations and to become leaders of school reform.[1] The program segments its students into cohorts—groups of students working towards the same kind of credentials (i.e., multiple subjects, secondary English, etc.) who meet twice weekly in a student teacher seminar. When I use the term "cohort" in this article, I am referring to the specific cohort that I studied.

During the 2006-07 academic year, I found the program to have emphasized *social* and *technical* aspects of teacher role. Relationships between teacher and student were highlighted across the spectrum of topics in cohort: curriculum, pedagogy, classroom management, and expanded roles for teachers (e.g., tending to a sick child). This was often referred to as a way to create conditions for "optimal learning," as well as establish and maintain control over the classroom. There was also a consistent focus on routines and procedures. Common in the cohort were topics such as "the three best ways to get students' attention" and "five messages students hear." Taken together, the focus on relationships and procedures presented teaching as routinized, caring work. This is reflective of the larger history of the teacher as a public servant in pursuit of technocratic ideals and connects to stereotypes of elementary school teachers as caregivers (Bullough, et al., 1984; Nias, 1989).

Methodology

To examine interrelationships between teacher identity and teacher role across the ecosystem of teacher education, I developed an ecological model for data collection. Graphic 1, The Ecosystem of Teacher Education, depicts four systems within the larger ecosystem of teacher education that were the domains of this study; these are described in the next section. My study was a qualitative exploration of shared understandings and representations of teachers and teaching across these systems, layered with an analysis of how these were mediated at the level of the individual. Study design integrated the tenets of critical ethnography attending to issues of power and position within the sites studied and life history research as I prioritized the student teachers' biographies and development of coherence in their ongoing life narrative (Carspecken, 1995; Linde, 1993).

Graphic 1
The Ecosystem of Teacher Education



Setting and Participant Selection

Relying on a purposive, convenience sample, I selected four student teachers from one elementary cohort. To select these focal students, I administered an online survey to all cohort members (n=15) to elicit the range of their preservice experiences, reasons for entry into teaching, and beginning understandings of themselves as teachers. Thirteen responded. I selected four students to create a heterogeneous group along the dimensions of prior teaching experience, student experiences, reasons for entry, and a range of demographic categories (e.g., gender, ethnicity).

Data Collection

Taking a view of teacher development as socially situated and embedded in institutions and relationships with others (peers, faculty, cooperating teacher, k-12 students) required employing a multi-level design. Guided by my use of symbolic interactionism, the focus of group observations was on shared understandings of teaching and how those shared understandings were in fact subjective in nature. Each individual's identity mediated the "sharedness" of the understandings.

Cohort sessions were observed weekly for eight months; student teaching events were observed three times during the year (fall, winter, spring) for each of the four focal students; informal observations occurred at department-wide events and program documents were collected. Interviews occurred across these systems: three interviews (fall, winter, spring) with each of the four focal students, one interview with each student teacher's cooperating teacher, teacher supervisor and other faculty members.

Data Analysis

Teacher role was viewed through seven categories, teaching as personal, political, social, intellectual, technical, aesthetic and employment.[2] Identity was analyzed

through dimensions of the student teachers' experiences (as both student and teacher), reasons for entry into teaching, professional plans, and other biographical information.[3] Analytical case studies were written to describe the program and each of the focal students (Yin, 2003). The case studies then became a data source used to identify commonalities and differences across student teachers, attending to the reciprocal interaction between role and identity. Analysis of the data illuminated ways in which the student teachers' emerging teacher identities intersected with and mediated representations of teacher role. In this article, I present two of the student teachers that portray distinct program experiences and paths of professional development.

Findings: Role, Identity, and Employment

Three strands of findings emerged. The first strand illuminates the active ways in which the student teachers negotiated the program—they relied on individualized varieties of resources, needs, and interests to actively mediate program components. In doing so, each created a professional identity that was consistent with his or her incoming goals yet also shaped by the year's experiences in the program. The second strand speaks to the interaction between role and identity. When role and identity aligned for student teachers, they experienced a consonance between personal goals and program expectations, but also limited opportunities for professional growth. Misalignment, however, created dissonance, and students drew on personal experiences or other resources to address the divide between personal goals and program expectations. The third strand reveals ways in which student teachers' hopes for employment shaped their participation in, and critique of, the program. Those students who were most compliant tended to seek employment directly after graduation while those who were more openly critical did not.

Active Negotiation of the Program: Introducing Jason and Dawn

At first glance, the notion that student teachers respond to aspects of the program in personal, individualized ways is not new. It has been well-documented in the teacher education literature that student teachers attend to parts of the program that are most consonant with their personal understandings of teaching and learning (Wiggins & Clift, 1995; Agee, 1998; Hollingsworth, 1989; Gore & Zeichner, 1991). Clift and Brady (2005), in their review of research on methods courses, found that student teachers resisted messages—even those that were consistent across their teacher education program—when they were "personally uncomfortable with the competing beliefs and practices" (p. 330). However, viewing the learning-to-teach process through the lenses of teacher identity and teacher role allows for more (and deeper) insight into how and why these student teachers negotiated the program in their personalized ways.

Jason, a White male, was twenty-three years old at the beginning of the study.

Raised in a working class family, he grew up and attended public schools in a wealthy community in Northern California. He described himself as having a history of being a "good student, bad kid" since the third grade where "I started to get bored, just started to do what [I felt] like doing and nothing more … if something excited me, then I was a really good student." This tenuous relationship between Jason and the contexts of his formal education, led him to focus more on independent learning (from books and experiences). Overall, Jason felt underserved as a student, recalling that few teachers seemed to take an interest in him. His elementary school teachers, in particular, were "caring and superficially happy but didn't make me happy as a student." Drawing on these experiences, Jason viewed good teachers as ones who "empower their students" and bad teachers as those who seem disconnected from students and "teach for the sake of a job." Throughout his schooling, Jason viewed himself as being very different from others in the group (across dimensions of social class, political orientations, and often gender, among others); he found this to be an uncommon resource, giving him a more comprehensive understanding of others and situations.

Before entering the credential program, Jason worked as a teaching assistant in elementary and middle schools and taught in a variety of outdoor education programs. He had a strong interest in teaching for social justice, highlighting the need for people to understand the impact of their individual and collective actions; he saw teaching as a way to work toward empowerment and collective responsibility, reaching many more people than you could in other types of work. He likened teaching to gardening as both enhance the "beauty and sustainability of the community" and felt that teaching was "a way to follow my heart. It is a balanced way for me to contribute to the community, it is a crucial job that I was underserved by repeatedly."

Jason's interactions in cohort and student teaching, as well as interviews and informal conversations, focused on the intellectual, political, and social dimensions of teacher role with a focus on becoming "a critical pedagogue." After the initial summer session, in which he took a course on social issues in education, he talked about missing the critical orientation to teaching and seminar-style courses, becoming frustrated with the content and structure of cohort and other courses. He said,

> We have had a lot of hammering on academic language or on scaffolding or on these things, but I don't think enough critical questioning of why we are doing what we are doing and what it means to us and what it means to the world. Maybe that's not why a lot of people got into teaching necessarily … a lot of people get into teaching without thinking about what their affect on the world is and how their views affect each kid that they open the world to.

In cohort, Jason made repeated attempts to reshape the conversations but did little more than sidetrack them. By the middle of the winter quarter, Jason had re-focused his attention towards student teaching and independent readings.

In Jason's first student teaching placement, a first grade classroom, he was

assigned responsibilities that were either strongly routinized (e.g., morning attendance; guided writing), or outside of the classroom (e.g., taking small groups to the garden; playing at recess). Not surprised by the overall lack of fit between the teacher he wanted to be and his cooperating teacher, Jason described her as not much different from his own teachers. "Most of my teachers were not critical pedagogues. I wasn't expecting necessarily that right away." He found a better fit in his second placement, a fourth grade classroom. The cooperating teacher, Marie, had a strong interest in working with Jason on his goals and gave him a considerable amount of autonomy and support; he could take or share the lead on anything that was going on in the classroom and she met with him daily to review the day and discuss the next. They both described their work together as "team teaching" which was notably different from the other students in the cohort.

When he had the chance to teach a set of solo lessons, Jason took the opportunity to reshape the classroom community by focusing on a quote by Martin Luther King, Jr. ("an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere") highlighting empathy as a necessary part of creating a better world. In the set of social studies lessons I observed, he intertwined two distinct agendas—the official university requirements (using a specific lesson format and a finite set of motivational tools), and his own sociopolitical agenda. The unit he designed focused on famous explorers incorporating the notion of perspective and a critique of the textbook.

Jason drew on his student experiences and social positioning to define the kind of teacher he would like to become. As a student, he felt ignored by teachers and attributed this to his socio-economic class (which he defined as "much lower" than the average student in the district) and a disposition towards questioning and critiquing course content, assignments, and teachers. He concluded that a critical pedagogue was one whose classroom would be student-centered and run in a seminar style, enabling participation among all students. This gave him some insight from which to select pieces of the program to attend to which included: the social foundations course, a student-centered Science methods class, his independent reading, and his second student teaching placement. From my observation of him, and through discussions, I found that he ignored or found ways to attend minimally to other aspects of the program. He prioritized his own interests over the goals established by the teacher preparation program in general, and responded to class sessions whose focus was outside his interest by attempting to alter the direction of the conversation. While working towards what could be seen as laudable goals (I certainly thought so), there was a sense that prioritizing certain topics was also a way to maintain the boundaries between himself and most others in the program—student teachers, faculty, and classroom teachers. His efforts seemed to re-inscribe his lifelong position of being on the fringe of the groups in which he was a participant, leaving his overall sense of self intact.

Dawn, a White female, was twenty-seven years old when the study began. Raised in a middle-income family, she attended both public and private schools

in affluent communities in Northern California. Her parents divorced when she was very young; she described her childhood and education (elementary through middle school) as "unstable" resulting from the custody arrangement in which she alternated years with each parent—even grades with her father and odd grades with her mother, until the ninth grade when she permanently moved in with her father. Dawn described herself as a "poor student," referring to her low academic achievement. She recalled not knowing what was going on in school; Dawn relied on relationships with peers and faculty to get by in one school, and reported "just cheating" in the other one where she felt little support. Drawing on these experiences, Dawn described good teachers as those who connect with students and bad ones as those who make students feel "singled out."

Dawn entered the credential program with a strong interest in teaching for social justice, which she framed as "valuing people equally" and highlighted the resources that students of color bring with them. She focused on individual-level change, often comparing teaching to therapy and parenting. She considered herself someone who was born to be a teacher because of her "natural ability to care and teach." Previously, she worked as a camp counselor, preschool teacher, and one-on-one aide for an autistic child.

Dawn's interactions in cohort and student teaching, as well as interviews and informal conversations, focused on the social and technical aspects of teacher role. She highlighted relationships between teacher and student and focused on lesson plans, textbook materials, and classroom rules in her discussions of learning how to teach. Throughout the months of the study, Dawn was unsure about what was going on in cohort and other courses. During our last interview, she talked about a recent assignment, "I have no clue what I am doing. We had to write about taking a some kind of pedagogy approach. I don't even know what I wrote. I obviously passed. I didn't get the paper back for an [evaluation] or anything, so its kind of like just there." As this passage illustrates, Dawn was not aware of expectations for her work, nor how she was assessed. "This program, I still don't understand how we are being evaluated per se. Everything is just vague and ambiguous." Although vague on the specifics of her work, Dawn maintained good relationships with her teaching supervisor and other faculty members whom she drew on for support. Typically quiet in cohort, she regularly nodded and showed nonverbal signals that seemed to translate as 'I get this' while our conversations revealed that she did not.

During her first placement, a first grade classroom, Dawn described herself as "a TA more so than anything" which I confirmed when I observed her student teaching; she sat with individual students as they completed a cut-and-paste activity. After this observation, she said, "sometimes I feel totally lost and out of the loop…for the most part I'm not really sure how it's going but I do have a good rapport with the teacher and with the other first grade teachers." She highlighted relationships and was certain that pedagogical knowledge would come over time. Dawn said,

> I think that really part of teaching is, it's not necessarily —it's about your relationship with the children. For me that's the biggest aspect of it—the bond you create with them, the trust they have in you and you have in them. That comes naturally to me so I think that everything else will come into place once I get into the classroom and once I start doing it and gaining that trust in myself.

For her second placement, Dawn requested to be with a cooperating teacher who would show her "how to teach" which, again, she characterized as "classroom management and lesson plans." She was assigned to Karen, a third grade teacher who taught at the same school where Dawn had her first placement; this enabled her to maintain many of the relationships she developed with other teachers and the principal. Karen had a very structured classroom and felt that Dawn needed "more guidance" and routines. During another observation of Dawn, she led the morning routine, guiding students to update the calendar and complete the grammar skill of the day (part of the school's curricula). She still described herself as a TA and did not like when the teacher left the room. Dawn, in her solo lessons, wanted to reshape the classroom community with a focus on her being the new teacher in the classroom. Dawn followed Karen's existing plan, a series of social studies lessons that focused on "citizenship." A few interesting things happened: first, the students interpreted the word "citizen" in a much broader context than the classroom community and Dawn was frustrated when students did not follow along with the scripted plan; second, she was surprised when the materials to teach the lesson were not stacked on the teachers' desk as usual and she had to improvise with different materials; and, third, she was angry with students who did not follow the rules for the "new community."

Dawn's primary interests in teaching stemmed largely from her own experiences as a student. She hoped to be a teacher who was "nice, caring, and fun" and wanted to create a classroom environment where students would know what was expected of them and not feel "put on the spot," as she had. Though her primary goal was to foster connections with students, Dawn understood a fundamental aspect of teachers' work as "delivering instruction" and she looked to those who could simplify this task. In her efforts to achieve these goals, Dawn focused on aspects of the teacher education program that highlighted relationships and taught specific routines and, much like Jason, had minimal engagement with courses and experiences that were outside of these domains. For her, this meant focusing on (1) her student teaching placement where she developed strong relationships (with teachers, administrators, and students) and her teaching practice was strongly routinized and (2) the cohort class where the stated purpose was to integrate theory and methods but, in practice, focused on relationships and routines. Even though she remained fairly unclear about her work and expectations placed on her, Dawn focused on creating and sustaining relationships, consistently noting that she would learn how to teach once she was in her "own classroom."

Both Jason and Dawn drew heavily on their student experiences to determine

(1) the general needs that students have and (2) ways to define what a good teacher is. They interacted with the program based on these general understandings, making consistent and conscientious choices about what they would attend to and how they would enact themselves in the program. Interestingly, Jason and Dawn drew upon these aspects of their prior experiences to not only decide what they would focus on, but also how as they enacted themselves in ways that were consistent with how they described themselves outside of the teacher education program; Jason remained on the fringe, focusing on individual endeavors while Dawn focused on relationships—beloved by most who knew her—and had minimal engagements with the academic work of the program.

Interaction between Role and Identity

As noted above, individual student teachers understood, mediated, and transformed shared understandings of teaching to connect with their own interests, experiences, and goals, but this was not a straightforward process that completely negated the influence(s) of teacher education. These student teachers worked at attending to their individual needs and goals, while maintaining a certain coherence between who they are (teacher identity) and who they wanted—or were expected—to be (teacher role). This occurred through experiences with others across the ecosystem of teacher education. Goffman (1959), using dramaturgical imagery, referred to this dialectic between identity and role as impression management. He wrote,

> The character one performs and one's self are somewhat equated … the performed self [is] seen as some kind of image, usually creditable, which the individual on stage and in character effectively attempts to induce others to hold in regard to him." (p. 23)

This is not a solitary act, as "the self does not derive from its possessor, but from the whole scene of his action, being generated by that attribute of local events which renders them interpretable by witnesses" (Goffman, 1959, p. 23). To be seen as credible, the individual must hover the delicate balance between these, making sure that neither one's identity or roles are too far from one another, creating discord in the individual and limiting the veracity of how the actor represents him or herself.

As described earlier, the program represented specific understandings of teachers' work that fell within social and technical roles for teachers; the student teachers also understood and enacted teaching in particular ways. To understand the interaction between these, I looked for alignment and misalignment between the student teachers' identities and the way that teaching was shaped in the program. Areas of alignment and misalignment held both possibilities and consequences for professional growth.

Alignment occurred when there was congruence between one's teacher identity and the teacher roles offered by the program. For Jason, this fit occurred between his focus on student-centered classrooms and the program's overall focus

on developing relationships with students. Though the purpose held for this relationship (or student-centered approach) differed with Jason looking to teach for empowerment and the program shaping those relationships as a pedagogical tool for student engagement, this permitted Jason some space and recognition for ideas that aligned. Dawn experienced an overall sense of alignment between her interests in teaching and the ways that teaching was structured throughout the program. The social and technical focus permitted her to prioritize relationships—professional and personal—and focus on teaching as a set of routines.

Misalignment occurred when there was a disconnect between the student teacher's professional identity and roles offered in the program. This describes the majority of Jason's interactions within, and reflections on, the program throughout the year. He held that teaching should be predominantly intellectual and political work, but found very few places within the program where he could sustain conversations about teaching that matched with his interests. Jason created niches within the program (second student teaching placement) and outside (independent reading group) to meet his individual needs.

While *alignment* may sound harmonious—something to hope for—and the term *misalignment* might conjure up images of conflict—or something to avoid—I found that both of these worked to further professional development in some ways and limit it in others. Alignment between one's identity and roles produced a certain coherence, which confirmed for students that they were on the right track. Misalignment highlighted areas where professional growth was needed and, as a result, some students questioned their career choice.

Dawn experienced a complete overlap, or coherence, between her teacher identity and roles presented in the program. This allowed her to be a legitimate member of the group and maintain herself as "nice, caring, and fun" creating a consonance between identity and role. However, appearing competent also hid the areas where further growth was needed. In the case of Jason, having some alignment helped him maintain his position as a legitimate member of the group. He was, nonetheless, on the fringe because there were still gaps between his identity and roles presented in the program. Having an overall sense of misalignmnent also made him unsure of whether teaching was a good career to pursue. While he expected to be different from his peers and teachers, he also questioned whether he would find enough support in schools to be the teacher he hoped to be.

Employment Concerns as Influence

Across the cohort, students tended toward one of two paths when negotiating the program: (1) to be openly critical of certain components and individuals, or (2) to outwardly comply with expectations (even if, in private, complaints were made). Discussions in cohort revealed that the student teachers viewed their teaching supervisor as a possible gatekeeper to future employment, since she acted as the intermediary between university and placement, and the evaluator of each student's

teaching progress. Being one of only a few people who had discernable relationships with school teachers and administrators gave her credibility—someone still connected to schools, someone the student teachers could trust to teach them about teaching—but this close connection to schools also positioned her as someone who could help or hinder their chances for employment.

The ways that the student teachers resisted certain aspects of the program were often consistent with hopes for employment in the following (2007-08) school year. Those students who openly critiqued the program were generally less interested in or committed to teaching right away, while those that most often appeared compliant were actively pursuing employment immediately following graduation. (It is also possible, however, that this was reversed—that their participation in the program and level of critique influenced their decision to teach.) I suspect that employment plans drove compliance in most cases because the student teachers' commitment to being employed as a teacher (or not) generally did not change over the year. Those with a strong interest in seeking employment as a teacher remained focused on that goal, while those that were unsure tended to opt out of teaching entirely, or plan to take a year or more (post-graduation) to decide. As a group, students in this latter category often found ways to meet their individual needs (i.e., clarify questions about assignments; criticize their student teaching placement) without involving the supervisor. I found that this limited opportunities for professional growth among those student teachers most interested in teaching right away; their need to appear competent (and not threaten opportunities for employment) made them less likely to seek help or critique the supervisor. This also limited the supervisor's professional development, as she received minimal—and/or disingenuous—feedback. This relationship with their supervisor reinforced persistent understandings of teaching as technocratic, public servant work since those who appeared most successful were compliant and, requiring minimal assistance, made teaching seem relatively simple.

This was true for Jason and Dawn who each actively resisted parts of the program, but in very different ways. Jason tended to openly critique content, format, and professors while Dawn was more passive in her resistance as she developed relationships and found ways to avoid work, or do the minimum that was expected. Their individual pathways were guided, no doubt, by prior experiences and interests in being defined in certain ways. However, both Jason and Dawn talked about their hopes for employment as also guiding their individual responses.

Jason saw teaching as a way to follow his heart and one part of his multifaceted activist identity; throughout the year, he created a distance between himself and those who would pursue teaching solely for employment. He enacted himself as a person focused on higher political and moral goals, critiquing students and faculty who did not do the same, and diverting his attention away from practice-related conversations that did not tie into how he defined himself as a teacher. Overall, Jason felt a disconnect between the kind of teacher he hoped to be and the way that the program, as he experienced it, was structuring teachers' work. At the end of the year, Jason decided

to not enter teaching right away; he planned to take at least one year off to travel and substitute teach, hoping to find a community that he wanted to be a part of, using his teaching as one part of community-level engagement and activism.

Dawn, who entered and remained focused on being employed after the program, tended to embed her critiques in accounts about her experiences, highlighting the positive aspects of the person or experience. On several occasions, she talked about relationships with her supervisor and cooperating teacher as being "beneficial in the long run" and, on three separate occasions said, "it's all about who you know." Her efforts were confirmed towards the end of the year when she was asked to apply at the same school where she did her student teaching. Although, Dawn described her time in the program as "not very productive," by the end of the school year, she was being encouraged to apply for a teaching position in the school where she did her student teaching. When I last spoke with Dawn, she was confident that she would complete the program and likely find employment in the community.

Conclusion

Teacher education is charged with moving student teachers from their largely personal, incoming understandings of teaching to a more balanced, professional view of their roles as educators. As such, preservice and inservice teacher educators have an incredible opportunity to consider how this interaction between identities and roles shapes learning within their teacher education programs. Teacher identity as a lens focuses attention to the personal resources that student teachers bring with them to the study of teaching through social positioning, arrays of experiences, and autobiographical understandings of teaching. Teacher role illuminates the conceptions of professional teaching that have been sociohistorically constructed and maintained across institutions.

This research suggests that student teachers will work toward their goals and make decisions about their program based on experiences as students and the partial view of teaching formed from their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975/2002). This paper offers a more nuanced treatment of student teacher agency, demonstrating that it is not a dichotomous exchange where the student teacher is completely constrained or exhibits absolute free will. Rather, agency exists in how people mediate their position and resources and is always in flux as the student teacher enacts different components of her multifaceted identity.

We should consider student teachers' identities as a starting point for teacher education; the challenge, then, is to learn how to bridge their identity to larger hopes for teachers and students. We also need to better understand how student teachers perceive faculty. Supervisors, in particular, must rely on their connections with schools to assist student teachers and maintain credibility, but they must also distinguish themselves as teachers of teachers (and learners themselves) to allow students to seek them for the guidance they need and deserve. Finally, we need

to examine how teachers' work is constructed and represented throughout the ecosystem of teacher education; teaching is represented in particular ways that shape opportunities for professional growth (for both student teachers and teacher educators) and, ultimately, define the profession.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

[1] The student population was predominantly white (70%).

[2] Most of these categories were developed during the conception of this study; the exception was "teaching as employment" which emerged from data analysis. For many students, employment concerns guided their participation in the program.

[3] These categories came from the student teachers' conversations about their development as teachers and what they located as influences (before and during the credential program).

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