SUPERVISION, MENTORING, AND SELF-DISCOVERY: A CASE STUDY OF A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER

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Supervision and evaluation by the school building administrator for the purpose of certification and formal assignment of a mentor are increasingly becoming part of beginning teachers' experience in American schools. At the same time, the purposes of supervision are frequently confused. Administrators and assigned mentors often find themselves expected to support and nurture beginning teachers while having to rate them for personnel decisions. The emphasis on rating, particularly through one of several instruments inspired by Hunter, focuses the administrator's and the mentor's energies on helping the beginning teacher develop various specific teaching skills.

Based on the assumption that improving teaching is essentially a technical challenge, the "supervisor diagnoses 'problems' during observations, prescribes a more efficient or effective course of action with reinforcement, and evaluates to see if these objectives are mastered or met."

When the supervisor notes a skill deficiency, the teacher receives assistance in one of many forms, followed by additional performance evaluations.

Over the last four years, I have been working with first-year teachers. Virtually all began their careers in schools where administrators and mentors, following district guidelines, emphasized a technical approach to supervision. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, these approaches to supervision continue to dominate school practice.

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ing effects of this orientation. Some effects were thrown into relief while I was writing case studies of first-year teachers as part of a larger study of beginning teachers' socialization and development. The case study reported here, of Heidi, proved to be most troubling and raises some fundamental questions about the dominate approach to supervision that are not easily answered by its champions.

THE CASE STUDY

In writing this case, and in thinking through some methodological difficulties it presented, I have drawn on insights from symbolic interactionism, schema theory, and recent work on metaphor. The emphasis here is on identifying and analyzing teaching metaphors as a means for capturing beginning teachers' self-conceptions as they evolve behind the public scenes of teaching, in context, and over time.

Metaphor and Analysis

Recently, interest has grown in the possibility of shedding light on teachers' self-understanding by exploring the metaphors and similes they employ. In part, this view is based on a growing recognition that human thought is primarily metaphorical, as Lakoff and Johnson eloquently describe it, and is our central means for coming to terms with our experience:

Just as in mutual understanding we constantly search out commonalities of experience when we speak with other people, so in self-understanding we are always searching for what unifies our own diverse experiences in order to give coherence to our lives just as we seek out metaphors to highlight and make coherent what we have in

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common with someone else, so we seek out personal metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own pasts, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals as well. A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and renegotiation of the meaning of your experiences to yourself. It involves the constant construction of new coherences in your life, coherences that give new meaning to old experience. The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself.

The search for metaphors to give coherence to experience predominantly is tacit, part of the "internal conversation" Blumer describes as the basis of self-formation; it is a matter of the individual making interpretations, of finding and testing meanings about the self in a situation. The challenge faced is to "make sense for oneself out of the experience and [the teaching] roles presented, and at times [to] find new meanings." Therefore, metaphors arise out of experience and, by giving "tacit knowledge voice," give coherence to it. Moreover, metaphors represent "purposeful modes of expression whose truth-value functions, while not literal, do reflect accurately how people think about their lives" and the situations confronting them. Analyzing teaching metaphors, especially metaphors used to represent the teaching self, one's "professional identity," is a promising means for identifying contradictions in and patterns of meaning and understanding. More specifically, by exploring changes in metaphor, we can identify changes in self-understanding, which are essential to comprehending the process of teacher development as it takes place over time and in context. As Russell and Johnston say, "Shifts in the imagery that teachers use when interpreting classroom events suggest changes in their perspectives on teaching." Although metaphor clearly informs practice, it does not determine it. Consistent with a symbolic interactionist view of socialization as interactive and meaning making as reflexive and purposeful, many factors outside of the

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11Eugene F. Provenzo, Gary N. McCloskey, Robert B. Kottkamp, and Marilyn M. Cohn, "Metaphor and Meaning in the Language of Teachers," *Teachers College Record* 90 (Summer 1989) 556.
individual teacher constrain practice. Thus, we must exercise caution when seeking links between metaphor and practice. As Grumet says, "A metaphor for educational experience will illuminate some aspects of educational practice and leave others in shadows."

Methods

Heidi was among a group of seven recently employed first-year teachers who volunteered to participate in a year-long, semimonthly seminar and support group where they would be able to discuss their teaching experiences. I worked closely with Heidi throughout her teacher-education program. Before the first group meeting, I explained to potential participants that they would be expected to keep a journal and a curriculum log, allow periodic classroom observations by me or one of two colleagues, and participate in a series of interviews.

Before the school year, I interviewed Heidi to gather background information. I focused on her teaching ideals, how and what she had planned for the first few weeks of school, and any concerns that she might have had. Subsequent interviews followed about every three weeks. Classroom observations that resulted in extensive field notes took place every other week. All interviews were transcribed for analysis, and starting in late November, transcripts were given to the teachers to become part of the record they were building of their first year of teaching.

Besides these data-collection methods, the teachers kept curriculum logs and journals. The logs contained brief descriptions for a single class period of the activities planned, a sentence or two about their origins, and why the teacher selected them for that lesson. The logs provided a record of the curriculum, its evolution, and modest information about how Heidi's thinking about content matter changed. Throughout the year, Heidi kept a journal. Initially, she focused her writing on the best and worst events of the day and their meaning, but by year's end she addressed a wide range of topics related to teaching and her feelings about them.

The story that follows draws heavily on a careful analysis of each data source. I gave specific attention to the analysis of Heidi's language, seeking the metaphors and similes that she found most compelling to give coherence to her experience. In addition, I took great care with classroom observations and in the interviews to identify and comprehend contextual and biographical factors that influenced how Heidi understood teaching and how she made it meaningful. Finally, at year's end, I wrote the case study itself and shared it

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with Heidi, and we discussed it at length. Heidi judged the case to be a useful and accurate portrayal of her experience of her first year of teaching and of her coming to terms with the role of teacher.

HEIDI

Heidi, a 26-year-old, recently married graduate in Spanish and English, came from a long line of teachers, including her father and several aunts, uncles, and cousins. Her mother worked as a school secretary. She claimed, however, she never intended to be a teacher. "I always swore I wouldn't be a teacher because everyone in my family is. It's something I just didn't want to do because they all did it." Her love of Spanish and her superior language abilities, developed while living in Argentina for 18 months on a teaching assignment for her church, ultimately led to her decision to become a teacher. Although her family discouraged her from teaching, especially her father who regretted his own decision to become a teacher because of the lack of "financial rewards and a lot of [administrative] hassles," Heidi concluded that no other career would enable her to work with the Spanish language in as interesting ways.

Initial Teaching Metaphor

Because of her reasons for becoming a teacher, not surprisingly, Heidi began the school year thinking of herself first and foremost as a subject-matter specialist: Teacher is subject-matter expert. "Competence" and love of subject matter were key values evident in the interviews with her before the beginning of the school year. Heidi did have goals besides teaching students Spanish, other teacher responsibilities also seemed significant. She thought that teachers, when teaching, taught more than just content, they also taught responsibility and good work habits, for example.

Work Context

South Nile High School, where Heidi began teaching, was a lower-middle and middle-class suburban school with an enrollment of 1,800. The school also drew students from a large working-class area traditionally occupied by employees of the mining industry. The industry's collapse in the 1980s crushed the expectations of many children of these workers who had taken for granted that they would be able to follow the path of their fathers into the work force. Academically, the school was undistinguished, neither outstanding nor particularly weak. Heidi was assigned to teach one section each of advanced debate and beginning debate, sophomore English, and three sections of beginning Spanish. She had four preparations, with one planning period.

Without question, had it been a year with abundant employment opportunities, Heidi would not have accepted the position at South Nile, but she did.
She was especially reluctant to teach debate, which she was certified to teach only because she had a minor in English. She had been a high school and freshman debater but had no experience whatsoever teaching debate. Obtaining the position at the high school, however, was contingent on taking over the debate program and so, out of desperation, Heidi accepted the assignment.

**Preparation for Teaching**

Heidi spent the summer before her first year of teaching attending university graduate courses, she had comparatively little time to get ready for school. Her lack of background in debate and her limited teaching background in English complicated her task of preparing. Because she had different backgrounds in each area, she approached planning in each area differently before and during the school year, trusting that, over time, she would be able to remediate whatever deficiencies arose.

In the process of planning in all three areas, Heidi framed the problem of determining what the students would be like by creating an imaginary student, an image based on "the kids I student taught." She further filled out the image by recalling herself as a public school student. Clearly, she had been academically a much better student than most of those she was destined to teach, and she was more engaged in school; she had been a student body officer her senior year, and so she felt much more positively toward school: "I loved high school." "Well, just today I sat down and thought, 'If someone asks me to do this [activity], would I want to do it?' ... I tried to draw myself back a little, [as] if I were an adolescent." And later, "I can still see myself there in the classroom as a student." Also, she called on her younger brother for advice. Still, Heidi realized she had a partial student image, a hypothesis, really, and that, generally speaking, she would have to trust that the materials she had been given were appropriate—at least some other teachers had found them so. Given the uncertainty of this image, Heidi worried about how well she would get along with the students, perhaps recalling some conflicts with students over her grading practices that arose during student teaching, and about how appropriate her curriculum would be.

Heidi had a solid academic background in English but had never taught the subject, she student taught sophomores in Spanish. Before school began, her aim was to outline the units for the term and to plan the first unit in some detail before school began. She started by reviewing the district program in English. "The district has some real intense guidelines ... but I'm not sure how to work with [them yet]." The guidelines included topics to be taught and suggestions for student readings. Functioning, as she described it, as a "puzzle solver," and with the guidelines in mind, Heidi sat down at a large table covered with all the materials she had accumulated as a teacher-education student in methods courses, materials borrowed from friends (both English teachers and teacher-education students), and some "things an English teacher
gave me at [the school].” Taking these materials, Heidi began sorting and sifting, trying to decide the unit topics she would teach and, within topics, which activities were suitable to her academically oriented view of teaching. The materials the English teacher provided were especially appreciated and, over the course of the year, a friendship developed between this teacher and Heidi. At year’s end, Heidi gratefully remarked that this teacher “supported me and encouraged me through tough times.”

Planning the curriculum for debate was a worry. She inherited a fairly successful program that the previous teacher had given up because he was simply worn out by all the work. Six years were all that he could stand, and he withdrew completely from the program and offered Heidi no assistance. Debate had no district guidelines, no adopted textbooks, and really, only a program based on personality and a calendar of upcoming tournaments. Heidi was concerned: “I have nothing,” she said. She had liked debate but had not thought of it in several years: “I know how to debate, but I don’t know how to teach anyone how to do it. So, that’s what I’m wrestling with right now.” After talking briefly with the former debate teacher, she concluded that she had no choice but to rely heavily on the more advanced students to help her with the less advanced and that she would simply have to develop a program while teaching it, keeping in mind that much of what she would do would be in response to the demands of tournament preparation. One result of this decision was that for most of the first two months of the school year, Heidi was only a day or two ahead in her planning, which was stressful.

For a person whose initial conception of herself as a teacher was tied to subject-matter expertise, the situation was troubling. As Heidi said:

Those [debate] kids are smart. They know more than I do right now. . . . What I’m afraid of is [that] I have to sort of pretend like I know more than I really do. I’m afraid that they’re going to lose confidence in me and not respect me as the person that’s really in charge. For some reason, it’s important to me to be in charge . . . [to be a person] they can work . . . with, and that can kind of help. . . . I’m afraid that I’m going to lose . . . my credibility.

Heidi entered the foreign language department with a program already in place. Before school began, she met with one Spanish teacher who gave her all the available program materials, including a checklist of topics to be taught, along with an orientation, for which Heidi was grateful. Ironically, Spanish, the area she needed least help in, was the one she was initially offered the most assistance with. In deciding how to use the school program, Heidi relied on her five months of student teaching with similar-ability students and her own vast experience with the language and in South American cultures. She planned out the first week with some care, but, feeling expert, was little concerned about it: “I could go in and teach Spanish without much preparation.”

In addition, Heidi planned for classroom discipline and management, basing her initial decisions primarily on her student-teaching experience. “I
think I was a little tough when I was student teaching. I expected a little too much. It was a tough situation. I've decided to just have a few common rules." She intended for these rules to remain the same throughout the year; she was determined to stick to them. One set of rules had to do with how she would treat disruptions in class:

I've decided as a teacher how many disruptions I'll allow a student to make in a class before I... turn them [over to the principal, or vice-principal, or before I... notify parents. I'll allow one disruption, and then the next one they're at the office. ... [The administration] will support that.

The First Week of School

Heidi received no assistance preparing to teach debate, some help for English, and quite a bit for Spanish. In addition, the principal gave her a brief orientation to the school. Nevertheless, in anticipation of her first day of teaching, Heidi was "pretty hyper." Despite the principal's orientation, she felt disoriented and uncertain of herself. The feeling of disorientation was heightened on the first day of school when she discovered an assembly that she knew nothing about was planned for the first period. The assembly "messed up the day's schedule." Following the assembly, in each class she made introductions and then shared a "disclosure statement" that contained her academic and behavioral expectations. There was little formal teaching.

Actual teaching began on the second day of school. Each English class began with the students writing for about 10 minutes in a journal on an assigned topic. During the first weeks of class, Heidi then had the students engage in various activities, most frequently reading a short selection from an assigned novel for the purposes of discussion or for answering questions on a worksheet or written on the board.

On the second day, she started the beginning Spanish classes by teaching the students how to answer the roll in Spanish. She also taught them how to ask, "What is your name?" and to respond "My name is..." The third day started with a review of the previous day's work; then she introduced the students to the use of Spanish gestures. From the curriculum log:

I want the students to learn [Spanish gestures] and use them with each other (I told them I unfortunately didn't know any of the "crude" gestures used in Spanish.) I did the gestures and had them write on a sheet of paper what they thought they might mean. I then did them again and asked for their responses. Sometimes they were right, other gestures were too difficult to figure out. The students then did them with me. We had a riot. They left class laughing and feeling like they could communicate, somewhat.

The next day she again reviewed what she taught and then had the students role-play situations when they could use what they had learned. The study of numbers, days, months, and time followed.

In advanced (varsity) debate, Heidi presented the topic that would be the focus for the year's competitions and began assigning students to gather and
organize evidence. In the beginning debate class, she gave an orientation to debating and assigned students to prepare outlines of speeches they would give. Only a week into the term, she found a speech textbook with “a good chapter on debate” that she was able to use to teach fundamentals to the novices while waiting for the varsity debaters to begin organizing and writing up evidence for the beginners’ use. The book helped her feel she had some knowledge of debate that the beginning students did not have.

Friday of the first week of school found Heidi feeling confident about her work and good about herself as a teacher. But she also felt tired, very tired: “My feet and legs were cramping and throbbing most of the day. My voice was gone, and I was dead tired.”

The Following Weeks of School

The second week of school also went well. In particular, Heidi began to feel she was connecting with the students in academically productive ways. She was, for example, pleased at the improvement she saw in the sophomore English class’s journal writing and in the growing honesty and openness the students expressed as they got to know and respect her:

The things they write are just fantastic. I’m . . . really impressed with what they’ve been able to do. [I enjoy] watching them improve just in a few weeks. [They are] more open. . . . They trust me, I guess, [which] makes me feel like I’m somewhat significant . . . .

Also, the students were responding appropriately and well to her teaching: “[In] both my Spanish classes, we’re having a lot of fun. The kids are laughing. They’re with me. I look out there, and I can tell they’re with me, and they’re excited [about the class].”

While much was going well, little problems began cropping up. An interested teacher or involved mentor could have easily cleared up many. At this point, however, Heidi was uncertain whether she had even been assigned a mentor and, not wishing to trouble the administrators, she did not know where to go for assistance. For example, on Tuesday of the second week she discovered:

I screwed up the computerized roll sheet all day. I marked the wrong week. (Why did they give me a new computer sheet with last week’s dates on it?) Then, I got the right week but marked it incorrectly. They brought my rolls back during 7th period to fix them—in the middle of class!

Other problems surfaced as well, each associated with not quite knowing what was going on in the school: “I don’t know what’s going on in this school,” she lamented. Being consumed with her work, she did not attend carefully to administrative details that proved to be a source of frustration. Shortly before the first faculty meeting, for example, Heidi realized she did not know where the meeting was to be held. Other problems arose from not being properly
informed. For example, she was not told how seriously the administration viewed prompt attendance at faculty meetings. Because she needed to listen to a student's speech after school, she was late for a faculty meeting and was reprimanded.

While troubling, these problems paled in comparison with the growing frustration she was feeling with other aspects of teaching. During the first several days of the year, Heidi was so busy planning her curriculum that she had not anticipated accurately the amount of time needed to keep up with paperwork, especially grading. She found herself dragging home each evening an ever-increasing pile of work to be corrected, only to be too tired to complete it. "I'm taking home the same box of papers that I take home almost every night," she complained. Besides grading papers, at midterm she needed to complete and send home "grade/failing" notices. Simply finding the time to organize her roll book proved to be difficult. Indeed, she was into the fourth week of teaching before she found time to fill in the grade book:

The kids aren't asking for papers, but last night I kind of set it all out on the counter and just thought, "I've got to grade these." So, I wrote all their names down in the grade book. I haven't even really done an official grade book yet. I was just ashamed of myself. . . . I'm concerned about how I'm going to do that . . . because I've got kids who I need to send failing notices on.

Furthermore, despite working hard, Heidi found that she could rarely be more than a day or two ahead in planning for her classes. With her lack of background in debate and in teaching English, and four different preparations, perhaps this situation was to be expected. Then, to compound her problems, the first debate tournament was scheduled for the first week of November, with several others following each weekend thereafter. Feeling stressed, Heidi found herself putting only minimal planning time into Spanish, trusting that her excellent content-area background would get her through the lessons in reasonably good shape. In debate, she resolved that she would simply have to run the classes as workshops where the students "won't be as dependent on me giving them instruction."

In English, she found herself working hard to gather materials from other teachers who were generally helpful.

Two of them are preparing a packet [of materials] for me [on To Kill a Mockingbird]. [Having these materials for teaching is] going to save me. That's going to help. But there are days when I'm not sure I can get the reading done and keep up. I'm assigning them 10 pages to read tonight, and I hope I can get the 10 pages done! This is a book I've not read!

Occasionally, Heidi did not decide what the activities for the day would be until the English students were writing in their journals at the beginning of the period. For a person needing and wanting to plan far ahead, this situation was extremely troubling:
If I got sick tonight, I don't know what I'd have a substitute do tomorrow in some of my classes. [My planning] is day by day... I hope my kids can't tell I'm winging it!

_Supervision, Mentoring, and Self-Discovery_

**Student Pressures**

Fortunately, Heidi had few discipline problems during this time. She relatively consistently enforced her rules, although at times she found being tough, as she said two months into the year, "really hard."

My policy was that you [turn in the assignment] the day it's due. The next day you get half credit. After that you don't get any credit. I had some kids give some really good speeches a day late. To think that I have to give them half credit has been really hard for me... [But] I knew I needed to do it.

Besides her consistency in enforcement, the routines Heidi established in English for beginning class helped eliminate off-task behavior there, as did the pressure of tournament preparation in the debate classes. Although she established few routines in Spanish, the often furious pace minimized student misbehavior. Also, in Spanish, Heidi included in the curriculum many interesting activities to engage the students.

Although Heidi generally felt good about her relationships with the students and was only somewhat concerned about student discipline, as the days progressed she became more concerned about poor student attitudes toward learning. A widespread and general disinterest in learning challenged her conception of herself as a teacher-expert. As a subject-matter specialist and as a former honors student in high school, this attitude was surprising and disappointing to Heidi; even the advanced debaters proved to be disappointing. Writing in her journal:

The varsity debaters have grown accustomed to sitting around during class working on other things, arriving late to class, and not committing to completing assignments. "This is how we spent last year," [they say].

In general, and unhappily, Heidi found that the students expected her to spoon-feed them content and to entertain them; they pressured her to lower her expectations. Neither activity did she associate initially with teaching. Nor did she intend to spoon-feed the students; although she hoped to provide interesting activities, she did not intend to become an entertainer.

Heidi was especially troubled by students who appeared to be self-destructive, and she felt pressured to do something to help them individually to learn: "I... care about them... They're teenagers, [and] life is hard. If they screw up now, who knows when they'll catch up?" She was surrounded by troubled teenagers needing help and, despite her commitment to academics, found herself wanting to help them. As her concern and involvement grew, the vice-principal advised: "Don't get too stuck on these kids." She ignored the warning.
**First Evaluations**

During this time, Heidi had her first administrator evaluation, although she was unaware she was being evaluated. The principal did a “walk through” evaluation, as he called it; he spent 10 or 15 minutes quietly observing Heidi to see whether she was having any noticeable difficulties. He did not see any and left pleased with how she was doing in class.

Shortly thereafter, the principal scheduled a meeting with Heidi to discuss the evaluation form that he would be using during the two mandated supervisory visits. Based on her performance, the principal would recommend to the superintendent of schools to either terminate or renew her contract. After two years of positive evaluations, Heidi would qualify for a “standard,” rather than a “provisional,” teaching certificate. The formal evaluation visit would require that the principal rate Heidi’s performance on a 1-to-5 scale in 14 areas, including her use of “learning objectives” and her “reaction to student response.” Each point on the scale represented a set of behaviors that, when taken together, represented a specific “level teacher,” such as a “5-level teacher” or “3-level teacher.” The message was not wasted on Heidi; when evaluated she would demonstrate the desired “5-level” behaviors, and she did. Heidi received for this and the subsequent evaluation in the spring, one in English and one in Spanish, very high ratings. The principal was extremely pleased with Heidi’s performance.

**Increasing Stress and Illness**

While performing well in class, behind the scenes Heidi was having problems. She was worried about and frustrated by students behaving self-destructively. In addition, she was overwhelmed with paperwork and grading; she was swamped by the demands of four preparations that made planning far ahead nearly impossible. Moreover, she felt guilty that she was neglecting her husband and their relationship. By November, Heidi began to feel that she was nearing a breaking point. “I feel like everything in my life is out of control!” Her frustrations caused an uncharacteristically negative attitude toward the students and toward teaching; she became a victim of dramatic swings of emotion. Debate, for example, threw her onto an emotional roller coaster over which she felt little control. When the students did well, she was exhilarated:

The students who worked the hardest last week had the most success at the tournament. Sometimes there are flukes, and the hardest workers don’t always reap the rewards. I was very proud of them. . . .

When they did poorly, she was crushed, and she struggled to displace some of the blame from herself and her feelings of inadequacy:

Because I have an English minor and debated in high school, I’m supposed to be able to coach debate and speech??? What did I get myself into? My debate students did not do well at a tournament last weekend.
Yet on the surface, from the view from the hallway, all seemed to be going well. Her recently assigned mentor—who was paid $650 to assume the role—saw no reasons for concern, nor did the principal.

At the end of the first week of school, Heidi reported that she was extremely tired, physically and emotionally. Occasionally, Heidi tried to make time for herself by having the students do seat work and by having them grade more assignments, but these brief rests did little to ease the demands of teaching. By Thanksgiving, she was exhausted, but for a while, her exhaustion was tempered by extreme anger when she learned that as a debate–English teacher she was entitled, according to district policy, to two preparation periods when in fact the principal had scheduled her for only one. Unfortunately, she could do nothing to alter the situation.

Her efforts to reach out and help troubled students only increased her difficulties, taking precious time away from planning and other valued activities. She discovered that because she was willing to listen to student problems, students talked, and talked, and talked; there was no escaping from them.

Some ask me about college and learning foreign languages. Others talk about the debate circuit. Some want ideas for asking guys they like to [the] Sadie Hawkins [dance], and then they run to me after they have asked them and ramble [on] about how nervous they are to get the boy's answer. It goes on and on. I sluffed the assembly yesterday in hopes of getting some reading done... and couldn't get away from students.

The problem was that Heidi had let the students know that she enjoyed talking with them; she was of two minds:

If I didn't ask them about their games every week, they might not have come to chat with me. But they are so cute; I cannot resist being interested in their activities.

Heidi had other pressures as well: She took graduate courses throughout the year in pursuit of a master's degree. Here, too, she had difficulty keeping up with assignments and readings and, especially, trying to maintain the high level of academic performance she and others expected. While trying to keep up with her job and her own schoolwork, Heidi pressed to the limits of her physical endurance. She slept little. Rarely did she take time out to eat a nourishing meal, relying on fast foods and colas to sustain her. She spent little time with her equally busy graduate student husband. And she let her portion of the housework accumulate:

My home life is really a scream. The bed hasn't been made for a week; clean clothes haven't been put away. Each morning, we rummage through one basket, hopefully it is the clean one, to get dressed. Not only do we use paper plates, but also paper cups [when eating]. I'm considering plastic silverware or not using any utensils at all!

With deepening exhaustion, Heidi fell ill. She had a case of the flu for the entire first week of October but missed only one day of school, feeling that
she "needed" to be in her classes. She did not fully recover her health, and even in the springtime she was "thoroughly tired" and battling a lingering cold. At the end of each school day, she would be "wiped out" and frequently would take short naps, only to awaken facing more work. Moreover, into April her weekends provided little rest and relaxation because of the debate tournaments held throughout the state and in a neighboring state:

Those tournaments... run the week together. My kids, my debate kids, are... working hard. Thursday and Friday at the last minute [I'm running around] making copies [of material they need]. And [then] I remember, "Oh, Shoot! I forgot to get the excuses for them!... By Sunday I'm dead, and I don't have any time to recover to start the next week.

In late November, Heidi's health, bad as it was, took a turn for the worst:

Yesterday I began to have back spasms, and by the time I got out of my car at home, I could not even walk. This has continued, and I have to go to the doctor this morning. As much as I want to withdraw a bit from debate and have the debate students become more self-supporting, I am having fits about not being at school this morning. They have a tournament this afternoon... I tried to cover all the bases, but I'm so worried about them.

After visiting with her physician, Heidi discovered that there was more than stress behind her physical problems, the physician told her she was pregnant.

Being pregnant and not feeling well, and being seriously overworked, Heidi looked toward Christmas break with great anticipation; she hoped to rest. Instead, Christmas proved to be emotionally an extremely trying time, perhaps one of the worst times of her life: She had a miscarriage just before the break. She returned for the few days before the break, despite being weakened and, as a way of coping, plunged herself into work with even greater passion than before, even putting aside for a time her graduate work. Feeling angry and bitter, she asserted, "Hey, I'm really going to go gung ho for my career; bag this mother business."

Returning from Christmas, Heidi worked as tirelessly as ever, pushing herself and filling every available minute with activity, in particular planning: "I go home and prepare ahead. That's what I do instead of doing other things like doing the dishes... or whatever, I just lesson plan." As a result, she got well ahead in her planning in each class for the first time, and she caught up with paperwork and even cleaned up her normally cluttered classroom. Work was therapeutic: "I'm working here because this is [a] place where I can succeed. You know, I can feel the success with the kids every day. Other things in life are out of control; I just ignore them." But she could not ignore them and felt troubled that, while totally withdrawing into work to heal, she was allowing her priorities to become even more unbalanced. She lamented, "I wish I were better at balancing things outside of school in my personal life; getting that together."
A Metaphor Shift

In response to the students and the pressures they exerted on her, her discovery that she enjoyed them more than she expected, the difficulties of her teaching assignment, and the chaos of her personal life, Heidi's sense of herself as a teacher changed. She began the year thinking of teaching in terms of demonstrating subject-matter competence: Teacher is expert. Early in the year, this sense of her teaching self was cast into doubt, especially by Heidi's teaching assignment. Clearly, for example, she could not function in debate as an expert, although for some weeks early in the year she tried. In the first week of November, she remarked:

I think what I’m afraid of . . . is that they’ll find out that they don’t have everything they need [for the tournament] or that there’s something I didn’t tell them and that was my responsibility . . . . I just feel under the wire . . . . The kids know a lot more about the topic than I do . . . . I just can’t do it.

Eventually, although at first somewhat unhappily, she came to terms with the problem: "[I've] resigned myself to accepting the fact that I don't know everything." The debate classes became extended workshops, no other alternative presented itself.

Heidi was unable to function as an expert, as she had hoped. She felt somewhat uncomfortable with that role in any case because of her work context and the problems brought to the classroom by students who needed more from teachers than just content knowledge. For a time, Heidi did not know who she was as a teacher, although to the casual visitor her classes were still going well, and the students were performing adequately. Writing in her journal: "Sometimes I am not sure who I am. Am I their teacher, their big sister, their mother, their friend, a police officer, a drill sergeant, a babysitter?"

During this time of confusion, she looked toward her students for self-confirmation and found in them her primary source of job satisfaction. In establishing friendly relationships with the students, Heidi sought and found pleasure in teaching. The kind and quality of these relationships came to define, for a time, who she was: a friend. Functioning as a friend, Heidi altered her relationship with the students and became increasingly open toward them and involved in their lives; many students, in turn, reciprocated by confiding in her also as a friend. Quickly, however, she discovered that while she enjoyed somewhat the role of teacher-friend, it was also troublesome; she had become overly friendly, too involved in the students' lives. Seeking to connect to her in friendly ways, the students invaded her space and consumed great amounts of time and energy that she so desperately needed for other activities. In frustration, she remarked: "I don't want students to feel they can tell me everything; I don't want to know it!" They made other demands on her friendship and took liberties in the classroom as well.

In the midst of her struggle to find herself as a teacher, Heidi held parent-teacher conferences. The two-day conferences proved to be an impor-
tant occasion for getting feedback on herself as a teacher, feedback that helped nudge her along in a direction that eventually led her out of confusion. Another role that included parts of her expert-teaching ideal and drew on the value she placed on friendship began to emerge, one that had deep roots. She spoke of the conferences in her journal and of the students' responses to them:

Several of the students whose parents should have come didn't show, but I wasn't surprised. I suspected that would be the case. The reports I had were not all good news, I was honest and tried to let the parents know that I will do whatever I can to help their child succeed. ... My gut feeling is that the experience was more beneficial for me than for the parents. ... So many of them said that their student really enjoys me and my classes. ... I realized how important it is to me that I can contribute some enjoyment for my students in school...

The students' responses to the conferences were very negative.... The ... consensus of the students was that their parents are deaf to positive comments from teachers. They can hear the negative remarks, which result in groundings, daily or weekly progress reports, and not a moment's peace when they are home without their noses in a book.

The tension Heidi noted between the adult world and that of the child became a key element in the teaching metaphor she eventually formed and tried to live out. Additional elements came from the students themselves. Although she came to care deeply about the students, some behaved in irritating ways. In particular, she found students who refused to work, who refused to exert any effort to learn, extremely frustrating: "The ones I'm hard on—some of them I like—but they're so lazy! They don't do anything. I don't want them to think I'm a softy, it's hurting them. It bugs me!" She came to value effort above performance in grading in contrast to her student-teaching experience when performance counted above all else. Gradually, Heidi began to perform a kind of triage on students. Those willing to work, she would meet halfway and invest energy and time in them; if they worked even harder, she would put additional effort into helping them learn.

Another element of Heidi's emerging teaching self was tied to her belief that caring for the students meant at times being hard on them. Being tough was all right; being easy was not doing them, or herself, a favor. Numerous occasions illustrated this development. In Spanish, Heidi began giving the students frequent tests to encourage them to do their reading and homework: "I'm tired of worrying about them; it is time for them to be concerned about their own performance." At the semester break, she removed from her beginning debate class all students who had not put forth a reasonable amount of effort and encouraged them to take other classes that were required for graduation. She also generally increased her work requirements, having decided she would no longer be a "Gift Fairy ... when it comes to grades."

Being tough, however, did not mean Heidi was uncaring; indeed, caring meant being tough but fair. With the students who did their part, those who met Heidi halfway, she maintained warm relationships, and classes were
frequently fun, a quality Heidi came to value greatly in selecting activities for increasing student motivation to learn. On their part, the students recognized that Heidi was caring and respected her for it:

I've had a couple of kids say that... "[You're] different from a lot of my teachers because you really care about us. We know that you like us; that you want us to have fun [and] want us to learn something.

For Heidi, becoming a teacher came to mean being a fair-minded, caring adult: Teacher is caring adult. Many factors played a part in nudging along this particular self-understanding, but one influence remains to be discussed: the terrible emotional strain caused by the miscarriage. Her response to the miscarriage seems to have moved her more quickly down the road toward becoming the caring adult teacher, more than anything else. For example, Heidi mentioned two months after the miscarriage that she felt "quite different" as a result of the experience, less inclined to do what other "people think I should" and less inclined to try to please; she was less disposed to define herself through the eyes of the students or anyone else, for that matter. She turned inward, seeking to locate sources of satisfaction and of self-worth that were genuinely her own.

Some aspects of life, she said, were simply beyond her control, and she would have to accept that, but school was a place where she could have a high degree of control and could "succeed"; in school, "things work." Success at work made bearing the grief and blunting the deep anger produced by the miscarriage easier. Succeeding meant having friendly, warm relationships with the students and caring for them, but not being friends with them; friends share pain, which she could not do. It meant getting the students to perform adequately, at least those who were willing to try, so she tightened her standards to more nearly reflect the subject-matter values she brought with her to teaching. It meant giving students others had written off an opportunity to perform in the hope that they would take it. A few did. In the success of these and other students, Heidi found confirmation of her values and of her worth as a teacher.

At Year’s End

At year’s end, Heidi had settled into a comfortable role that accurately reflected what she valued and who and what she was. The role differed from the one she envisioned at the start of the school year. The role was fitting; indeed, she felt as though she was being herself and no longer actually playing a role at all: "I catch myself in class being . . . more . . . [relaxed]. . . . I'm loosening up a little in class when it comes to [expressing my] personality. but I'm still pretty tight on the work." She genuinely enjoyed teaching: "I enjoy it. It's not like work anymore. It's not like punching in at the office and putting in my time. . . . It's kind of recreation, sometimes."
Although bone tired, she felt much less stressed and more in control of both her personal and professional life: "There are days that I go home that I don’t take anything with me. I just go home. That’s strange, [to me]. . . . I feel like I’m much more [in] control." At the conclusion of her first year of teaching, Heidi, after a long struggle, felt like a teacher, and her success spilled out, influencing other aspects of her life: "I think my whole attitude just about my life and everything I’m accomplishing is much more positive [than it was a few months ago]. I’m happy. I enjoy what I do. . . . I feel like I’m really a teacher."

CONCLUSION

In Heidi’s shift from content-area expert to friend to caring adult, several influences were evident. Certainly the most powerful factor undermining her initial conception of herself as a teacher was her teaching assignment. Except in her Spanish classes, Heidi was unable to function as an expert. She neither had the background nor the time necessary to acquire it. The students, who did not fit her image of what they were supposed to be like, also contributed to Heidi’s difficulty. She was forced to think that teaching involves more than developing subject-matter knowledge in young people. Nevertheless, for a time Heidi struggled to maintain her understanding of herself as an expert. Gradually, however, this view crumbled, and with its disintegration Heidi was left uncertain about who she was in the classroom.

Schema theory offers a useful way of thinking about what transpired. Heidi’s teaching metaphor operated as a schema that, like all schemata, "provided[d] the skeleton around which the situation [was] interpreted." It formed her model of what teaching was supposed to be and was the basis for framing and responding to problems, such as defining what students were to be like and what they would be able to do. Operationally, the “primary activity of a schema is the evaluation of its goodness of fit.” Heidi discovered that her understanding of herself as a teacher did not quite fit the situation; if she was to be able to find satisfaction in teaching and to function appropriately and well, she needed to reorganize or reconstruct her understanding. So, still wanting to teach, she accommodated to the situation while teaching. Schema theorists, drawing on Piaget, use the concept of accommodation to refer to moments when schemata necessarily must change in response to the inability to make a situation adequately and appropriately meaningful.

While struggling with her self-definition, Heidi inadvertently and unintentionally fell backward for a time onto a friend role and gave up, at least

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Ibid., p. 39.
partially, the ambition to function as an expert. This role, too, proved troubling and unfitting, in part because of the great demands of friendship. Consider the implications of this conception of teaching for framing problems, as Schön conceives of it: Students become friends entitled to make demands on friendship; discipline becomes a matter of constant negotiation; content is expected to be especially responsive to student likes and dislikes; grading becomes essentially a tool for motivation and reward; and failure is highly personalized. For Heidi, the demands of this conception of teaching and understanding of teaching-related problems were too great, especially because of her physical difficulties and the pressures of maintaining at least a minimally satisfactory home life.

Eventually, Heidi settled into a comfortable and productive understanding. Teacher is caring adult. She successfully accommodated to her situation, but she had to compromise her expectations and reconstruct many meanings she had formerly associated with teaching and with herself as a teacher. By compromising and adjusting some meanings, Heidi eventually produced a new conception, a new teaching schema, out of the old that fit the situation and proved satisfying.

Heidi mostly accomplished her new understanding on her own, with little help, although she claimed to appreciate the support she received in our seminar and said that journal writing was helpful, as were the kind words of a few teachers on the faculty. She especially appreciated the English teacher mentioned earlier. She received no help whatsoever from her assigned mentor, whom she rarely saw but who thought everything was going well, or from the principal, who formally evaluated her twice and highly praised her. Indeed, he and the vice-principal thought Heidi was an outstanding teacher and thought of her as being other than a first-year teacher.

[The] principal . . . told me that he was talking to the vice-principal about his surprise at my success in the classroom as a first-year teacher. The vice-principal told him he could see that any day as he walked by my room. They concluded that I was not a [typical] first-year teacher. That comment meant a lot to me, [but they] didn't see the things I went through outside of the classroom, they were not aware of my stresses and personal conflict . . . but I was successful in the classroom.

Because Heidi was successful in the classroom, she received little assistance, as the principal admitted: "She had such a positive evaluation that I never asked her about whether or not the mentor [was helpful] . . . If a person is successful, [we] may not spend much time with her." Had she been having obvious and serious problems, she would have been helped, he said.
The technical approach to supervision defined what was a serious problem, and none of the problems Heidi faced, apparently, counted. More accurately, her problems were invisible, hidden by the template used to assess competence. The entire accommodation process that found Heidi shifting from teacher-as-expert to teacher-as-caring-adult took place tacitly, out of sight, like the quest for metaphors itself. To discover what Heidi was experiencing would have required relating to her in ways not encouraged by the evaluation form or the approach that mediated her interaction with the principal.

As I have thought about Heidi's experience, and that of other beginning teachers I have worked with, three generalizations about supervision stand out. First, when the beginning teacher is found to be technically competent, the function of supervision becomes problematic, and supervisors and mentors tend to withdraw, expecting the beginning teacher to request assistance if needed. In their vulnerability and need to appear competent, however, few are able to do so, to ask for help is to admit failure. Second, when the purpose of supervisor evaluation is confused, where summative and formative evaluation are intermixed, the importance of obtaining the desired rating is the dominating concern for the beginning teacher, who establishes a tentative, cautious relationship with the supervisor or mentor that discourages openness. Third, the emphasis on developing skill and rating performance results in a serious oversimplification of the process of becoming a teacher, which must be viewed in relationship to biography and conceptions of self-as-teacher and to the teacher's entire life situation. Each generalization points toward a constrained and destructively partial view of teacher development and the process beginning teachers go through as they try to negotiate a satisfying place in schools and to establish their professional identities.

The third generalization requires elaboration. The problem of finding oneself as a teacher, of establishing a professional identity, is conspicuously missing from most lists of beginning teachers' problems. Although this omission is not surprising because most studies are grounded in a technical view of teaching and thus the emphasis falls on the lack of various skills, it is serious. Admittedly, the problem is slippery, often manifesting itself in other problems such as inconsistency, which in turn produces difficulty with classroom discipline and management. Nevertheless, the problem remains grimly insistent.

Contrary to the implicit message of technical approaches to supervision that one proper teacher role is supported by research, there are, as Heidi

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discovered, many and diverse teaching roles; there is no clear role in which beginners can or should be socialized.

It would appear that the conception of teaching as a profession in its own right is unclear. This lack of clarity in both the profession and the [educational] system may be a significant factor in the difficulty many teachers have in finding for themselves a clear role or a place in the system. The profession is unclear as to the authority, responsibility, and freedom teachers have when they teach, while the system is unclear as to what authority, responsibility, and freedom society has given it.

Moreover, the process of role negotiation is inevitably highly idiosyncratic, involving the interaction of the individual in specific contexts that reflect various institutional priorities and practices. Here, the place of the individual is pivotal. The beginning teacher’s self-conception, based on years of experience perhaps as a parent but certainly as a student, is inevitably at the center of the negotiation process. Through these conceptions of self and of teaching—which are generally not fully articulated and often not always fitting to the work situation but are nonetheless powerful—operating as schemata, the beginning teacher makes the teaching situation either productively or unproductively meaningful.

Approaches to supervision that ignore this reality are inevitably miseducative and of limited use to the beginning teacher.

Because the process of producing a professional identity is highly idiosyncratic—a characteristic that undermines much value of supervision based on a technical view of teaching and teacher development—the challenge of giving appropriate support when the desire to give is present is seriously complicated. Nevertheless, the process of teacher development is not illogical, incomprehensible, or lacking in purpose, a view that would reduce mentors and others interested in providing beginning teachers with assistance to attempting to help them feel good while they suffer. To the contrary, the process of negotiating a teaching role is grounded in a logic that flows out of the individual teacher’s self-conception and teaching expectations linked to this understanding, and out of the process of meaning making itself and the “internal conversation” within the context that enables meaning. Moreover,

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the logic is linked tightly to the beginning teacher's need to negotiate a place in the school and a set of relationships that provide a satisfactory level of security and belonging, respect and self-esteem, and a sense of personal competence; these needs must be fulfilled if role negotiation is to be successful. Thus, the logic can be explicated, understood, explored, adjusted, and built on in the quest to establish a productive, satisfying teaching role. In this process, supervisors and mentors can be invaluable if they are willing to honor the beginning teacher's biography and conceptions of teaching and of self as teacher. Supervisors and mentors must recognize this foundation on which the beginning teacher stands when negotiating a teaching role, which is the stuff out of which the role itself is eventually formed. The role of the mentor and perhaps of the supervisor shifts to that of helping the beginning teacher to uncover and articulate the "implicit theories" or schemata through which the world is interpreted and made meaningful.

Based on this view, the challenge to supervisors and mentors is first and foremost to help beginning teachers discover who they are as teachers. Unfortunately, many mentor programs appear to take this aim for granted or ignore it altogether. At the same time, however, the programs usually include, besides the aim of improving the beginning teacher's instructional skills, provision for emotional support. This focus is inherently conservative, encouraging an adjustment rather than a remaking of the teaching context and the meanings associated with it. Following Polanyi, beginning teachers need assistance to make explicit their implicit conceptions about self as teacher and about teaching, for only in so doing can those meanings become susceptible to the influence of reason, an essential step toward becoming reflective practitioners.

Heidi's story challenges some assumptions associated with technical approaches to supervision, and it raises questions about support-oriented

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mentoring programs that aim to help beginning teachers cope with and feel good about teaching. Heidi had few if any obvious skill deficiencies, and so she was abandoned by her assigned mentor and ignored by her principal who openly praised her; she performed well in the classroom and appeared not to need assistance. Despite performing well in the classroom and participating in the support group seminar, she engaged in a serious but private struggle. Thus, from a technical view of teaching she may have not needed a mentor, nor perhaps did she need additional principal support or assistance. From a broader view of teaching and of teacher development, however, she needed but did not receive much assistance of another kind—coming to terms with who she was as a teacher. Instead, she struggled alone, for the most part, and in private. Although undoubtedly a common experience, Heidi's story is certainly an unfortunate one that has lead other promising beginning teachers to quit teaching for seemingly inexplicable reasons.

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Walker's comprehensive text stresses curriculum thought and practice historically and in contemporary context. Walker thoroughly treats curriculum deliberation, curriculum theory, national curriculum policymaking, school and classroom curriculum change, the development of curriculum plans and materials, as well as scores of other perennial topics in the field of curriculum. Every page contains clear and careful explanations or arguments.


This book explores the differing curriculum traditions in Britain, France, Russia, the United States, Latin America, India, Japan, and China. The authors examine the transfer of curriculums from Europe and America to colonial states and the difficulties faced in bringing about change. The analysis is done in relation to four curriculum theories: essentialism, encyclopedism, polytechnicalism, and pragmatism.