TENSIONS IN LEARNING TO TEACH
ACCOMMODATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TEACHING IDENTITY

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This article analyzes how Sharon, a student teacher, negotiated the different conceptions of teaching that provided the expectations for good instruction in her university and the site of her student teaching and how her effort to reconcile the different belief systems affected her identity as a teacher. The key settings of Sharon's experience were the university program, her third-grade class at Harding Elementary, and her first teaching job. During student teaching, Sharon experienced frustrating tensions because her cooperating teacher provided little room for experimentation, mentoring instead with a mimetic approach. When in her first job, Sharon had the opportunity to resolve instructional problems with greater authority. We see tensions that require a socially contextualized intellectual resolution rather than simply one of relational accommodation as potentially productive in creating environments conductive to the formation of a satisfying teaching identity.

Keywords: identity; teaching identity; professional development

What I am concerned about is I think that throughout this semester, being with my [cooperating] teacher as opposed to being at [the university], I just hope that I don't totally switch to her side.

Sharon made this remark 1 month into her student teaching in a third-grade classroom at a public elementary school. She was concerned that the values and mentoring approach of Catherine, her cooperating teacher at Warren G. Harding Elementary School, provided her with little opportunity to practice the constructivist teaching approach she had learned in her university program.

In this article, we explore how Sharon negotiated the different conceptions of teaching that framed instructional expectations in her university and Harding Elementary. We focus in par-

ticular on the ways in which her effort to reconcile the different belief systems affected the development of her identity as a teacher. For the analysis, we rely on tenets of activity theory, a framework that focuses on the settings of human development and the ways in which social practices within those contexts promote development toward a particular ideal (see Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). The two key settings we discuss in Sharon's experience are (a) the university program, which emphasized what the faculty called constructivist beliefs about teaching, and (b) her third-grade class at Harding Elementary, particularly as overseen by Catherine in what Sharon and others characterized as a "traditional" teaching approach.

Activity theory assumes that human development—in this case, a teacher's construction of a teaching identity—is a function of action within social settings whose values embody the settings' cultural histories (Cole, 1996; Smagorinsky, 1995, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978, 1934/1987; Wertsch, 1981, 1985, 1991). This emphasis on settings distinguishes activity theory from theoretical perspectives that assume that teaching is a solitary profession, shifting attention instead to the ways in which contexts provide tools, constraints, and practices that channel people toward particular ends. With this more social focus, activity theory provides a way to analyze how early-career teachers are guided toward particular beliefs about teaching and learning through practices that put these beliefs into action. The teacher, in this conception, is not so solitary, instead being part of a larger social system that includes the broad educational policy context, a community's vision of education, a school's mission toward realizing it, a curriculum through which to implement it, administrators invested in enforcing it, colleagues who help to establish it, students who have been socialized to participate in it, and other relationships.

The tension Sharon experienced between the university and school settings illustrates what Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) called the "two-worlds" pitfall, straddled by student teachers who find themselves torn between demands of the university that assigns their grade and the school that structures their first teaching experiences. From an activity theory standpoint, these two settings are responsive to different constituents, have different overriding motives, respond to different ideals, and consequently emphasize different values and practices, with the university setting more concerned with ideals and schools with their gritty application.

Activity theory is predicated on Vygotsky's (1978, 1934/1987) notion that the origins of human consciousness are found first in culture, that is, people enter and interact within cultures whose frameworks for thinking they then internalize. Activity theorists then try to understand the nature of particular cultures and how people within them appropriate their surrounding culture's conceptions through mediating tools (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999; Leont'ev, 1981; Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989). Of particular concern in Sharon's case are the ways in which she was urged to appropriate different sets of pedagogical tools in each of the two key settings she straddled during student teaching. The university elementary education faculty were unified in calling their epistemology *constructivism*; included in this approach were such practical tools as the use of manipulatives, cooperative learning groups, and other mediums that allowed for hands-on, open-ended learning. The school provided no formal language for its approach; Sharon, however, had learned at the university to refer to and critique the school's method as traditional teaching, which emphasized such tools as worksheets, basal readers, and other vehicles through which to inculcate knowledge in students.

For Sharon and other teachers, these two settings provided the two worlds and their pitfalls described by Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985). Beyond the differences in conceptions, there are distinct differences in the roles that student teachers play in the two settings (Grossman et al., 1999). The university reinforces a student role for preservice teachers, with the expectations of getting a good grade based on meeting professors' standards. At the

same time, student teachers occupy an apprentice teacher's role while in the schools. With the ultimate goal of assuming a full-fledged teaching role, student teachers are likely to regard the school's values as having greater pragmatic value. Their goal is to be judged proficient in terms of the values that govern the school. Although the university has some opportunities to reinforce its values during supervision visits, these occasions are fleeting relative to the constant presence of the mentor teacher and ubiquity of the school culture.

The tensions felt by student teachers as they inhabit these two worlds affect the ways in which they construct their teaching identities. Among activity theory's considerations are the ways in which individuals adopt particular practices and ways of thinking to solve specific problems within a setting (Tulviste, 1991). Learning to teach poses a number of challenges for novices, including developing a conception of the subject matter and how to teach it (Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002), developing a conception of teaching and learning and their role as a teacher (Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002), learning to manage student behavior (Bullough, 1989), and learning to work with colleagues (Smylie, 1994). Addressing these problems and others contributes to the development of an identity as a teacher (Britzman, 1991). Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that identity formation comes about through action within communities of practice:

> Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities. (p. 53)

Learning to teach is thus in part a process of constructing an identity in the midst of systems of relations. During student teaching, there are multiple systems of relations involved in overlapping, often conflicting activity settings that make this identity formation quite challenging. Although it is tempting to say that one's identity formation may be thwarted by an obstructive experience, one could only run afoul if developmental paths led to clear and anticipated destinations. Rather, we see identity formation coming about through relationships and experiences that mediate the path of development—planned or pleasant or neither—so that one becomes, as Lave (1996) argued, a dif-ferent person.

Given the focus and theoretical framework for the study, the following research questions framed the investigation:

1. What goals (and thus conceptual and practical tools for teaching) were emphasized in the activity settings of the university program and the student teaching site?
2. In the setting of the student teaching site, how was Sharon guided toward Catherine's conception of effective teaching?
3. In what ways was the development of Sharon's teaching identity affected by her experiences in these settings and subsequently the site of her first teaching job?

CONTEXT

The University Program

Sharon attended a 4-year research-oriented university in the U.S. Southwest. She was a 5th-year student majoring in elementary education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, one of three departments in the College of Education. The College of Education offered preservice training for prospective teachers through an NCATE-approved 5-year program, with the 5th year taken for graduate course credit. Most courses in the program were taught by tenure-track faculty. Ideally, students would take 2 years of general course work and then declare an education major. During their 3rd and 4th years, they were required to take core courses in the college's psychology/technology and administration/foundations departments. In the elementary program, in the final semester of their 4th year, they took a set of five content area methods classes from curriculum and

instruction faculty, each accompanied by 30 hours of field experiences. In the 5th year they would, for graduate credit, do their student teaching and take an action research class during one semester and take electives during the other.

The College of Education's elementary preservice program faculty accepted and imparted the tenets of Piagetian constructivism as the umbrella concept to guide their students' thinking about teaching. As part of their program implementation, they streamed these principles throughout all elementary education courses taught within the curriculum and instruction department. Students in the program learned to contrast the program's notion of constructivism with what their faculty termed *traditional teaching*. This contrast was raised in the first few minutes of Sharon's initial interview for this study when she offered, in reflecting on her own education, "I think that every experience that I can remember, I do not remember any really constructivist teachers. I had really traditional teachers."

We next outline the tenets of constructivist and traditional teaching that Sharon understood from her experiences in the university program. We should stress that in reporting the beliefs of Sharon and other students we interviewed, we do not subscribe to or endorse the constructivist/traditional binary. These two constructs, rather, served as Sharon's and her professors' primary conceptual tools for classifying approaches to teaching. We feel that it is important to review them as she described them in interviews and tape-recorded group activities to provide an understanding of what she internalized through her experiences in the preservice program, particularly the elementary block of five methods courses where constructivism was most emphatically emphasized.

Traditional Teaching

Teachers and texts are authoritative. This assumption includes the corollary that the role of students is to remember the knowledge passed on by teachers and texts and to demon-strate their knowledge by reporting it correctly on examinations. When asked to elaborate on what she meant by traditional teaching, Sharon began by saying:

> I think that—well and this is to my understanding from what I've been taught at [the university], my teachers were more—they were more, I guess, output based—they wanted work sheets and things like that and we didn't do a lot of the writing [inaudible], discussion. I didn't do a lot of constructing my own knowledge. I did kind of what I was told to do. . . . For the most part, I didn't get to say, this is what I feel about the story and get to bounce ideas off of other kids so I could construct my meaning of the story. It was kind of like the teacher would help us—help us determine what the story meant to her and then to the whole class and not to each individual person. It was . . . when you ask questions then you want a certain answer . . . leading questions.

In this conception of teaching, students are not assumed to benefit from putting knowledge to use through constructive activity; rather, their role is to memorize information for the purposes of testing.

Knowledge is fixed and transmitted. The notion of right answers suggests that knowledge is fixed and can be transmitted intact and recalled for assessment. Sharon continued her description of traditional instruction by saying:

> All of my teachers always used basals and then we'd have to basal out—you know that have answers there and always ask us—you know, people would say different things but they would wait for that right answer, you know, that they wanted in writing. Yes, this is what we're talking about, you know, and then point that out, and so I was just kind of a follower in growing up just because I would follow the leader—what the basal wanted.

As Sharon reveals, meaning is located in the text, with the teacher determining which answers are right and wrong.

Teachers rely on textbooks for curriculum and materials. These assumptions about authority and knowledge transmission suggest the need for particular kinds of texts, those that provide the arena for assessing students' mastery of fixed knowledge. As Sharon's remarks revealed, the basal reader provided the basic material for her own elementary school learning, typically suggesting a teaching approach that relied on the

transmission of authoritative, fixed knowledge about texts.

Constructivist Teaching

Constructivist teaching in contrast centered on providing the environment in which students had the opportunity to construct meaning for themselves. Constructivist teaching as described by Sharon and other research participants from her cohort included the following traits:

Learning and learners are the focus. The elementary preservice teachers contrasted traditional teaching with approaches that focused on students and how they make sense of the texts they read and produced. Sharon described some high school teachers who followed these different sets of assumptions:

> I say constructive isn't traditional because I seem to remember the teachers that cared what I thought, and I consider them constructivist. [Laughs] Maybe that's not fair but that's how it—my definition of constructivist is in my mind, that they—I guess they allowed me to put my input in and learn—I guess that I also thought that my input wasn't important at that point in my life.

Sharon's reflection on her own sense of worth underscored the idea that by caring about and respecting students' ideas and feelings, teachers can help students construct not only knowledge but positive self-images.

Students' activity is stressed. The emphasis on students' construction of knowledge suggests that classrooms need to be organized to allow for students to move about and manipulate their environments. Sharon described a college English class in which

> we had projects that we could do, and with our project, we could get with a group and basically do a presentation as a result. Some people did. Some people draw stuff like the characters and the story written in red, actually role-play, and other people did like news broadcasts and talking about whoever, Hawthorne or whoever, and then different people did different things or you could do an essay.

Rather than receiving knowledge, as in what she believed to be traditional approaches, stu-

dents are here expected to construct it through activity in a stimulating environment.

The emphasis on learners suggests attention to diversity. Because of its emphasis on learners, constructivist teaching was characterized by the elementary preservice teachers as promoting attention to classroom diversity because students have the opportunity to take their learning in personal directions. Sharon described the ways in which her learning changed when she entered high school:

> It didn't seem so rigid that I couldn't express myself, you know, and we couldn't discuss it and things like that which, you know, sometimes when you're analyzing sentences and things like that, I mean in some ways, I mean that's harder to be constructivist because you know, you have to—I mean this is a noun and you can't contest that, you know, I mean you have to say okay, this is how the sentence is and we've got to break it up this way and you've got to know what this is.

Viewing students as individuals was tied to the notion that teachers should view their work as caring for the whole child and not simply transmitting knowledge from texts to students.

Appropriate materials include literature and writing, with meaning constructed by the learner. In contrast to the basals employed by traditional teachers, Sharon described a constructivist teacher as using such "authentic" materials as picture and chapter books, that is, books designed to be read and enjoyed rather than books designed to teach principles of reading. Sharon recalled no such learning until middle school:

> I can remember my seventh-grade teacher very vividly and she—I feel like was more constructive once again. It really threw, at least me probably, because she expected us to express ourselves, and she wanted a lot of feedback on what we thought of literature [inaudible]. Seventh grade is when I remember we started actually reading like a book—a whole book—and then analyzing it. . . . I know we were expected to . . . have a discussion, a group discussion about the literature and things like that. I just remember being horrified, and I didn't know what to say, and I remember that the hardest thing for me to get over was there was no right answer. You know that just frustrated me because I was always—and I've done this in [inaudible] way, but I was always a teacher pleaser, you know in growing up and I recog-

nize that. I always—I wanted the right answer to make the teacher think I was smart or whatever and—which I did, you know, get awards and things because of that—but I don't think it was because I was such a good student. I guess I knew what buttons to push.

The more ambiguous nature of literature (as opposed to the closed-ended nature of basal selections) confounded Sharon's understanding of how to do school. As an adult learning to critique education, however, she adopted the university's view that open-ended instruction in relation to open-ended texts provided students and teachers with a more stimulating learning environment.

Knowledge is connected. A final trait of constructivist teaching related by the preservice elementary teachers is that knowledge is whole and connected, rather than being isolated into subject areas, parceled into curriculum strands, and divided into component parts. Sharon described this trait when referring to her greatest learning during her college education:

> Probably one of the most important things [I learned at the university] has been by the reading instruction that I learned just because I didn't have a grasp on strategy that people used to teach from and how you can connect these to all the other subjects. That's another thing, is just to incorporate a major integrated—integrating all of your subjects so they all tie in, and the kids can get a wider view of everything put together.

This quality was described in other interviews as integrations, a weaving of learning through and across the curricular strands.

Caveat

We should again stress that our presentation of the constructivist/traditional dichotomy comes from the students' own account of the teaching approach presented in their university program. Other sources corroborate adherence to Piagetian constructivism: professors' course syllabi and assessments, faculty Web pages where it was listed as a theoretical orientation, and search committee deliberations where it was argued as a factor in hiring new elementary education faculty. As reported in other studies from this research (e.g., Cook et al., 2002), how-

ever, the bifurcation of teaching and learning into two mutually exclusive categories worked better in theory than practice. Program faculty did not always teach according to constructivist principles and, even on those points of general agreement, interpreted the concept differently enough to create uncertainty among students regarding how to be constructivist teachers. A teacher such as Catherine might be traditional in her fragmentation of the curriculum but constructivist in her care for her students. These poles nonetheless provided Sharon with a vocabulary through which she characterized teaching and learning, serving as umbrella concepts for describing general and particular approaches to teaching.

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Any mention of Warren G. Harding Elementary School to local educators brought the response, "Harding is a very traditional school." Harding's approach emphasized phonics and basal readers for reading instruction, workbooks as the primary arena for student writing, teacher authority and student discipline, and other instructional approaches that stressed "basic skills" as building blocks for literacy. The workbook activities in the lessons required students to produce language in proper form in response to text-generated prompts and questions. The roles for teachers and students were those that typically follow from such instruction: Teachers occupied highly authoritative roles in the classroom and assumed their responsibility to be that of a powerful broker between the authoritative instruction in the textbooks and the students, whose role concerned mastering the information transmitted by teacher and text.

SHARON

Prior to college, Sharon had lived her whole life in the same state. She described her schooling as consisting of mostly traditional teachers. Following high school, Sharon attended one year of college as a business major in a neighboring state, then transferred back to a univer-

sity in her home state where she became an elementary education major. Sharon said that she wanted to be a teacher who

> is supportive and cares about what the kids know and more than anything that I'm driven more by the kids wanting to learn [than] what my classroom should look like or what I feel like my teaching role should be. . . . That's what I feel like a good teacher should be—always be open-minded [and] willing to change and willing to adapt to different kids' levels and different environments.

CATHERINE

Catherine was an experienced teacher in her town's school system. She was a figure of some authority within the school and school district, being the head teacher in her school, a position that made her in effect the school's assistant principal. Catherine described herself as a "very confident" person even during student teaching, and her confidence translated to a great sense of command in her relationships with students and adults throughout the school and district.

In her own teaching, Catherine followed the school curriculum faithfully. Her lessons, and those she required Sharon to teach, followed the outline of the school's basal reading series. Catherine had a strong presence that students respected. She exhibited her authority in the firm control she exercised over students in terms of discipline and in the ways in which she organized and presented lessons. Furthermore, her room was decorated in a manner that suggested that her own priorities were paramount in the classroom. The classroom walls were bedecked with the letters of the alphabet, posters stressing correct language usage, and other didactia that revealed the values of the curriculum. The walls included no work produced by students. This display suggested an emphasis on Catherine's sense of what was important for students to learn rather than students' activity and production.

IMELDA

Imelda, Sharon's university supervisor, was a doctoral student in elementary education at the university. She was a native of Malaysia with a special interest in elementary mathematics education. During the semester of Sharon's student teaching, Imelda supervised a total of 11 student teachers, making five visits to the classes of each, while continuing her doctoral studies. This onerous workload limited the time she could spend with any one student teacher and made her classroom observations more a function of when she could schedule a visit than what was propitious for the student teachers.

Imelda's style of supervision was to observe a lesson and then, rather than provide an assessment of the lesson, to ask the student teacher how the lesson had gone. The sessions were designed, she said, to get the student teachers to reflect on the lesson and think about how it had worked. Student teachers consistently said that they would have preferred a direct critical evaluation of the lesson that pointed out their mistakes and suggested methods for improvement. Ironically, when asked for the rationale behind her method of response, Imelda said that American students do not like direct feedback and prefer a less critical approach; that if she were in her native country, she would respond with a more direct and acute appraisal.

Imelda's indirect style of supervision mitigated the influence of the university program during Sharon's student teaching. Rather than reinforcing the values of the university program, she provided a forum for student teachers to evaluate their own teaching, usually in terms of the lesson's purpose within the school's conception of teaching.

METHOD

Data collected during student teaching consisted of interviews with Sharon prior to student teaching and before and after each set of classroom observations and interviews with Catherine and Imelda; two group-concept map activities conducted with Sharon and other participants in the research; field notes taken during nine classroom observations; and artifacts such as Catherine's planning book, the state-mandated curriculum, and other documents. Similar data were collected during Sharon's first

year of full-time teaching, though were more limited due to the great distance of the community in which she taught from the university campus.

The data were analyzed with the Atlas/ti qualitative data analysis software to code each observation and interview. The interviews and field notes were analyzed to identify the pedagogical tools that were emphasized in the different settings of Sharon's university program and student teaching. (This coding system and the research design as a whole were originally developed by Pamela L. Grossman, Peter Smagorinsky, and Sheila Valencia for research conducted through the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement.) Each tool was coded in each of the following categories:

- Name of tool: This category included dozens of tools, including collaborative learning, basal readers, manipulatives, listening centers, *Weekly Reader*, workbook exercises, and many others.
- Type of tool: This category described whether a pedagogical tool was conceptual (i.e., capable of being abstracted to apply to many circumstances, such as routines) or practical (i.e., more immediately applicable, such as a seating chart).
- Area of teaching in which the tool was emphasized, including student diversity, classroom management, teaching, learning theory, assessment, writing, speaking/listening, reading, and language.
- Attribution that Sharon made regarding where she had learned of the tool, including her apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), her teacher education coursework, her mentor teacher, her colleagues, curriculum materials, mandates (e.g., the state curriculum), and so on.
- Problem toward which the tool was applied: student learning, identity, context surrounding classroom (e.g., policy), relationships, motivation, perception of students, control, classroom logistics, and classroom interactions.

For instance, during an interview that followed an observation during her student teaching, Sharon said:

> They do a worksheet. And the worksheet—I believe the listening center should be more like an enhancement and enrichment type thing because the sheets are so difficult. I mean they really are tough sheets. I mean some of those words at the top of their sheets—I mean every time—and I think you've probably no-

ticed this—I have to get them through each vocabulary word to make sure that they have some understanding to get it.

In this statement we identified two tools, both practical: the worksheet and the listening center. The area in which she used these tools was reading. Sharon's attribution of her use of standardized test was to her mentor teacher in an earlier "quotation" (Atlas/ti's name for any circumscribed segment of text). She used these tools to solve a set of problems: to promote student learning about the tests and to contribute to her evolving identity as a teacher (we inferred that her identity was affected because she critiqued the instruction she was required to do). Each quotation in each interview and set of field notes was coded in this manner.

One conceptual tool that recurred in our coding was what we called *accommodation*, defined as a grudging effort to reconcile her acceptance of the conceptual tool of constructivism with Catherine's tendency toward traditional teaching methods. We next review the differences in activity settings that encouraged these different conceptions of teaching, how Sharon appropriated one rather than the other, and how she then accommodated these beliefs to the pragmatics of the workplace.

RESULTS

The reporting of results follows the sequence outlined in the research questions. We first review the goals (and thus conceptual and practical tools for teaching) that were emphasized in the activity settings of the university program and the student teaching site, then focus more closely on her student teaching site (which was the focus of data collection) to understand the social practices through which Sharon was guided toward Catherine's conception of effective teaching. We finally consider the ways in which Sharon's teaching identity was affected by her experiences in these settings. We additionally provide a glimpse of Sharon's teaching career as she moved into her first year of full-time teaching in a school some distance from the university and Harding Elementary.

University and School Settings

University. We have previously described the university program's emphasis on the conceptual tool of Piagetian constructivism. The manner in which this conception was reinforced was revealed during the first concept map activity. We coded constructivism as a conceptual tool because of its overarching quality, as described in the following exchange:

> Student: [Constructivism] is your theory of teaching. I mean that is like if you agree that [inaudible] as hands on experience as opposed to you filling a cup. Everything you do is going to have that here.
> Student: Constructivism.
> Researcher: So where is it—if it is so all encompassing, where does it go?
> Student: At the top with teacher and then the arrow pointing down.

Sharon further defined this conceptual tool as follows:

> I believe constructivism is just allowing children to develop their knowledge with your guidance. I mean, you helping them kind of do some boundaries and kind of helping lead them to discover things for themselves, and in their own way but also making sure they don't discover something in the wrong way, where they think that they can tie their shoes by rolling them up or something. You kind of help them along but you let them discover for themselves instead of spoon-feeding them or just pouring knowledge into them.

This excerpt reveals the ways in which the students emerged with a general conception of constructivist teaching. Other data from the study suggest that the students' understanding of constructivism lacked clear definition (Cook et al., 2002) due to inconsistencies in their professors' perspectives on the concept, discrepancies between what the university faculty professed and what they modeled in their own teaching, and the absence of a constructivist perspective or vocabulary in the schools. Sharon's remark that constructivism requires inquiry but that a teacher should ensure that students "don't discover something in the wrong way" suggests that the concept was presented and internalized generally but not without unresolved inconsistencies. In Vygotskian terms, such loosely unified associations indi-cate the formation of a pseudoconcept rather than a concept (Vygotsky, 1934/1987; cf. Cook et al., 2002). The elementary education program's effort to instill a constructivist outlook, then, was undermined by the lack of consensus that follows from constructivism's own relativistic principles (see, e.g., Phillips, 1995).

School

The activity setting provided by Catherine's mentorship was quite different from that found at the university. In the following interview, Catherine revealed her beliefs about the qualities she sought to develop in an early-career teacher:

> Researcher: When you work with Sharon, what are the kinds of things you look for in her teaching?
> Catherine: I look for classroom management, rapport with the children, well-prepared for her lessons, and it's not done at the last minute, the way she carries herself, I look for voice tone, I look for all those qualities.
> Researcher: Why are those the things you focus on in student teaching?
> Catherine: If they're not well-prepared, they don't have voice tone, they don't have rapport with the children, it doesn't matter how well they're prepared, the lesson's not going to be carried out. The same with classroom management. If she doesn't have control, the best lesson is lost.

Catherine's interview transcript focused on issues of control, with an emphasis on classroom management. In contrast with the activity-oriented, multidirectional approach that Sharon had been taught in her university program, Catherine stressed the need for teachers to exercise firm control over students. Much of her feedback to Sharon came in the form of suggestions on how to achieve better discipline. Toward the end of Sharon's student teaching, Catherine used her influence to arrange an interview for Sharon to get a job at another elementary school within the district, working with children with severe emotional disturbances. Catherine strongly believed that this situation would be of great benefit to Sharon in her career development because she would be forced to learn how to exert disciplinary control over the most challenging students.

Catherine's conception of good language arts teaching was consistent with Harding school's reputation for traditional values:

> I would place most of my emphasis on I would say structure. Because structure is going to cover any kind of expository writing, where you have, if the child can write a good sentence, then they've got some of the basic skills of capitalization and punctuation, complete thought, and I feel like by the time they leave third grade a good language arts basis for a child would be to be able to write that solid paragraph, and that's going to include spelling. . . . Language arts starts with being able to write and know the basic skills.

Catherine elaborated on her view of basic skills, stressing that "to be able to have it correct, we've got to have all those other things in place. Spelling, and I also place a great emphasis on grammar, correct verb agreement." To help students learn these basic skills she believed in "the old-fashioned diagramming of sentences" which she thought the university should emphasize in its preservice education program. Her conception of good language arts teaching centered on providing a foundation in grammar: "I don't care if it's reading or writing because all of your workbooks that go with your basals in reading, those aren't just comprehension skills, those are language skills." Such knowledge should first be the province of the teacher (who should learn grammar in the preservice program) who then predicates language arts instruction on providing students with these basic language skills.

In this section we described the stated beliefs of the university and school programs. In the next section, we illustrate how these conceptions came into conflict when the settings began to overlap: when Sharon, with nondirective university supervision, did her student teaching under Catherine's guidance.

Conflicting Conceptions of Teaching

Catherine's approach to mentoring Sharon was in the mimetic tradition (Jackson, 1986), that is, Catherine assumed that Sharon would learn how to teach by imitating her methods as closely as possible. Catherine stated that

Catherine: A teacher learns to teach by first, observation. . . . Then I'd say the modeling by the teacher consultant. I can see myself in Sharon because she's taken on a lot of the classroom management skills I have.

Researcher: So it's a combination of watching and then how would you describe that second part, you know, you said observing good models of teaching and then—

Catherine: Internalizing. She will be internalizing. I would say that when an intern first comes to you they are trying to internalize. I would say more classroom management skills because the university cannot teach that. That is by experience. Then as she tries her wings or his wings on different subjects with feedback from me then things are corrected, things are added.

In Sharon's view, there was little opportunity for constructing a personal teaching style within Catherine's mimetic mentoring approach. She often expressed frustration at the lack of opportunity she had to teach according to the principles she'd learned in her preservice program. This fear prompted her concern that she would eventually go over to Catherine's "side": that she would become the traditional teacher she had learned to deprecate at the university. Sharon did not feel that she was given the opportunity to wing it, to add new knowledge by applying Catherine's methods or those learned at the university to new situations.

Catherine's values were well illustrated in the lessons observed during Sharon's student teaching. The language arts lessons were arranged according to routines built around the basal reading series and accompanying workbook. Students were expected to move briskly from lesson to lesson with minimal off-task conversation. Several lessons observed revealed the same pattern, which Sharon confirmed was the routine way in which Catherine required her to teach. In the typical lesson, a story would be accompanied by a series of worksheets in the supplementary workbook. One might be on vocabulary in which students classified words. Another vocabulary worksheet might be on using new words, with students matching definitions with words and putting words in blanks in a prewritten paragraph. Another worksheet might be on compre-

hension, with students being instructed to complete the summary of a selection by filling in facts from the story.

Each worksheet page also had a generative task at the bottom of the page. A typical such task might say, "On separate paper, write a paragraph about your favorite kind of music. Use three words from the box." Or "Pretend your friend is very nervous about making a mistake. On separate paper, write three sentences of your own telling your friend what to do to stop worrying." Throughout the observations, whenever they would come to the generative question at the bottom of the page, Sharon would say, "No bottoms"—that is, students were instructed not to do these open-ended tasks. Students would mark them out with large X's and move on to the next worksheet. Sharon verified that Catherine followed this procedure whenever the class used the workbooks.

Sharon referred to her frustrations during the second concept map activity, conducted at the end of student teaching, when she and other members of her preservice cohort turned to the traditional/constructivist continuum:

> Sharon: What traditional versus constructive is? She was head teacher. She is boss. [group laughter and remarks] Well, I'm serious. There is no way I would dare tell her she is doing something wrong. You've got to be kidding! . . . My teacher had taught for like 19 years in the same room so I didn't dare even say that her bulletin boards looked crooked or anything. . . . Even if I had had the freedom to try out a lot of things, my third grade, these kids didn't respond well to constructive learning. They went crazy. Because then if you had like open discussion or if you were having something that was not their norm or they raised their hand to respond, they just went berserk. . . . They couldn't handle not having their structure they were so used to.
> Penny: Yeah, see I found out even in the first grade level there was just so much structure in the poor kids' lives that they had been in kindergarten and transition and now in first grade. I mean that's 2 or 3 years they're getting this really traditional structure stuff and so when I would come in and try to do creative kinds of things, they are like, "I don't know what you're trying to get at." I'm like, "well use your imagination and like [inaudible]." That was real stressful.

The last part of this exchange came between Sharon and Penny, another teacher who did her student teaching at Harding Elementary and found that the environment made constructivist teaching difficult (see Smagorinsky, 1999). Penny had the insight that even in first grade, many students had spent one half of their lives at Harding, including preschool, kindergarten, transition (an extra year of preschool), and first grade. In first grade, then, they were heavily enculturated into the school's authoritarian structure, a condition that was reinforced and strengthened with each subsequent year in school. To return to Vygotsky's (1978, 1934/1987) views: The students' frameworks for thinking had been internalized through their social practices of schooling. Even as early as first grade, the students believed that there was a right way of doing school, one that they had appropriated through their participation in the cultural routines emphasized at Harding Elementary. Not only did their enculturation to these schooling practices make it difficult for Sharon and Penny to enact constructivist teaching methods under the guidance of their mentor teachers, it made it difficult for students to recognize constructivist teaching as worthwhile and respond appropriately to its more open-ended approach.

Accommodation

Sharon's experience during student teaching suggested to us the image of a dance studio in which the footsteps are imprinted on the floor, with the novice dancers' role being to follow precisely in those footsteps to learn their routines. Catherine's mimetic approach to mentoring left little room for Sharon to practice constructivism, either as a teacher with her third graders or as a learner about the practice of teaching. She expressed this frustration during our interviews following her teaching. Toward the end of her student teaching, we talked about her experiences, with the following exchange taking place:

> Researcher: Last time we, last time I saw you, you said, "Sometimes I'm worried about going over to her side." Do you remember that?
> Sharon: Yes. (laughing)

Researcher: What um, could you talk a little bit about that?

Sharon: Um, I was just really concerned. And actually it's funny that you say that because I've just I've been talking to a lot of my professors, and I'm trying to get, make sure that in my graduate work next semester that I have a little bit from each subject kind of to refresh my memory. I'm just not practicing anything that I learned in college. I mean, anything. . . . It's you do, ok, well you're finished reading this story, you go to workbook. And I feel like that's almost making me, making me not think. . . . I guess I'm jealous of the people that got at the schools with the teachers that are real original and real creative and want them to think about different things and ask them questions about, well why did you teach it this way? . . . And I feel [cheated].

Researcher: So when you say you're worried about going over to her side, it's that you're not getting the opportunity to practice?

Sharon: Right, and I don't think, I mean, I think it's easy for people who just say that it would be easy to use whole language, but I think you have to practice with that. . . . She tests them out of the textbook, and their reading grade is worksheets. I mean that's their reading grade, across the board. Worksheets. Their language arts grade is worksheets and letters. . . . So I guess that's what I'm saying. That it would be easy for me my first year teaching to go over to the other side just because I'm afraid, just because I'm not confident enough in my abilities, you know, cause [inaudible] and I don't have, especially in a school that [is traditional]. I mean it's so much easier to say, I give up, I'm doing it just like you, and we're all going to be happy campers, and no parent will complain.

Here Sharon discusses what we coded as *accommodation* to describe a teacher's deference to more powerful forces in the environment: mentor teachers, centralized curricula, and so forth. In her relationship with Catherine, Sharon had little choice but to accommodate Catherine's vision of effective teaching to preserve a positive relationship and receive a supportive evaluation. Catherine's imposing presence left her little choice but to abandon her prospects for enacting a constructivist pedagogy during student teaching:

> But I don't know if I am going to be able to do it within this classroom. I don't know how much leeway she is going to give me. And I know not to step on her toes. She will definitely bop me back in line. That is pretty evident. She doesn't—I mean, she thinks that I should be there to learn from her and not to in any way take over her classroom. Which is fine.

Epilogue

The next year Sharon found a job at Hoover Elementary in Oakton, a town about 200 miles from the university and from Harding Elementary. The distance from campus made data collection difficult and resulted in a sketchier portrait of her first year of full-time teaching. Furthermore, the researchers began to take different career paths following Sharon's first year in her job, making it difficult to maintain contact with Sharon after her relocation to this faraway town.

Sharon's first job was teaching kindergarten, an assignment outside her specific area of training but in what she felt was a good situation. Her school was located in a prosperous small city economically anchored by a large international business and in what Sharon described as "socioeconomically . . . the highest school" in town, a middle-class area drawing largely on wealthy neighborhoods but also including students from lower-middle-class families. The school district's cultural homogeneity was revealed by its predominantly White enrollment and openly Christian orientation. Sharon reported, for instance, that throughout the city "preschool is pretty much based out of a church." Furthermore, a December observation revealed Sharon leading the class in making Christmas ornaments, singing Christmas carols, reading "The Night before Christmas," and working on a project called "My Christmas Book." She also reported heavy involvement on the part of her students' mothers, who for the most part had not entered the workforce. She appreciated and felt pressured by their intense interest in their children's education.

The school's only other kindergarten teacher was a veteran of several decades who taught next door to Sharon and was described by her principal as "very dominant," someone who had "no reason for Sharon to be successful because it would be competition." She was, in some ways, reminiscent of Catherine, although without Catherine's sincere goal of nurturing Sharon toward what she believed was excellence in teaching. In previous years, this colleague had been allowed to select her roster of students first, based on her knowledge of the

district's families and demographics, and assign the remaining students to her junior colleague, a practice she tried again with Sharon. The school's second-year principal, aware of and disturbed by this custom, had not allowed it to happen with Sharon.

Sharon characterized her colleague's instruction as traditional because "she's a very domineering, controlling person. . . . It's kind of like she's trying to do some whole language type things but then she still has the mind-set of a traditional teacher." Their relationship, although not overtly hostile, was not close either; Sharon believed that "she wasn't making me look bad but she was kind of trying to intimidate me" by making continual references to Sharon's youth and inexperience. This colleague provided little assistance to Sharon during her first year of teaching.

Because the principal recognized this situation, he assigned Sharon a mentor teacher, Lauren, who taught kindergarten in a different school in the district. This relationship turned out to be beneficial to Sharon, who regarded Lauren highly and only felt tension because Lauren's son was a student in her afternoon class. In general, though, Lauren spent a great deal of time with Sharon, observed her frequently, and gave her useful feedback on her teaching.

The principal encouraged curricular integration. The city schools, said Sharon, were "not truly phonics driven but they incorporate phonics into everything" through the Reading Readiness program, a reading approach built around phonemic awareness and phonological processing. The principal described his own conception of how to integrate a curriculum:

> If our letter is M, you know, everything you do relates to [the letter]. Every sound, you know. If you read the story about cows, well, what does the cow say? Moo. What does moo start with? You know, every single opportunity. . . . They don't need to come out of kindergarten learning to read but there are so many prereading skills that can be taught in those early years to give them that foundation so that when they do come into the first grade, second grade and really start into that reading, you know, it'll click so easy for them because they've built that foundation in those early years. And even if they're

gluing the macaroni onto the paper, count them as they're gluing them on.

The limited data available did allow for a sense of Sharon's trajectory as a teacher within this setting. In reflecting on her student teaching, Sharon felt that Catherine's mentorship provided her with some ideas on management and room décor but little in terms of a teaching conception that she could employ in her new setting:

> I tried to learn a lot off of my student teaching or cooperating teacher. And she talked a lot about getting your teacher face on and all those things and I really have tried to do that. But as far as like, well, and being organized with my plans. That was something I really did. And just a few things like that. But otherwise, well, and bulletin boards, too. She really taught me how to organize bulletin board ideas to make those. But as far as like actual teaching stuff, I mean it's totally different. I'm like in a totally different ballpark. . . . I mean, my cooperating teacher, she went straight out of the book pretty much. I mean, we went right out of the book. And now I don't have textbooks. I mean, it's just a totally different environment.

In this new environment, Sharon employed what might be called constructivist activities. For instance, during one observation the children were given choice time, during which different sets of students built a tower with blocks, painted at an easel, played with plastic frogs, colored flowers, sat at a listening center, played with a Brio set, drew at a table, and improvised at a "pretend center." Another assignment required them to create their own bugs, draw them, and write about them. Less constructivist lessons included counting beans for a math lesson, writing numbers from 1 to 50, and completing district-required reading readiness tests.

Lauren's general endorsement of Sharon's teaching was tempered by her belief that Sharon lacked a "big picture" for teaching kindergarten, that is, she didn't really know "where she's going" in her teaching and had no overarching curriculum objectives for her students. For example, Lauren felt that Sharon's writing instruction was going poorly because she had no vision for their writing. Sharon's statement that "My goal is just that they're comfortable with writing, and they will, at least, attempt to

write things and attempt to express themselves in writing" was, Lauren felt, too vague to help the students make progress as writers. Much of Lauren's mentorship was dedicated to helping Sharon develop this bigger picture so that Sharon could teach with greater curricular integration and purpose.

DISCUSSION

It is a well-worn conclusion among teacher educators that schools and universities often don't match up well in terms of their beliefs and that teachers from progressive teacher education programs often gravitate toward the conservative values of schools within a few years (e.g., Borko & Eisenhart, 1992; Ritchie & Wilson, 1993; Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981). Presenting that finding alone would advance the field little. As we have discussed in other work on this project (Cook et al., 2002; Grossman et al., 1999; Smagorinsky et al., 2002), we believe that activity theory provides a useful apparatus for making sense of the experiences of teachers such as Sharon beyond the commonsense "use it or lose it" explanation of the quandary she outlined toward the end of student teaching: that she was in Catherine's class "to learn from her and not to in any way take over her classroom."

We would like to focus our final consideration of Sharon's experience in student teaching on questions of identity, keeping in mind the relational notion of identity we borrow from Lave and Wenger (1991) and Cole (1996; cf. Grossman et al., 1999). In this conception of identity, identity is interwoven with context; indeed, we look to the root of the term *context* to see its origins in the notion of weaving. One's identity, then, is not simply the emergence of internal traits and dispositions but their development through engagement with others in cultural practice.

As a self-described "teacher pleaser," Sharon was skilled at doing school regardless of the teaching approach. This disposition suggests that, like volunteer research participants in general, Sharon had a need for approval (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1975). We make this interpretation not to describe a negative trait but to explain her ability to get along, to understand and adapt to local norms easily, and to get the approval of those who taught and supervised her. She had succeeded in traditional classrooms as a student, had adapted to constructivist teachers when older, had earned high praise from her university professors in education, was well-liked and admired by Catherine during their time together at Harding Elementary, and was regarded as an excellent prospect by her principal at Hoover Elementary. Her identity as a student and teacher, then, was tied to her relationships with authority figures who guided her. On the surface, acceding to Catherine's will and priorities was "fine" and an appropriate concession, given how firmly settled Catherine was in her classroom domain. At other times, Sharon revealed that she felt cheated by being denied the latitude that she saw available to some of her peers in their more flexible and reciprocal relationships with their mentor teachers.

Sharon's relationship to the university and its faculty was that of a student, a role that she played well. This role changed when she entered Harding Elementary where the motive was different, stressing more restrictive goals and emphasizing her role as a teacher rather than as a student, albeit a teacher whose relationship with her mentor was that of a student. At Harding, her path of identity formation did not follow the route she originally anticipated because Catherine's strict guidance did not enable her to use the constructivist tool kit that she had learned at the university. Sharon instead found herself engaging in cultural practices—the exclusive reliance on basal readers and workbooks, the mimetic stance that she and her students needed to adopt, and other practices that she associated with traditional schooling—that, she felt, were not enabling her to employ what she thought were more effective tools and become the teacher that she had envisioned during her university course work. Although retaining that image, she feared that without putting its tools to use she would go over to the other side, to blend into the school environments that defined and supported teaching in ways that ran counter to the philoso-

phy she had appropriated during her formal learning at the university.

What is interesting about Sharon's case is that she did not follow the pattern predicted by Grossman et al. (1999), who argued that the teaching role impressed by schools is likely to supercede the values and practices that are stressed in the university. From an activity theory standpoint, the motive of the school setting will potentially override that of the university setting because of the change in role from student to teacher and change in evaluative clout from professors to mentor teacher. Sharon accommodated to Catherine's mentorship because Catherine provided little room for any alternative. She did so, however, grudgingly, resisting the motive of Harding Elementary and the goals of Catherine. Given Catherine's mimetic view of mentorship, their relationship involved little reciprocity, little of the weaving inherent in an activity theory notion of context and identity. As such, Sharon's student teaching experience allowed her to grow neither toward her own preferred goals as a teacher nor toward Catherine's. She feared indeed that she would go over to Catherine's side because she would have experienced no other alternative.

We see in Sharon several tensions that affected her identity work as a teacher. We see tensions between the two worlds, the two activity systems, of the university and school, in terms of motives and the tools required to enact them, and in terms of the practices best suited to appropriating the cultural tools sanctioned within the setting. Her first year of full-time teaching provided an environment that gave her more determination in finding her identity, although if she had begun teaching at Hoover in a different year—without her principal's supportive intervention—her relationship with her domineering kindergarten colleague might have been oppressive, as it appeared to have been for the succession of junior faculty who preceded her.

In effect, Hoover Elementary provided Sharon with a social context that included, to use her university's parlance, traditional and constructive elements: Phonics instruction, for instance, was mandatory yet expected to be integrated across the curriculum. The learning environment for new teachers also included the guidance afforded by curriculum mandates and mentoring yet deliberately created space for constructing an identity within these channels, as when the principal intervened to mitigate the influence of Sharon's autocratic colleague.

From our study of Sharon's experiences, we see the ways in which tensions can be productive. In retrospect, it appeared that Catherine's mentorship prepared Sharon in atomistic ways—running scripted lessons, managing behavior, and carrying out other discrete aspects of classroom life—but did not provide her with the big picture that Lauren found lacking in her ability to conceive of and plan toward overall curricular goals. The tension of gaining the broader vision appeared to be one that provided useful goals in Sharon's development as a teacher. Hargreaves and Jacka (1995) argued that the absence of tensions during student teaching can be more seductive than inductive: Student teachers who never face philosophical contrast or conflict may well face an ideological meltdown when moving to settings that invalidate their ideals. On the other extreme, smothering tensions such as those Sharon experienced with Catherine can be discouraging.

We conclude by returning to Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann's (1985) metaphor of the pitfall—literally, a pit covered with a flimsy camouflage through which an unsuspecting traveler will fall to entrapment. During student teaching, Sharon, steeped in university ideals, indeed found herself in a pitfall, hemmed in with no place to go, with only the goal of getting out. This tension provided her with little room for growth. More productive tensions awaited her at Hoover Elementary, where she found herself coming up short as a curriculum planner. At Hoover, she was guided toward the goal of developing a clearer vision for her children's learning and developing teaching methods to help them realize that vision. We see such tensions—those that require a socially contextualized intellectual resolution rather than simply one of relational accommodation—as potentially productive in creating environments

conductive to the formation of a satisfying teaching identity.

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