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Most professors typically have little formal preparation for their careers in academe and thus learn their craft by doing. Often those who seek support during this process look to experienced colleagues to mentor them. Mentoring, as experienced by most new faculty, tends to be individual, informal, and random. The role of the mentor for new faculty is often assumed by the department chair, though some junior faculty report that they use multiple mentors to help them with their varied responsibilities in teaching, scholarship, and university service. The mentor initiates the new faculty member into the customs and expectations of academic life, shares knowledge about the institution, and helps him/her establish an identity within the academic community. In this paper, we describe what we learned about mentoring through a self-study of our socialization into higher education.

A Self Study of the Influences of Mentoring

Studying our socialization process presented us with a unique opportunity to engage in what Richardson calls "formal research" and "practical inquiry" simultaneously. Our self-study research has contributed to the knowledge base in our field and also greatly enriched our day-to-day work with students and colleagues. As educators in institutions of higher learning we must engage in the study of our practice if we are to promote a positive stance toward self-study and self-reflection in our students.

We used autobiographical reflection as a way of making sense of our experience. In order to document the experience we were about to embark on as new professors, we made a commitment to regularly write letters to each other using e-mail and collect artifacts of our work over the course of our first two years as new professors in departments of education. The data we collected included: 84 e-mail letters, 79 of which were 800-1700 words in length; two audiotaped and transcribed discussions of our work conducted towards the end of each academic year; and program descriptions and course syllabi we developed in our new positions.

Our first step in analyzing our data was to identify general themes by using the constant comparative method. From this initial analysis we chose to explore the topic of mentoring. We independently reviewed the data a second time to identify explicit and implicit references to mentoring. The results of our individual analyses were combined to create a data set that included 78 segments identified by both of us. This process allowed us to establish the broadest

possible data set relevant to mentoring. As autobiographical researchers, we recognized and valued the ability of each of us to read between the lines differently and to look through slightly different lenses because of our past and present experiences. Once our individual analyses were completed, we discussed and decided on a specific set of questions that would guide our final review of the data on mentoring. We generated guiding questions:

- Who did we identify either implicitly or explicitly as mentors?
- How have mentors influenced our work as beginning professors?
- What shape did mentoring take for us?
- What are the characteristics of mentoring in our experience?
- How did our relationships with mentors change over time and why?

Using this list of questions, each of us independently coded the data set on mentoring. We compared our results and where there were discrepancies we came to consensus through discussion. In the remainder of this paper we share what we learned from our self study and suggest ways that the insights we gained might inform mentoring practices in institutions of higher education.

The Influence of Mentors on Our Practice

From our review of the data, we discovered that our socialization into higher education was influenced both by individuals who had served as our mentors for four years while we were graduate students and by individuals in the institutions where we were hired as assistant professors. Past and present mentors shared similar qualities. They were: (1) knowledgeable about the culture and expectations of the institution, (2) well respected within the institutions as teachers and scholars, (3) supportive and accessible to us, and (4) shared a similar philosophical orientation with us.

Woven throughout our letters to each other were references to our mentors in the teacher preparation program where we had worked as full time graduate instructors. Perhaps the most powerful influence of these previous mentors was evident in what we valued in teaching teachers and how we believed these values could best be assimilated by students in our new institutions. The strategies we adopted in working with our students were grounded in the values of building community among students and practicing experiential learning, two central themes of the teacher preparation program content and structure at our doctoral institution.

We often used our experiences with former mentors as a frame of reference when attempting to evaluate our effectiveness in our new positions. Reflecting on how to use the authority that came with his new position as field programs director, Steve writes "I have a renewed appreciation for that part of Mary [former mentor] that patiently waits for discussion to occur, for an issue or idea to be bandied about as people explore its facets, before she chimes in with her 'authority.' One's authority can really get in the way sometimes." At times, we internalized the voices of these early mentors to help us give a name to what we were experiencing. For example, discussing the imminent hiring of an administrative assistant for his office, Steve writes, "Once she's in place, I foresee pulling back from the time I spend in the office and retreating to my hideaway for reading and writing. What does Mary call it, 'recaptured time?' 'Found time?"

When we accepted positions as assistant professors, both of us identified our department chairs as mentors early in our first semester of employment, and Steve identified as a second mentor the individual who had been in the position of field director prior to his arrival. The mentors we identified during our first weeks as assistant professors assumed several important roles that oriented us to the expectations of the culture of our new workplaces and helped us develop a sense of self-efficacy as new professors. In the early weeks of Steve's appointment as an assistant professor, his department chair offered Steve expert insider knowledge of the workings of the department and college. Steve writes, "he spends a lot of time discussing department policies, history, etc. with me and is always available when I have questions about my job." Steve's secondary mentor was also extremely helpful in the early months of Steve's role as field programs director. Steve writes, "I run things by him frequently, and I think he appreciates being included. He's able to point out potential problem areas with district personnel, supervisors, and faculty when I sound him out about pursuing a policy alteration or implementation." Nancy's department chair also provided her with important information about department and college expectations and an understanding of what was valued in the tenure and reappointment process. She writes, "In conversations [with the department chair], I have learned that the dean. . . places heavy emphasis on teaching and service in school." The department chair also served as a sounding board for Nancy's ideas about how she might structure her courses and work with student teachers in her new job.

In addition to informing us about our professional responsibilities, our department chairs helped us to balance professional obligations to teaching, service, and scholarship. To support Steve in his reappointment process, Steve's chair arranged to bank Steve's spring semester assigned time so he could teach a class early enough to get student evaluations in his first year review portfolio. Nancy's mentor was active immediately in easing her into her work in the department by scheduling her classes at convenient times, as well as guiding her toward professional enhancement opportunities, e.g., inviting her to participate on a state education task force. The role of mentor as protector became evident to us when both of our mentors used their power as department chairs to protect us in situations where we perceived we were making high stakes decisions that would have an impact on our ability to be viewed as effective professionals in our new workplaces. For example, when Nancy and a colleague experimented with team teaching and received poor student evaluations, the department chair acted to insure the evaluations would not harm their chances for reappointment. "Fortunately, our department chair supports our collaborative work," Nancy writes, "and has asked us to write a memo that will go in our files to support our experimentation."

As assistant professors, we both sensed that there was an expectation for us to participate in initiating change within our departments. Steve was the first person to assume the position of field programs director as a tenure track faculty position at his institution, bringing stability and continuity to a position that had been passed around almost from year to year for quite some time. Nancy was asked to chair a curriculum committee charged with developing a mission and a set of standards to guide the undergraduate teacher preparation program and was given a course load reduction to develop closer ties between K-6 schools and the university. To support us in assuming these leadership roles, our department chairs offered us advice while also encouraging us to be independent thinkers. Steve writes, "He's also careful about interfering. My sense is that he wants an independent administrator, not a yes-man who can't do anything without checking

with him. At the same time, he reinforces at virtually every opportunity (appropriately and professionally) that we are a policy-driven program, that policy is thoughtfully constructed, and that I must be careful about doing things ignorant of policy or contrary to it."

In contrast, we perceived that our former mentors' expectation for us as graduate students was to learn how to become teacher educators by assuming a large amount of the responsibility in implementing a program structure and philosophy that were already in place. We were given the autonomy to make decisions about the way we chose to teach particular courses, identify appropriate school placements for student teachers, or work with student teaching supervisors; however, the decisions had to adhere to the existing program philosophy and were shared with our mentors on a regular basis.

Because the teacher preparation program we worked in as doctoral students was built on a collaborative model, we participated in the planning discussions as apprentices to the collaborative process. We had many opportunities to co-plan and team teach with our mentors. When we became new professors, the context in which the mentoring relationships developed were individual rather than collective, i.e., each of us informally identified individuals as mentors and it was through individual relationships that we were socialized into our new work cultures. The individual relationships naturally led to us align ourselves with these individuals in our departments, and these alignments had an impact on our relationships with other faculty. "Unlike my colleague who arrived at the same time I did, I became quickly aligned with one person in our department -- the department chair," writes Nancy. When a disagreement arose between the department chair and another faculty member in the late spring of her first year, Nancy expressed concern about how her perceived alliance might have an impact on program work she was engaged in. "I need to do some serious thinking about where I see myself in relation to these two individuals if things continue to polarize."

Our dependence on mentors diminished significantly by the end of our second year as assistant professors. In the beginning of the third year, we had replaced our individual mentors with a range of supportive relationships with colleagues. For example, Nancy and the colleague with whom she had been team teaching for a year were meeting on a regular basis to plan for their courses. She also began collaborating with another faculty member on a number of presentations and publications focusing on a new teacher education inclusion program they were developing. Steve was also engaged in a collaborative research project with another colleague in his department.

Mentoring Relationships: What Have We Learned?

Mentors influence the work of beginning faculty in a variety of ways. In socializing a novice into the profession, the mentor not only provides expertise, but also transfers values to the novice that continue to serve as a frame of reference once the day-to-day mentoring relationship has dissolved. Internalizing our former mentors' voices and values illustrates for us how mentoring during our doctoral studies continued to influence our thinking long after. In addition, mentors create opportunities for their proteges to develop a sense of self efficacy. As doctoral students, we were given repeated opportunities to experience all aspects of teaching and administration in a teacher education program under the guidance of our mentors. As assistant professors, our

department chairs provided us with both support and autonomy to help us define roles for ourselves in our new institutions.

Our experience also supports the view that new faculty depend on different kinds of mentors to orient them to institutional expectations for teaching, research and service. We found that some individuals assume one dimension of the mentor role for a specific purpose and finite length of time, e.g., informant. This individual's role is narrow, uni-dimensional, and specialized, but important. For example, Steve's predecessor served as an informant to help orient him to his job during the first few months. While such individuals are instrumental in the early socialization of new faculty, they do not significantly influence the values that frame our theories of practice as educators, colleagues, and scholars. Only mentoring relationships that are long term and multidimensional, whether collective or individual in nature, are the ones that seem to have such an influence.

Collective and individual mentoring experiences have different effects on individuals during socialization. Becoming aligned with particular individuals in our first two years as assistant professors influenced how we interacted with other colleagues. Some individuals may tend to seek collaborative relationships more than others, and are therefore more inclined to seek out mentors when entering a new work environment. When we look back at our experiences since we first became full time graduate instructors, we see that virtually all of them have involved collaboration with others including, of course, this self-study. This suggests to us that we are inclined to seek collaborative relationships in our work, so informally adopting mentors when we became assistant professors reflected a personal preference for this form of socialization.

Interestingly, we chose mentors of the same gender and race. As Caucasians in departments of education with faculty of both genders, we had this choice. This is not the case for many new professors. In fact, there is evidence that women and minorities often receive little support from senior faculty in settings where informal structures dominate the socialization process. Thus, our positive experiences with informal mentoring should not suggest that it is the best model for effectively socializing professors into higher education. However, they do suggest that the faculty members involved should have choice in determining who will work together and in what ways. The powerful mentoring relationships that evolved for us were promoted by our holding common views of teacher education with our mentors and their ability to offer us guidance and autonomy simultaneously.

Finally, we believe that collaborative self study has the potential for becoming a powerful tool for faculty socialization. The process of self study research was as influential on our practice as the product of our efforts. In reviewing our experiences using self-study methodology, we saw multiple stories emerging. Writing to each other regularly over a two-year period and analyzing our data stimulated recollections of stories not yet documented, which made the research process an organic one, growing and changing as we moved deeper into it. We were inventing our professional lives through our texts. We learned to value a process that broadened rather than narrowed our inquiry and created a certain lack of permanence in the findings as our professional autobiographies continued to evolve. We would have liked to engage our mentors in this process with us, though we recognize that their participation would have changed the nature of our inquiry.

Our field, i.e., teacher education, has been greatly affected by the national call to improve K-12 schools. It has sparked an interest in how those who teach teachers are prepared for their roles in these reform initiatives. We clearly see how mentors influenced our work as beginning teacher educators and believe that our experiences are probably not unlike those experienced by new faculty in other disciplines. We hope that our findings have provided food for thought for beginning faculty attempting to make sense of their own socialization process and for tenured faculty who are exploring ways to effectively socialize new professors into the culture of academe.

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