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Exploring the complexities of the relationship between K-12 and college faculty in a nontraditional professional development program[☆]

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Abstract

In this collaborative research project, we used qualitative methods to explore the complexities of the relationship between K-12 and college faculty, both in the context of graduate school (to improve professional development), and as colleagues whose goal it is to improve education for children through collaborative partnership. Ultimately, we wanted to understand what constitutes a transformative relationship. The research team found that through a collaborative and reciprocal process of struggling together to understand the inconsistencies created as we work to transform teacher education and K-12 education, we could foster intellectual development for both faculty and students. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Context of the study

The five people who collaborated on this research project have at least one thing in common.

We all spent 2 years together in a nontraditional professional development program at the Institute for Educational Transformation (IET) at George Mason University in Virginia. One was a first year college professor. The others were experienced K-12 teachers seeking to earn a master's degree. The IET Master's Program strives to forge a partnership between college faculty and K-12 faculty while students are enrolled in the program and after they graduate. The ideal is that K-12 teachers and college faculty will view each other as colleagues who can share expertise. The goal of this research project was to understand the

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complexities of this relationship and to continue developing better connections both in the context of graduate school (to improve professional development) and as colleagues whose goal it is to improve education for children through collaborative partnership. Ultimately, we wanted to understand what constitutes a transformative relationship.

Before talking about the study, it is necessary to describe the Initiatives for Educational Transformation (IET) program which is an interdisciplinary “school-based” master’s program for teachers (Sockett, 1993). It has enrolled approximately 200–300 students in 3–4 groups each year over the last 8 years.

To foster collaboration and avoid isolation, teachers enter the program in teams from individual schools. The program spans 2 years including 3 summers and teams start and finish the program together. The IET faculty also teach in interdisciplinary teams. The curriculum is highly integrated and the faculty follow a particular group of students throughout their stay in the program. The nontraditional teacher-friendly schedule is designed to respect the scheduling demands of classroom teaching. The students attend a 2-week summer session during their first and second summers. In the third summer, they attend a 1-week session. During the school year, they attend four full-day Saturday sessions. Furthermore, the program has negotiated with some school districts for teachers to receive four release days during the year to attend classes during the week. So, the students attend four-full day class sessions during each semester (two Saturdays and two weekdays), eight days total all year.

With regard to curriculum, the program has a philosophical foundation. Teachers are expected to confront moral and epistemological issues that affect their interpretations and judgments of their classrooms. The program is built around a moral frame. Teachers write autobiographies, narratives and reflections on experience, and then use multiple theoretical frameworks for interpreting them. As a means to promote critical reading, teachers are initiated into the program with pre-course requirements for reading imaginative literature, and thereafter engage with theory from several different disciplines. The teachers earn half their credits for

research done in their classrooms. During the first year they produce an individual teacher-researcher study. In the second year, they complete a team research project. Technology was integrated into the curriculum and, for the group involved in this study (as with other groups in the past), laptop computers were provided for e-mail, electronic conferencing and other Internet use. Ultimately, our goal is educational transformation. Hicks and Sockett (2000), two colleagues who are involved in the program, describe their definition of transformation as this:

We approach transformation as an educational aim from three moral and practical premises. First, we are practically, not rhetorically committed to the view that education is fundamentally a moral business. This notion has not been promoted with teachers. It has atrophied in a system that at every level of professional action, treats teachers as technicians not moral agents. Second, powerful socialisation processes encourage teachers to believe they are only technicians or artisans (Huberman, 1996) with respect to curriculum practice, governance, and accountability. Third, most teachers struggle against their technically defined role to create humane caring environments in their classrooms and schools. That reflects an idealism and commitment which has been brutalized by bureaucrats and abandoned by academics.

With this orientation, we reject the concept of reform as a governing concept for what we wanted to do. Reform, in our stipulative definition, speaks to the improvement of an on-going system without any necessary change in goals or purposes, roles, relationships or products. A reformed character would be one who had given up habits s/he came to see as damaging. Transformation stipulatively describes the radical character of our search for what we once described in polemic terms as “new systems, new products, new experiences, new approaches and new roles”, and preferably all at once (p. 2).

IET provides a unique experience for the teachers enrolled in the program. A large percentage of the graduates are satisfied, and even excited, about their experiences. Some find collaboration in

teams transformative. Some change classroom practice as a result of teacher research. Some are drawn to the philosophical emphasis and the intellectual community. Some like writing narratives and reflecting on their experiences. The point is, there is usually something about the program that positively affects each student (IET Alumni Survey, 1999). Below, we have included some alumni responses from a survey sent out by the IET faculty. In this survey, the alumni were asked generally about their experiences in the program. When students were asked whether what they learned in IET was useful to them, a large percentage responded affirmatively:

- Yes, very thoughtful program in terms of me thinking about my students, assignments—where am I going w/it all and what do I hope to achieve—I now always have these questions in my mind.
- Most useful—definitely improved my practice. Researching and reflecting on how and what students are learning was most useful.
- Yes, I learned a great deal from my research. I feel confident to voice my opinions in decision making. I love to collaborate with grade level and team teach whenever possible. I have read books by authors we read in our program.
- Yes, it gave me the confidence to know that I could do research and be a part of a collaborative team.
- Yes, technology was very helpful to me!! Reflection caused me to rethink some of my practice.
- Yes, I am able to view the world differently (and my students!). I am now a better writer. I am technology literate. It also encouraged me to continue taking more classes.
- Yes!! I guess the most helpful part is it made me more of a reflective person. I feel that I am constantly finding things I'd like to change or research instead of placing blame on the parents, kids, myself, etc.
- Yes, learning to be reflective and learning the practice of self-evaluation.
- I never would have examined my teaching practice as a teacher researcher. I am finding myself questioning the “types” of activities that I am having my students complete.

When asked how their classroom practice has changed as a result of the program, a representative sample of the comments included:

- I work at opening more democratic spaces for my students, negotiating deadlines, and creating a safe and caring atmosphere here in my classroom.
- I continue to examine what motivates students in the classroom and attempt to create an atmosphere that allows students to learn English with a hands-on approach.
- I am now an administrator and I promote collaboration and research. I “preach” empowerment!
- I just try and use what I learned to improve my teaching. I give my class more of a voice, more exposure to the arts, etc.
- This is impossible to do in such a small space. Suffice it to say that it has in some way touched every aspect of my practice in positive ways.
- I have more courage to try new teaching methods, experiment with alternatives.
- I learned to present myself with self-confidence and professionalism. I value my knowledge.
- I question everything. My teaching, school policy, etc. (in a productive way).
- I am using my knowledge in every way and in everything I do at school and at home.
- More collaboration; more ownership within our building. I feel more grounded in professional beliefs.

It is true that a vast majority of students and alumni speak very highly of the program. The comments presented above are not only representative of the positive comments received, they are representative of all the comments received. Still, it is also true that groups of students have had better and worse experiences with different programmatic features depending on their implementation from year to year and the dynamics of the group. For example, some groups have complained that they wanted more faculty consistency, when, for some reason, a number of faculty members have had to leave the program. One alumna from the Prince William Class of 97 stated:

- When the faculty changed, we thought the whole program changed. It started out looking like it

was framed from a feminist point of view and then it became a very clinical sociological point of view and I don't know whether that was disruptive. In the long run it probably helped us because when we had the clinical sociologist, we were doing research and looking at our qualitative data.

Other groups have complained about cohort consistency, when, for some reason, the IET faculty needed to move students between cohort groups. In other words, although there has been a great deal of success, there is always room for improvement. Depending on the group, different issues have arisen from time to time as concerns worthy of attention. For this study, the specific group involved—the Prince William class of 1998 (PW98)—was surveyed about its interactions with faculty because some members claimed confusion about expectations around “relationship issues”.

We thought the concept of relationship was important for other reasons as well. The IET program has been in existence for 8 years and 625 alumni have now completed the program. We wanted to explore issues of partnership not only in an effort to improve the IET master's program, but also because part of the initial vision of IET was to bring together a significant number of teachers from different schools and provide them with a common experience and a common language so that they might go back to their schools after graduation and work to build a community that was moral, intellectual, and collaborative (hence educational transformation). Our research team set out to understand the complexities of the relationship between college and K-12 faculty to prepare us for the next step in building partnerships and working toward transformation. We chose to do that experientially. In other words, our research group was comprised of people from a university, an elementary school, a high school and a middle school. In our project, we not only explored the complexities inherent in collaborative partnerships, we lived the experience.

1.2. Literature

The literature confirmed that many of the approaches to professional development employed

by the IET program were in line with the current thinking about what works in teacher professional development. Most of the literature on partnerships promoted the use of strategies such as teacher research, site-based teaching, collaboration, technology integration and many others that had been employed by IET (Christenson, Eldredge, Johnston, & Thomas, 1995; Biott & Nias, 1992; Clift, Veal, Holland, Johnson, & McCarthy, 1995; Johnston, 1997). The IET program has been experimenting with many of these ideas since 1992. It is now at the point of reflecting (both alumni and faculty) on what worked and what didn't given a program that had successfully incorporated many of these strategies. The literature that was most helpful was that which described similar programs or projects and provided useful “lessons learned” (Biott & Nias, 1992; Hursh, Gurney, LaCelle-Peterson, & Ramdin, 1995; Johnston, 1997; Slater, 1996; White, Deegan, & Allexsaht-Snider, 1997). Although the concept of school/university partnerships was being considered extensively in the 1980s (Atkin, Kennedy, & Patrick, 1989; Goodlad, 1988), and has a history that goes back even before the 80s, it was apparent that the idea of developing partnerships between K-12 schools and colleges has become popular in the 90s. Currently, people are seriously engaged in experimenting with partnership implementation. A significant number of partnerships described in the literature were associated with Professional Development School (PDS) models (Johnston, 1997; Allexsaht-Snider, Deegan, & White, 1995).

Still, although people had been experimenting with partnership programs, it was obvious that people had not found “the answer” to the question of how to develop a successful partnership or how to maintain it. In fact, some researchers honestly questioned the optimistic idealism of collaboration (Johnston, 1997; Slater, 1996). Possibly there is no “answer” and people must look for solutions in their own context under very specific circumstances. But whatever the reason, questions remained in our minds so we scanned the literature for answers to some of our questions. How do people define partnership? Have people tried to reinvent the relationship between college faculty and K-12 faculty

in the past? What happened? What has constituted successful partnerships?

1.2.1. Defining partnership

The literature provided us with a broad picture of the concept of partnership between K-12 and college programs (see for example, Atkin, Kennedy, & Patrick, 1989) and some even talked about what a partnership is not (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). There was no consistent view of “partnership”. Historically, partnership between colleges and K-12 schools has been oriented so that schools provide sites for teacher internships, research studies and experimental innovations. College faculty members are situated in the role of the organizers, the innovators, the researchers and the advisors. The schools look to the college personnel to provide the energy to initiate and maintain projects. The schools were usually willing to be involved in interesting partnerships if the project looked like it could be useful, if it brought them some recognition and it wasn’t going to take too much time away from the staff’s “real work”. Historically, there has been some friction as public school personnel fear criticism from college professors (Atkin, Kennedy, & Patrick, 1989).

1.2.2. Reinventing relationships

The literature did provide stories about people who had tried to reinvent relationships between college faculty and K-12 faculty. Many of these stories were written from the perspective of college professors who tried to do what some described as “giving away” institutional power (Kerper & Johnston, 1997). Most often this was considered a failure and the college faculty learned quickly that their efforts to “equalize” their relationships were met with resentment and frustration. First, the idea of sharing leadership and power with students was not as easy as was expected. It was difficult for students to respond immediately to a major change in the traditional teacher–student roles that are thoroughly ingrained in our history and culture. Many of the disappointed college faculty suggested that it was unrealistic to believe that hierarchical status supported by institutional structures (e.g., grades) could simply be brushed away by telling students to pretend that it didn’t “really” exist or it

wasn’t “really” fair. Many of the researchers also found that their institutional power was useful for purposes of leadership and organization. They had difficulty figuring out how to share power while also providing and maintaining direction and focus for their projects. Other articles explored problems with college faculty’s resistance to change especially with regard to nontraditional teaching off campus at school sites (Trubowitz & Longo, 1997). The question remained in our minds: was it the power transfer implementation that was confused or were the professors’ theories of empowerment misguided? In other words, we still wondered how to empower groups toward autonomy and shared responsibility while also providing the leadership and structure needed when developing intellectual communities.

1.2.3. What constitutes a successful partnership?

From the perspective of the college professors, the outcomes of the “partnerships” were considered successful when the partnerships provided professors with the ability to reach (or connect with) teachers more effectively (White, Deegan, & Alexsaht-Snyder, 1997). Failures were associated most often with teachers’ inability to collaborate, to take responsibility for leadership and to deal with change. As the literature moved from the 80s to the late 90s, the language used to describe the partnerships became more and more respectful of K-12 teachers. Teacher voices were included more often in the research, specifically in the data analysis and in the reporting of the results (see for example Johnston, 1997).

However, although many of the partnership project descriptions were couched in more respectful language, it still seemed that what the college faculty wanted was for K-12 faculty to be more willing to accept their progressive ideas. To describe positive results, researchers made comments like, “after the project, teachers were more willing to use constructivist teaching strategies, teachers were more willing to use whole language approaches or teachers became more reflective”. It is important to understand the context of most projects. Often professors were working with preservice teachers. The professors believed it was their job to push, to advise, to evaluate and to teach. It could be argued

that in a professional development program, the relationship is different. The teachers are professionals. There is a difference between preparing students to enter a profession and providing professional development opportunities for experienced practitioners. Still, when reading about partnership experiences in the literature, the orientation seemed to have its foundations in a psychological/medical model that assumed there was something wrong with existing K-12 practice. College professors were still viewed as the people whose job was to fix or cure the problems. The K-12 faculty's role seemed to revolve around the notion that teachers should be more open to being fixed.

Ultimately, in this research project, our goal was to explore the complexities of the relationship between K-12 and college faculty in a nontraditional professional development program. Over the last decade, professionals (both K-12 and college faculty) have struggled to transform teacher education. Those changes have raised questions about how we should relate given a new orientation toward our practices. We wanted to understand what constituted a transformative relationship.

2. Methods

2.1. Data collection methods

For this study, we used a number of qualitative data collection methods. Data were collected in three ways: through dialogic inquiry, in-depth interviews and short answer surveys. When appropriate, the information from one data source was used to supplement information provided from another.

2.1.1. Dialogic inquiry

First, we used what has been described as dialogic inquiry (for an example of this method, see Hollingsworth & Cody, 1994). For almost a year, our team came together on Saturdays once per month to talk about issues of faculty/student relationships. Each of these conversations was taped and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The faculty involved in this study, both college and K-12 faculty, kept journals of their experiences. Two of the K-12 participants were awarded a teaching fellow-

ship that allowed them to teach in a college setting after graduating from the master's program. These women were able to talk about their experiences as both "college student" and "college faculty".

2.1.2. Student surveys

We also asked one group of 80 students (from the Prince William Class of 98) at the end of their master's program to fill out a short answer survey as a means to gather data from a larger number of respondents. In this survey, we asked them to talk about their relationship with the faculty at the beginning of the program and at the end. We also asked them to describe their vision of successful partnerships.

2.1.3. Alumni interviews

We interviewed 10 people regarding faculty-teacher relationships in the program. We interviewed eight alumni and two IET faculty members. Four of the alumni graduated from the class of 1996 and four graduated from the class of 1997. We did not interview teachers from the class of 1998. In addition, the two faculty members who were interviewed were not involved with the 1998 cohort. We asked the alumni to give us some useful information on how they might work with college faculty as partners to improve education for children. This provided us with in-depth data that helped us to move beyond the information provided in the surveys and in our own dialog. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.

2.1.4. Other documents

Some members of the research team kept journals that were referred to often. Also, in the IET program, teachers are asked to write reflections on the day after each class session. We made use of the reflections for the class of 1998. We also had access to some student evaluations of college faculty.

2.2. Data collection procedures and analysis

The dialogic process lasted from August 1997 to August 1998. Once each month on a Saturday, our group came together and met for about 4 h. During that time, we taped our conversations. Tapes were transcribed verbatim for analysis by research team

members. Surveys were distributed to the IET graduating class of 1998 during the last week of their program. In these surveys, the students were asked the following four questions:

- (1) Please describe your relationship with the IET faculty when you started the program.
- (2) What is your vision of how faculty should relate while teachers are enrolled in the master's program?
- (3) Did your relationship change with IET faculty by the time you finished the program? If yes, how?
- (4) What is your vision of how college faculty and K-12 faculty should work in collaboration to improve education for children?

To follow up on the dialogic and survey data, we conducted interviews with IET alumni and faculty members in the early fall of 1998. Interviews were open-ended, although we did spend time together as a group developing questions as a place to begin our inquiry. The questions we asked the alumni were similar to those we asked on our surveys. Alumni were asked to expand upon their description of their relationship with IET faculty while they were in the program. They were asked to describe how faculty and students should relate. Each group member interviewed two participants and transcribed their interviews verbatim.

The challenge of qualitative data analysis is to make sense of massive amounts of data, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Patton, 1990). Interviews were analyzed with an inductive cross-case analysis. Data were organized topically. During the interpretation, we worked to attach significance to what was found, offer explanations, draw conclusions, make inferences, build linkages, attach meanings, impose order and deal with rival explanations. At this point, we recognized the need to take responsibility for the interpretations and make a clear distinction between description and interpretation. It was also important for us to state the strengths and weaknesses of this method of inquiry. In qualitative research the emphasis is on illumination, understanding, and

extrapolation rather than causal determination, prediction, and generalization.

3. An important issue: assumptions about responsibilities

Our team collected so much data that we could have written a book about faculty/student relationships in a nontraditional professional development program, developing trusting communities in various contexts, and building partnerships. For this paper, we chose to narrow our topic and discuss issues related to the assumptions and responsibilities of both faculties because we thought this topic was important and it provided useful examples to illustrate our conclusions.

In order to reinvent the relationship between college faculty and K-12 faculty, it was necessary to first examine traditional roles and responsibilities and then critique these traditions. In the IET program, faculty strive to develop relationships that some may describe as nontraditional. It is expected that teachers will feel empowered by their experiential and professional knowledge to the point they can share their expertise with both K-12 colleagues and college faculty. Among the various cohort groups, there is a mutual respect between K-12 faculty and college faculty.

3.1. Issues of authority and hierarchy

From the survey data especially, we found that whether the PW98 students were generally happy with their relationships with IET faculty during the program was strongly influenced by issues of intimidation, authority and hierarchy. This finding was consistent with results from other similar studies, but we thought it was important to emphasize that we were hearing complaints or compliments, in the same way that was described over and over in the literature. Here are just a few comments from teachers about how they felt when they first entered the master's program:

- I viewed the faculty as the experts. I needed to learn from them.
- Very intimidated by all faculty.

- Didn't know any. Thought that they would be all knowing.
- I felt a combination of things—partly I felt intimidated by them—they were my professors!
- I tried to maintain my distance. I was affected by my own perception of authority figures.
- I was respectful of the level (college professor) of the faculty. I was intimidated by all faculty before chatting personally with them.
- I'm not the one to ask because I have a problem with authority between teacher/student relationships.
- I felt intimidated (my own fault mainly), but as the time wore on first year I could tell they wanted to hear from us.
- I felt very intimidated—It was mostly me.
- I was very intimidated b/c I am younger than most of the teachers enrolled and I had no idea what to expect from a graduate program. Therefore I didn't talk much.

The data clearly demonstrated that the issue of intimidation brought on by fear of authority was greatly reduced by the time the students graduated. When asked if their relationship had changed by the end of the program, some typical comments included:

- Yes, I came to regard some, if not all, faculty members as intellectual equals. I felt more trusting in my relationships. I came to feel I could safely approach all faculty members.
- I was no longer a “received knower” like I've been all my life. I had always taken what authorities offered as truth. Through this program, I found my voice and now question and acknowledge my own beliefs as well.
- Yes, I realized the faculty was friendly and honestly trying to help me. Now I feel I can speak freely about any issue with any faculty member.
- Yes, it became more equal. I felt like I could ask questions and have them honestly answered. I was able to vent frustrations, and be heard.

Still, because of the gravity of these issues, they affected the faculty/student relationships throughout most of the program. Grading was one structure that kept the hierarchy intact, despite good

intentions. No matter what the IET faculty did to take the focus away from grades, it didn't work. Grades were still very important to the teachers. The college faculty member in the study admitted that she often told students to find their voices and not to worry about what the faculty wanted. But, grading ultimately was structured around what the faculty wanted. In fact, no one had good ideas about how a person can develop a system of assessment that is not based on “what you want”. Although grading is an obvious example of a structure that supports hierarchy, this was not the only example explored in the research. Often subtle directions or comments or interactions communicated a hierarchy to the students.

3.2. *Role redefinition*

Issues of authority and hierarchy seemed to be problematic. We tried to dig deeper to better understand the nature of these problems. Student concerns seemed to be more accurately associated with the ambiguity of the roles assigned to “professor” and “student” given a nontraditional program where everyone's knowledge is valued and respected and where knowledge is shared, not provided.

- Let the teachers know that this is a different program and how open you are at discussing everything and anything.
- The removal of the “authority” figure for an old timer like me was just difficult to handle. I hope the IET faculty will continue opportunities for participants to develop their own autonomy.
- There should be authority, but faculty should be approachable.
- I learned a great deal at the end of the 2½ years. I now see the benefits. However, a little more of the “teacher–student roles” might enable a better ease into the program.
- Remember teachers do not enter this program as researchers. We need to be “taught”.
- University partners should guide their students and mentor them rather than be the “authority”. The program did a wonderful job in establishing that type of relationship between students and teachers.

In IET, the goal is for teachers to feel empowered (by learning to trust their knowledge and expertise), while also admitting to inadequacies (areas targeted for growth). There is an inherent tension. In some cases, the faculty are expected to point out problem areas. At other times, they encourage teachers to recognize and appreciate their own expertise. Both are aspects of the teacher/student role and both have their foundations in a hierarchy, but one is more desirable to students than the other. So, one would more likely prompt a negative response, the other a positive response.

The way teachers viewed the faculty's role was often associated with how they viewed their role as a teacher of children.

- As a child I would love a teacher to be my friend. My students have said as much. As an adult, I don't want a friend, I want to be taught. I want to respect my instructors for the material they teach and the knowledge they have, not because they care or listen. It's bizarre. I can't believe I wrote all of this and it completely contradicts all I want to do in my class. This is probably a unique perspective.

In this case, the teacher's goals are much easier to accomplish if there is a clear hierarchy in place, because the duties are clear, one person has the role of helping and the other has the role of being helped (developing). The relationship is clearly defined. Often it is easier for someone to take criticism and to learn from somebody else who has been assigned this role—someone who is “supposed to know more”.

3.3. *Contradictions*

Ultimately, we started recognizing that there were many other contradictions embedded in the faculty/student interactions. While the college faculty member on the research team constantly talked about how she wanted students to be autonomous learners who took responsibility for their own learning, she also talked about how responsible she felt for the program, for student experiences and for failing to “reach” students.

- For me I feel a little bit responsible. If everybody leaves and they never did engage in intellectual dialogue and didn't get anything. Or they didn't really engage in reflection and didn't see the value of it. I will feel like we failed.

It was concluded that K-12 faculty believed they were often exposed to mixed messages. On one hand they were expected to be responsible, yet they were often closely monitored. They were expected to be autonomous, yet they were “cared for” by the faculty. Our group talked about what constituted appropriate “care”. The K-12 teachers in the research group talked about the need for trust and honesty between the two groups. The idea of trust and honesty was connected with care. They needed to trust that the college faculty cared about them and thought well of them before they could be receptive to criticism. One alumna stated:

- You take risks when you let someone else look at your writing. It takes a while for you to feel, I mean we expect critical, criticism from the faculty but at the same time it takes a while for you to feel really safe to say what you want to say and the fact that we had several different advisors was hard. Plus we felt that there was a big shift in the emphasis.

The faculty also experienced some contradiction when trying to understand what the students wanted. The students wanted to be free to find their voices and express themselves, but they also wanted clear guidelines because they were uncomfortable with ambiguity. Of course, some wanted faculty to be close and others did not. Most wanted a closer relationship:

- I believe the relationship should be very close to the type I experienced! I believe the faculty should get to know teachers personally and collaborate together.
- I believe you should be in a close relationship because it helps to make lines of communication stay open. It isn't necessary for faculty to share their personal lives but I think it adds a lot to the relationship.

- They should get to know the teams on a professional and personal level. It is nice when we get to know the whole person as we did Professor X with her wonderful home video.
- I think they need to be more personable and open with us as a group.
- It seemed as though the faculty “loosened up” more the second year. It would have been nice to see the personalities come out earlier.
- As I got to know them, I began to relax and learned to like and appreciate each one very much.

Others did not want a close relationship:

- Hmm. This is one I have thought about often. I’ve wondered does IET’s philosophy prevent the instructors from being more overt in their leadership and instruction. My first paper for Professor X was on the topic of student teacher relationships. Should it be one of friendship? As a teacher, two years ago I agreed with my students that teachers should be their friends. As I’ve reflected on that paper, I continue to waiver on my response. If I were to rewrite that paper today my answer would probably be the same, yet the paper itself would be far more complex and an emphasis would be placed on definition of terms. It is a delicate balance that as a student (note the difference from view as teacher) I prefer to be taught and I find friendship unnecessary and uncomfortable.

The teachers I have respected most were all college professors and two of them I never spoke with. They earned my respect. They were vastly knowledgeable and made the sharing of that knowledge exciting—in fact quite an experience. The other two teachers that I respected gained my respect by being approachable. I needed help in their class and they were willing to provide it after class—never hurried or rushed—they helped me on their own time. That’s it. I respected these teachers for their knowledge, their ability to present their knowledge in interesting exciting ways, and they helped me when I asked for help, and made sure I understood. These four teachers were the most memorable, the most respected, and their courses were the ones whose

content I remember the most. None of them I would describe as a friend. I think if I was to call any of them a friend, they would no longer be the teacher I respected the most.

For this program, I would like to see a movement toward placing emphasis on the responsibilities of the instructor and learner and their roles versus interaction and human relationships. I have seen this in this program and see its value, but believe it should be limited to the teaming experience and it should not overlap onto instructor student relationship. University “Partner” is a good example. I did not need a partner, I needed an instructor.

In this last quote, the student claims to want a teacher to be approachable and willing to help, but not a “friend”. Other students also had a difficult time moving beyond their basic assumptions and expectations about faculty. For example, the survey data clearly showed that even by the end of the program many students felt that the members of the college faculty were responsible for their educational experience. If their experience was pleasant, it was because the faculty was organized. If their journey was rocky, it was because the faculty was not organized. The data clearly showed that the students did not feel they had control over their learning. The expectation espoused by the college faculty research team member that students should take responsibility for their learning and help to create a stimulating learning community for everyone did not reveal itself as being understood (and/or agreed upon) by teachers in the survey data or in the alumni interviews.

Whether or not students were able to take responsibility for helping to create an intellectual community was considered important to the college faculty member on the research team, because it seemed to her more likely that if students could help develop community in IET, they would go back to their schools and develop community in their own workplace.

Another example of contradiction clearly evident in the data was associated with the program’s interdisciplinary nature. One criticism of the IET faculty was that they didn’t understand what was happening day to day in K-12 classrooms either because

they were interdisciplinary faculty or had never been in a particular situation (high school/elementary/special education) or because they had long since been removed from the classroom.

- Take the time (if possible) to visit each teacher's classroom to see where they are coming from. We, as teachers, are constantly amazed that you don't know obvious classroom themes and problems.
- I think that our advisors should actually visit our classrooms to have a better understanding of what our lives are like. I didn't feel that the faculty had a good understanding of young children and what they are or aren't capable of.
- I'd like to have the IET faculty visit our classrooms more. Professor X did come when we asked her and I think it really helped.
- The professors need to come into my school and see how I teach! I think it's silly that an institute for changing public education has so few teachers with public teaching experience! How can you change what I do when you don't know what I do, except in theory?
- I think college faculty should be more active in K-12 education—whether it be observation or just visiting the schools regularly. This will give them a better perspective of today's schools.

Although some of the faculty were criticized for “not knowing what was happening in the classrooms”, the data suggests that some teachers related to college faculty as though they were the experts who would (and some thought should) tell them what they were doing right or wrong in the classroom. In one of the previous quotes, the teacher said, “How can you change what I do, when you don't know what I do, except in theory?” This demonstrates a traditional orientation toward the role of college faculty where they are expected to “change what teachers do”.

Some teachers wanted former teachers as advisors. Yet, they also recognized the benefit of an interdisciplinary approach. Below, the interview dialog provides an example of this phenomenon. One teacher said:

- Alumnae: We had more problems relating to the sociologists and the authors who hadn't had

elementary school experience or hadn't had teaching experience.

Interviewer: Was that a handicap?

Alumnae: I think it opened eyes on both ends. I think probably the most valuable thing that came out of it, out of the whole program, was the dialogue. The dialogue between elementary, middle, and high school teachers who don't often have a chance to get together and between the professors and us. I think we really learned a lot from each other.

In another part of the interview, this same person said:

- I almost wish that they (college faculty) had come into our schools and got the feel of our schools a little more. I think they would have understood what problems we face and faced. It's hard when they are so totally removed from the situation for them to have empathy for what we are doing. That's why I think we were particularly blessed because our advisor was a former teacher and when she came to the school sometimes for team meetings and we were “brain dead” or needed to “unload” about what had happened during the day, she just let us go with it and then brought us back to whatever topic we were on.

These quotes illustrate the confusion this teacher experienced while in the program. She describes the benefits of a “nontraditional” approach that makes her think about things differently (the interdisciplinary nature of the program) and also the benefits of having a former teacher as an advisor who understands her, who can empathize with her and who cares about her.

4. Discussion: understanding the problem

4.1. *Structural changes inherent in a nontraditional program and K-12 schools*

We suggest the problems described in this paper can be understood in part by exploring the contradictions inherent in the structural changes now

taking place in K-12 schools and in teacher education. In the 80s, Goodlad (1988) put forth the idea that teacher education and K-12 schools were involved in symbiotic partnerships. This refers to unlike organisms (or institutions) joined intimately in mutually beneficial relationships. He commented that these relationships are fraught with uncertainty, but he did not portray this as being negative. In fact, Goodlad thought that uncertainties could be useful in developing new ways of thinking about teaching and teacher education. Later, Kincheloe (1991) agreed with Goodlad's assessment that struggling with uncertainty could enhance intellectual development. We believe that the relationship between K-12 schools and colleges of education is gradually moving not only toward a symbiotic relationship, but some of the structures, (in this case the model of teacher professionalism), are actually becoming more alike. In sociology, convergence associated with organizational structure is referred to as isomorphism and is a well established area of research (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Morgan, 1996).

As we sought to understand the reasons for the inconsistencies and contradictions that led to the mixed messages in IET, we located this problem within a larger body of literature, especially in relation to role redefinition. It occurred to us that teachers in K-12 schools are starting to be expected to function like college faculty and teacher educators are starting to be expected to emulate teachers in K-12 schools. People are now asking teachers to do research in their classrooms. They want teachers to engage in intellectually stimulating activities and dialog. They are starting to allow teachers to choose professional development activities autonomously. They encourage teachers to participate in conferences, be active in developing curriculum and to publish. They expect teachers to take on leadership roles in their schools and to collaborate with colleagues. They encourage teachers to get master's degrees and advanced certificates and board certifications to enhance their credentials. Some are even getting Ph.D. degrees.

Conversely, faculty members in teacher education programs are being pushed to be more like K-12 teachers in that there is more emphasis on teaching and developing positive relationships with students. In fact, it is much more difficult now to get

tenure if an education professor does not demonstrate excellence as a teacher. Research associated with teaching (teacher research) is becoming publishable and valued in the university (Rice, 1996). Part-time education faculty members are often people with master's degrees who work in the field. Professors are presenting fewer lectures and providing experiential learning activities. They are giving fewer tests and using various forms of authentic assessment.

This type of change makes sense. In a society where teaching in lower grades has not been valued in the same way that college teaching is valued, for K-12 teachers to experience equal status to university professors, they must engage in similar activities. One way to describe this phenomenon is to talk about how these organizations are becoming more alike, another is to view the changes in both K-12 schools and in teacher education as a movement toward the center or toward the ideal. What is the ideal? In this situation, we are talking about a new model for teacher professionalism that spans both K-12 classrooms and college classrooms. Many would connect this professional model with the moral dimensions of teaching (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotinik, 1990; Hansen, 1998; Sockett, 1993; Tom, 1983). For both K-12 teachers and college faculty, employers want caring, competent teachers who work to develop a supportive environment that is intellectually stimulating. Ultimately, education stakeholders want to employ teachers (both in the lower grades and in the university) who are intellectually curious, who are dedicated to professional growth and who are politically active, among other qualities mentioned previously. In the past, universities have over-emphasized a detached type of scholarship that provided "the model" for how to move the field forward theoretically. The structure of schooling in the lower grades nurtured a technical-vocational orientation supported by monitoring devices like standardized tests. The pendulum is constantly moving back and forth, slowing forward progress, but little by little, movement toward a similar professional model is happening.

The problems inherent in the movement toward a similar professional model have created inconsistencies in role definitions that confuse constituents.

If there is uncertainty inherent in symbiotic relationships, there are certainly inconsistencies inherent in a move toward isomorphism. Role redefinition, however, is not the only reason that we are facing contradictions. The problem is that while the expectations of K-12 teachers and teacher education faculty are changing, the institutions which set these expectations are not changing as rapidly. For example, although many people now in public schools recognize the value of teacher-research and reflective practice, teachers are still not given time to do this type of work. Although teachers in K-12 schools are encouraged to talk at conferences and share information, they still have trouble taking “time off work” to attend conferences. And, rarely are they supported financially. These types of activities are starting to be valued because they bring recognition to schools (similar to universities), but teacher evaluations still do not give these activities a weight commensurate with the effort they require.

The university has similar problems. While creative teaching is becoming more valued in the academy, evaluation procedures (and other mechanisms) that support creative pedagogy (e.g., rewards for technology integration or collaborative teaching) are still not widely available. Although the faculty in IET want to develop an environment where all can teach and all can learn and interact with teachers as equal professionals (mainly so teachers come to view themselves as professionals who can effect change), hierarchical structures are still in place that discourage this effort.

4.2. Rethinking the role of the teacher educator and understanding hierarchy

In some ways these changes force us to rethink what teacher educators need to know in order to be competent in their role as professors in settings like IET. They need to know how to share information, rather than deliver information. They need to know how to collaborate and work through conflict. They need to understand how to challenge a person’s thinking and provide activities that allow students to struggle with complex issues. They need to be able to work with teachers to understand concepts like how to be a moral professional.

Although college faculty members have more knowledge in certain areas than students, they can’t claim to know (for example) how to interact as moral professionals in every situation. We all constantly struggle to know how to respond to difficult people, to assess learning, and to “teach” in different contexts. Teaching is complex.

Hierarchy is also complex. Many people equate hierarchy with abuse of power. Those who have experienced abuse of power are wary of hierarchy. Those who have experienced a positive and fair chain of command usually trust hierarchy more. Those who depend on the hierarchy often seek credibility in their roles and in the hierarchical power structures, rather than in their competence.

There are some reasons hierarchy exists that are unnecessary and others that are unavoidable. For example, the idea that university teaching carries with it more prestige is a socially constructed notion that is oppressive and should be challenged. On the other hand, college faculty have a hierarchy of knowledge because they are more educated than teachers coming into a master’s program.

There are ways to reduce the power of the hierarchy. For example, although college faculty have more knowledge in some areas, respecting the vast knowledge from experience that teachers bring to their learning is one way to equalize relations. Although K-12 faculty are evaluated by college faculty, college faculty are also evaluated by students. If student evaluations had consequences equal to that of “not earning a degree” this could also equalize the relation. At IET the faculty advise students at their schools so faculty interact with them at their workplace. Still, we have grading, and college faculty still act as gate keepers. They decide whether students will earn a degree. In other words, given our current reality, it would be impossible to eliminate hierarchy altogether. What we need to do is work to eliminate fear of authority. For teachers to be confident professionals, they need to have a realistic view of authority so they can practice democracy in their own environments. College faculty also need to understand the inherent contradiction, and therefore the mixed messages they are sending as they express (in words and/or deeds) their desire to eliminate hierarchy while also having hierarchical structures clearly in place.

4.3. *Understanding contradiction and seeking balance*

So far we have suggested that K-12 schools and schools of teacher education have started to hire teachers and professors who fit a similar professional model. We have also suggested that the changes in values and expectations are changing faster than the structures that support these changes. This causes inconsistencies and contradictions that make the normal struggle to find balance in teaching even more difficult. The IET faculty must find balance between:

- (1) Giving students structure and guidance and allowing them to struggle with ambiguity as part of their intellectual development;
- (2) Allowing students to develop deep and meaningful relationships with a few faculty members and exposing them to more faculty voices;
- (3) Asking them to produce products that are viewed as academically acceptable according to traditional norms and allowing students to reinvent or deconstruct academic norms;
- (4) Being a friend who is supportive and validating and being a mentor who gives critical feedback; and
- (5) Helping students learn to communicate in a way that brings about change and allowing students to find and express their own voices, even when they are angry, etc.

On the other hand, the K-12 teachers also struggled with the new norms associated with a non-traditional professional development program. For example:

- (1) While teachers wanted freedom to find their voices, they also had problems dealing with ambiguity;
- (2) While they wanted to be trusted with leadership responsibilities, they believed it was the college faculty's job to develop and facilitate the learning community.
- (3) While they enjoyed being pushed to think differently, and they wanted information that they "did not already have", they wanted to be taught and advised by people who were former

teachers who understood their difficulties and could validate their current ways of thinking; and

- (4) Although they wanted a close relationship, they also wanted leadership and structure based on authority.

As we change the way we interact in teacher education settings and in K-12 schools, we face contradiction between new philosophies of education and old structures already firmly in place (e.g., grading). At one point, even in professional development, college professors were expected to teach teachers how to teach. For professional development programs like IET, where faculty believe that teacher's knowledge should not only be respected, but actually form the base of students' learning, the roles have changed. Now, they must structure activities to stimulate professional growth, not provide technical advice. Some of these activities must help teachers develop a different orientation to their own learning.

5. *Seeking solutions*

5.1. *Growth in the face of a changing context and the importance of reciprocity*

We have talked about how K-12 teachers and college faculty members are converging on a similar professional model that is not yet supported by institutional structures. We have discussed problems with authority and hierarchy and we have uncovered some contradictions that exist because of the changes we are experiencing in these educational settings. The question is: What should we do about it? Earlier, we mentioned that to deal with inconsistencies, teachers and college faculty need to constantly reflect upon and dialog about these issues. First, these issues need to be understood and articulated as part of the learning community development process. Then, each individual needs to develop a clear understanding of his or her philosophy regarding different roles and responsibilities in a learning community. Finally, the tensions can only be resolved if they are discussed openly and honestly. One IET faculty member refers to this as

having meta-conversations. Another faculty member would describe this process as developing an epistemological presence in the program (Sockett, in prep.). This may sound simplistic, but faculty and students usually do not spend time discussing the different perspectives on knowledge and authority that are represented in classroom situations. It is difficult. Often when students come into a non-traditional program, they are so engrained in the “traditional way of doing things” these types of conversations make little sense. The conversations have to be carefully structured as part of an ongoing process.

Rather than looking at contradictions as bad, we refer back to Goodlad (1988) who says uncertainties can be useful in developing new ways of thinking about teaching and teacher education. It is actually the struggle to understand complexities that helps people develop intellectually. There are no answers to educational questions like: should a teacher be more concerned with caring for student’s emotions, or challenging one’s thinking? Usually, we have to find a balance and make moral decisions based on the context of the situation.

So, it makes sense for students and faculty to constantly dialog about inconsistencies or contradictions as they experience change. People need to develop trusting learning communities where issues of knowledge and authority can be discussed openly. College faculty need to be open about their expectations and their interpretations of events. They also need to be open to alternative interpretations of the same events. But, we never did answer our original question: What constitutes a transformative relationship with college faculty and K-12 faculty in a nontraditional setting? We have talked about the importance of respect and the need to eliminate barriers associated with hierarchy, but ultimately, to reinvent the relationship between college faculty and K-12 faculty, we believe all parties must have a willingness to grow in the face of an ever-changing context. For a relationship to be truly transformative it must be reciprocal. It seems important for both groups to understand and accept that within the university setting students and faculty have different roles, but those roles do not have to be defined by boundaries associated with the traditional hierarchy. The roles

can be structured so that both groups can learn from each other, respect each other, etc. Faculty and students together can agree on the college faculty’s explicit responsibilities and the students’ role. People can determine together how much structure, and what type of structure, works best for each group. What we believe is important in a non-traditional situation like IET, is that students have the opportunity to help define those relationship boundaries and to develop those structures. Not only is this respectful, but teachers themselves need to constantly negotiate relationship boundaries with their kids. They need to struggle constantly to understand how to provide enough structure so that kids can be successful, while also allowing kids to struggle intellectually with the complexity of the topic. We believe that for a college faculty and K-12 faculty to have transformative relationships:

- (1) The roles must be mutually agreed upon and defined (explicitly or implicitly);
- (2) The fear associated with issues of authority needs to be minimized or eliminated, so that traditional notions of knowledge can be openly questioned;
- (3) Power (whether based in hierarchy or competence) must be used responsibly, (e.g., to provide structure and leadership, not for control); and
- (4) Both parties must have mutual respect for each other’s abilities (whether older/younger, more educated/less educated, etc.).

This makes the relationship reciprocal. This constitutes a transformative relationship.

Students from IET’s first few graduating classes have made numerous statements like, “We all had a good time. Nobody knew what they were doing and we all had to work together to figure it out”. This sentiment has been expressed over and over again in different ways throughout the years. It is possible that during the early stages of an innovation, it is easy for students and faculty to work together and experience a great deal of reciprocity. Out of necessity, people are open to learning and struggling together with ambiguity. As the program becomes more institutionalized and college faculty become more experienced, it is important for the IET faculty to attend to the changing context of the program. Those who believe struggling together is

an important aspect of the program might search for ways to recreate a feeling of “struggling together”. It is possible that some in IET might try to recreate it artificially. Others might try to struggle with new issues, but it is possible they may find they are not as open to learning because suggestions come across as criticism and they don’t want to give up (or change) anything they have come to believe is important. In this situation, the relationship could become less reciprocal because college faculty start focusing on how they can show teachers how to improve their classrooms, not how all parties can create a learning community together. This issue was brought up by Suzanne Soohoo in a book chapter she co-authored about control and contradiction in democratic teacher education programs (Soohoo & Wilson, 1994). After talking about her attempts to promote greater student responsibility in the university classroom, she responds to a comment by her co-author in a conversation they have presented in their chapter:

- Once again you seem to hit right at the core of the contradictions. In the process of writing this piece, I found I was working through a teacher control problem by experimenting with alternative practices. By the end of the semester I became more clear about a pedagogy that increases student participation. Now I am wondering, how do you engage in this deliberateness without being controlling and manipulating the classroom participants? I could honestly say this first semester I was constructing, playing, hardly deliberate. The entire teaching experience was in a somewhat amorphous state. I didn’t consider myself an expert. So, at the end of the semester, this question of deliberateness is more significant to me. Because now I know what I know, and I have to respond morally to the fact that I’m now the expert and therefore could fall prey to using this new knowledge as a form of control. (p. 176)

It could be argued that simply telling students how to develop a learning community is not as effective as allowing students to experience the successful development of a community and the satis-

faction of interacting in a supportive community. As the IET program becomes more established, students’ input may come across as uninformed (because of their lack of experience in a new setting). The college faculty, on the other hand, will become more knowledgeable. It is possible that given this scenario, the college faculty could become “the teachers” in the traditional sense and fall back into a more comfortable highly structured, unambiguous role that makes sense to everyone.

In some ways, the idea that the expectations in teacher education programs and K-12 schools are converging on a similar model is an example of a macro-change. The example of college faculty becoming more experienced in IET is a type of micro-change. IET has also experienced local structural changes (by rapid growth and by joining George Mason’s Graduate School of Education). We think it is important for people to recognize that they will always need to struggle together to understand the changing context of their situations and the inherent inconsistencies associated with these changes. Ultimately, at the end of our data analysis stage, our research group got together and determined what we thought important to communicate in this paper. We have summarized those items here:

Possible explanations for relationship difficulties

- Expectations for K-12 teachers and college teachers are converging which causes contradictions that confuse constituents.
- Everyone says they want positive change toward an ideal professional model. When they try, they feel uncomfortable and then move back toward the traditional.
- When an innovation first starts out, people struggle together naturally. Out of necessity, all parties are open to learning. Later, it is more difficult to learn from others because suggestions become criticism and people are more set in their ways. The relationships become less reciprocal.

Possible solutions

- To reinvent the relationship between college faculty and K-12 faculty, all parties must have a willingness to grow. The relationship must

truly be reciprocal. Everyone's voice is crucial to everyone's knowledge and growth.

- To develop positive relationships, all parties must be open and honest. They must have courage to reveal (e.g., lack of knowledge). They need to engage in continuous dialog about these issues. These meta-conversations are part of developing an epistemological presence in the program.
- Rather than artificially trying to recreate the feeling of "struggling together", people need to be open to learning as a result of the changing context. They need to struggle to work through inherent inconsistencies. This struggle is what moves people forward intellectually.

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