"What Else Would I Be Doing?":
Teacher Identity and Teacher Retention in Urban Schools

By Sarah Warshauer Freedman & Deborah Appleman

Our nation's urban public schools and their students are in dire need of a durable and committed corps of teachers, teachers who are willing to stay in education long enough to make a difference in the conditions of those schools, and most importantly, in student achievement. Many traditional teacher education programs critique alternative programs such as Teach for America for the relatively short (two-year) commitment that is required of its recruits, but do teacher education programs fare better in preparing novice teachers to stay in urban education? To what degree are teacher predispositions the most salient factor in determining the career paths of young teachers? Are there programmatic elements that can be identified that help young teachers stay in urban schools? Ultimately we ask: What is the role of the many experiences in the lives of beginning teachers that contribute to the development of their teacher identities—from what they bring, from their teacher education experiences, from their experiences in their school settings?

In order to explore this question, for five years we have been following the development of teacher identities and career choices of a cohort of graduates of the Multicultural Urban Secondary English (MUSE) Credential and MA program at the University of

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California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley). Members of this cohort of 26 received their credentials in the spring of 2002, began teaching in the fall of 2002, and received their MAs from UC Berkeley in 2003 after completing a teacher research course and MA paper during their first year of teaching.

One of the main goals of the MUSE program is to prepare teachers to teach some of our most underserved students, those who come from conditions of poverty and populate our low-performing, urban schools. We decided on this focus for the MUSE program because we so desperately need good teachers for our most underserved students. Also, we knew that many teachers leave these schools after just one year, resulting in classrooms filled with large numbers of inexperienced teachers (Henke, Chen, & Geis, 2000; Ingersoll, 2003).

We wanted the MUSE program to prepare teachers in ways that would give them necessary skills, help them develop robust identities as urban teachers, and support them to stay. Since having large numbers of inexperienced teachers is associated with lower levels of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005), we further hoped we would be able to contribute to narrowing the achievement gaps between these students and their more affluent peers. By following a MUSE cohort for five years, we hoped we would be able to find out whether the education we provided actually contributed to forming a group of teachers who would stay in high poverty, urban schools and who then would have an opportunity to contribute to reducing the achievement gap.

We found that compared to national statistics, this MUSE cohort stayed in teaching in significantly higher numbers. Whereas nationally only 76% are still teaching after one year, 96% of the MUSE students in the cohort we studied were still teaching after their first year (Freedman & Appleman, in preparation). Of these, 92% stayed at their same school and 4% moved to another school. Almost all took jobs in urban, high-poverty settings; one took a position in a school that was a mix between urban and suburban populations. Quartz, Lyons, Masyn et al. (2004) reported on a five-year retention study of graduates from Center X at the University of California, Los Angeles, another program with a targeted focus on training teachers for high poverty, urban schools. They found that 95% of the Center X teachers remained in teaching after one year and 98% remained in education. It is interesting to note that the MUSE and Center X statistics are almost identical.

We also found that after teaching for five years, 73% of the MUSE students were still teaching or doing curriculum development work for the schools compared to 54% nationally. Of these, 69% remained in high need urban schools. Quartz, Lyons, Masyn et al. (2004) reported that 71% of the Center X teachers were still teaching after five years and that 88% remained in education. Again the MUSE and Center X statistics are quite similar. Although the Center X report finds some movement away from the neediest schools across time as does MUSE, when combined, the findings from these two programs suggest that the teacher education program may make a difference in the numbers of teachers who begin in high poverty, urban

schools and in the length of time they stay. Since there is attrition, it seems that the teacher education program may be able to provide a partial but not full solution to the problems facing urban education. It is also the case that both MUSE and the Center X programs attract a population of teacher candidates that may differ in systematic ways from the norm; the programs are rigorous and attract students with an interest in urban schools. Given these limitations, we wanted to look at teachers in this somewhat of a "best case" scenario, to explore how the MUSE teachers' developing identities related to their decisions to stay as long as they did as well as to their decisions to leave. It is our hope that this focus can help unravel some of the dynamics involved in the career decisions of those who, one might argue, enter the teaching profession relatively predisposed to stay in high needs urban schools and who further have realtively strong support for staying. For this group, we examine what seems to be behind the decision to stay as a teacher in such schools, the decision to move out of teaching but stay in education, and the decision to leave teaching altogether.

Theoretical Framework

There are multiple theoretical frames through which to view the development of teacher identity. We rely primarily on the sociocultural theories of Vygotsky (1978; 1986) and Bakhtin (1981; 1986) to explain how beginning teachers assume and incorporate a teacher identity and how that identity changes across time. We have also been influenced by Holland and colleagues (1998) and Wenger (1998), who have written in some detail about identity development from their varied sociocultural perspectives. Sociocultural theories lead us to focus on how identity develops across time through the interplay between the self and others in a social community of practice. Beginning teachers are entering new communities of practice, through interactions within their teacher education program, with their new teacher peers, within the schools where they work, within new professional networks. We also pay special attention to aspects of these theories that allow us to look carefully at issues of power as they affect the identity development of the beginning teachers, power both in relation to their social positioning and their positioning in relationship to their students and to authorities in their teacher education program and at their school sites.

Current sociocultural theories of identity development have roots in cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) based on Vygotsky (1978; 1986) and developed by his followers (e.g., Wenger, 1998) and to the cultural theories of Bakhtin and his circle (1981; 1986). The Vygotskian school elaborates developmental processes as they occur in activity systems; the Bakhtinian circle elaborates the role and functioning of dialogue within the activities that lead to development. Both of these socio-cultural theories focus on understanding how varied subjects learn and grow as they interact in the world. They do not look for a fixed and coherent identity but rather at how identities change as one's experiences within communities of practice

change. Identities develop as ongoing dialogues are filtered through the identities one brings to a community. In this way the past, the present, and the future permeate every activity related to identity formation.

In his discussion of identity development, Wenger (1998) describes how the construction of identity is fundamentally social and relates to communities of practice: "Issues of identity are an integral aspect of a social theory of learning and are thus inseparable from issues of practice, community, and meaning" (p. 145). As one example, in the cohort experience in MUSE, preservice teachers articulate initial beliefs that are subsequently revised in the context of social negotiation within other communities of practice, for example at their school site. The intense quality of the cohort experience creates a focal point for social and intellectual participation while the school site with its emphasis on practice creates another important site of participation. As Wenger says, "participation is a source of identity. By recognizing the mutuality of our participation, we become part of each other" (p. 56). He elaborates on the importance of not dichotomizing the individual and the social: "The concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other . . . .It is therefore a mistaken dichotomy to wonder whether the unit of analysis of identity should be the community or the person. The focus must be on the process of their mutual constitution" (pp. 145-46). Similarly Holland and colleagues (1998) "begin with the premise that identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice" (p. 5).

Like Wenger and like Holland and her colleagues, we find that a sociocultural conception of identity supports an analysis of the social structures that are intertwined with issues of power and agency and that therefore exert strong influences on identity development—those aspects that are related to how society codes such attributes as class, race, gender. Holland and her colleagues name these aspects of identity formation "positional identities" and explain how they "have to do with one's position relative to socially identified others, one's sense of social place, and entitlement" (p. 125). Issues of power are particularly relevant for programs that most often prepare white, middle-class teachers from small towns or suburbs to teach in communities of color in high poverty urban schools. Studies show that such teachers generally have "limited experience with those from cultures or areas different from their own"; many have "negative attitudes and beliefs about those different from themselves" (Executive Summary, *Studying Teacher Education*, p. 21). Given the usual demographics of the teaching force, we must interrogate how preservice teachers develop situated knowledge about their location within various power dynamics in and out of the classroom.

It is important to note that recent identity scholars in cultural studies (e.g., Butler, 1990; Bhaba, 1994) focus on the structural influences on social positioning and the structural determinants of who has power. Although such scholars provide helpful analyses of social structures, we find that a sociocultural frame allows us

a wider lens. Through it we can examine how people negotiate their identities within social structures. We do not see individuals or social structures as fixed. We are interested in how people use agency, in how they negotiate their social place in different ways. As Wenger frames it, "[T]he duality of identification and negotiability provides a sophisticated way of talking about the social construction of the person" (p. 212). We encourage preservice teachers to interrogate their own positions and their students' positions around axes of race, class, gender and sexuality, and we consider the importance of these socially constructed categories in their developing teacher identity. We also consider how their interrogations might lead them at times to reshape their ways of interacting and ultimately might affect their identity development. We are interested in how individual agency within the cultural world develops and how it relates to understanding how different people, who seem similar according to some cultural categories, have different histories and develop different identities.

The Study

As we began to consider what the MUSE program might be doing that could be making a difference in teacher retention in high need, urban schools, we understood that some of what made a difference in the teachers' identity development was related to factors beyond the bounds of the program. As noted earlier, these teachers were likely to be more committed to urban schooling than the average novice urban teacher because they chose to apply to and spent over a year studying in a program with a focus on urban schooling. However, through our study, we hoped to learn about how their experiences in the program interacted with the identities they brought. As we began to specify our basic research question, we asked what activities within the MUSE program seemed to be making a difference to the teachers' identity development and why. We also asked how the teachers interacted within their new communities of practice in the schools and how those interactions shaped their identity development.

To study the teachers' identity development, we gathered a great deal of information when they first entered urban classrooms. They were taking courses with us during their student teaching and during their first year of teaching, and so we had access to numerous observations of their teaching, their writing, and their ongoing oral reflections on their work. To follow them across time, we tracked our informal e-mail, conversations, and personal meetings with them across the years. This informal contact included 22 out of 26 members of the cohort. We also distributed a questionnaire and conducted a set of interviews with about 15 members of the group when they were in their fourth and fifth years of teaching. Finally, we conducted follow-up interviews and had e-mail exchanges with three others after their fifth year. From what they revealed, we feel confident that not only did they come in with strong commitments, but that they initially left the program with even

deeper commitments. We also had provided a number of support structures that seemed to help most of them to work within and manage some, although not all, of the complexities of their school contexts.

We first want to note that many of the MUSE graduates began changing schools after two years or more, even though they did not tend to move after their first year. Further, by the fifth year, 39% of the MUSE teachers had moved from one urban or high poverty setting to another (Freedman & Appleman, submitted). One reason could be that during their first year of teaching the members of the MUSE cohort were still working on their MAs as part of their credential program. Hence, they received a great deal of support, including biweekly seminar meetings, which may have decreased movements after the first year. The culminating assignment for their master's degree, as part of their credential program, was a teacher research project. This project is designed to help the novice teachers synthesize MUSE program content in terms of principles and practices with their emerging identites as first year teachers. The students pose a question that is critical to them, their practice, their students, and their school context and pursue it through action research. Thus, they examine, contest and refine their burgeoning teacher identities in that critical first year of practice within the context of their teacher education program.

In their second year they were more independent of Berkeley. Although a number moved between the end of the second and fifth year, only one member of the cohort changed schools more than once in the five-year period. In that case the teacher stayed in the same district and in the same cluster of alternative charter schools but had to move twice because of school closings.

It is also the case that a number of the MUSE graduates participated in Project IMPACT (Inquiry Making Progress Across Communities of Teachers), a program to mentor and support beginning teachers and funded through external grants to UC Berkeley. Through Project IMPACT, teachers from MUSE could apply for funds to bring together a teacher inquiry group at their schools, which might include other MUSE graduates as well as other early-career teachers at their school. Each IMPACT group also included a Berkeley-based leader.

We chose to capture our findings on teacher identity through case studies. We decided on a case study approach because recent scholarship on teacher identity and development in urban schools employ ethnographic case studies to explore the complexities of novice teacher development (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Michie, 2005). As an example, Michie, borrowing from Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's (1983) notion of portraiture, provides "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of five successful urban teachers. In so doing, he traced the complex interplay of the idealism of teachers committed to social justice and the pressing realities of their urban schools. Michie found that the teachers constantly negotiated and redefined their teacher identities. He writes of the five teachers:

> None had the attitude she had it all figured out. As Liz put it, "If you're really committed to being a good teacher, you commit yourself to constant study." (p. 187)

We include here three case studies from the cohort under study. In order to select cases that would represent a range of beginning teachers' experiences after their induction program, we first determined the current status of every graduate and charted their current teaching status and location. We then grouped the students into four general categories: those who at the five-year point remained in classroom teaching (73% of the cohort, with 65% of the cohort still in high needs, urban schools and 8% who had drifted to more affluent settings); those who remained in an education related field, although not necessarily classroom teaching (4 %); those who had left the education profession altogether or who were "taking a break," with the intent to return, mostly on maternity leave (23%). We then surveyed those in each category, describing our current research project and requesting in depth follow-up interviews. After gathering those interviews on several candidates, we determined which cases seemed to present the clearest picture of the divergent paths taken by this cohort of MUSE graduates.

For our three cases, we describe Natalie who fits the traditional definition of a stayer in a high needs school; Margo who has remained in a significant position in urban education, even though she has left classroom teaching; and Sally, a leaver who seems to be a casualty of dysfunctional urban schools. In each case, interviews, survey data, and their culminating MA paper provide insights into the different paths taken by these novice urban teachers. In each case, their own personal identities and predispositions to teaching intersected significantly with the MUSE program components, during both years of the program. In each case, the construction of a particular teacher identity shapes and determines the career paths of the novice teachers who choose either to stay, move, or leave urban teaching altogether.

Natalie: The Traditional "Stayer "

Natalie has taught continuously in an East Bay area high school since entering the second year of her credential program. Hailing from Calexico, California, Natalie is a first-generation college student who also earned her BA at Berkeley. Moving away from her family was both painful and traumatic, she reports, but the pull back home, to live and to teach, has lessened with each year. Although she misses her family, she considers her teaching colleagues and students to be her family "up north."

Natalie has always been keenly attuned to her students' sociocultural contexts and how those contexts shape and inform their learning. In her Master's paper, for example, Natalie used her students' "I am from" poems to describe their cities of origin and their backgrounds. As a non-native speaker of English herself, Natalie has always been particularly interested in students who are place in sheltered language programs. Sheltered students, Natalie observed, "become more attuned to the absence of other types of reading and writing curriculum. Students become critical of what is "missing" in their English education" (Natalie, 2003, p. 2.). Many of them, she wrote, become desperate for more literacy learning opportunities. Natalie has dedicated herself to providing those opportunities for all her students.

Natalie's nascent teacher identity was informed by her keen sense of herself and provides an example of how radically educational opportunities can change the course of one's life. Natalie sees herself as a lucky example of that transformation. In her teacher education program she strongly identified herself as a first generation college student, a Latina, a native speaker of Spanish, and a resident of a border town. During her two years in the MUSE program, Natalie found ample opportunities to declare and explore these multiple aspects of her identity, through readings, writing assignments, reflections on her practice teaching, and class discussions where, with her cohort, Natalie continued to reflect on the relationship between her academic history and how that history informed her sense of identity and mission as a teacher. In a recent interview, Natalie explained that she felt that her background and perspective as a first generation college student and a Latina were an important part of her emerging teacher identity. She stated that because of the program's reflective assignments, class discussions and cohort structure, she felt compelled to explain her perspective, and that her articulation of that perspective strengthened her sense of identity as an urban Latina teacher inspired to serve students for whom, like herself, educational opportunities might be transformative.

Natalie is an intellectually ambitious teacher. At a recent professional conference, she presented an elaborate unit on Mexican gangsters or cholos, with nearly a dozen learning stations and activities. When asked if this is how she usually teaches, she replied, "I try. I'm a perfectionist when it comes to my kids."

Natalie has observed several of her colleagues, including a fellow MUSE student who teaches at her school, contemplate leaving. "Something happens right around the five-year mark," she says. "People get tired, and they start thinking about other possibilities. About what else they could do with their lives." When asked whether she has ever contemplated leaving, she immediately replies, "Are you kidding? What else would I do? This is what I was meant to do. It's all I want to do. Of course, I get tired. It's an unbelievably hard job. But I love it, I still do. Besides, if I left, my kids would kill me."

What sustains Natalie? "I think we were well-prepared, I really do, and I'm not just saying that to suck up. My cohort helps a lot, too. I see Beth [a member of the cohort who teaches in her school] every day, and I'm in touch with a few others, though we see each other less than we used to. But these are my buddies. We keep each other sane, or insane. At least, we give each other the props and support we need."

What specifically about the MUSE program helped prepare Natalie and helped her develop her identity as a teacher? She, like many of her other cohort members who have stayed in teaching, repeatedly pointed to several factors in interviews:

• taking all of their classes together as a cohort;

• small group assignments which required collaboration with cohort members outside of class;

- support in integrating learning from all classes into their student teaching experience;

- placements in urban schools with effective "master" teachers;

- frequent (weekly) observations and reflective sessions with university supervisors;

- intensive training in curriculum development with written feedback on lesson planning;

- frequent whole class discussions (often heated) during the methods class on issues related to urban education;

- weekly meetings with methods professors to track academic progress in the program and teaching experience.

Clearly, none of these elements is unique to the MUSE program. Many, if not most, teacher education programs include some, if not all, of these elements. But the presence of these program elements within the context of preparing to teach in high poverty schools helped foster a sense of preparedness and competence, as well as solidarity, among cohort members who stayed in teaching.

When she left the MUSE program, she felt prepared to meet the challenges she faced. She felt that she could perform the role of "teacher." She identifies personally with her urban students and considers it her mission to help them develop strong academic identities. She also remains close to her teaching colleagues who sustain her and fortify her teaching identity.

In response to a query about where we might find her five years from now, Natalie chuckles and says, "Right here I expect, doing the same thing. I'm not going anywhere. I'm in it for the long haul." For Natalie, her identity as an urban teacher is robust and enduring. Although she left the MUSE program with a strong teacher identity, at this point it has become the most salient of her personal identities. She lives alone and claims to devote almost all of her time to teaching. "I don't really have time to do much else," she says. "Yeah, I get tired, but never bored by it."

Margo: Leaving Teaching but Staying in Urban Education

By the five-year point only two teachers in the cohort had moved into non-classroom positions and both were what most would consider high-level professional posts that normally go to very experienced teachers. Margo likely received such an offer and was ready for it because she was the only member of her cohort who came to the program with prior teaching experience.[2] A graduate of Reed College, Margo decided that she wanted to apply her strong liberal arts background to education. Margo taught for a couple of years in New Mexico before she decided, "that I needed to get certified so that I knew what I was doing." As she entered the MUSE program, Margo expressed her attraction to the program in terms of its

emphasis on urban education and her sense that the program would emphasize a social justice perspective. Margo also had a deeply articulated sense of teaching as a highly skilled profession and she approached her student teaching and her first year of teaching with a high degree of professionalism.

Margo's case is one that animates the complex intersection of teacher education program and teachers' initial predispositions. Like all of her peers, Margo came to MUSE with an interest in serving underserved youth, a desire to hone her pedagogical skills, and a deep sense of social justice. Our teacher education program cannot claim to have instilled these beliefs in any of the students; they are what led them to the program in the first place. Yet Margo found that her predispositions for professionalism and social justice were reinforced and amplified by the program and by the members of her cohort.

An accomplished teacher who appears politically savvy beyond her years, Margo was one of the few probationary teachers in her district to survive within a highly dysfunctional urban environment.

From the early days of her teaching career in New Mexico, through her three years at an East Bay high school as a teacher who was selected to teach in the Puente program at her school, Margo has been particularly interested in improving the academic experiences of Latino males.[3] In her Master's paper she wrote:

> While I have gained more authority, training and experience, I still see that look of skepticism across the faces of many of the Latino boys that I work with. And I saw it again with each of these two boys in my third block class. So I decided that I wanted to find out more in order to learn what was going on behind it. (Margo, 2003, p. 3)

In her paper, Margo painstakingly accounts how she worked to learn about her students and then helps her Latino male students reflect on their academic identity in order to improve their learning. Eventually, Margo found that being a classroom teacher failed to satisfy her need to "look at things from the big picture." One of the conclusions of her Master's paper was the following:

> While I was interested in learning about students perceptions of their academic identity, I ended up more interested in how they experienced and related to the school they were becoming a part of. . . . In both Jesus' and Miguel's interviews they stated that they didn't think that teachers really knew them. Miguel believed that teachers would assume he wasn't paying attention and in effect stereotype him as a slacker. Jesus made a comment during his interview that he didn't think people even saw him, that he simply blended into the background at school. Clear illustrations of this happened twice when I was talking to Jesus: When the administrators ignored us as we spoke, and when the security guards ignored Jesus and Jose as students who were supposed to be in class. These were moments when my students were literally not being recognized as being students. (Margo, 2003, p. 33-34)

In part, her work on her MA paper helped Margo ultimately decide, when the

offer arose, that she wanted to try her hand at addressing some of the challenges that were larger than the classroom. After three years of teaching, post-certification, and five years total, Margo decided to accept an offer to work full-time for Puente as a professional development director, providing professional development opportunities for urban teachers who are part of the Puente Project. Although her work with Puente allows Margo to continue to work on behalf of Latino students in particular, as well as other underserved students, the decision to leave the classroom was difficult for Margo, who misses both her students as well as the immediate evidence of her efforts:

> It's hard because my Puente boys [the ones she wrote about in her Master's paper] are seniors this year and they didn't make it. I mean, one's in my cell phone—we talk—and he ended up failing himself out of the game. And I was really trying to look at those particular students and trying to understand what was making them drop out of this idea of being students and having a vision for themselves. I think I had a really good shot at it, from my vantage point, in the classroom and working with him. I think that what I have now is a larger frame, which sadly makes him a smaller piece in this larger systemic issue. But he gave me a fuller understanding of the context of the school that I was at, because I got to see the school through his eyes.

In her current role as a teacher leader, Margo now finds herself in the interesting position of training a couple of her fellow cohort members, including Natalie. She still feels deeply connected to her cohort and tracks their careers with both collegial empathy and acute professional interest. Margo claims: "The MUSE program helped me create professional and personal relationships that I have maintained far longer than I ever thought they would. We have a bond that continues, even after all this time. Crazy, huh?"

Margo's teacher identity as a teacher leader is traceable to her early days in MUSE when, as one of the few members of the cohort with previous teaching experience, she often invoked a big-picture perspective, while her less experienced peers were more squarely focused on their own classroom situations. Even in the early months of the program, her cohort received Margo's comments in class with uncommon respect, even deference. In Margo's current work with Puente, she now helps other urban teachers assume leadership roles. Margo's self-definition as a "teacher leader with experience" moves her to think more broadly about her identity as a teacher and the contributions she and other urban teachers can best make to urban school reform. "I care about urban schools as much, maybe even more, than I did before, she says. "I just need to decide where I can make the most difference."

Sally: The Leaver

Judging from her two years in the MUSE program, including her first year in the classroom, Sally was perhaps the least likely member of her pre-service cohort to be involved in a political controversy that would lead to her departure from ur-

ban school teaching. She never shied away from speaking her mind, and she was a great team player within her cohort. Studious, well spoken, and thoughtful, she embraced the identity of an urban classroom teacher with passion and verve.

Although it was never obvious to her peers, who warmly accepted her into the cohort, Sally experienced feelings of isolation within the program because her generally conservative political outlook and her deeply held religious faith stood in contrast to the beliefs she heard voiced by many of her peers. For most of her first year in MUSE, she was reticent to express beliefs she feared might set her apart, but by her second year she trusted her cohort enough to decide to focus her MA paper on the topic of religion in the schools. She explains her internal conflicts this way:

> As you well know, my politics and worldview differ greatly from Cal. MUSE has a definite liberal mindset. I had to face discrimination, even in MUSE, for being a conservative in most areas of my life. I am dedicated to teaching those who are disenfranchised, but the 'sense of mission' that was taught to me at MUSE came with a very liberal political bent. I didn't buy into that wholeheartedly.

Sally's teacher identity was inextricably intertwined with her identity as a person with political and religious beliefs. Her feeling of being different because of her political and religious beliefs contributed to feelings of isolation, *which* perhaps later made it difficult for her to find political allies she considered trustworthy when she needed them.

In her MA paper, "Religious Identity Formation in Schools," Sally wrote in some detail about the importance of religious identity, not just for herself but for her students:

> The question of religious identity is an important one, and one that is not asked enough. In a quest to encourage all students to form their identity, there seems to be little place in a classroom, or even on campus for students to explore their religious identity. If we do not ask the question of our students' religious identity, then how can we address our students' identity? With the freedom of religion in mind, guaranteed by the First Amendment, it is necessary for teachers to focus upon creating a classroom that respects all identities and religion. (Sally, 2003, p. 28)

Sally started her work in the classroom in ways that seemed to seamlessly blend her religious perspective and her conservative worldview with her deep commitment to urban students. She focused on creating challenging lessons for her students and felt well prepared to teach. Observations of her classroom showed that she had excellent relationships with her students and that they were benefiting greatly from her preparation and dedication. Sally seemed poised for a long and successful career. Thus, it was a great surprise to everyone, including Sally, when she found herself in the middle of a difficult and messy political situation that resulted in her non-reelection (non-rehiring after a two year probationary period) to a school she had by all indications ably served.

The non-relection affected both Sally and another member of her original

MUSE cohort. There are as many different interpretations of the root causes of this non-reelection as there are players in this macro- and micro-political drama, and Sally rightly asserts that her teacher preparation training did little to equip her for such a situation which seemed to be unrelated to her political or religious beliefs or to her abilities as a teacher.

Sally believed that the high standards for academic performance that she and her colleague insisted upon for their twelfth-graders put them at odds with the school's practice of social promotion and graduation. As new and idealistic teachers, the two of them engaged their students in a rigorous curriculum that the students were not expecting. In the end, 25-30% failed their senior English course:

> I was non-reelected because I was not passing [some] students at the senior level. I didn't fail too many students—the goal of my school was 100% graduation. Anything short of that was unacceptable.

The issue related to standards and pass rates was coupled with issues related to the leadership style of the principal, who had a history of non-reelecting teachers. In two years almost two-dozen teachers had been non-reelected at the school. In addition to the other teacher from Sally's MUSE cohort at her school, several other MUSE teachers from the same cohort in another school in the same district were also non-reelected, although most of them were eventually rehired.

In order to determine if there was something systemic about the focus, content, or tone of the Berkeley program that contributed to these multiple non-reelections, the faculty director of the program and the dean of the Graduate School of Education held a meeting with the principal of Sally's school. The fact that the MUSE teachers collaborated so closely and took directions the administrators questioned did seem threatening to those in power. The cohort that provided support from the point of view of the program was a liability from the point of view of the administrators.

When the faculty director and the dean reported the results of their meetings to the MUSE teachers who were involved, despite the good intentions that led to the convening of both meetings, Sally felt that the initial meeting with the principal hurt rather than helped her cause as an unjustly non-reelected urban teacher. In her words, that meeting and the subsequent one "attempted to destroy my dignity, and it did destroy my faith in education. It effectively 'disillusioned' me."

Additionally, during the non-reelection process, Sally had tried to meet individually with program faculty, but faculty were busy with the new group of students and with the first year teachers who were still in the program. They could not give her a speedy appointment to discuss her situation. She thought faculty should be more available to graduates to provide support in the often-turbulent political aftermath of the transition from program participant to a fully credentialed, MA holding, second-year teacher. She also felt that her teacher education program had done little to prepare her for the complex micropolitics of the urban school setting.

Besides being very busy with current students, another reason Berkeley faculty

were not as responsive as they might have been was that Sally was a participant in Project IMPACT, which they thought could provide her with the support she needed. Sally did attend a number of Project IMPACT meetings during which she was able to discuss what was happening at her school, but she found that her peers ultimately tired of discussing the politics, wanting to escape what was a difficult situation for them all. The support Sally received from Project IMPACT also seemed insufficient to her.

Although Sally had no problems securing a job at another urban school and worked there happily and successfully for two years, she only stayed long enough to pay off her state scholarship, which required four years of teaching in low-performing schools. She then began her family and after a one-year maternity leave has decided not to return to her new school. Sally says that the scars of the non-re-election remain with her to this day and have been important in her decision not to return to the classroom. No element of her burgeoning identity as an urban teacher or her positive experiences at her second school helped her want to return.

Sitting in her living room with her nine-month-old baby playing nearby, Sally is reflective about her experiences over the past five years. She wishes her initial teacher education program had better prepared her for the politics of urban schools. She wishes the program had supported her more effectively during her non-reelection, and her feelings of lack of support seem to have permanently stunted her identity as an urban teacher. She felt abandoned by the program in a time of need. Project IMPACT helped but it wasn't enough. She also blames the schools. She lives in the district where she began her teaching career and is adamant in not wanting to send her daughter to the local public schools.

Although Sally does not want to return to classroom teaching or send her daughter to the local schools, she still cares about urban education issues and wants to work for change. She is thinking of running for the local School Board and summarizes her current perspective this way:

> School reform is necessary. I hope to never return to the classroom unless necessary, but that doesn't mean that I will leave a leadership position in education. I think you should continue this longitudinal study to ten years, to see what exactly the "long haul" means. I believe you'll see great things from us.

Conclusion

We began our inquiry into the teacher identities and career paths of MUSE graduates to help us understand the relationship between those identities and the teacher preparation program that serves both to induct and to support teachers for high poverty, low-performing urban schools. Teacher education programs will always confront the commonplace wisdom that teachers are both born *and* made. For a program such as MUSE, the importance of clearly articulating program goals and philosophy is essential to attract students whose predispositions to urban teaching

will help create an effective and supportive cohort. Thus, while the intersection of predisposition and program elements make it difficult to attribute specific aspects of teacher identity development to specific programmatic features, these case studies provide some insights into the development of teacher identity both within and beyond a teacher education cohort program. The cases also raise several important issues about the challenges of preparing novice teachers to work effectively in urban schools.

Program components influenced these pre-service teachers as they developed, refined, and tested their emerging teacher identity. Particularly important was the building of a cohort that yielded ongoing communication and support after the program at the university was over and contact with former university faculty was less available. The cohort provided a space for teachers with different backgrounds, levels of experience, and professional stances to support one another, both during the program and in the ensuing years. Ironically for Sally, the cohort sustained her during her difficulties at her school and after, more than the program itself, but the cohort also intensified the problems she was having at the school and proved insufficient to help her solve those problems. For these teachers, their emerging teacher identities and the emerging teacher identities of their peers seem inextricably intertwined.

We further found that the opportunities to reflect and practice and receive feedback from multiple sources and points of view were highly valued. This cycle of reflection, practice, and feedback provided the novice teachers with spaces for developing common identities related to programmatic values and unique aspects of their own identities. Weekly observations and feedback sessions are very labor intensive and require a well-funded program with plentiful resources. Even so, when a student feels out-of-synch with program values, in Sally's case her religiously conservative world view and what she perceived as a liberal worldview dominating the program, and when that student runs into difficulty in part because of being associated with the program's values, identity conflicts that are difficult to resolve can emerge.

A further complication is that given the state of some urban schools, teacher education programs may need to better prepare students for the micropolitics that may face them. Although faculty in the MUSE program did acknowledge the political complexity of urban schools throughout the course work, the program did not explicitly offer students strategies for dealing with micropolitics, nor did they integrate political savvy into the knowledge base for beginning teachers. Our novice teachers, then, did not always have the political savvy they needed to help them navigate their school situations. Clearly, the challenges of the political landscapes of urban schools need to be more intentionally integrated into the MUSE curriculum.

We faced the ironic situation that a student like Sally wanted continued help from the program, but had to face the fact that sadly, faculty energy and resources had had to move on to a new group of preservice teachers and a new group in the MA course. Structurally, the University could not provide time to continue to work in intensive ways with graduates two years beyond their credential. We knew the

need was there and established Project IMPACT for that purpose. But even Project IMPACT did not prove to be enough for this student in this case. In fact, teacher education programs as a whole cannot continue to offer their graduates the support they need to continue their work. We should acknowledge this irony when we measure our success in terms of retention rates. How long can the arm of a teacher education program hold and support its novice teachers? How long, how intensive, can an induction program be in order to ensure that its graduates are adequately prepared to sustain their commitment to high poverty students as classroom teachers?

Perhaps, the answers are that they can't. The challenges of many high-need, urban schools and the current bleakness of the educational landscape can press cruelly against even the strongest programs. Weekly meeting with faculty, regular classroom visits, intentional assignments and frequent feedback can strengthen a novice teacher's knowledge base, but they do not serve as a magic elixir to ward off the difficulties, both in the classroom and out, that many of these teachers will encounter. To be sure, as the cases of Natalie and Margo illustrate, there will be those whose faith that they can play a significant role in helping their students find better futures will sustain their identity as urban educators. Even those who leave classroom teaching often recast a different career in urban education (Freedman & Appleman, in preparation; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). As Michie concludes about the five urban teachers he studied:

> While it's crucial that we stay wide awake to the issues we face as educators, and to the inexcusable inequities that continue to plague schools of poor and working class children, we must also take time to acknowledge-and learn from-the hopeful moments, the extraordinary sites where possibility is being realized, the dedicated teachers who create spaces in which kids feel respected and challenged, significant and valued. (p. 194)

As teacher educators devoted to preparing optimistic young people to face those "inexcuseable inequities," we must continue to create the most robust programs we can, offer our best theoretical and practical pedagogical knowledge, and help them to become more knowledgeable about the challenges they and their students face. Some will indeed leave the education field, but many will stay in education in some way. These young educators remain optimistic that they can still make some difference for their students, enough of a difference to keep trying.

Notes

Pamela Grossman provided invaluable suggestions and advice. Finally, the first author would like to thank the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences for support while writing this article.

[2] Each year the program enrolls one or two or sometimes three students who have taught before but want a credential and the further education that comes with it; although unique in her cohort, Margo's situation is not unique for the program.

[3] The Puente Project provides support for high school and community college students who are "educationally disadvantage" so that they will be prepared to apply for and succeed in higher education. Puente teachers, like Margo, focus on teaching basic literacy skills. They work on teams with counselors who help the students with college and career planning, and community mentors who take on each student and provide living models that higher education is a possibility and that it can bring tangible financial rewards. (http://www.puente.net/)

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