Participatory Action Research and the Quest for Teacher Educator Community Solidarity

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Abstract

Desiring to overcome sharp feelings of disconnection, a year-long participatory action research seminar involving both clinical and tenure-track teacher education faculty was formed. Working in teams with tenure-track faculty support, clinical faculty set research questions but they were reluctant to assume project leadership. In part, because of intensifying pressures associated with impending program accreditation, the projects languished. Nevertheless, the boundaries separating the two faculties and communities of practice softened, and friendships were formed and strengthened. Drawing on insights from positioning theory and Wenger's research on communities of practice, the authors conclude that friendship may be a precondition for re-imagining the established relationships and understandings that currenlty fragment teacher education.

Introduction

Over the past decade there has been a dramatic expansion of the place of practicing teachers in teacher education (Buchberger, Campos, Kallos, & Stephenson, 2000; Cope & Stephen, 2001) and a variety of new clinical faculty roles have emerged. Tenure-line faculty also are facing changing times: It appears 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" (LePage, Boudreau, Maier, Robinson, & Cox, 2001, p. 205). While long-established relationships are being reinvented, the initial celebration of the value and power of university faculty and school faculty collaboration and of partnership has given way to a daunting reality, that collaboration is difficult even under the best of circumstances.

Researchers have noted many challenges: role confusion, slippery job expectations for site-

educators and unreasonable time demands (Utley, Basile, & Rhodes, 2003), conflicting values and reward systems between schools and universities (Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992; Cornbleth & Ellsworth, 1994), and ambivalence of university faculty toward the value of clinical work (Bullough, Hobbs, Kauchak, Crow & Stokes, 1997). Sandholtz and Finan (1998) note another challenge: "boundary spanners," clinical faculty who live and work between the worlds of the school and the university, sometimes feel they do not belong to either world (p. 24).

With the formation of a new faculty role within the BYU/Public School Partnership--Clinical Faculty Associate (CFA)--the later issue became especially troubling and it was in the hope of mitigating this challenge, which we believe is common to clinical faculty and tenure-line faculty relations, that the current study was undertaken.

Background

Employed full-time for two or three years by the University, CFAs are outstanding public school teachers, drawn from the five Partnership districts, who assume primary responsibility for supervising field experiences, teach or team teach university courses, and have many of the regular responsibilities of tenure-line faculty, including serving on search and admissions committees. While they spend a large portion of their time in schools, they have an office on campus and participate in nearly all departmental activities. At the end of their term of service, the CFAs return to their home school district to a teaching position held open for them or seek some other professional opportunity. As noted, the CFAs are "boundary spanners," having one foot in the schools and another in the university.

The issue of not belonging arose as a serious concern following analysis of set of interviews conducted with virtually all of the CFAs who had occupied the position in the past (Bullough, Draper, Smith & Birrell, 2004). Even though they enjoyed their work at the university, many of the CFAs said they did not feel valued for their contributions to the program. Echoing a conclusion reached by Beck and Kosnik (2001) that university researchers tend not to recognize as legitimate or to discount the value of teacher-generated theory, a few of the CFAs remarked that some of the tenure-line faculty were dismissive. Mostly, the CFAs reported feeling closely connected to other CFAs and to a very few tenure-line faculty members, but generally disconnected from the university. They felt they were visitors and often misunderstood. Since those data were gathered, the situation has improved somewhat

through consistent and persistent efforts to provide opportunities to build relationships across faculty differences. However, a questionnaire distributed to current CFAs and tenure-line

faculty revealed that while diminished, the issue remains and is serious.

The Study

Participatory action research, as Reason (1994) has argued, may be a means for addressing challenges of the kind we are facing: "the emergent processes of collaboration and dialogue...empower, motivate, increase self-esteem, and develop community solidarity" (p. 329). In part, this claim arises because action research, as a form of problem solving, is thought to be a "formalization of a learning process intrinsic to teacher professional growth" (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 960). We wondered, "Would a year-long participatory or collaborative action research seminar promote CFA empowerment and be a means for building and strengthening a shared sense of community between clinical and tenure-track faculty members?"

Taking Reason's claims for participatory action research seriously, an action research seminar was planned that would involve all 14 of the CFAs and 6 tenure-line faculty member volunteers (ten, or about half of the tenure-line faculty said they wanted to participate but scheduling problems reduced this number). Reasons for CFA involvement were embedded in the job description which includes an expectation of participation in some form of program evaluation, a responsibility the seminar would fulfill. The tenure-line faculty who volunteered to participate joined the seminar primarily for two reasons: (a) because of an interest in improving the programs and the belief that closer relationships with the CFAs was central to achieving this aim; and (b) anticipation that some interesting projects might result.

Getting Organized

A CFA who intended to pursue a graduate degree and had considerable interest in action research was asked if he would be interested in serving as seminar leader. He was. Having a CFA in a leadership position was thought to be centrally important to the project's success and a key to encouraging development of a sense of ownership of the seminar. With the support of two of the participating tenure-line faculty members, the seminar leader would schedule and plan meetings and organize study groups but the groups would be responsible for identifying their own topics or problems for study. For the first two meetings all of the seminar participants would meet together. The second meeting would include an introduction to action research given by one of the tenure-line faculty members while a second tenure-line faculty member would present on research methods, and together, under the seminar leader's direction, the entire group would explore topics for possible study.

Since the CFAs were used to working with other CFAs within the same school district and district boundaries seemed unbreachable, the seminar leader determined that at least initially research team membership would be randomly set, then changes in membership would be made as topics for study emerged and interests developed. His desire, supported by the two consulting tenure-line faculty members, was to promote formation of new relationships and, in the recognition that several important potential topics for study cut across the districts, to encourage recognition of the value of pooling resources to bring about improvements in practice. Before the team assignments were made, the 6 tenure-line faculty members met to discuss potential roles within the seminar and teams, and it was agreed that we would be supportive but not assume leadership of the research teams. The tenure-line faculty members wished to promote CFA ownership of the studies and, as much as possible, of the process of inquiry itself. Each tenure-line faculty member accepted the possibility that the final research topics might be ones of comparatively little personal interest. There was no intention of forcing an agenda on the research teams.

Meetings for the entire seminar were scheduled monthly, although more frequent meetings were needed at the beginning of the year. Individual research team meetings were scheduled as needed and were more frequent than the seminar meetings. Prior to a whole group meeting, the pattern was for the seminar leader to share his plans with the senior tenure-line faculty member, solicit feedback and sometimes express concerns that were explored jointly. The seminar leader had the final say over what was done in the seminar.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Each of the whole-group seminar meetings was recorded and the audiotapes transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed in order to understand the story of the seminar, shifts in the story-line, and to identify central themes. Several of the small research team meetings were also recorded, as was a tenure-track faculty focus group held six weeks into the year and led by the senior faculty member. These tapes were also transcribed. Two sorts of intertwined stories emerged: one of the seminar and another of the individual research teams. Additionally, each of the CFAs was interviewed early in the year by the seminar leader to ascertain their views of research, understanding of action research, and to identify any concerns they had about the seminar and their team project. Questions were also asked about CFA willingness to assume leadership within the research groups, attitudes toward the wider faculty, and beliefs about the perceptions of the CFAs held by the tenure-line faculty. It was thought that information of this kind would be useful for planning future seminar meetings and for anticipating potential difficulties.

The Seminar Unfolds

At the first seminar meeting the seminar leader explained his hope that through the seminar and the research that we would conduct together, a better teacher education program would result, and that together we could begin "to close the gap between our (the tenure-track faculty and the CFAs) relationships." He then made the case for the importance of collaborative work to improving teacher education and introduced the attending tenure-track faculty and invited the CFAs to introduce themselves, which they did. Readings were passed out, initial research groups formed, and a time set for the next seminar meeting which would include the orientation to action research and to research methods and an exploration of potential topics for study. As the discussion began about future meeting dates, the seminar leader said to the group, "Dr. B. would like us to meet bi-monthly for the first two months." This was surprising, and gave the impression that the seminar leader was a front man and not actually responsible for the seminar at all. In addition, a reminder of the second meeting was posted under Dr. B.'s name, not the seminar leader's. Concerned, Dr. B. met with the seminar leader and in a conversation that was tape-recorded, urged him to accept responsibility for the seminar, since he was doing the planning, albeit in consultation, and take ownership of the plans. Responding, the seminar leader explained that he thought Dr. B.'s name would carry more weight with the CFAs than did his, that, he said, they would be more likely to react favorably. "I felt that I didn't have the respect, and that if I put your name there, that we would actually get some action. I felt fear, perhaps."

At the time, Dr. B. was not fully aware of what the seminar leader was feeling nor did he appreciate the reasons lying behind these actions. In a formal interview with the seminar leader, some of these feelings came out. The seminar leader was asked, "You've assumed a new role. What do the CFAs tell you about that role and how do you feel about playing it?" He sensed that some of the CFAs felt resentment towards him, wondering why he had been placed in a position of leadership. Then, he remarked, "I'm a CFA too, [but] I think they think I'm now embedded in the other side... I've crossed over or I'm on my way [to crossing over]." He elaborated: "They see me interacting with the tenure-line faculty, spending time with them, and now they see me coming out of the shadows on the other side." "Have you abandoned them?" "No, not at all. I've been trying to be their friend. At the same time, they see me a little bit leaning the other way now... Trust [of me] is not quite as firm as it was before... I can't seem to talk to the CFAs as much [as before]." In some sense, the seminar leader believed that other CFAs thought him a traitor, but a traitor to what? The seminar leader went on to explain: "I'm starting to believe that you guys [the tenure-track faculty] are valuable, and that you're really sincere in what you're trying to do with action research... I

believe there is so much to gain from working with tenure-line faculty, expressing ideas, talking." Apparently, he thought these beliefs distinguished him from other of the CFAs.

Before the second seminar meeting, the small groups met to discuss possible topics for study. Within the groups some frustration was expressed about how the seminar was being organized and strong and negative feelings surfaced about being assigned to a research team. The reason for assigning groups was to encourage CFAs to collaborate across district boundaries, but this proved unworkable given scheduling problems and, for some, strong friendship preferences. Additionally, feeling overwhelmed by work demands, some of the new CFAs found the seminar to be an unwelcome complication and being assigned to a group an unnecessary irritant. Seemingly resigned to her fate, one new CFA grumbled and said, "I'll just do it [the action research project] because I have to; it won't be anything I'm interested in whatsoever." The implication was clear: When working with friends, even an uninteresting topic might become interesting and maybe the seminar would be less troublesome, perhaps even valuable. But not working with friends was a guarantee for disaster. Plans quickly changed.

During the second seminar meeting the presentations were made on action research and research methods and possible questions for study were explored along with how interesting and useful data might be gathered. As the meeting proceeded, energy and enthusiasm grew; participants began to imagine possibilities for inquiry. Puzzled by their new responsibilities, some of the new CFAs wanted to explore their roles as teacher educators. Others wanted to study the impact of interns and student teachers on pupil learning. The conversation was wide-ranging, interesting, energizing, and hopeful.

In the weeks that followed, much shifting of group membership took place to the point that it became difficult to know who was working with what group. Shifting continued until the first meeting in January, when the seminar leader asked: "During our last meeting we had a lot of people that were still getting into groups. We'd like to find out if everyone has an action research team that they're on. [Let's] go around and talk about the different groups and if you feel so inclined, tell us, of the topics that are going around, if one interests you, then we'll get you signed up with that group. We want everyone to feel a part of the study." The groups reported, and some more shifting took place when it was discovered that one CFA and one tenure-line faculty member was without a group. Two groups collapsed into one. Of the 5 remaining groups, 3 had made progress toward addressing their questions, one focusing on tenure-line/CFA relations, another on mentoring, and a third on beginning teacher impact on student learning. Each question represented a genuine concern of the CFAs.

Research team studying tenure-track/CFA relations

Between the January and February seminar meetings, the team interested in tenure-line/CFA relations gathered data on tenure-line faculty attitudes toward and views of the CFAs. Some of the survey results proved surprising, underscoring the value of data gathering in forming as well as exploring a question. Although the data would not be written up, discussion of them was lively and ultimately very important to quality of the relationships that formed within the team between the CFAs and the participating tenure-track faculty members. Speaking of the results, a CFA remarked in amazement: "The faculty comments were more positive than I was anticipating... You know, [they said they're] grateful." She began to question her established perception of the tenure-track faculty's views. But, despite this data set, prior CFA beliefs about the tenure-track faculty proved resilient and members of the team interpreted the data cautiously, doubtfully. "I don't know how long I have to be here before I feel comfortable talking at faculty meeting." Another concurred: "I don't [talk] either, [I'm] extremely intimidated...[by] all the professors, but [with them individually] I feel comfortable." While reviewing the data, another CFA commented on the CFA/tenure-track faculty relationship and shifted the direction of the conversation. She pressed the question of what difference the survey results really made to how she carried out her responsibilities: "You guys all have what you need to do, and by you people I mean tenured line faculty, you have got your jobs to do. We [CFAs] have our jobs to do. Sometimes they come together. But it's so rarely that they do, that we just don't have any interaction." Indirectly, she raised a question about the value and purpose of the seminar itself and whether or not altered relations were even desirable. Another CFA commented: "Really, honestly, I don't feel like I have as much in common with you people as I do with the people in the schools I go to, in the public setting." The tenure-line faculty present listened, and one asked, "So, is the whole idea of partnership hopeless?" At this question, the CFAs quickly back peddled, protesting, "No, No." Apparently partnerships do not require close working relations between clinical and tenure-track faculty, only clear role expectations and an acceptable level of mutual respect.

As the discussion continued, the CFAs said they liked working with teacher education students, very much liked some of the tenure-line faculty, particularly those from whom they had taken course work. But as they spoke there was a hint of resentment in their words. A CFA bristled when commenting on a survey response of one of the tenure-line faculty that supervision was "grunt work," and said: "Where a mom stays home for years and years doing, quote, the grunt work, laundry and all that stuff, and then at the end of the day dad's saying, 'Why do the kids always call up and say, 'Hi, is mom home?' [That's how] relationships are built." Looking at the tenure-line faculty, a CFA said, "Honestly, if we were

here longer, [more than two or three years], you all would get to know us better and know what kind of people we are. Basically, you don't know anything about us, do you?" The charge was a serious one, especially when coupled with the belief that what the CFAs do and do well, work closely with the schools, is not fully appreciated nor its value well understood. Seeing field work as "grunt work," however appreciated, meant to the CFAs that they were second class citizens. Yet another shift in the conversation followed as the CFAs commented on the current action research project and seminar, and in so doing implicitly made a distinction between good and bad tenure-line faculty--those who participated in the seminar were seen as trying to reach out to the CFAs to build relationships, a valued gesture even if the projects proved disappointing: "to actually get to work with you, to get to work with K., to get to work with L. in a situation that you'd never get to before, that helps to build relationships." Another CFA asserted, apparently believing that partnership is possible, concurred, saying: "I feel the same way... I think this is a great way to work together. You know, with some kind of common purpose rather than being like, 'this is my work, this is your work.'"

<center>Stalled studies, limited results</center>

Despite lots of good intentions, the individual team projects languished. Some tenure-line faculty members and CFAs felt disappointed and, among some CFAs, there were feelings of guilt, of having let the tenure-line faculty down for not accomplishing more. Study progress was slow in part because the CFA and tenure-line faculty work load had grown in response to swelling state and federal mandates and program accreditation pressures, the full impact of which was only realized after the seminar was well underway. There was little that could be done. However, these pressures underscore the importance of making appropriate adjustments in expectations and in work loads if partnership and action research are organizationally valued. There were hints of this problem early in the year during the CFA interviews conducted by the seminar leader. In the interviews nearly all of the CFAs commented that they were having difficulty meeting all of their programmatic responsibilities as well as conducting action research. Just as passing a law does not necessarily alter citizen behavior, merely including as part of a job description an expectation of participation in program evaluation does not mean supporting conditions are in place and the desired work will be done. While all of the CFAs praised in principle the aim of engaging in collaborative work, as the year progressed the CFAs felt increasingly unable to do so. One clinical faculty member speaks for all: "I go home, walk in, and my wife says,'What is wrong with you?' I'm just so tired. When I talk to the others, they feel the same way." Later, once the projects were underway, the tenure-line faculty expressed the same concern and for many of the same

reasons. Only administrative action might have changed the situation.

Even though the action research projects were moving only very slowly, if at all, remarkably, CFAs did not miss seminar or team meetings, and virtually all participated in some fashion. While the CFAs were unable to do but very little work on the projects outside of formal meetings, they were, albeit in varying degrees, invested in the seminar and in their teams. For perhaps most of the CFAs, the projects were less about data gathering and inquiry than means for engaging in rich, interesting, and sometimes painfully honest discussions about various aspects of the teacher education program which were valued and valuable. Capturing the sense of the group, in a final assessment of the seminar a CFA commented (this, despite not completing the study): "Honestly, I think this has been really good. I've enjoyed it. I've enjoyed the conversations we've had and [reviewing the data] was very enlightening... It shouldn't stop, this is where our growth comes."

Talk was enjoyed, relationships formed and strengthened, and a muted but palpable sense of solidarity began to emerge. What did not emerge was any desire on the part of the CFAs to assume leadership or accept responsibility for the action research projects. Ironically, the seminar leader is the one person for whom stronger feelings of solidarity did not develop. Not a member of any of the teams, and to a degree treated as an outsider by the CFAs, he alone at year's end felt disconnected except in his relationship to one of the tenure-line faculty members with whom he had ongoing interaction. In effect, the invitation for him to lead the seminar proved to be an unwitting request that he sunder his CFA affiliation.

Failure of internal leadership to emerge from within the teams--a possibility that early in the year concerned the tenure-track faculty--also slowed down the projects. The tenure-line faculty resisted taking charge of the teams primarily for fear of turning the studies away from CFA interests. Despite tenure-track faculty resistance, throughout the year the CFAs continued to expect them to lead, and when they did not respond as expected, confusion resulted and uncertainty followed and grew. The initial "nervousness" about working with the tenure-line faculty diminished but did not disappear, especially among the new CFAs. In the last meeting of year, when asked about why it seemed so little internal leadership emerged, one of the CFAs commented that she was quite comfortable working on our projects, and being "vehicles to help you get the data that you want." Another remarked, "we know you are a researcher, so even if you were a CFA we'd still be looking to you." Still another said, "Someone has to take the reigns; we'll just let you do that." Participation in the seminar and in the research teams had virtually no impact on this aspect of how the CFAs conceived of their work and role. They did not think of themselves as researchers nor of researching their

practice as part of their role.

The view that tenure-line faculty lead and clinical faculty follow was prominently expressed in the interviews with the CFAs conducted early in the year. As one CFA remarked: "I would not be comfortable with a tenure person there, me being the leader." This issue was recognized by the tenure-line faculty following the first meetings of the small groups. "I was trying to encourage them, saying that we were going to collaborate on [a project], and then, [they seemed to say], 'Well, we're sure glad we've got you in our group.' It was, 'Tell us what to do. We'll do whatever you say. No matter what it is, just tell us what to do.'" Flags went up; the CFAs were surprisingly deferential and somewhat uncomfortable with the tenure-line faculty. One tenure-line faculty member remarked: "My group asked me if they could call me [by my first name] or if I wanted them to call me Dr.... If we really felt like we were colleagues, they would not ask that."

<p align="center">Double-mindedness</p>

The tenure-track faculty seemed a little uncomfortable as well. Participating in the seminar and on the research teams precipitated considerable role uncertainty among the tenure-line faculty, perhaps even more than among the CFAs. They were uneasy. "I've been a little bit nervous about what my role would be [in the seminar]." It was difficult to know how to be a contributing member of an action research team, when research was less important than building and strengthening relationships across faculty boundaries.

At least some of the tenure-line faculty experienced a discomforting feeling that they were withholding full involvement in the projects. To become fully engaged would have required them not only to bring to the table their expertise as researchers, but also a willingness to assume team leadership, and to be willing to invest large amounts of time and energy. From the outset, the topics or problems identified for study were intended to emerge from the groups, primarily emanating from the work and interests of the CFAs, and the tenure-line faculty had agreed that their individual and collective research interests were not to drive the projects. Sticking to this commitment proved difficult.

Additional sources of uneasiness arose from the broader context of the relationship between the CFAs and the tenure-line faculty. Although there appeared to be a level of deference afforded them by the CFAs, none of the tenure-line faculty really believed they had much, if any, influence over the CFAs, especially over how they were socialized into the department of teacher education. Others, the tenure-line faculty said, had much greater influence, so they looked to the seminar as a promising venue for social interactions. Shadows of a somewhat

oppositional relationship, a division along traditional lines of field- versus campus-based faculty, surfaced. In the tenure-track faculty focus group, a faculty member remarked that students often concluded that CFAs were more knowledgeable about teaching than were the tenure-line faculty because of their having have more recent classroom teaching experience. The tenure-line faculty thought students sometimes dismissed as irrelevant much of what they taught. At the same time, the tenure-track faculty recognized the work of the CFAs was demanding, time consuming, and often undervalued, and desired to communicate appreciation to them.

In the focus group a question was raised: "Are we lying to ourselves when we say we are just here to support [the CFA projects]? Isn't it true that when you are trying something new, which for many of the CFAs action research is, you look to someone who has experience. You go for an expert. If we have been assigned to be part of a group, why would we try to fade into the woodwork entirely when we have more expertise as researchers than the CFAs who are expert teachers?" One of our number responded: "In my head, this is their research... It would be great if they could go on this journey, and I could go with them, but not lead them. It's not about producing this high end fantastic research but it's about them going and saying, 'I want to look at what I do and how can I do it better.'" Pondering motives, one of the tenure-line faculty said, "Why am *I* even doing this?.... Because I like to be associated with you, this group, and because I like to associate with the people who are CFAs." Like the CFAs the tenure-line faculty found pleasure in the process and, as one remarked, thought of action research as important in building a culture of scholarship: "If we think of this kind of activity as culture building, if we can elevate the quality of the conversations and deepen their intensity, then there is an indirect benefit across the board, and in fact at some point that affects scholarship."

<p align="center">Making sense</p>

Hammersley (2004) has written that "'action research' cannot refer to a fusion of, or a transcendence of the distinction between, research and some other activity; that while there may be overlap there cannot be isomorphism; and that as a result there is the likelihood of contradictory tensions" (p. 173). He further argues that "there are two fundamental types of inquiry: one which is subordinated to some other activity, and a second which is pursued in its own right. In the first type, any conflicts are resolved in favour of the other activity, in the second they are resolved in favour of inquiry. What is critical here is which goal or goals are taken as the immediate priority" (p. 173). Hammersley's point underscores a crucial problem with our attempt to build and strengthen a sense of professional community through action

research: the goals of building a community and conducting research are not commensurate. Moreover, given the programmatic demands faced by the CFAs the requirement of *acting* conflicted with the task of *researching* practice, and the former was given the greater priority. Priorities were set to reflect both institutional and personal values. For the CFAs action was valued over systematic reflection. That the seminar leader did see his own practice in this way was a contributing factor to his loss of recognition by the CFAs as being among their number.

Yet, despite the difficulty the CFAs and tenure-line faculty found making time for the projects and the failure of any of them to come to full fruition, a measure of solidarity did emerge between the tenure-line and clinical faculty. There is also evidence that the CFAs gained in self-esteem and power, including a willingness to confront the tenure-line faculty over some disturbing aspects of the program. These developments are consistent with Reason's (1994) claims for the impact of participatory action research. To better understand these outcomes and especially to gain perspective on the disappointing results with an eye toward undertaking future partnership-building projects, we draw upon two complementary bodies of research and theories: (a) Wenger's (1999) concept of "boundary crossing" between "communities of practice" and; (b) Harre and van Langenhove's and their colleagues' work on "positioning theory" (1999).

A *community of practice* is a group that shares a social context and that is bound together by a set of problems and shared pursuit of solutions to those problems that involves building a body of knowledge and shared expertise that is held in common. Participation within a community of practice brings a sense of belonging and offers subject positions that shape identity and give meaning. Although communities of practice often overlap, and individuals belong to multiple communities, Wenger argues that moving from one to another community of practice can be difficult, sometimes impossible, especially when the communities have been defined oppositionally as appears to have been the case to a large degree between the CFAs and the tenure-track faculty.

Positioning "refers to the assignment of fluid 'parts' or 'roles' to speakers in the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts" (van Langenhove & Harre, 1999, p. 17). Through interaction individuals construct a storyline within which each plays a part and the part they play results from how they position themselves or are positioned by others.

> One can position oneself or be positioned as...powerful or powerless,
> confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative,
> authorized or unauthorized, and son on. A 'position' can be specified by

reference to how a speaker's contributions are hearable with respect to those and other polarities of character, and sometimes even of rule. Positioned as dependent, one's cry of pain is hearable as a plea for help. But positioned as dominant, a similar cry can be heard as a protest or even as a reprimand. It can easily be seen that the social force of an action and the position of an actor and interactors mutually determine one another. Conversations have storylines and the positions people take in a conversation will be linked to these storylines. (van Langenhove & Harre, 1999, p. 17)

How events are understood is determined in large measure by which parts are played and how the parts are played within the storyline, and storylines are shaped by the communities of practice that produce and sustain them. It is also important to note that subject positions open or close opportunities for growth and development.

Taking their place within specific meaning contexts and specific moral orders and communities of practice, speakers like the CFAs and tenure-line faculty bring with them specific claims, or rights to speak, and perform different duties and assume different obligations which reflect differences in power and authority. These differences may or may not be recognized and honored by other speakers, which profoundly effects the nature and sustainability of the storylines that form. Positioning may be *tacit* or *intentional*, *unrecognized* or *strategic*. When positioning is intentional, it may be successful or unsuccessful, since positioning of self always involves a positioning of others and a positioning of others always involves a positioning of self. Positioning may be forced, when a person is made to play a part in a storyline that would not be freely chosen. Finally, positioning does not necessarily require direct presence, a point of importance for explaining how the seminar developed.

Communities of Practice

The CFAs and the tenure-track faculty belonged to two related but remarkably distinct communities of practice and, as noted, some seemed to think that keeping them distinct made good sense for practical as well as social reasons. Faculty members belonged to one or the other community, but not to both. There was no third position, as the seminar leader discovered. The boundaries separating the two communities reflected not only differences in forms of identification--the CFAs identifying primarily with the work done in schools by public school teachers and the tenure-line faculty identifying with the university and the communities formed around the various specialty areas--but also in the nature and location of the work done and in the distribution and recognition of rights, responsibilities, and duties. Even though they set the research questions, for most of the CFAs the seminar and projects

were not seen as firmly connected to their community of practice. Rather, they were thought to be mostly connected to the tenure-line faculty's community that, by virtue of its position, held the right to speak and the duty to lead the seminar and team meetings. This was true even when the formal position of leadership was occupied by the seminar leader, a fellow CFA whose leadership some thought to be illegitimate. While the tenure-line faculty tried to deny its power by seeking to support inquiry into topics for study set by the CFAs and by attempting to position them as researchers and team leaders, denial had no effect on the reality of its expression. One does not need to exercise power to have it, nor for others to acknowledge it as real.

At this point, an insight from Sartre is helpful:

> In so far as man is immersed in the historical situation, he does not even succeed in conceiving of the failures and lacks in a political organization or determined economy; this is not, as is stupidly said, because he 'is accustomed to it,' but because he apprehends it in its plentitude of being and because he can not even imagine that he can exist in it otherwise. (1956, p. 434)

The CFAs took the institutionally established and hierarchical relationships between the two communities of practice as given and as natural and proper, a matter of habit, tradition, rights and duties, and, importantly, of self-identity. Moreover, at the beginning of the year there were no apparent reasons for re-imagining this relationship or for altering it in any way which realizing the seminar aims would have required. Indeed, there were good reasons for maintaining it: An alteration would require increased work and greater responsibilities without obvious benefits and a changed sense of self and of one's place within the faculty.

Positioning

Community boundaries were maintained and strenCommunity boundaries were maintained and strengthened in various ways, actively and passively, knowingly and tacitly. The CFAs appear to have marginalized the seminar leader, who felt a sense of loss and disorientation. As he said, he was seen as having "crossed over," and in being so judged the boundaries of the CFA community were actually strengthened and a message was likely sent to him and to others about what happens to those who might want to venture into the tenure-track faculty's community and engage its problems and share its expertise. In this role, he was no longer "hearable." Rumors, grounded in a measure of truth, were spread about tenure-line faculty members' disrespect for the CFAs that, despite survey evidence to the contrary, spilled outward, and sustained a myth, albeit one of diminishing influence, that silence and

compliance, however begrudging, were necessary strategies for institutional survival. The fact that 6 tenure-line faculty members willingly participated in the seminar and on the teams did not change the fact that they were still tenure-line faculty and as such, somewhat suspect. One of the CFAs commented that at the beginning of the year the thought of participating in a seminar with the tenure-line faculty was "quite scary." Only in a very perverse sense do individuals feel a sense of solidarity with those who scare them. Explicitly, the tenure-line faculty did not wish to push the CFAs away and certainly did not want to scare them, but apparently they did.

Silence and compliance encourage passive resistance to change. Having been positioned as powerful and as expert researchers, and having made claims of this sort, the tenure-track faculty's intentional and strategic attempt to reposition the CFAs as leaders, capable of conducting research and acting on the results, was quietly resisted. More importantly, in part the attempt itself may have been disingenuous, a possibility sensed in the focus group. Facing CFA unwillingness to embrace this alternative positioning and encountering continuing expressions of deference, the tenure-line faculty found itself spinning in uncertainty, torn between a desire to take charge and push the projects along and a fear that by taking them over they would thereby defeat the purpose of the seminar and be seen, rightfully so, as duplicitous. The tenure-track faculty were double-minded, which certainly played to the CFA faculty members' hesitancy to lead.

Positioning and Community Formation

Through consistent interaction in the seminar and in the team meetings some changes in relationship did occur and friendships began to develop. As noted, at least for the CFAs, exchanges became progressively more honest and open, as when a CFA confronted four of the tenure-line faculty in a team meeting, charging that we knew little about the CFAs. Ironically, there is not a similar sense of honesty evident in comments made by the tenure-line faculty whose desire to be supportive of the CFAs may have also led to a withholding of self. As the year progressed, most of the CFAs began to think of the tenure-line faculty as including several individuals who were sincerely interested in their work and were potentially friends, if not colleagues sharing a new community of practice. Perhaps the seeds of friendship may open the possibility of new forms of community emerging in the future. Bringing with it a lively interest in the other's well-being and an undeniable moral claim, friendship alters established subject positions of dominance and submission and invites a re-imagining of relationships. However, there are clearly other, and perhaps much better means, of encouraging friendship formation than taking the indirect route of participatory action

research, means that would not likely produce either feelings of guilt or the need to deny or withhold knowledge and recognized skill.

At year's end both the CFAs and the tenure-line faculty were adamant about wanting to continue to meet and to further pursue the various studies initiated by the teams. But the question of leadership and responsibility remained, as did the underlying realization that despite these desires, under present work conditions none of the participants would be able to energetically pursue the studies. This strong affirmation by the CFAs of the value of the seminar and of the projects was a little surprising. "We've come this far with the projects, we ought to finish them." "You know, I never thought about gathering data and thinking about questions I had, that I could find the answers to my questions--it's been good."

Our data suggest that it may be possible to create a third alternative to the two established communities, a new community of practice grounded in shared inquiry. But, as Hammersley (2004) suggests, the aim probably should be to research practice for its own sake. Creation of such a community must be institutionally supported so that meaningful studies can be successfully conducted. Perhaps our first misstep in the effort to create this "new space" was when we failed to discuss roles, responsibilities, and relationships up front, before embarking on any studies. The tenure-line faculty acknowledged the polarization between the communities of practice (CFAs and tenure-line faculty), and the serious need for bridge building; however, the expectation of the tenure-track faculty was that they would build the bridge but that it was the CFAs responsibility to cross it.

We now believe that the creation of a new community of practice requires that the work of the two communities connect in more authentic ways, where mutuality is required for success on tasks that both communities value. But it is not certain that this condition can be met more than occasionally. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is that we can create conditions that soften the boundaries separating the two communities and increase the desire of community members to cross established boundaries when doing so makes sense. This condition may very well provide the beginnings of a third "shared" community where tenure-line faculty and clinical faculty like one another, build friendships, and begin to recognize and take advantage of opportunities to work more closely together. Friendships may transcend community boundaries regardless of whether or not a change in community membership or formation of a new community of practice is sought. Indeed, friendship may open the possibility of new forms of community buildling. Bringing with it a lively interest in the other's well-being and an undeniable moral claim, friendship alters established subject positions of dominance and submission and invites a re-imagining of relationships necessary for community building.

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