

One Without the Other: Contextualizing Mobility Through Discourse Analysis

Becky Haddad¹
Jonathan Velez²
Josh Stewart³
Haden Botkin⁴
SBAE⁵

Abstract

Community engagement has significant impacts on SBAE teachers' perceived opportunities to remain at their schools or in the profession at large. We wanted to better understand how interactions between teachers and their communities invoked challenge or support, particularly in helping us understand how to retain mobile teachers. Specific to this study, our purpose was to understand how individuals in communities interacted with each other's positions to identify better where support and challenge were perceived. This discourse analysis utilized the metalanguage generated from a series of interviews, based in dialogue, with several actors across a single migratory context. To evaluate the use of positionalities, we aligned previously identified positions of each group against the other. This condensed into three themes articulating how actors' positionalities interacted: Conflicting Requirements, I Can and I Will, and All My Love and Support for question one, and themes of Support and Challenge to answer question two. These themes culminated in an interactional work cycle recognizing replaceability and we discuss the theoretical implications of this work cycle for SBAE teachers and community influencers alike.

Introduction

"I felt more supported," "I needed a new challenge," and similar statements were how 2019 participants validated their decision to change schools (Haddad et al., 2019). While we knew support and challenge were critical to an assessment of success, little research existed to define constructs of support and challenge as they related to making a career of teaching. In more recent work with mobile school-based agricultural education (SBAE) teachers, we sought to identify the positions *mobile SBAE teachers*, and their *community influencers* occupied. We used discourses to identify positions, assuming a relational inherency to navigating mobility. We conceptualized *mobile SBAE teachers* as SBAE teachers who have changed schools at least once, and *community influencers* as those working closely with the SBAE teacher to construct and navigate the *local expressive order* (i.e., the positioning theory approach to the local context). The local expressive order moves beyond the site to encompass the interactions (i.e., *discursive context*) invoking support and challenge as a mobile teacher enters a new context.

¹ Becky Haddad is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 143 Filley Hall, Lincoln, NE 68503, haddad@unl.edu, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9153-2253>

² Jonathan Velez is the Department Head in Agricultural Sciences and Agricultural Education at Oregon State University, 108 Strand Agriculture Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331, jonathan.velez@oregonstate.edu

³ Josh Stewart is an Assistant Professor in Agricultural Education at Oregon State University, 108 Strand Agriculture Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331, josh.stewart@oregonstate.edu, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1863-6288>

⁴ Haden Botkin is a Graduate Research Assistant in Human Sciences specializing in Leadership Education in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 143 Filley Hall, Lincoln, NE 68503, hbotkin2@huskers.unl.edu, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2240-5072>

⁵ Aaron Miller, Stephanie Godfrie, Ben Meyer, Caleb VanZee, and John Shellum (by pseudonym) are SBAE teachers and community influencers in the North Plains Consolidated School District in Oakville, NA

Substantial research in agricultural education has discussed the necessity of working relationships between SBAE programs and their broader community (Eck et al., 2021; Langley et al., 2014; Moser & McKim, 2020). Community engagement had significant impacts on SBAE teachers' perceived opportunities to remain at their schools or in the profession at large. While identifying the importance of relationships to the success of an SBAE program is not new, using interactions to understand support and challenge more clearly is new. In our previous work, mobile teachers expressed community support as one of the greatest factors contributing to feeling successful in their teaching practice after changing schools (Haddad et al., 2019). Having previously identified the positions within a *migratory context* (a school new to a mobile teacher), we found ourselves eager to understand the interplay between mobile SBAE teachers and community influencers. The problem, as we shared with previous research, became a glaring lack of clarity around what support *we* (as a broader profession and within communities) could actually provide and what challenges we could subsequently help alleviate.

Ample literature has studied the ill effects of mobility on students and teachers (Atterbury et al., 2017; Feng & Sass, 2012; Gary et al., 2015; Goldring et al., 2014; Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt et al., 2012; Ross et al., 1999; West & Chingos, 2009). At this writing, over twenty years of compiled research, from a variety of perspectives, comprised the knowledge base around teacher *attrition* (departure from the teaching profession), *turnover* (loss and replacement of teachers at the school level), and *mobility* (teachers remaining in the teaching profession through changing schools or districts). However, there was a gap in the literature between an organizational approach accounting for the detriments of mobility on school systems and a discipline-specific (in this case, SBAE) or even personal accounting of mobility as healthy, if not necessary, for some teachers and their career (Haddad et al., 2019; Haddad et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Peterson, 1978). Limited research had examined teacher mobility from an asset-oriented perspective, and little existed to clarify career mobility as its own episode, comprised of several distinctly human phenomena.

The literature also exposed the current discourses around issues of the teaching career, teacher mobility, and the broader positionality of mobile teachers in school contexts (Davies, 2000). While teacher mobility provided the context for this study, questions regarding teacher positionality in school contexts remained. The literature has focused on student impact and relationships almost exclusively (Atterbury et al., 2017; Borrero et al., 2012; Harris & Sass, 2007; Hazari et al., 2015; Turner et al., 2013) and left relationships with colleagues, administration, and others to the fate of anecdote. Therefore, the question guiding this study was: How do positionalities influence the support and/or challenge perceived by mobile SBAE teachers and their communities? This study tells the story of navigating support and challenge through mobility and bears significance as it helps us better understand the nuance of *support* and *challenge* for SBAE teachers, particularly as teachers use these constructs to assess their career decisions.

Related Literature

Various studies have attempted to describe teachers' career patterns relative to mobility. This body of work, however, focused largely on teacher satisfaction (Chapman & Lowther, 1982), differences in career patterns for male and female teachers (Murnane et al., 1989; Whitcombe, 1979; Whitmarsh et al., 2011), and the intention involved with patterns over the course of a teaching career (Burden, 1982; Draper et al., 1998; Peterson, 1978).

The examination of teachers' career patterns began with Peterson (1978) working with retired secondary school teachers and identifying a dissonant discourse about what constituted an effective teaching career, based on how the teaching profession was structured and how teachers were socialized. Namely, teachers become effective in their career through longevity, but this longevity is not rewarded by opportunities for *upward mobility* while remaining a classroom teacher. In recognizing these challenges, Peterson (1978) echoed Lortie (1975), claiming teaching is not a true career with a progression of sequenced

steps of upward mobility. Understanding the teaching career as lacking opportunity for upward mobility identified a systemic structural driver of *lateral mobility* (moving between schools).

Important to this study was the assertion that *upward mobility* in teaching involves *leaving* the classroom (Burden, 1982; Draper et al., 1998; Peterson, 1978). If a teacher were to improve their position, they must progressively engage in *lateral mobility* (moves between schools) to experience promotion while remaining a classroom teacher (Burden, 1982; Draper et al., 1998; Peterson, 1978). This type of mobility attempted to better the teaching environment without necessarily changing the station of the teacher. Peterson (1978) recognized the various improvements gained through *lateral mobility* as significant victories necessitating acknowledgment as part of a career pattern in the social world of a school. To only see teaching organizationally implied a false availability of career incentives for classroom teachers (Peterson, 1978). As such, an organizational approach would be inherently at odds with the actual state of the teaching profession.

Instead, an extensive review of internal teacher career patterns provided an accounting for job morale, affective changes associated with aging, perceived changes in the school environment, shifting commitment from teaching, personal revitalization, and attitudes about teaching at retirement (Peterson, 1978). A notable time of personal revitalization happened for teachers following a move to a new school, a change in the subject being taught, a reassignment of duty, an opportunity to take additional coursework, and the challenge of meeting the needs of new students (Peterson, 1978). In this way, teachers were exercising autonomy over the system in which they worked (Lortie, 1975). We saw this in more recent work with mobile SBAE teachers as well (Haddad et al., 2019). Ultimately, success for the individual teacher is—at least partially—measured by teaching circumstances. Moves to more desirable teaching positions, in effect, are the marks of a *successful teacher* (Peterson, 1978).

The above are career challenges for any teacher. We theorized; however, these challenges were magnified in teaching positions relying on community engagement (e.g., SBAE). The literature corroborated this challenge. SBAE teachers were filling multiple roles (Robinson et al., 2013), having the unique identity of agriculturalist and teacher (Shoulders & Myers, 2011), being overworked (Traini et al., 2019), and interacting extensively with a broad community on multiple levels (e.g., FFA, SAE, classroom, etc.) (Phipps et al., 2008). SBAE teachers are diligent, daring, and devoted educators (Roberts & Montgomery, 2017). In addition to operating in a system with little room for upward mobility, there was little room for the SBAE teacher to be mediocre, let alone poor (Traini et al., 2019). These conveyed expectations positioned agriculture teachers as better than their colleagues in other disciplines, able to assume more responsibility, and as members of a club more connected with their community (Traini et al., 2019). In our previous research, we heard teachers position themselves and be positioned by their community influencers based on their ability to meet expectations (Haddad et al., 2021). In this way, the social and professional expectations of teachers converged on the mobile SBAE teacher elevating the potential for challenge as they entered new environments and communities.

Discourse Analysis & Positioning Theory

Recognizing the challenge of engaging in a career without an upward trajectory and the expectation for embeddedness of SBAE programs in their communities, we necessarily approached SBAE teacher mobility using a *positioning theory* approach to discourse (Davies, 2000). Exploring the reflective discourse within a local expressive order allowed us to examine the interactions promoting support and challenge through mobility. *Positioning theory* was our means of understanding location within and through interaction. More simply, *positioning* is constantly occurring in our interactions as we try to situate ourselves with others. Recognizing the theory's centrality to this interactional form of discourse analysis, positioning theory provided the framework while grounding the methods for our study. Positioning allowed us to look *at* and *through* the relayed interactions to better understand the local and professional discourses in which the participants interacted. As a framework, positioning helped us understand mobility as an

interactional endeavor. As a method, positioning engaged the participants in identifying their roles in interactions through discourse. The approach was both participatory and transformational (Patel Stevens, 2004).

Positioning theory approaches discourse to recognize the multiple ways an episode may be perceived (Davies, 2000). For example, a teacher may position themselves as supported if they have the resources to do their job, but a community influencer may see their positioning of being supportive rejected if their other attempts at support are not engaged. Drawing on earlier work identifying the positions engaged in migratory contexts (Haddad et al., 2021), we turned to how engaged positions may contribute to an SBAE teachers' acceptance or rejection in a community (i.e., how they are supported or challenged). By understanding how taken-up positions were perceived by SBAE teachers and their community influencers we hoped, as pre-service educators and SBAE researchers, to pre-empt conflicts in community engagement as new and mobile teachers alike stepped into new programs.

SBAE research adopted a stance toward mobility as a *source of new hires* in the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) Supply and Demand Studies (Smith et al., 2022). In aligning with this approach, we engaged a discipline-oriented and community-situated perspective to issues of teacher mobility. This identified the multiple ways individuals interacted with and around their work. Without discounting the impacts of teacher mobility on schools, a gap in the literature existed in seeking out mobile teachers to determine how they may be unique in their professional choices and needs relative to teachers who exit or are first-year teachers.

Purpose & Research Question

The broad purpose of this line of inquiry is to understand how engaged positions invoke challenge or support, particularly in helping us elucidate how to retain mobile teachers. Specific to this study, our purpose was to compare how individuals in communities interacted with each other's positions. We engaged this purpose to identify where support and challenge were perceived. We aimed to explore how mobile teachers and community influencers aligned (took up, rejected, or reified) themselves with assigned positionalities. We also wanted to explore how such alignment invoked support and challenge in the interaction between SBAE teacher and community influencer.

Methodology

To answer how positionalities influenced perceived support and challenge, we used discourse analysis with a positioning theory lens to determine the positionalities of our participants. Having discussed the process of determining positionalities in a previous publication (Haddad et al., 2023) we were concerned here with understanding the perceived interplay between the identified positions. We previously engaged in reflective autobiographical interviews, asking participants to describe their experience and make meaning of the positions identified from their reflections as outlined by Patel Stevens (2004). We grounded our data collection and analysis in positioning theory (Davies, 2000) as we engaged discourse analysis (Ash, 2003; Patel Stevens, 2004). We focused on how participants ascribed meaning and positionality within their reflective process (i.e., generating metalanguage). The metalanguage formed the foundation of identifying alignment across positionalities as participants recognized how their positioning of themselves may have interacted with intended positioning from others. While trustworthiness is further outlined in the previous publication (Haddad et al., 2023), we briefly point to the *answerability* required in generating metalanguage through participant relationship, *authenticity* through shared journaling and data mapping, and *reflexivity* through co-iterative analysis and shared reflective process as the key components of trustworthiness for the study.

To generate the metalanguage used to understand the interaction between positions, we operationalized *interviews based in dialogue* through a semi-structured protocol, allowing significant time

for participants to unpack the meaning-making of their experiences as they continued to share (Davies & Harré, 1990). Our *actors* (participants), by pseudonym, at the time of the study, included two former agriculture teachers (Aaron and Stephanie), the current agriculture teacher (Jessie, discussed by others, but later withdrew from study participation), the current assistant principal (Aaron), two former industrial technology teachers (Ben and Caleb), and the current FFA Alumni president (John). In addition, we engaged the state supervisor (Mark) for additional context of the broader state community. However, given his distanced engagement with the site, we did not consider him a participant. Collecting interviews based in dialogue involved an initial discussion with these actors regarding their experience with the various episodes of mobility (e.g., hiring and onboarding processes, and their work) (Patel-Stevens, 2004). A follow-up interview allowed the participants to interpret and make meaning of their reflective experience and identified positions back to the researcher.

Before follow-up interviews, we adopted an inductive thematic coding process to identify positions taken up or assigned (Ash, 2003). Our thematic coding embraced positions conveyed in the literature and our previous work with mobile teachers to identify positionalities. The follow-up discussed these positions and allowed participants to make meaning of their recalled positionality (Patel Stevens, 2004). We then mapped the positions identified in each *speech episode* (a story about mobility experiences) and identified themes of similar positions (Ash, 2003). The subsequent discourse analysis followed Ash's (2003) coding scheme, identifying speech episodes, associated positions, order of positioning, and aligned *metacomments* (meaning-making language acquired in the co-iterative analysis) outlined in previous work (Haddad et al., 2023). After confirming the identified positions with participants, we used open coding to derive themes for two sub-groups: mobile SBAE teachers (Aaron and Stephanie) and influencers (Aaron, Ben, Caleb, and John). Aaron was a member of both subgroups; former SBAE teacher and a current administrator. We interviewed him for each role separately for both initial and follow-up interviews but found it difficult to keep his experience separate when generating metalanguage.

Coding yielded 24 concepts (positions) in four themes for SBAE teachers and 17 positions in four themes for SBAE influencers. We were interested in how the two groups' desired positions took up, rejected, or reified the desired positions from the other group. To evaluate the use of positionalities, we mapped codes, definitions, and aligning positions of each group against the other. The aligning positions are outlined with the findings, but we have included Appendix A to provide a more complete picture of each position, by stakeholder group. We identified aligning positionality by commonality in position regardless of how that position was occupied. This regrouping condensed into three themes relative to the interactions positioning mobile SBAE teachers and their community counterparts: *Conflicting Requirements, I Can and I Will*, and *All My Love and Support*. This answered question one. To answer question two, we focused on positionalities indicating support and challenge. We aligned mobile SBAE teacher positions of *supported* and *up for a challenge* with community influencer positions of *supportive* and *challenged*.

Regarding our own positionality, and in line with engaging a community-based approach, I (a research team member) was a former SBAE teacher in this context. This operationalized a key assumption of positioning theory: specifically, discourse, language, and positionality are embedded in context. In addition to participant-researcher relationships, embeddedness in the site was salient and essential to undertake a positioning approach to discourse (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Proceeding in this way called for a particular "forthrightness about intents" (Patel Stevens, 2004, p. 184), which accounted for institutional positions, *reflexivity* (including sharing all generated reflections as data back to participants), and *answerability* (generating the metalanguage, follow up, and data mapping). While we only examined one site, our focus on interaction made this a discourse study. We were concerned with discourse to understand the interactions available to all participants, recognizing the interactions available at this site also subscribed to broader discourses of what it means to make a career in education.

Discussion of Findings

Using the generated metalanguage allowed us to explore the interaction between positions across our two groups of participants (SBAE teachers and community influencers). In the discussion that follows, we outline our participants' collective answers to questions of alignment across positions and encounters with support and challenge. Together, these weave a story to increase our understanding of challenge and support through mobility.

How do mobile SBAE teachers and community influencers align (take up, reject, or reify) themselves with assigned positionalities?

In identifying similar and opposing positions between SBAE teachers and community influencers, three themes emerged: *Conflicting Requirements*, *I Can and I Will*, and *All My Love and Support*. Within the *Conflicting Requirements* theme, interactions of attempt and intention sought to yield better programmatic results for all involved. Unfortunately, lack of clarity in expectation challenged the uptake and reification of positions allowing *vision*, *growth*, and *needed change*. For example, Aaron said:

If it's your program...I want you to have vision, keeping in mind what the community needs and wants, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and then have a vision of where you want to be in two, and three, and five, and ten years...I think I still have your plan on my computer...and I want to help you get there. I want you to grow the program, so I have to go to the superintendent and say, "I need another ag teacher"...Depending on the courses we offer and whoever's leading. That teacher who's leading it is extremely important. They have to be the champion, trying to develop whatever their vision is of their ag program. I don't know if I did a good job with that or not, but that's what I want.

This is a tall order and just one example of those involved positioning themselves as *doing the right things*. Aaron saw himself asking for things that would establish a quality program; however, the specifics of the vision and how it would best align toward "needing another ag teacher" were not clearly articulated. No one in this study set out to engage the wrong things in their interactions. However, if the right things were not clearly and mutually agreed upon, those right things were not taken up and reified. A failure to take up attempts at the right things, among these participants, invoked an irreconcilable challenge to positionality for some. Without all involved agreeing on the *right things*, it was difficult to find a way forward, allowing SBAE teachers to position themselves as *meeting expectations*. Teachers and community influencers also elaborated substantial expectations for each other and the SBAE program they supported. Identifying which were the right things became especially challenging when one teacher (the researcher) was positioned as *doing the right things* without specific elaboration. John said:

In an ideal program, you would still be here. I mean that from the bottom of my heart. We all understand, and we give you credit...But that type of long-term situation would really be one of the best ways to keep things going forward. If it could be continued even half as much as what you had started, it would have kept blossoming and growing.

Community influencers described ideas of successful predecessors but did not identify the concrete actions that secured those positions as clearly. Perhaps, not knowing how the future would unfold, the predecessor would have been more desirable regardless, because it would have meant continuity. Perhaps a particular predecessor really did excel at aligning unspoken expectations. Or maybe, relative discontinuity sets others up for success. Regardless, there are significant implications around this finding: a predecessor perceived as successful can unintentionally impose significant challenge on their replacement.

The interesting finding within the *I Can and I Will* theme is the *not*. There was a discrepancy in mobile SBAE teachers and community influencers positioning themselves with how they positioned each other. More importantly, there was a discrepancy in the positions each afforded the other. While both relied on similar positions, *resilient survivor*, *autonomous individual*, and *imposter* were taken up, reified, and rejected in ways that could incite conflict among these participants. Former SBAE teacher Stephanie gave this example of her frustration:

I was hired with this promise of, “Do what you want. It will be your program and you can turn it into whatever you want it to be.” That was pretty appealing to me. The reality was half the time I was teaching Junior High, which was not my fave, and the other part of the time was the high school stuff...I added some of my own stuff but was tied down schedule-wise by the Junior High electives and that wasn’t something I was really into.

Both community influencers and mobile SBAE teachers were *resilient survivors*, but only community influencers saw their counterparts this way and articulated extending courtesies to their counterparts based on this positionality. In other words, if only one party saw themselves as occupying a particular position, they expected courtesies they were unwilling or unable to extend. As an example within *survivorship*, community influencers’ recognition of SBAE teachers taking up this positionality warranted additional support through lightening the load. SBAE teachers, however, did not acknowledge the survivorship or long hours engaged by their community influencers in education or agriculture. The interactional challenge here begs us to look outside ourselves in our interactions to empathize with our supporters.

Similarly, these SBAE teachers perceived themselves as *autonomous individuals*, a position reified by their community counterparts. Here is Aaron’s administrator perspective:

I want you to have a vision for your program, and I want to support you in that vision. Each ag teacher has strengths and weaknesses. Each community has strengths and weaknesses. What is our ag program going to be here in Oakville? It's going to be a little bit different if you're the advisor, compared to if I'm the advisor, compared to if [my predecessor] is the advisor. Each of us has different things...You’ve got to meld those together, and it looks different depending on who's running it.

However, our teachers did not articulate extending this same position to their community influencers. Among these participants, this added additional challenge when the teacher had a vision they desired to enact but did not recognize the autonomy of the others involved in bringing the vision to fruition. Both mobile SBAE teachers and community influencers positioned the teacher as an *imposter*. Among our participants, this manifested in teachers acting the part, despite feeling otherwise. Community influencers expressed a desire to provide support, not expecting the teacher to perform as a site veteran, which backfired as a *double rejection*. In essence, teachers perceived their attempts to reject positions of impostership as rejected by certain attempts at support.

In these tellings, uptake, reification, and rejection turned to ideas of reciprocal investment, as exemplified in theme three: *All My Love & Support*. In other words, did community influencers position SBAE teachers as *equally invested* rather than merely *invested*? Among a multi-voiced concern for outward shows of investment from the SBAE teacher, Ben, former industrial technology teacher added:

In a town the size of Oakville, people really appreciate the teachers that live in town and go to their churches, are there for other activities. They see him go downtown to the parade and all that stuff...When you have a smaller town, that's one of the things that has changed a lot...It's just different...but we've noticed people really appreciate if you're living in the town you work at.

The importance of this finding is the nuanced investment beyond ties to place. *Investment* was the culmination of and predicated on *connection* and *support* but went beyond the provision of these positions to an expected uptake of connectedness and being supported. Caleb said:

I was willing to share everything I had. I would've come into your classroom and taught lessons. I would've done whatever you wanted me to do to be able to make it go well for you. I knew a weak point for you, you said that day one, “Well I've never done this before.” I'd be there to help you through it. At the same time, I didn't want to say, “Well I taught it before, why don't I just take it

from here on out?" I thought it was great you were willing to learn it and now you're an engine guru.

In other words, the idea of investment was built on and derived from the prior conceptions of compatible positions. If a teacher did the right things with perseverance and willingness, they were positioned as invested. Investment, then, was a product of both place and interaction.

Taken together, the themes *Conflicting Requirements*, *I Can and I Will*, and *All My Love and Support* compiled an interesting landscape for mobile SBAE teachers and their community influencers to navigate. First, the expectations from community influencers on these teachers were numerous and varied. Taking up positions relative to these expectations was imperative for SBAE teachers. However, this became a competing requirement with their own efforts at independent positionality. Second, *survivorship* and *autonomy* were at odds with each other. SBAE teachers and community influencers each took up these positions but did not always extend the courtesies of these positions to others. Whether for lack of opportunity in the interview or truly not viewing their counterparts this way, mobile SBAE teachers did not position the community members with whom they interacted as surviving or having autonomy. Finally, positions of *support* and *connectedness* were tied closely with *investment*. Community influencers reified mobile SBAE teachers' attempts at investment where support and connectedness were reciprocated. These teachers took up support but also recognized rejection in their investment efforts if they did not align with the community influencers' positions of being supportive and connected.

How do positionalities influence the support and/or challenge perceived by mobile SBAE teachers and their communities?

In articulating the implications of support, teacher educators, administrators, researchers, and other community influencers can better understand how teachers feel embedded in their communities. To identify the interactions invoking support and challenge, we aligned the related positions. The findings led us to operationalize *support* and *challenge* as follows:

1. *Supported/Supportive*: Taking up a *supported* or *supportive* position was an explicitly reciprocal positionality. One cannot be supportive without someone else taking up being a supported other. The challenge implied is the means of support relative to what is perceived as needed by both parties involved.
2. *Challenged*: Being in the position of *challenged* highlighted a nuance in desire. Some *challenge* was desirable, as it fostered continued change and growth, pushing an individual forward. Other *challenge* was rejected as an affront to autonomy or other attempts at desired positionality.

Perceptions of support imposed a challenge to the occupation of a supported position. Being supportive was a significant undertaking. The reification and uptake of *being supportive* was a sizeable investment of material, experiential, emotional, mental, and time resources. If not returned, it was withdrawn, while subsequent efforts to occupy *being supported* were rejected.

In both the initial and follow-up interviews, participants discussed what support looked like. The occupation of a position of *being supported* consisted of checking in, encouragement toward professional development, mentoring, ample resources, schedule accommodations, classroom management support, encouraging autonomy, and connectedness among staff. Stephanie emphasized her mentor relationships with Aaron and Ben:

[Aaron] was especially helpful with some of the discipline things...because he already had relationship and rapport. Him being able to tell me, "This is who we use for welding materials," and "This is what we've done with whatever," was so helpful.

Outside of the school, community reifications of *being supported* included: conversations regarding personal interests and background; service as guest speakers, hosting field trips, or coaching CDE teams,

and attendance at FFA and SBAE functions. This list was minimal compared to the support community influencers sought to provide. While John started our conversation discussing material benefits provided by the alumni, he emphasized connectedness throughout our discussions:

I'd like to be able to make contact before there's any interaction with students. Just to provide some insight as to who [the Ag Alumni] are and what we do as a resource is extremely important. The first few weeks of school can be overwhelming. You've almost got two roles...The alumni support group ties in more what happens before eight o'clock or after three with the FFA side, more than with the day-to-day classes. That's up to the teacher.

Community influencers took up being supportive as outlined by the SBAE teachers. Yet, their desired positions of support also encompassed financial stability, continuity of institutional knowledge, content expertise, facilitation of community connectedness, support of challenging students, and providing direction and input for the forward progress of the total program. With ideas closely related to themes from the first question, participants carried out the *right things* with autonomy, but without clear agreement about what the *right things* were. Unfortunately, anything less than uptake was a slight to the investment of community influencers; a slight that would inevitably cause support and connectedness to crumble as available positions within the SBAE teacher's repertoire.

In discussing findings related to challenge, we noted challenge and support are not opposite; they also may not occur on a continuum. In fact, among our participants, challenging each other was seen as a healthy interaction invoking support. However, there was also challenge between participants that did not invoke support. This type of challenge was less about the ability to do the job or even the will. *Challenge* here became a symptom of conflicting positions and expectations within the interactive context. The need for a community influencer to position themselves as supportive placed heavy emphasis on the lack of communication in their positioning of mobile SBAE teachers as *challenged* when communication was lacking. Aaron said,

Lack of communication really starts it. When you don't have good communication, relationship dives. That's when the feelings of inadequacy or not being heard will start to get in. Then there's animosity built, and then negativity.

As much as these teachers looked for support in their communities, their community influencers sought to provide it. Ben corroborated:

I would try to connect with Stephanie for a short time, almost every day, to ask how things were going, see if she needed anything, see if she's pulling her hair out or not...but we can't really help them with too much to start...She has to actually decide to seek somebody out if she needs help.

Not surprisingly, *challenge* was articulated in various ways. Community influencers found themselves better equipped to see the challenges the SBAE teachers faced. This was in part because influencers saw their SBAE teacher as a component of the broader, local agricultural community, and the program as a proxy for agricultural vitality. This situated influencers to identify challenges more broadly than those occurring within the school context. Teachers, on the other hand, saw influencers as a component of a successful program. This did not mean they ignored the context of the broader agricultural community, but those challenges, if addressed, were secondary to the challenges of the local school context.

Influencers had been involved with the broad agricultural challenges before the SBAE teacher came to the community and they would continue to address those challenges long after the teacher left. At the school level, community influencers had navigated onboarding new teachers through the local context multiple times. These mobile SBAE teachers, however, made little acknowledgment of the challenges the community recognized (broadly, or within the school context). Aaron and Stephanie seemed to be in touch with the challenges of the students and the need for classroom-related communication. However, neither teacher was able to acknowledge the challenge of program turnover as articulately as the community

influencers could. The teacher did not have to pick up the pieces dropped when they left. Community influencers were looking for opportunities to connect the pieces to keep the whole together upon inevitable teacher exit.

There was substantial depth with which the community could identify challenges to a teacher's success and their subsequent eagerness to help teachers work around and through challenges. The community influencers saw communication as the way around imposed challenges. They were not asking the SBAE teacher to take on challenges for themselves, they simply acknowledged they existed. Influencers saw themselves as better positioned to aid in rejecting positions of challenge than their SBAE teachers.

Transferable Findings

These teachers (SBAE and not) expressed the benefits of changing schools, corroborating previous work in this area (Haddad et al., 2019). However, this study also brought penalties on teacher mobility to light. If mobility remains the only means by which teachers can better their situation, greater attention must be given to accommodating moves. In this way, we will see local interaction subscribing to broader discourses. While the findings from our study focused on a small, localized sample, our participants subscribed to discourses with broader implications for considering the teaching career. We share these ideas as transferable findings, with applications beyond the local expressive order.

From Community Influencers for Mobile Teachers

Ben and Caleb both strongly encouraged teachers to challenge themselves and be selective and evaluative in considering future positions. For both the new teacher and the mobile teacher, however, the key consideration seemed to be geography, as identified by several of the participants and corroborated by the state supervisor, "Especially with first-year teachers, everybody wants to go home." Community influencers recognized the difficult role a SBAE teacher occupies. They also offered substantial help and support to aid in managing the workload, and in fact, influencers saw their positions rejected if the assistance was not accepted.

Underlying these implications, based on the data presented here, was a key understanding related to working with community influencers: they sought engagement. Despite being busy survivors themselves, they were eager to be involved. Teachers identified asking community members to be guest speakers, field trip hosts, and CDE coaches, but the data here suggested their ask was too small. Community influencers were willing and able to provide much greater leverage to a total SBAE program including financial stability, institutional knowledge, content expertise, facilitation of community connectedness, support for challenging students, and input and visioning for the forward progress of the program. If this appears overzealous, we ask readers to keep in mind a community's investment in the success of local agriculture and the SBAE program's role in that local success. Community influencers expressed engaging with the local SBAE program as carrying out a mission for local agricultural success. This required a reification from SBAE teachers of serving a community well acquainted with hard work. While community influencers did not expect anything to be difficult for the sake of difficulty, they expected others to rise to the challenge for which they were hired. SBAE teachers' willingness and ability to return others' investment was essential to establishing a position of support.

From Mobile Teachers for Community Influencers

Teachers expressed several desires in connection from their administrators, validating connection already occurring and seeking additional points of support, including regular check-ins, support for continued development of pedagogical content knowledge, mentoring relationships, supplies to do the job, schedule accommodations, follow through on classroom management issues, classroom autonomy, and time to connect with fellow staff members. Aaron emphasized these as important to his role as administrator, particularly in his context as a former agriculture teacher. The reminder for administrators is to maintain

accountability in mistakes. Allow them, but enforce clear, reasonable, and consistent expectations at all levels.

Curricular resource availability did not seem to be the issue for these teachers. Provided enough chairs, teachers suggested they had the material resources needed to perform the tasks of their job. The biggest resource they were lacking, however, was time. Stephanie identified time to collaborate and plan as two foremost factors inhibiting program growth. Stephanie expressed the challenge of implementing resources when she was too overworked and stressed to sort through them. Aaron and Stephanie both expressed the overwhelming nature of sorting through available resources to find what would work for their program. The limit, rather than resources themselves, was cost, time to implement, or time to secure funding to cover the cost, particularly for resources to expand program offerings.

Teachers expressed concern over knowing how and who to ask for help. Employing opportunities to increase the comfort of preservice teachers in asking for assistance could be an essential skill as early-career teachers seek program fit. Apart from seeking human resources, deploying human capital, and delegating were vital tasks for teachers' success. However, these teachers had limited capacity to organize resource deployment, despite available assistance. Integrating opportunities for communication and public relations plans, or community engagement plans, in pre-service programs provides a starting point for early-career teachers to capitalize on and secure resources in their communities. Engaging a culture of questions continues work already in progress to build a culture of learning in pre-service and early-career teachers. This further acknowledges teaching as a learning profession and confirms the advice from community influencers regarding the practice and support needed to become an effective educator.

Conclusions & Implications

Caleb, who has moved multiple times over his career, recognized his local experience was evidence of a structural challenge:

It's a dumb system...Imagine if it was not just all these independent districts. You can still be independent districts, but if the seniority list was just, "Hey, here you go. There's an opening coming up," so I'll say, "[Principal], would you like to move there instead?"

The impacts of teacher mobility on student achievement are statistically clear in the literature (Atterbury et al., 2017; Feng & Sass, 2012; Gary, Taie, & O'Rear, 2015; Goldring et al., 2014; Ronfeldt et al., 2012; Ross et al., 1999). Our community influencer participants recognized similar challenges as they attempted to hold program pieces together despite mobility. While this is not a call to incentivize teacher mobility, greater attention needs to focus on the policy level to avoid punishing it. To Caleb's comment, the detriments of mobility on teachers remain unexplored and we must "imagine if." In recognizing the challenge of identifying the *right things* between the participants in our study, reconsidering how experience is acknowledged may support steps toward reduced impacts on students, teachers, and communities. Cycles of mobility will continue to impact the hardest hit students if incentives do not reflect a value on teacher experience at the school district level.

Teachers and community influencers positioned SBAE teachers as overworked. However, the expectation for robust FFA programs and continued growth of the SAE program was also present, particularly from community influencers. SBAE teachers conveyed these expectations as desires to grow programs as visionaries. In alignment with findings in the *Conflicting Requirements* theme, FFA and SAE must be identified as integral parts of the SBAE teacher contract and job duties. Recognition outside the field of Agricultural Education for the centrality of these components to a total program establishes the desired position at hire related to the *right things*. Clarity in expectation aids in managing SBAE teachers' workload. This role likely extends beyond the roles of participants in our study and may need to include considerations for school boards and superintendents to be contractually clear with the SBAE teacher

relative to the job they are to carry out. Notably, school boards are uniquely positioned *in the community*, and clarity in contracts would aid community influencers in appropriately grounding expectations against what growth will be supported in the school.

Resource limitation imposed significant challenge throughout this study. Resources of time and money were difficult to navigate as one often enacted the other. Community influencers could see how busy their SBAE teachers were and tried to help by providing additional funding. While time and money imposed constraints on each other, there was also potential for time and money to offset each other. Teachers in CTE areas spent additional time writing grants to secure money to acquire available resources. This situation, anecdotally, is not unique to this study, though continued research may seek to ascertain how CTE teachers structure their time. In our study, this was a vicious cycle of making resources available without alleviating time constraints. Apart from securing funding, participants identified a challenge in time to implement. A teacher cannot use available resources if they are overworked. Those in positions of teacher support were quick to generate and supply missing resources, but teachers indicated resource saturation. In addition, teachers were asked to add tracking and communicating their workload to an already full plate. Necessary considerations may include additional staff, delegated support, time allotment based on different preps taught, or compensation for the added logistical load SBAE teachers carry.

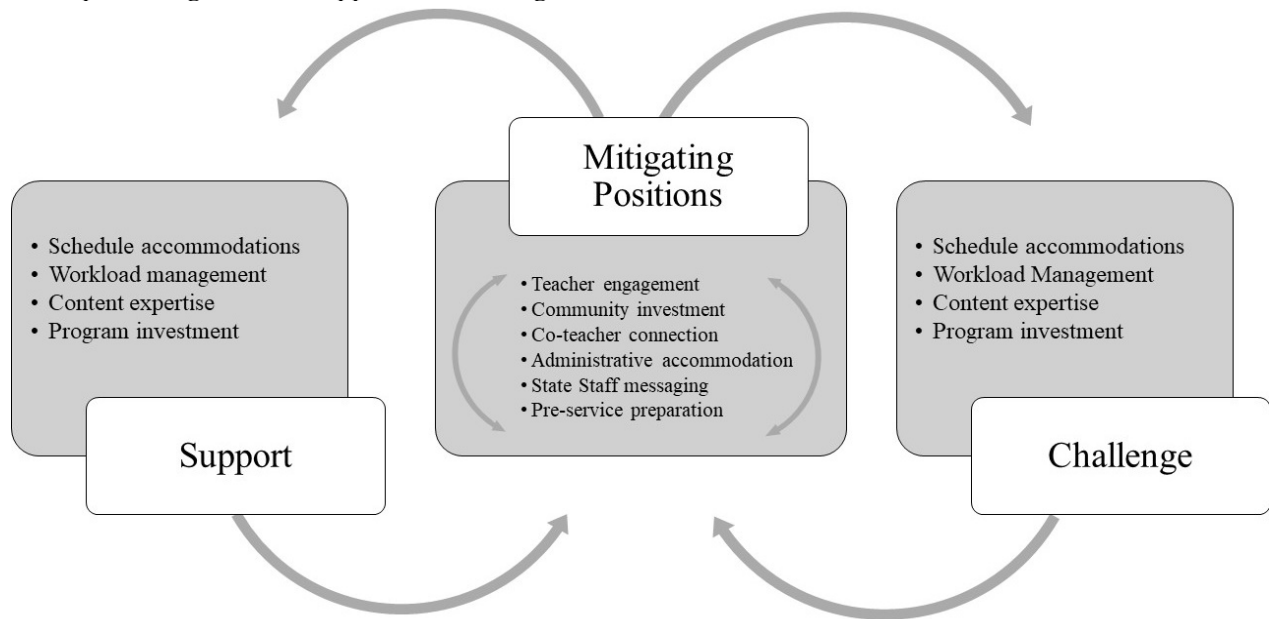
These themes culminated in an interactional *work cycle* of a person who will one day take the place of another. The predominant discourse, implying the challenge of mobility is something to be prevented, was reified through navigating the expectations of the predecessor while attempting to reject broader discourses. Therefore, SBAE teachers must consider the *work cycle* in terms of what they leave for the next person. Can someone replace you? What will the community expect of the next SBAE teacher based on the *right things* you are doing?

Toward a Theory of Teacher Support & Challenge

The data identified teacher support and challenge as nuanced, relational constructs. Challenge and support, as identified by the participants, were relational, reciprocal, and intertwined. Conceptualizing a theory of teacher support and challenge necessitated attention beyond logistics. Challenges often associated with changing schools, as addressed by some community influencers (e.g., using the copier, submitting grades, or school policies), posed much less challenge to participants than navigating relationships did. The findings revealed teachers were challenged in being limited in their autonomy to take up desired positions. Schedule, workload, and content expertise were components of challenge applied to teachers, regardless of their mobility status. Depending on the interactions engaged, these were also integral to teachers' positioning themselves as supported. Figure 4 contextualizes the support and challenge constructs.

Figure 4.

Conceptualizing Teacher Support & Challenge



This initial conceptualization provides a framework to continue the discussion of representing the interaction of support and challenge and the positions taken up to mitigate each within the migratory context. Within this study, the constructs of support and challenge were discussed relative to similar experiences but were mitigated differently depending on the interactional positioning among SBAE teachers and community influencers. This representation sought to capture the cyclical nature of these constructs and their mitigation as discussed in this context. Namely, while the manifestations of support and challenge were similar, they could be mitigated by different uptake, rejection, and reification of positions, to impose different perceptions of similar interactions.

As outlined above, support and challenge reciprocated on each other as breakdowns in support instigated challenge, while alleviating challenge rendered support. While this is not a surprising conclusion and is certainly oversimplified given the nuance of challenge and support outlined in the findings, little exists in the current literature to conceptualize support and challenge as constructs in school contexts. This conceptualization can certainly be expanded, and additional items would add nuance to the constructs. Our participants highlighted needs related to schedule, workload, content expertise, and program investment, as imposing challenge or support. Even in this conceptualization, Aaron's thoughts on mobility go unanswered:

Sometimes there is very little you can do in a school because there was nothing [my first school] could have done to keep me. There's nothing [my second school] could have done to keep me. There wasn't much we could have done to keep you. Our personal paths were to move on and do something else.

Positioning allowed support and challenge beyond the duality of *have or not* and *are or not* (Davies, 2000). Support and challenge, through this lens, were navigated and renegotiated as various mitigating factors dynamically interacted. Support was mitigated as a challenge for the participants depending on the navigation of engagement, investment, connection, messaging, accommodation, and preparation. Seeing similar instigations of support and challenge denoted the importance of mitigating support and challenge

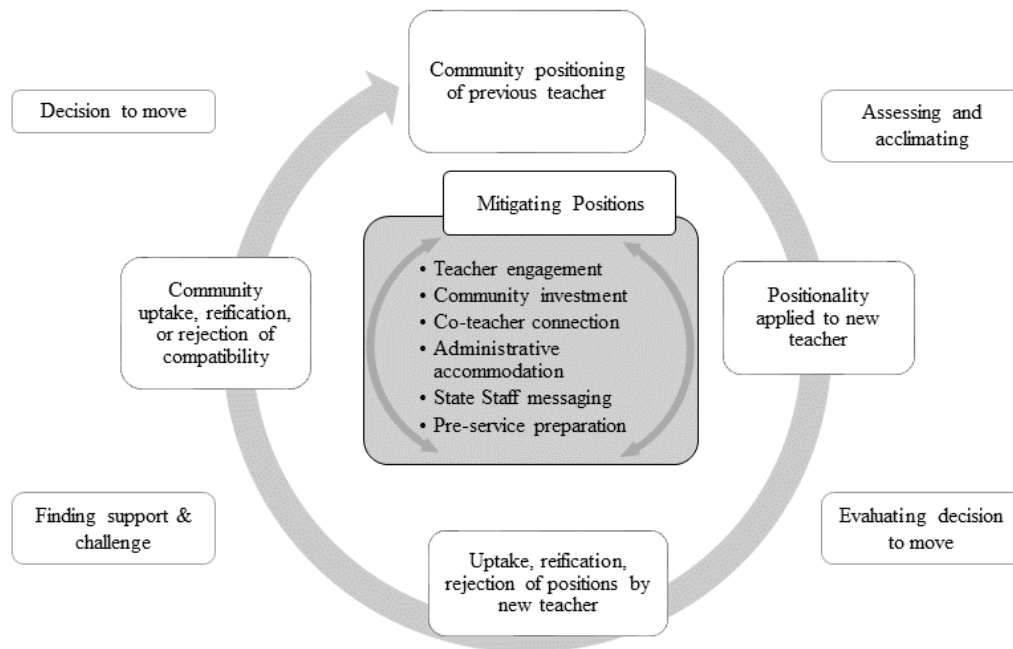
relative to supporting teachers through challenge, positioning them as supported, or perpetuating the challenges they faced.

The Need for a Theory of Teacher Mobility

Our study intended to understand teacher support and challenge. These constructs enabled the view of teacher mobility as a retentive outcome for the SBAE profession. The data collected did not lend well to advancing a comprehensive theory of teacher mobility, recognizing limits on generalizability and a focus on support and challenge. However, this development is warranted if teacher mobility has a retentive outcome. Based on the work done thus far to embrace mobility as retentive, Figure 5 outlines a beginning conceptualization of a theory of teacher mobility. We will not purport to advance a theory based on one qualitative study. However, this work lends itself well to exploring the emerging conceptualization toward a theory of teacher mobility.

Figure 5.

Toward a Theory of Teacher Mobility



Teacher mobility is a complex series of choices that vary highly by individual, context, and interaction. This conceptualization recognizes the discursive positioning of mobile teachers within community contexts, identifying the interactions (mitigating positions) influencing the positions available to the mobile teacher. Our conceptualization focuses closely on the teacher within the *local expressive order* (Davies, 2000). This elaborates local context, relative to the teacher, school, organizations, and departments of education with whom they interact. Further exploration is needed in the outlying areas, particularly related to understanding the decision-making process engaged in mobility, processes of assessing and acclimating within teacher career choices, the ways teachers evaluate their decision to move, and continued replication and validation toward understanding support, and challenge. In addition, there is scant research available to understand teachers’ access to positions across the systems in which they work. This area is ripe for future research!

Understanding support and challenge aids teachers across SBAE, but specific attention must be directed to the challenge of mobility, and the uptake of challenge to better employment situations while

remaining teaching. This implication extends beyond SBAE to the teacher workforce more broadly. Evidence from this research suggests, rather than borrowing from a variety of approaches, teaching may be unique enough to support its own theory of mobility outside traditional social, organizational, developmental, or achievement-based approaches. SBAE is well situated to host this theory given heightened community interaction and expectation, thus making challenge and support more visible. This also makes the theory more accessible for similar teaching positions where heightened student and community engagement are programmatic norms. The proposed theory of teacher mobility must account for this phenomenon as a retentive outcome at the professional level while working within the constraints of teacher socialization (Lortie, 1975; Peterson, 1978). Theory development should ground mobility as a relational phenomenon, recognizing teachers intentionally move to accommodate relationships at home, but determine the success and worth of a move based on professional relationships (Haddad et al., 2019).

The context of teacher mobility presented positions within the constructs of support and challenge. SBAE teacher mobility, through a positioning lens, exposed a pinch point of school and system-wide challenges in education as communities worked to position someone new. Lastly, *migration* implies a pattern of movement beyond mobility that must look across the broader system rather than at the individual teacher. By explicating breakdowns in support and perceived challenges, this study laid the foundation for exploring pinch points in the teaching career. Mobility work helps us explicate what teachers move away from, systemically, to better allow us to focus on the structures that support the teaching career.

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