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ABSTRACT

There has been considerable concern among policymakers over the last decade about the recruitment and retention of talented and energetic people into teaching. A study is described that documented what three talented and idealistic prospective teachers hoped to accomplish in their teaching and how their goals developed through teacher education and student teaching experiences. Data were collected utilizing student teaching journals, interviews conducted before student teaching began and again near its end, and reports from cooperating teachers and supervisors. Case studies based on teaching experiences of the students illustrate their views which reflect a relational conception of teaching, a commitment to sharing personal beliefs, and a wish to share of themselves in ways that would make meaningful differences in their students' lives. Results suggest that policies intended to promote professionalization of teaching in general and standards for social studies teachers in particular should not devalue the more personal dimensions of teaching, and that policymakers should treat these personal dimensions as a central rather than a peripheral concern. (LL)

Private Lives, Public Forums: What Teachers Share of Themselves in Teaching

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As we all know, there has been a great deal of attention in recent years to attracting talented and energetic young people to teaching (e.g., Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986). There has also been an accompanying emphasis on the "professionalization" of teaching which is seemingly intended in part to make careers in teaching more attractive to "the best and the brightest" (e.g., National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1991). Considerably less attention has been given to what attracts talented and energetic people to teaching in the first place and what satisfactions tend to keep them in the classroom. Yet, if they do not encounter the satisfactions which drew them to classroom teaching in the first place, their recruitment and certification is unlikely to keep them there long (Jackson & Belford, 1967; Noddings, 1987; Zumwalt, 1988).

Because of its underlying purpose of educating good citizens and good neighbors, many prospective teachers have told me that social studies is the subject area where they hope they can make the most difference. These same people

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frequently report that they have a message to share which can influence youngsters' lives as individuals and as members of society. The purpose of this exploratory study was to document what three talented and idealistic prospective teachers aimed to accomplish in their teaching and to see how this developed through the course of a teacher education program and, more particularly, through their student-teaching experiences. Finally, I shall consider briefly some questions this study raises for teacher policy, especially that policymakers treat the personal dimensions of teaching as a central rather than a peripheral concern.

The participants in this study I shall call Cindi, Lorraine, Paul. Each had an outstanding undergraduate record: Cindi and Paul at Ivy-League universities and Lorraine at a major state university. They all wanted to put to use their undergraduate work in history and the social sciences and entered the master's program in the teaching of social studies at Teachers College, Columbia University in the autumn of 1990. Each was enrolled in my class on the teaching of social studies that fall. I worked closely with them then and trailed them into their student teaching experience in the spring. I kept track of their development by as many means as practicable including journals which they kept from September to May. I also interviewed each of them for about one hour before they began student teaching and again near its end. I supplemented my own three or four

mornings spent in each of their classrooms with reports from their cooperating teachers and supervisors. Further, we frequently talked informally about their emerging conceptions of teaching.

The participants all aimed, as we shall see, to accomplish more than the stereotypical image of social studies instruction: transmitting information in teacher-dominated recitations (Thornton, 1991). Rather, their views reflected to varying degrees what Nel Noddings (1990) calls a "relational" conception of teaching: They wanted to share of themselves in ways that they hoped would make meaningful differences in their students' lives. Of course, given their fledgling status and the usual constraints on the autonomy of student teachers, they were not always successful. Still, no one questioned the desirability of the goal.

The accounts which follow are based on the experiences of the three participants and, to a slight extent, impressions gained from some other beginning teachers I worked with and visited during the same nine-month period. Each of the three accounts is organized in roughly chronological order although some departures are made for purposes of clarity. As far as possible I have retained the participants' own words.

Cindi

Cindi began her teacher education program with high hopes and a sense of mission. She thought that social studies was of fundamental importance because it provides students with

an opportunity to know their suroundings and prepares them for "functioning purposefully in society." It is "important and necessary for all people to be educated in order to survive and prosper in life." Cindi's favorite subjects were history and the social sciences and she wanted to "introduce others to the importance of these subjects."

A teacher, Cindi said, "has a responsibility" to tackle controversial issues in class such as abortion, drugs, and war: "It develops critical thinking." She intended to raise issues about which she felt strongly such as civil rights, social class, and the status of women because she believed, " if we are going to change society, we have to start talking."

She realized that dealing with such issues could reveal her strong personal beliefs--they "will show anyway"--but insists that teachers "have a responsibility to be fair and not judgmental." To avoid indoctrination, teachers should present alternative views. If she felt a student was adopting an extreme and unwarranted view, she would try to persuade them otherwise. For example, I asked her: "What would you say if a youngster remarked that the Japanese harmed as the result of atomic warfare 'deserved it' because Japan had started the war?" Cindi said she would impress upon the student that "innocent people don't start wars, governments out of their control do." She added, however, that if the student was not persuaded, she would be content to say, "fine, that's what you think, I can't force you."

Cindi's student teaching assignment was in a public, junior high school in New York City. Prior to beginning student teaching, Cindi and the other participants were required to observe in the classroom to which they were assigned for student teaching. Soon Cindi was questioning the fit between her ideals and the problems she saw in classrooms: "It would be impossible to go into all the various questions and dilemmas I have at this time, [but]...I am beginning to wonder whether there are any concrete answers to be found." She wondered, for instance, how the coverage of a broad curriculum could be reconciled with providing a "just" portayal of women and minority groups: "How do we teach a more inclusive history, an American history more reflective of American society as it really is?" She also noted the reliance of her cooperating teacher on the textbook for lessons and tests: "How does one stay out of the textbook trap?" she asked. She also expressed keen disappointment in the low level of collegiality exhibited by teachers at the school.

Overall, the several weeks of observing seemed to take a toll on Cindi's idealism and initial optimism. Disillusionment, perhaps sometimes even cynicism, began to appear in her journal. After a student was caught cheating and received individual help with her work, for example, Cindi noticed that the student was more attentive during lessons. Cindi pondered, however, "...how long will it last? Has she really turned over a new leaf? I suspect that it is

a temporary ploy in order to get back in the teacher's good graces." This skepticism was still mixed with optimism though: "Whatever the reason, I am hoping that while she is trying, while she is coming in for help during lunch, I will be able to spark her interest in the subject. I am trying my hardest to make it relevant to her life and to make her enjoy the subject."

In January 1991 Cindi began student teaching and soon several matters arose which would provide opportunities to share her views. As it turned out, however, she did not address either of the two seemingly most propitious ooportunities--though for quite a different reason on each occasion. The first opportunity was the outbreak of the Persian Gulf War only days after she began student teaching. There was great student interest, in and out of the classroom: "Given the emotional atmosphere and the differences of opinion that abounded, I realized that any discussion of the war had to be handled with sensitivity and care. As a teacher, especially a social studies teacher, I felt it my responsibility to say something about it to the students. I was also eager to hear what students had to say." Cindi approached her cooperating teacher seeking advice on how to discuss the war with the class. The response was unexpected: the teacher's religious views precluded discussion of the war. Cindi was stunned: "What could I do? Of course I could not bring up the subject in <u>this</u> teacher's class...."

The second seemingly propitious opportunity arose several weeks later with the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. This event was significant to Cindi on both personal and curricular grounds. Personally she felt a special interest because she was herself of south Asian ancestry. More generally, Cindi saw the assassination as a way to underscore the longstanding communal divisions of the subcontinent where, after all, one fifth of humanity lives. Moreover, she also saw an opportunity to connect the assassination to an earlier lively lesson she had taught on gun control. In that lesson she had tried unsuccessfully to mask her strong belief in gun control. Cindi recalled, nonetheless, that she had only "press[ed] them on their beliefs" (that is, she had not indoctinated) and was unconcerned that her private beliefs were probably evident.

Eventually she decided against discussing Gandhi's violent end. Cindi judged that her students, mostly of African-American and Latino heritages, would see discussion of south Asia as somehow self-serving on Cindi's part, bringing in her heritage when it was not relevant. Further, she concluded that the assassination was simply too divorced from what the class was then studying, the United States Constitution.

Cindi's initial confidence that she could emphasize what she believed was truly important was severely tested by the end of her student teaching experience. By then she identified the school environment as a major determinant of

what she would be allowed to teach. Moreover, she thought that her student-teaching school was insufficiently supportive of collegial interaction among the staff. Nonethless, Cindi remained cautiously optimistic about her future career in teaching and determined to search carefully for a supportive school environment in which she would be allowed to teach what she believes is important.

Lorraine

Lorraine believed that "learning social studies opens up the world..." and, by "examining the history, economics, and politics of other cultures, we can learn more about ourselves and perhaps learn a little more tolerance, or at least respect for one another." Her hope was to use stories, skits, art, music, film, and novels to "bring social studies alive" and "show students that their problems in today's world have happened before."

Meaningful learning, Lorraine argued, is impossible without free expression. She said that she would feel no compunction about sharing her strong personal beliefs about social and political issues as long as there was an atmosphere of free exchange. Lorraine thought it feasible to reveal her beliefs without imposing them on her students. The difference between sharing beliefs and indoctrination, she said, lay in making sure that those who disagree are respected. Education ends when students cannot express their points of view. With these caveats in mind, she had no qualms about arranging the curriculum to include issues

important to her such as "peace, social justice, [and] respect for other people and their ideas."

It had been 15 years since Lorraine had graduated from high school and her first few classroom observations shocked her: "The most blatant thing I observed--and this is even in a predominantly, white, middle class, suburban high school [near New York City]--was a general lack of respect. Students ignored teachers' requests for quiet, were unprepared, were disruptive, didn't care that a visitor was in the room."

Nevertheless, Lorraine was "energized [sic] by watching good teachers" and saw "possibilities and alternatives" when watching not-so-good teachers. She reacted especially strongly to a teacher who did not seem to give students credit for being able to figure out complex situations. With evident frustration, Lorraine declared: "I don't think it is beyond even ninth graders' abilities to present them with [fine distinctions]."

When she began student teaching, Lorraine tried to put some of her ideas into action. For example, on being assigned to duties in a "structured" study hall, she thought she could use the opportunity to develop more personal relationships with students: "I've managed to have conversations with them about music and sports. I'm working my way around to history to see if I can't fool them into conversing about the history of some of their hobbies."

In her regularly assigned 10th-grade, global studies classroom, Lorraine was given the opportunity to teach a unit on conflict and change in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. This was a ready opportunity for Lorraine to include subjects on which she had strong personal beliefs. She divided the class into research groups and each group was assigned the task of investigating a challenge to Soviet authority in eastern Europe during the Cold War such as the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the more recent Polish Solidarity movement. Consistent with her aims, Lorraine worked hard to present multiple viewpoints and encouraged the students to take on the roles of the group they were researching. She also tried to counter the oversimplistic belief which associates everything good and reasonable in the Cold War with the West and everything evil and unreasonable with the Soviet Union. She worked hard to show that there were rational and historical reasons for Soviet behavior.

After several days' preparation, the day arrived for the student presentations. Lorraine's expectations were low; she usually was her own harshest critic. She felt sure that she "had not given them enough information to work with...and positive...all the oral presentations would be just lousy...." To Lorraine's surprise most of the presentations were lively and informed. The students often "got inside" their roles, the "Soviets," for example, complaining that the "Hungarians" were ungrateful for the millions of Soviet

dead spent in "liberating" eastern Europe from the Nazis. A few students who had complained about the difficulty of the assignment made the best presentations. Several students went to sources beyond what Lorraine had given them.

Lorraine's personal beliefs were even more evident when she dealt with a topic which drew directly on her own experience. She had been to central America twice and was eager to share what she had seen and learned. It is most important, she believed, that students "understand that these places are different in many ways from the way we live our lives but in many ways we're [all] people, very often [with] the same worries and concerns."

Several months into her student teaching assignment, Lorraine was invited by a ninth-grade global studies teacher to give a slide presentation on central America in his class. Lorraine described some of the problems that central America has experienced such as earthquakes, recurrent United States interventions, corrupt leaders propped up by the United States, and poor health care. She mentioned Nicaraguan war widows who had warned her that the United States should not fight in the Persian Gulf, "otherwise your husbands will be coming back in plastic bags like ours did." Throughout her presentation, she spoke clearly and with passion. She had a keen eye for comparisons and contrasts which would make sense to ninth-graders including the state of the roads, sanitation, and housing in central America

versus suburban New York. The students appeared interested and attentive throughout.

Although Lorraine's presentation on central America was forceful, she provided a sufficiently rich description that students would be able to draw their own conclusions on matters such as United states policy in the region. After she had finished her student-teaching assignment, I asked her: "Why didn't you just come out and say [what you really think] that U.S. policy in Latin America has for a long time been misguided if not morally wrong?" "I think I implied it," she answered. She added, however, that she worried about being too explicit and that the possibility of "dictating" in a "power position" made her "nervous." Care must be exercised because "kids will buy it!" A teacher should "stroke their interest" and get students to "reach their own conclusions." Overall, while Lorraine often felt preoccupied with surviving the day, it was never to the "extent that it prevented [her] from covering things [she] felt important."

Paul

The personal beliefs that Paul brought to teaching were well thought through but less focused on controversy than those of Cindi and Lorraine. Paul's three main reasons for wanting to teach were, first, a desire to teach students "the basic knowledge of social organizations and cultures at home and abroad so they will have a sense that today's world is a global village." Second, he wanted students to meet the

"demands of citizenship" by learning the "ability to think critically about modern life and the effects of the past," as well as to "think analytically and communicate their opinions effectively." Finally, he simply found history and the social sciences intrinsically interesting.

Paul's announced aims in the fall did not seem particularly evident when I observed his teaching in the spring. For example, he had written in one of his earliest journals, long before he had even observed in the classroom, of his great interest in "material culture studies." In detail he explained this as the "study through artifacts of the beliefs--values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions--of a particular community or society at a given time." Paul felt that material culture studies could be a corrective to the "orientation of social studies [which] has not only been toward the European white male, but also toward literate testaments." Although Paul never said specifically that he would use material culture studies in his own teaching, it seemed plain that he would like to. After his first few journals in the fall, however, he never again raised the topic.

Inevitably opportunities for Paul to share his personal beliefs arose during his student teaching at a public junior high school in New York City. More so than with Cindi and Lorraine, Paul's opportunities for sharing his personal beliefs originated with the students. For example, early on the morning of Ash Wednesday Paul had attended a church

service. By the time he arrived at school he had forgotten about the smudge of ashes on his forehead. Some of the students recognized the significance of the ashes but most did not. Paul explained that the ashes were from palm leaves, not from a cigarette butt. He further explained that he was an Episcopalian, but "did not feel it was proper to go into further explanations because I thought it might introduce an improper degree of religion into the classroom." Paul did not appear to question this conclusion and summed up his thoughts on the episode with characteristic humor and resilience: "I did learn that you have to explain Ash Wednesday repeatedly in the course of the school day and that a late-afternoon [church service] might be more practical than an early morning service."

When Paul more deliberately set out to share his personal beliefs, he was not always successful. This was partly because of his inexperience in the classroom. No doubt it also reflected the almost antithetical backgrounds of Paul and his students. They were nearly all from underprivileged, urban backgrounds and of Latino and African-American heritages while Paul's background was rural, Ivy-League, white, and middle class. Understandably, a period of adjustment transpired on both sides. As Paul noted early in his student-teaching experience, he found himself "two steps behind the students on almost every occasion." Similarly, the vehemence with which students insulted each other at first stunned him and prevented him from addressing problem

situations as effectively as he would have liked: "Part of it is my amazement at what I am hearing; part of it a disinclination to confrontation." Often Paul would move to "cool the situation down but took no decisive action on the spot with regard to [the] personal invective." Disappointment with being "behind" the students continued to haunt Paul: "The overwhelming feeling of frustration that I have comes from the fact that I am always reacting to [situations of] this kind. This makes it difficult to pick out parts of myself that I am sharing with kids. Often they exercise an indirect control of the agenda."

As I have already noted, Paul was less inclined than Cindi and Lorraine to arrange the curriculum to address his personal beliefs. He sometimes found, however, that students' reactions to subject matter provoked a reaction in him which probably made his personal beliefs evident. For instance, a unit on the Civil War included a debate over the right of the South to secede from the Union. Many students sided with the South. Paul was surprised that it was mostly African-American students who defended the right of the slave-holding South to secede. The students had less sympathy for Lincoln's constitutional duty to hold the Union together and the Southerners' obligation to abide by the Constitution.

Thus, Paul found himself trying to persuade the youngsters that there was reciprocity between citizens having rights and having responsibilities--as both citizens

of a nation and members of this class: "They pick up much faster on rights, much faster than responsibilities." Paul also recalled in this regard that one student had asked to bring a sleeping bag to school for occasions when fellow students were making presentations. Although presumably the student was speaking at least partly tongue-in-cheek, in response Paul tried to emphasize that as students in the school they have a "responsibility to tune in." He suspected that this made his personal beliefs evident: "They can probably detect that I'm frustrated with their lack of understanding of...responsibility. In that way, they see what I value more."

Discussion

My accounts of Cindi, Lorraine, and Paul illustrate what at least some talented and energetic people wanted to share of themselves in their teaching. My impressions of several of their peers revealed that they had similar aspirations. It is worth underscoring that even Paul, who was hesitant in sharing his personal beliefs, found that committed teaching meant sharing his beliefs, such as his plea for balance between rights and responsibilities.

Although Cindi, Lorraine, and Paul wanted to share their views with students, they firmly distinguished this from indoctrination. Thus, while they did not insist that students agree with their viewpoints, they did place great emphasis on each student <u>having</u> a reasoned viewpoint. This played itself out in different ways, however: Lorraine was

prepared to arrange the curriculum around issues important to her, Cindi did so on an inconsistent basis, and Paul's views surfaced almost in spite of himself. Nevertheless, the satisfactions and frustrations evident in sharing of themselves seemed central to what they cared about in teaching.

Although they did not emphasize students agreeing with their views, when they encountered student apathy toward issues they cared about they felt unsettled and, frequently, frustrated. These reactions are consistent with some other accounts of committed teachers: the deepest satisfactions they find in their work are in reaching students and lighting a spark in them (Boston Women's Teachers' Group, 1983; Flinders, 1989).

There has been considerable concern among policymakers over the last decade about the recruitment and retention of talented and energetic people into teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1985). If Cindi, Lorraine, and Paul are at all representative of such people, the priority given by policymakers to criteria for "professionalization" of teaching in general (e.g., Holmes Group, 1990) and to "standards" for social studies teachers in particular (e.g., Keller, 1985; National Council for the Social Studies, 1988) may not speak to the main concerns of the best and the brightest. Although Cindi, Lorraine, and Paul would stack up well against such criteria, the satisfactions they cared about most deeply cannot be so readily measured. It is

crucial that policies intended to promote "professionalization" and "standards" do not devalue the more personal dimensions of teaching. Unless policies address what attracts the Cindis, Lorraines, and Pauls to teaching, those policies will fall short of keeping them in the classroom.

Note: This paper was prepared for a Division B symposium, The Place of Teachers' Personal Experience in Curriculum Inquiries, at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 20-24, 1992. I am indebted to my colleague, Michael Whelan, for his criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper. Although their real names are not used herein, I am also grateful to the three teachers who allowed me access to their lives.

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