

Citation:

Keane, E., Heinz, M., & Lynch, A. (2020). Identity matters? 'Working class' student teachers in Ireland, the desire to be a relatable and inclusive teacher, and sharing the classed self.

International Journal of Inclusive Education, 1-17.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1853255>

Identity Matters? 'Working Class' Student Teachers in Ireland, the Desire to be a Relatable and Inclusive Teacher, and Sharing the Classed Self

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Abstract

This paper is about social class and initial teacher education, specifically the perspectives and experiences of those from lower socio-economic groups in an initial teacher education programme in Ireland. It draws on a qualitative study employing in-depth semi-structured interviews with 21 'working class' student teachers, exploring their backgrounds and educational experiences, motivations to become a teacher, and experiences in initial teacher education. A key finding concerns participants' highly classed desired future teaching identity: they expressed a strong desire to be a relatable and inclusive teacher, which they conceptualised as being approachable, caring and supportive of all pupils. To varying degrees, they felt that becoming this type of teacher could be achieved in part through 'sharing the (classed) self' with their pupils. Building on research about diversifying the teaching population internationally, and critical arguments for and against 'ethnic matching' approaches, the findings are examined from the perspective of 'class matching' as well as teacher self-disclosure with respect to social class.

Keywords

Social class, initial teacher education, inclusive teaching, teacher self-disclosure

Funding Details

This work was supported by Ireland's Higher Education Authority under PATH1 (Programme for Access to Higher Education, Strand 1: Equity of Access to Initial Teacher Education)

1. Introduction

Previous research has shown that the teaching profession internationally, and in Ireland, attracts individuals who are predominantly from middle class and white backgrounds (Schleicher, 2014; Authors, 2015, 2016, 2018). In Ireland, while the issue of diversifying the teaching profession has been of research and policy concern for some time (cf. Conway et al. 2009; DES, 2002; Authors, 2011, 2013; Authors, 2015; Lynch and Lodge, 2004; Moran, 2008; Teaching Council, 2008, 2011), significant work in the area has been conducted recently, particularly since the commencement of projects to diversify initial teacher education (ITE), funded under the Higher Education Authority's (HEA) Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH), Strand 1 (Equity of Access to Initial Teacher Education) in 2017.

We know relatively little about the perspectives, experiences and motivations of individuals from under-represented groups, especially those from working class backgrounds or lower socio-economic groups¹, in relation to considerations about a teaching career. Previous research

¹ While the student teacher participants in this study would be categorised as working class, terms such as 'working class' and 'middle class' are often contested in Ireland, and linked to the country's post-colonial status (Breen and Whelan, 1996). Hence, inverted commas are used with the term 'working class' in the title and in relevant places in the paper, particularly when referring to the participants, as this was not a term the participants used, and we are not using this term uncritically. We also use the term 'lower socio-economic groups' to refer to students from what would be regarded as working class backgrounds, in the more objective sense as the several lower socio-economic groups identified in the Irish census. Our participants would be categorised as coming from one of these lower socio-economic groups in terms of family income and had to meet relevant criteria in this

suggests those from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to report social justice-based (Authors, 2017a) and altruistic motivations (Authors, 2017b) in relation to careers including teaching. Additionally, it has been argued that teachers are more effective if they understand the role of their background in their approach to teaching (Van Galen, 2008). However, we know little about the source of these motivations, or about if and how they relate to individuals' developing professional identities and experiences in the context of teaching.

The *Access to Post-Primary Teaching (APT) Project* is a joint National University of Ireland (NUI) and St. Angela's College, Sligo project, funded under PATH (Strand 1). The project aims to recruit and support student teachers from lower socio-economic groups in/to the Professional Master of Education (PME)² programme. This paper draws on data collected as part of the NUI aspect of the project via semi-structured interviews conducted with 21 APT participants during their PME studies. In this paper, we explore an important focus of the participants; their strongly expressed desire to be a particular 'type' of teacher, specifically one who is relatable and inclusive. This paper examines the participants' conceptualizations of such a teacher, exploring what being relatable and inclusive meant to them and what was involved, as well as their perceptions of the importance of their socio-demographic positionality/ies in constructing this identity.

There are five sections in this paper. In section two, we examine previous research on social class in teaching, and the formation of teacher identities. Section three presents the study's

regard to enter their undergraduate programme via an Access programme or the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR).

²The Professional Master of Education is a two-year postgraduate initial teacher education programme in Ireland.

methodology. Our findings, focusing on participants' expressed desire to be a particular type of teacher, are presented in section four. In the concluding section, the findings are interrogated through an examination of relevant research and recommendations for policy, practice and future research are considered.

2. Literature Review

Issues of social class in teaching are regarded as being largely invisible (cf. Lampert, Burnett and Lebbers, 2016; Hall and Jones, 2013; Van Galen, 2008; Reay, 1998). This invisibility also pertains to the research literature, with a considerable dearth of research on class in teaching and ITE, even, and perhaps especially, in the literature on diversifying the teaching profession. There is a significant body of research examining the rationale for, and benefits and challenges of, diversifying the teaching population internationally (cf. Villegas and Irvine, 2010). In this literature, there is a considerable lack of focus on issues of social class, including the experiences of student teachers, and teachers, from various socio-economic group backgrounds. Drawing on Reay (1998), Van Galen (2008, p. 99) establishes an important rationale for focusing on "the daily class work" of teachers, arguing that examining the class positionalities and experiences of teachers is necessary in the context of stratification in schools and wider society.

The small amount of research about 'working class' teachers emphasises their likely positive impact on the educational experiences of working class students. Relative to teachers from more privileged backgrounds, 'working class' teachers tend to position themselves as 'change agents', desiring to 'give back', particularly in relation to pupils from similar backgrounds to themselves, setting high expectations for all and being highly committed in their work, often in reaction to

their own previous negative experiences of schooling (cf. Maguire 1999, 2001, 2005; Burn 2001; Van Galen, 2008; Authors, 2017; Authors, 2018). For example, in Ireland, the ‘working class’ student teachers in Authors’ (2018) study recounted generally negative prior school experiences, including being directed away from higher education, and teaching as a career, by their career guidance teachers, but frequently pointed to a particular teacher who encouraged them and was supportive of their future plans. They were clear about their desire to inspire and support pupils like themselves through their own teaching, and noted how this desire was rooted in having not felt encouraged or supported themselves. Research with minority (ethnic) teachers also demonstrates their common motivation to contribute to educational transformation (cf. Su, 1997; King, 1993). However, ‘working class’ student teachers, and teachers, are also reported as experiencing a sense of inferiority entering the (generally) middle class teaching profession, stressing about fitting in and ‘belonging’, and being highly conscious of class markers, such as dress and accent (cf. Maguire 1999, 2001, 2005; Burn 2001, Raffo and Hall 2006). Some previous research has found that beginning teachers’ class experiences and values pre-dispose them to feeling aligned with some teaching contexts, and misaligned with others (Hall et al. 2005; Ash et al. 2006; Raffo and Hall 2006). Lampert, Burnett and Lebbers (2016) examined how one working-class pre-service teacher in Australia experienced studying in a predominantly middle-class ITE programme, and teaching in low socio-economic communities. Reflecting on her own previous experiences of class-based discrimination, ‘Salli’ became very self-aware of her perceptions of different student groups and how they related to her own positionality, as well as the complex ways in which she performed in terms of class.

Teacher identity formation and actual classroom practice have been found to be significantly impacted by student teachers' backgrounds, previous experiences in education, and personal beliefs (Edwards and Edwards; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011; Lortie, 1975; Wall, 2016; Van Hook, 2002; Lawrence-Lightfoot; 2003). For example, memories of school may foster a desire amongst student teachers to emulate or be specifically different to certain teachers encountered in the past (Chang-Kredl and Kinglsey, 2014). However, there is a lack of research on teacher identity formation from a class perspective, and yet Van Galen (2008) argues that a core component of teacher identities and daily work involves 'class work', and that teachers' class backgrounds significantly impact their professional identity. In the 'class portraits' Van Galen (2008) presents, the class background of the working class teachers was central to the formation of their professional identity, for example, in the ways they considered social mobility, inclusion and inequality. Looking at the experiences of 'middle class' teachers, Hall and Jones (2013) have also emphasised the importance of class in shaping teachers' early professional experiences and class identities.

In this paper, we unpack the impact of (working) class positionality on the construction of teaching identity, in terms of the aspects that are prioritised by 'working class' student teachers, why these aspects are emphasised and how they are enacted in practice.

3. Methodology

As part of the APT project, participants complete a number of individual, semi-structured interviews over the course of their Professional Master of Education (PME) programme, focusing on their motivations for entering the teaching profession, their schooling, HE and PME (including

placement) experiences, and their perspectives about diversifying the teaching profession. This paper draws on the data collected during round one interviews with two participant groups, those who commenced the PME in 2017/2018 (N=11) and in 2018/2019 (N=10). The interviews were conducted when participants were in the early months of PME Year 1, after the completion of one five-week block on campus followed by their first five-week school placement block. Full ethical approval for the study was granted by the institutional Research Ethics Committee.

In line with project requirements, all APT participants had entered their *undergraduate* programme (at various institutions in Ireland) via a pre-entry access programme or the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) having met various criteria regarding socio-economic disadvantage, including relating to family income. As such, all would be considered as coming from lower socio-economic groups, or as being ‘working class’, although for Bourdieu and Passeron (1979, cited in Ball et al., 2002, p. 54), these students are, however, “the least disadvantaged of the most disadvantaged”. Indeed, they are “already exceptions” in terms of their “educational trajectories and aspirations” (Ball et al., 2002, p. 53).

The participants were offered a PME place at the university through the standard Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC) competitive selection system having met all application requirements and securing a place on an oversubscribed programme. All 11 of the first group were female, and seven of the second group were female, with three males. 20 of the 21 participants were of the majority ethnic group, being White, Irish and of the settled community. One of the participants was a member of the Irish Travelling community³.

³ Minority ethnic groups, including the Traveller community, are very significantly under-represented in teacher education programmes in Ireland (cf. Authors, 2016).

Situated in the interpretive paradigm, this in-depth qualitative study employed individual, semi-structured interviews as a data collection method. Following the interviews with the first group, data were transcribed verbatim and grounded theory coding techniques, including open (line by line) and focused coding, categorising, and memoing (cf. Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Authors, 2015) were employed during data analysis. Data and codes were reviewed at team analysis meetings at various stages throughout the process. Subsequent to coding stages, provisional categories were constructed. The same analytic process was followed with the interviews with the second group of participants. The categories derived from both groups were then reviewed, discussed and reworked in team analysis meetings to establish an overall schema of categories covering the data from both groups. This paper pertains to one of these categories, concerning participants' expressed desire to be a particular type of post-primary teacher, a relatable and inclusive teacher. Pseudonyms are employed throughout.

4. Findings

An important category to participants' desire to be a relatable and inclusive teacher, specifically regarding pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds. They believed their socio-demographic positionality, in terms of coming from a lower socio-economic group, and having had particular school and life experiences, made them *able to relate* more easily to pupils from similar backgrounds than would otherwise be the case. This resulted in the participants desiring to be *a particular type of teacher*; one who was approachable, caring and actively supportive of the success of all their pupils.

4.1 Being able to relate due to similar backgrounds and experiences

Participants commonly expressed the idea that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to see themselves in their teachers because they are perceived as coming from backgrounds different to their own. Clara highlighted what she felt was a mostly middle class teaching body 'passing judgement' on those whom they did not understand:

I think people need to remember the teachers ... most of the time, can relate very little to the student body that's in front of them because...they've come from very different backgrounds to the students...and they're passing judgement on something they know nothing about (Clara).

In the context of Irish schools being very diverse, Martina also perceived "a big gap of understanding" between teachers and some pupils:

It's all about the students being able to identify with teachers standing up in front of them, rather than there being a big gap of understanding between them (Martina).

The majority of participants believed that their (lower) socio-economic backgrounds, and their related experiences and identities, enabled them to better understand and relate to pupils from similar backgrounds than otherwise would be the case. Paul claimed to have a "... sense of where they're [pupils] are coming from". Sarah explained that "... because of the background I've come from ... I've seen where these kids are, I know what it feels like". Similarly, many of the other participants directly linked their backgrounds to being able to understand certain pupils:

I think that it's good to have more people from these [disadvantaged] communities in teaching because they know. They'll say, "Ah, yeah, I know what he's going through". I know what I would have liked when I was in his situation in school (Robert).

I fully believe I teach differently because I'm from a DEIS⁴ background ... even in terms of dealing with the likes of minority groups ... like I would have grown up dealing with them, and I'd be able to understand and just get their culture (Paul)

... there's always something else going on, there might be another reason why a student hasn't their homework done, or there might be a reason why they're absent, just comes from my background. I know the struggles with school and getting in there and getting the work done. So I think it's just kind of made me more open-minded, and I think I'll be more open-minded for the future (Ava)

Some of the participants felt that pupils would perceive that teachers from more privileged backgrounds would not understand them or their lives, due to a lack of 'familiarity or similarity', suggesting that such familiarity or similarity was almost a precondition of a successful pupil-teacher relationship:

... the students in front of me felt like they understood what I was saying, and they came from nearly similar backgrounds or outlooks. Whereas if ... I pulled up in a Ferrari car, driving from my castle, they'd be saying 'She hasn't a clue what's going on in our lives.'...They'd automatically shut it down and there's no familiarity or similarity, so 'why should I listen to what you have to say?' sort of attitude (Ava)

4.2 Wanting to be a Particular Type of Teacher: Relatable and Inclusive

⁴ A DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) categorisation indicates that the school has designated disadvantaged status due to the socio-demographic composition of its student population, and is eligible for specific extra supports, including funding.

This ability to relate resulted in participants desiring to be *a particular type of teacher*, relatable and inclusive. For them, this was one who was approachable, caring and actively supportive of the success of all pupils. Much of their thinking was based on their own previous schooling experiences. For a small number, participants wished to emulate positive examples they recalled. For example, Ava described her post-primary teachers as helpful and encouraging, even outside the classroom:

... very helpful ..., and they definitely kept me on track ... [history teacher] was the first person who actually told me I could go and do something, ... and [other teacher] really took me under their wing and they even gave me lifts from school when I needed ... because I didn't have transport at the time. (Ava)

The more typical experience recalled by participants, however, was teachers who "...just come in, do the class, and that's it" (Maria), and were not interested in really engaging with or motivating their pupils.

... there was just other teachers who came in, did their job, and they didn't have that interest in motivating you, like they more or less just delivered knowledge I guess ... some were just kind of a bit cut off from us. (Aine)

In the same way, for Brigid, there was a "barrier" in schools between teachers and students: "'This is our staff room don't come near it,' or 'This is my classroom ... and when class is finished off you go. Don't talk to me after'". Along with this sense of distance, some participants recalled being afraid of their teachers who "ruled through fear" (Robert). Recalling similar experiences, Sophie believed that pupils often see teachers as "the crazy people that just give out homework

and shout at you”. Aine reported that for many pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in her placement school, their daily experiences were marked by “the teachers constantly giving out to them, constantly shouting at them, constantly giving them extra work, detention”. Such negative teacher-pupil relationships resulted in the participants feeling as if they “couldn’t talk to any of the teachers or confide in them” (Elizabeth).

The participants were also conscious of their own teachers having been mostly of more privileged backgrounds than themselves, and therefore not being able to relate to their experiences. As Catherine explained, “They didn’t really take our backgrounds into consideration... [and as a result] they didn’t really know what we were going through as young students”. In this context, the desire to be a *different* type of teacher was noted by many participants, and was described as someone who was approachable, caring and actively supportive of the success of all their pupils.

Wanting to be seen by pupils as approachable

The participants expressed a strong desire to be seen by their pupils as approachable, rather than someone to fear. The participants stressed wanting their pupils to perceive them as helpful, caring and supportive, so that they would be comfortable talking to them:

... letting the kids know that you’re not there to like scare them, you’re there to help them.

You’re there to get them through, to meet their needs, whatever they need (Sarah).

I prefer to be a teacher that is caring and supportive, than a teacher that just comes in and teaches the lesson, and goes out again (Maria).

It was understood that being regarded as approachable necessitated a mentor-type conceptualisation of and approach to teaching, which participants felt extended beyond the pedagogic realm:

... you're more than a teacher, you're a mentor, and I want the pupils to be able to confide in me and communicate with me, and not be scared of a teacher, like dreading going into the classroom (Elizabeth)

The participants linked several positive results to their caring approach. Paul's approach was "firm but fair and strict but caring" and he directly linked his approach to positive relationships with his pupils, emphasising that "I have a good rapport with my students because I care". Louise felt that her caring approach, exhibited through talking to her pupils "about their life and tak[ing] an interest in them" meant that "they have more respect for you". For Brigid, part of a caring and respectful approach involved "talk[ing] to them like they're adults ... if you want them to respect you, talk to them properly". Indeed, many of the participants emphasised their desire for mutually respectful pupil-teacher relationships as part of their approach. They also tended to link respect with "understanding students and their backgrounds" (Martina), a willingness to "go down [and] mix with my students" (Sarah), and "believing in everyone ... [being] fair" (Clara). This approach was linked to generally not having experienced this themselves as learners.

Actively supporting the success of all pupils

For the participants, part of being this different type of teacher involved actively supporting success of *all* pupils, leaving no one behind. In most cases, this desire was related to their own memories of feeling left behind at school.

I don't want to go and leave someone behind, like I was left behind ... I was just left behind.

[They felt] 'Just leave her, she doesn't want to come to school, she's grand'. (Sophie)

While the participants commonly reported wanting all pupils to succeed, they differed in how they defined success. Some linked it to HE progression, and thus promoted and discussed HE options with their pupils and encouraged them in this regard:

... just kind of talk a lot about how they can choose what they want and not to let things like financial issues like, you're gonna get a grant ...there's things out there that will help you (Anna)

... irrelevant of who they are, where they're from, they're all entitled to an education, they're all entitled to go to third level college, and some of them just might need to be told 'You can do it.' (Martina)

Other participants took a broader view of success, viewing it as whatever made their pupils happy.

I want all of them to succeed, and if they don't want to go on and do university, that's no problem with me. If they just go on and do something that they're happy with, I'll be delighted." (Ava)

Even if she's not at school ... that doesn't mean that she won't go on and do something that she is really passionate about and really loves ... school's not for some people (Clara).

The participants felt they could actively support the success of all through being a role model for those who came from similar backgrounds to themselves. Just by being their teacher, and being

open about who they were and where they came from, they felt that they could be “a role model ... [and] motivate them to want to learn and to enjoy the learning experience” (Catherine).

Several participants expressed a keen desire to advocate for pupils, particularly in cases where they felt other teachers had failed to do so. Again, this sentiment was most strongly expressed in the context of negative memories about their own school experiences:

I believe that every student is entitled to an opportunity of education, no matter what your background is, or your ability, because no child should have their education taken away from them ... Because that’s what was done with me (Sophie)

There was definitely kind of an attitude, which I hated, of the students that were from more disadvantaged areas or families ... so negative ... real disheartening even for all of the rest of us to watch ... somebody could have stood up ... ‘Come on, this is not fair’ ... it’s just like they got no support in school. They were knocked down at every chance.
(Jane)

Others reported witnessing actions that they perceived as unjust in their current school placements. For example, Paul made a case to a teacher in his placement school advocating for a group of pupils, saying: “No, no, no, they’re good. Like they’re good, you just need to give them time”.

Sharing the (classed) self

As part of becoming the approachable and caring teacher, some participants strongly felt it was important for pupils to be able *to see themselves* in their teachers. This led to some deciding to

share information about their own backgrounds and educational experiences, with the aim of 'inspiring' their pupils to consider HE and career options.

By giving them little bits [of personal background information] ... ways for them to kind of look at you ... they identify themselves in something ... If they could identify something that I'm saying and relate to it, chances are they could look at me finishing school and eventually attending college and say 'Look, if she can do it, why can't I?' (Martina)

I have come across students who just need someone to tell them, 'I'm like you, I've been here, if I can do it, you can do it ...' (Ava)

Rita, who was from the area in which her school was located, explained that many of her pupils were familiar with her background, and she viewed this positively. She recalled a conversation she had with her pupils, explaining how she felt it made her more approachable:

I was like, 'Sure, like my family has no money and ... I'm in my Masters. If I can do it, you're well able'. And it makes me more approachable to them. It changed the dynamic of the relationship ... 'cause I wasn't like just an authority figure to them, I was like the 'local girl' who was training to be the teacher in the school. (Rita)

Another perceived benefit of 'sharing the self' was the possibility of counteracting stereotypes about teachers not being 'human' or being 'academic geniuses'. Clara believed that there were clear stereotypes amongst pupils in schools about what 'type' of people are suited to becoming teachers. She noted that "people in secondary school [think] ... you have to be a certain way to be a secondary school teacher". Several participants relayed anecdotes alluding to how (sometimes) they, and certainly school pupils 'generally', viewed teachers as not being human or

a person in some fundamental respect, as not being 'normal', or as not having a 'real life' outside of the school.

I think students kind of feel that the teachers aren't human. (Elizabeth)

... you are just a teacher, you don't go home, you sleep in the school. You actually don't think your teacher is a real person ... You don't think that they're [teachers are] actually real people. (Louise)

I think it's important for them to know that teachers are human, they're just like them, that they [the students] can be like them, and that they too, can be successful like their teachers have been. (Elizabeth)

I just think being relatable and making the kids realise that you're only a person too ... and you have a family ... you have a life outside teaching ... that's really important ... because sometimes I think they just see you as a teacher, nothing else, that you live in school, like you live and breathe in that school, that's all you are ... make them realise, 'look, I'm the exact same as you, I sat in them seats ...' (Sarah)

Some participants felt that sharing more about 'the self' – as a teacher - would specifically encourage those from disadvantaged backgrounds to consider teaching as a career. As Jane and Sarah explained:

It's all about relating to them and letting them know that they can be in your shoes ... if you can relate to a teacher and get on that personal level, then you'd consider it (Jane)

Talk to these kids and say, 'this is the background that I've come from', so they can relate to us and actually think, 'Well actually, hang on a second, I'm not that different ...' And it might spark the interest for kids to think, 'Well, ok, I always thought teachers had to be of a certain stance, or a certain background or status, but really ... you're no different than me, so why can't I do it? (Sarah)

In this context, Sophie noted the importance of teachers having "fun" and "a laugh" with the students, "not being strict the whole time, and showing them that teachers actually are human, that we're not robots". Catherine remembered one individual teacher from her school placement who was notable because "they [the students] could actually speak to her like she was a normal person ... they had ... a great relationship with her", juxtaposing this with other teachers she observed, describing them as "making no connections really," but simply seeing their role as "a job, into the classroom, out of the classroom".

Another common (mis)perception of teachers amongst pupils, according to the participants, was that teachers had to be very high academic achievers, and "all knowledgeable about everything" (Paul):

I remember thinking all the teachers ... they must have all gotten A's ... been really good in school, like really good in college ... because that's the way they've been presented to you. (Clara)

In this respect, Ava explained that she would often bring in examples of mistakes she had made in her own academic work to show to her pupils, challenging the stereotype that to become a teacher one had to be "perfect" or "academic geniuses" (Ava).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the strongly expressed desire of student teachers from lower socio-economic groups to be a relatable and inclusive teacher. Participants credited being from a lower socio-economic group, and having had particular – frequently negative - school and life experiences, with making them *better able to relate* to pupils from similar backgrounds than would otherwise be the case. This perceived ability to relate resulted in them desiring to be *a particular type of teacher* – one who was relatable and inclusive, constructed as being approachable, caring and actively supportive of all pupils. One way of accomplishing this was by ‘sharing the (classed) self’.

As previously noted, social justice-based and altruistic orientations to teaching are not uncommon amongst under-represented groups (cf. Authors, 2017), nor is the influence of previous schooling experience on construction of teaching identity (cf. O’Grady, Hinchion, and Mannix McNamara, 2011; Authors, 2018). In this sense then, the expressed desire of ‘working class’ student teachers to be relatable and inclusive in their practice is somewhat unsurprising. What we have shown in this paper, however, is a) what this involved (i.e. being approachable, caring, and actively supportive of the success of all pupils, b) the extent to which this was prioritised in their developing teacher identities, and c) that one way of inhabiting this sort of teacher identity is through ‘sharing the self’.

Motivational orientations in teaching and ‘class matching’

From a policy perspective and encouraging certain teacher attributes, it is tempting to unproblematically embrace the idea that ‘working class’ teachers are likely to be particularly

relatable to and inclusive of pupils viewed as being 'hard to reach' (Authors, 2018). Based on theories of interpersonal attraction and the principle of 'homophily' (which holds that "... contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people" (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 416), being around people who are perceived as 'similar' to oneself provides feeling of comfort and safety (Authors, 2009, 2011a), which holds obvious benefits for the learning environment. Further, research has pointed to benefits for both minority and majority groups of having teachers from under-represented groups (cf. Villegas and Irvine, 2010). However, from the perspectives of 'role modeling' and 'ethnic matching' in teaching, this line of thinking has been found to be problematic (cf. Drudy et al., 2005; Davison, 2007; Villegas and Irvine, 2010; Brown, 2014; Santoro; 2015; Hopson, 2013), indeed as contributing to the "problematic politics of representation" (Hopson, 2013, p. 27).

Similarly, in relation to 'working class' student/teachers, such thinking could be regarded as classist. Santoro (2015) has emphasised in relation to ethnicity that minority ethnic student teachers can become over-burdened by diversity-related work which it is assumed they will take on given their positionality. In relation to class, we posit that having to perform a particular teaching role of being the 'savior' of pupils from lower socio-economic groups constitutes a significant burden. Even in cases where such teachers expressly desire this role, and 'choose' to work in schools with high proportions of pupils from relevant groups, assumptions and work practices are likely to place an unfair burden on these teachers. While the participants in this study emphasised the need to be caring as part of their desired relatable and inclusive teaching identity, we argue that part of the duty of care *for teacher educators* is to support the *unexpressed* needs of student teachers (as per a care ethics approach, cf. Noddings, 2012).

Further, teachers from 'working class' backgrounds simply may not wish to inhabit this 'savior' role. A 'class matching' line of thinking also renders invisible ITE's responsibility for preparing *all* teachers, irrespective of socio-demographic positionality, to effectively – and empathetically – support *all* pupils (cf. Cochran-Smith's (2004) principles of pedagogy for social justice). Wanting to be, and being, a relatable and inclusive teacher for *all* students needs to be something we engender in *all* student teachers. For those from lower socio-economic groups, what does the prioritisation of this facet of their evolving teacher identity mean for their focus and experience in and post-ITE? Does another form of 'class matching' evolve in working class teachers' potentially stronger alignment with pupils similar to themselves? While the participants in this study emphasised their desire to be supportive of *all* pupils, their inclusivity narratives emphasise pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Further, where does being relatable and inclusive feature in terms of teacher identity for those from majority and privileged groups? The journey to being a relatable and inclusive teacher may be different and, in some ways, more challenging for those from more privileged groups. Cochran-Smith's (2004) principles of pedagogy for social justice provide a good starting point for all student teachers to consider how they might actualise a more inclusive teaching approach.

Sharing the Classed Self: Teacher Self-disclosure

Many participants felt that one way of being relatable and inclusive was through sharing information about themselves with their pupils, believing that doing so provided evidence to pupils from similar backgrounds that they too could succeed. Additionally, it was seen that sharing the self would help to counteract unhelpful stereotypes about teachers being in some way 'not human' or 'academic geniuses' and in this way would encourage those from lower socio-

economic groups to consider teaching as a possible career. The concept of teacher/instructor 'self-disclosure' has not before been examined from the perspective of social class. In educational contexts, self-disclosure is understood as "a teacher's sharing of personal and professional information about himself or herself in a believable way" (Goldstein and Benassi, 1994, p. 212). Previous research has focused on the 'appropriateness' (e.g. Zhang, 2010) of professionals, such as teachers and social workers, disclosing information about themselves to their pupils. In ITE, Zhang (2010) examined second-level preservice teachers' attitudes toward the use of teacher self-disclosure (regarding religious beliefs and political perspectives) as a tool for citizenship education, but the (6) pre-services teachers involved did not consider it acceptable. In a comparative study of China and the US, Zhang, Shi and Hao (2009) examined the 'appropriateness' of teacher self-disclosure from the perspective of pre-service teachers, and found statistically significant differences between the two groups, with the US pre-service teachers more open to the idea compared to the Chinese students who were strongly influenced by the Confucian emphasis on formality. However, in a comparative study of pre- and in-service teachers, both agreed that teacher self-disclosure, including in relation to personal topics, was appropriate (Zhang, Shi, Tonelson and Robinson, 2009). In terms of more personal disclosures, previous research has explored teachers' disclosure of their sexual orientation (e.g. Allen, 1995; Cain, 1996), and disability (e.g. Gilson, 2000). Various benefits to teacher self-disclosure have been identified, including helping marginalized groups to entertain or "grapple with multiple subjectivities" (Allen, 1995, p. 136), humanising and personalising the teaching process (Beck, 1983), increasing immediacy (or 'closeness behaviours'⁵) (Mazer, Murphy and Simonds, 2009)

⁵ Non-verbal 'closeness' behaviours – gesturing, smiling, speaking with vocal variation

and thus credibility (Thweatt and McCroskey, 1998). We suggest that *classed* teacher self-disclosure facilitates entertaining multiple subjectivities about the self – and ‘other’ selves – and view this as a core objective of diversifying the teaching profession, with working class student teachers and pupils in relation to seeing new possibilities for themselves, but also with more privileged groups in terms of challenging perspectives on what is possible *for whom*, and learning about inclusivity and social justice more broadly.

Teacher self-disclosure, however, may also be risky. On rendering one’s (private) self public (Grumet, 2001), there is an accompanying sense of vulnerability about making oneself ‘visible’ (Authors, 2009). For teachers, particularly beginning teachers, and even more so, for those from lower socio-economic groups, this sense of vulnerability is heightened. While teacher self-disclosure regarding social class may be powerful in its educative value, it constitutes an additional personal ‘ask’, and raises ethical questions about the extent to which we can or should expect ‘working class’ teachers to perform such a public classed self. Student teachers may well desire to ‘fit in’ to the middle class profession, rather than stand out by making their habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; 1993) explicitly visible through disclosure. What will one’s pupils make of what one has revealed? Certain forms of face-to-face self-disclosure can have very negative effects on teacher credibility (Kearney et al. 1991). Classed teacher self-disclosure is also risky in the sense of not being able to predict how the self-disclosure may be received; Rasmussen and Mishna (2008, p. 201) give the example of an instructor of colour telling of experiences of racism, and noting the potentially differential impact on a pupil of colour (who “may feel validated and a sense of solidarity”) and on a white pupil (who “may experience shame and guilt, or denial”). As the teacher who desires to be relatable but also inclusive, there are complex issues to consider

in terms of who may feel included or excluded - by one's (classed, or otherwise) disclosure/s - and how this process may be navigated. This paper has highlighted the need for critical identity 'work' for teachers, whose main work in schools remains the interactional "reciprocal ... labour of producing meaning ... the core meaning of self-identity" (Wexler, 1992, p. 10).

From a policy and practice perspective, while diversifying the teaching profession must continue to be an important goal, and while being relatable and inclusive are deservedly vital foci of national policy (cf. Teaching Council Professional Codes, 2011), we must be careful about unduly burdensome expectations of those from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds. In ITE, we must further consider how we might harness and support this desire amongst 'working class' student teachers in a critical but protective fashion, whilst simultaneously working to engender it amongst those from more privileged backgrounds. In terms of future research, it is necessary to 'follow' teachers from different class backgrounds into the profession to examine their developing professional identities and the extent to, and way/s in, which such conceived and performed identities are 'classed'. To what extent, and in what way/s, do they enact their desire to be relatable and inclusive for *all* students? Are there factors in the professional environment which impact on if and how this aspect of their teaching identity will be enacted?

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