

A National Survey of Education Students: Some Data on Background, Habits, and Reasons for Entering Education*

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A sample of 583 education students from ten Canadian universities responded anonymously to a questionnaire on their backgrounds, habits, and outlooks. Their reports of family background; religiosity and political identification; reading history, habits and orientation; coursework and education status; and their expressed reasons for pursuing a teaching career showed: (1) their socio-economic backgrounds were representative of the broader Canadian society, although slightly advantaged; (2) women were more privileged than men; (3) most students were offspring of parents who had not attended university, and their expectations of social interaction and material benefits led the list of reasons for entering education; (4) persons in the sample had a conventional political and religious orientation; (5) their patterns of reading and mass media use indicated that few were interested in or attached to "high" cultural pursuits and preferred mass commercial culture; (6) many in this sample of education students (especially men) recalled protracted difficulties with reading, and the sample as a whole was noticeably non-bookish.

Un échantillon de 583 étudiants en sciences de l'éducation dans dix universités canadiennes ont rempli de façon anonyme un questionnaire sur leurs antécédents, leurs habitudes et leurs opinions. Les analyses des informations qu'ils ont fournies sur leurs familles, sur leurs convictions religieuses et politiques, sur leurs habitudes de lecture, sur leurs études et leur scolarité et sur les raisons précises qui les incitent à vouloir poursuivre une carrière d'enseignant ont révélé chez eux plusieurs caractéristiques semblables. Leurs antécédents socioéconomiques sont représentatifs de la société canadienne dans son ensemble, même si certains—en général, les femmes—viennent de milieux un peu plus favorisés. Les parents de la plupart de ces étudiants n'ont jamais fréquenté l'université; parmi les principales raisons invoquées pour avoir choisi les sciences de l'éducation figurent l'interaction sociale et les avantages matériels. Les étudiants faisant partie de cet échantillon sont conformistes quant à leur orientation politique et religieuse. Leurs habitudes de lecture et leur

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utilisation des médias révèle que peu d'entre eux s'intéressent ou sont attachés à des idéaux culturels et qu'ils préfèrent la culture commerciale de masse. Bien des étudiants dans cet échantillon (tout particulièrement les hommes) ont mentionné qu'ils avaient eu pendant longtemps des problèmes de lecture; dans l'ensemble, l'échantillon réunit un fort pourcentage de gens peu intéressés par la lecture.

Lortie's opinion that "we know next to nothing about the flow of people into teaching" (1973, p. 486) is nearly as true today as it was 15 years ago (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Empirical evidence about the background, habits, and outlook of entrants to teaching is very limited and narrow (Lortie, 1986; Schalock, 1979). In Canada little has been added to our first papers on this topic (Travis, 1979b, 1983; Travis & Violato, 1981; 1985).

Teaching has become what Jacoby (1983) calls "a decultured trade" (p. 160). A renewed and urgent interest in teacher quality (Gallup, 1986; Lortie, 1986) has led government bodies, foundations, and universities to examine the quality of teachers and teacher preparation programs (Berliner, 1983; McQuaid, 1984). We should thus anticipate changes in teacher education (Cogan, 1975; Zumwalt, 1982). Knowledge about the nature and circumstances of those who would be teachers may be critical to ensure these changes are rational and sensible.

Researchers' interest in teacher quality is not new (Barzun, 1954; Conant, 1963; Waller, 1932). By 1963, however, Getzels and Jackson concluded that despite massive research on teacher personality since the 1930s, virtually nothing had been discovered about what personal qualities make a "good" teacher. Getzels and Jackson's (1963) evaluation effected a moratorium on this line of research. Potential predictors of teaching success that were studied include intelligence, academic achievement, previous experience with children; knowledge of principles and procedures to be used in conveying knowledge to others; skills of teaching as assessed in micro-teaching, physical characteristics; letters of recommendation, photographs, professional course marks, ratings on student teaching, and more. This research has been fruitless (Schalock, 1979)—no crucial variables have been linked to teacher "effectiveness." Considering the variety and complexity of endeavours denoted by "teaching" (Collini, 1987; Hearne, 1987; Norris, 1987; Stokes, 1987); the superficiality (Bruner, 1983, p. 183) and insistent credulity (Sharpe, 1978, p. 191) that conventionally attend "applications" of "theory" (Murray, 1984, pp. 6–17); and the conceptual and methodological muddles typical of so-called "effectiveness" research, this failure is unsurprising (Travis, 1987). We require a better understanding of the social structure of schools and of their culture, and of the culture and characteristics of teachers. Unfortunately, as Lortie (1973) observed, "the social structure, social psychology and culture of schools and teachers remain largely unknown" (p. 493). This still rings true.

Even so, some important studies of teachers and prospective teachers have been published. These include the National Education Association's (NEA) national surveys of American teachers (1961, 1967, 1972). In Britain, Lomax (1972), Crocker (1974) and Wilson et al. (1984) made contributions. However, this foreign work is of limited use to Canadians, and is somewhat dated and narrow in scope.

Even Lortie's (1975) fine study is limited in several ways (Pedersen & Fleming, 1979). Its data, collected during 1963 and 1964, are stale. Further, Lortie did not distinguish between elementary and secondary school teachers on important characteristics such as their reasons for becoming teachers. His own data are based on a small sample ($N=94$); he usually presents them in a statistical form that prevents the reader from making an independent interpretation. And like the NEA surveys, Lortie's work is in any case American.

The value of these studies arise from what they suggest for research. "Basic demographic and personal characteristic variables have proved time and again in survey research to account for large proportions of attitudinal variance; we have yet to 'map' the general outlines of teacher viewpoints and relate them to basic social variables" (Lortie, 1975, p. 490). The search for a few crucial variables to predict success at teaching is therefore unrealistic: "it is as if we were trying to chart a particular acreage without a map of the general terrain" (Lortie, 1975, p. 493). The present paper pertains to the Canadian landscape but is not as limited in focus as the earlier works.

An earlier Canadian study (Bulcock, Mercer, Quinlan, & Sullivan, 1973) focused solely on women teachers in Newfoundland. A second by the Canadian Teacher's Federation (1981) provided no data on teacher qualities although it dealt with class size, salaries, and teaching load. Even the CSSE Yearbook on *The Education of Teachers in Canada* (MacIver, 1978) contained no information about who was being described. Accordingly, Canadians studying teacher characteristics often use the scanty American data.

Our study aims to enhance understanding of the background, habits, and outlook of Canadian education students and of their expressed reasons for entry into teaching. It contributes to a "map of the general terrain" in Canada.

METHOD

Subjects

We drew a non-probability (volunteer) sample of subjects from students enrolled in teacher preparation programs at ten Canadian universities (Victoria, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Regina, Lakehead, Western Ontario, McGill, Dalhousie, and Mount Allison). The total sample of 583

included 217 men (37.2%) and 366 women (62.8%) enrolled in both pre-baccalaureate programs (B.Ed.) and post-baccalaureate programs. Three hundred and fifty-two subjects (60.4%) were studying for their first degree while 231 (39.6%) held at least one degree (see Table 1).

Subjects ranged in age from 18 to 49 years with a mean age of 23.4 years ($SD=5.04$; mode=20). One hundred and seventy-four (29.8%) were 20 or younger; 284 (48.7%) were between 21 and 25; and 125 (21.4%) were 26 or older. Four hundred and forty-seven, or more than three-fourths of the sample (76.7%) were single; 120 (20.6%) were married; and 2.3% ($n=16$) were "other" (divorced, widowed). Other characteristics of this sample have been reported previously (Travis, 1979b, 1983; Travis & Violato, 1981, 1985).

Procedures

Questionnaires were mailed to university contacts (faculty members) who administered them to the subjects during the 1977–1978, 1978–1979, and 1979–1980 academic sessions according to standardized procedures that included guarantees of anonymity.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire had a variety of item types (open-ended, multiple choice, yes-no, rank order, and checklists) designed to gather data on respondents' background, habits, and outlooks. We considered especially subjects' educational background, political orientation and religiosity, family of origin, and stated reasons for entering education.

RESULTS

Subjects' Status and Educational Background

More than one third of our sample (39.6%; $n=231$) held at least one degree; a greater proportion of men (58.1%) than women (28.7%) held degrees. Subjects' educational status, types of degrees held, and field of specialization appear in Table 1.

Courses

The respondents indicated the number of courses they had taken in various subject areas. The number and percentages of respondents who had taken at least one course in each of the following areas were: psychology ($n=525$; 90.1%); history ($n=403$; 69.1%); sociology ($n=339$; 58.1%); economics

TABLE 1
Educational Status, Types of Degrees Held, and Field of Specialization

<i>Part A: Educational Status of Subjects (N=583)</i>						
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>percent</i>
Junior (years 1 and 2)	37	23.6	120	76.4	157	26.9
Senior (years 3, 4, and 5)	54	27.7	141	72.3	195	33.4
Post-Baccalaureate	126	54.5	105	45.5	231	39.6
<i>Part B: Types of Degrees Held (n=231)</i>						
<i>Bachelors</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
B.A.	140	60.6	M.A.	4	57.1	
B.Sc.	36	15.6	Ph.D.	3	42.9	
B.P.E.	47	20.3				
Other	8	4.5				
<i>Total</i>	231	39.6	<i>Total</i>	7	1.2	
<i>Part C: Fields of Specialization of Degree Holders</i>						
<i>Field</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>				
Humanities	96	39.8				
Life Sciences	56	23.2				
Physical Education	47	19.5				
Physics, Math, Chemistry	19	7.9				
Fine Arts	9	3.7				
Other	14	5.9				
<i>Total</i>	241*	100				

*Some of the 231 degree holders had credentials for more than one subject, inflating this to

($n=126$; 21.6%); and political science ($n=121$; 20.8%). Psychology was the most widely taken subject; least frequent were economics and political science. Nearly half of the sample ($n=265$; 45.4%) had taken at least one course in the teaching of reading, and nearly all of these students were prospective elementary school teachers.

Reading Problems and Enjoyment

Subjects were asked to report their memories of reading in their early years at school. Nearly a quarter of the sample reported either vivid (11.7%; $n=65$) or vague (12.5%; $n=73$) memories of difficulties with reading, and only 41.5% ($n=242$) indicated that reading was easy and enjoyable. From these data, subjects were classified into one of two groups: those with early reading difficulties ($n=138$; 23.7%) and those without difficulties ($n=324$; 55.6%). Significantly more men than women reported reading difficulties ($X^2=6.56$; $df=1$; $p<.05$).

Current Orientation to Leisure Reading

Nearly 83% ($n=484$; 82.6%) of the sample reported that they read infrequently; 37.2% ($n=187$) reported that they never read during leisure time, and more men (51.2%) than women (32.7%) indicated that they did no reading. One hundred and seventeen (20.1%) indicated they were indifferent to or disliked reading. Over 80% of those who read in leisure time chose material that is culturally and intellectually unsubstantial (for example, *T.V. Guide, People*). Further analysis showed that 58.3% of the sample considered television their main source, or one of their two main sources, of "adequate and reliable information" about what happens in the world—though it has been demonstrated that television paints an inaccurate picture of world affairs (Lapham, 1981).

Nature of the Family of Origin

Subjects' reports about their parents' occupation, education, and reading habits are summarized in Table 2. These data show that nearly half of the mothers were not employed outside the home (homemakers), while the largest maternal occupation group was clerical. Most fathers were in the skilled work category (licensed workers such as plumbers or electricians). On the basis of father's occupation, subjects were classified into one of four socio-economic classes (see Table 2): (1) professional/managerial, (2) entrepreneurial, (3) skilled labour, and (4) unskilled labour.

Some 39.7% of our sample came from lower socio-economic strata (skilled and unskilled labour). This is remarkably similar to the situation in Britain (Lomax, 1972) and in the United States: the 1961 national survey of American teachers showed that 37.6% came from families where the father was employed in skilled or unskilled labour occupations, and in 1971 the same group represented 39.6% of American teachers (NEA, 1972). Lortie (1975, p. 35) wrote that "teaching is clearly white-collar, middle class work, and as such offers upward mobility for people who grew up in blue-collar or lower-class families." Our respondents from the two lowest socio-economic strata may therefore change their social status by becoming teachers. This is not to say that cultural elevation accompanies status elevation.

In our sample, just as was seen in the United States and Britain (Lortie, 1975; NEA, 1967, 1972; Lomax, 1972), teaching is a more important medium of upward mobility for men than for women. There are notable differences in the socio-economic class of men and women ($X^2=12.02$; $df=3$; $p<.01$; see Table 3). Of the women, 64.1% belonged to either the professional/managerial or entrepreneurial classes while only 52.2% of the men did so; 35.9% of women were in the skilled or unskilled labour designations while 47.9% of the men were also in this group. Moreover, disproportionate

TABLE 2
Parental Occupation, Educational Background, and Reading Habits

	<i>Mother</i>		<i>Father</i>		<i>Socio-economic class based on father's occupation</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	
<i>Occupational Category</i>					
Physicians, lawyers, dentists	1	0.2	17	2.9	Professional/ managerial n=213 (36.5%)
Teachers, professors	56	9.6	38	6.5	
Social workers, nurses	41	7.0	6	1.0	
Professional (not specified)	16	2.8	73	12.5	
Managerial	6	1.0	79	13.6	
Private business	15	2.6	51	8.7	Entrepreneurial n=121 (20.7%)
Farmers, fishermen	3	0.5	70	12.0	
Skilled work	20	3.4	115	19.8	Skilled labour n=139 (23.9%)
Police, military, jail guards	2	0.3	24	4.1	
Non-skilled work	29	5.0	71	12.2	Unskilled labour n=92 (15.8%)
Clerical workers	106	18.2	21	3.6	
Homemakers	263	45.1	—	—	
<i>Attended University</i>					
Yes	83	14.2	125	21.4	
No	489	83.8	448	76.8	
<i>Frequency of Reading</i>					
Every day	271	46.5	297	50.9	High (Father) n=423 (72.5%)
Several times per week	146	25.0	126	21.6	
Occasional/irregular	92	15.8	79	13.6	Low (Father) n=133 (23.6%)
Rarely	39	6.7	43	8.1	
Never	8	1.4	11	1.9	

numbers of women, compared to men, had fathers who had attended university ($X^2=6.80$; $df=1$; $p<.01$). These findings suggest that the social rank of teaching recruits differentially among men and women.

More than three fourths of the fathers (76.8%) and mothers (83.8%) had not attended university (see Table 2). Only 28 respondents (4.8%) had parents that both attended university. Since for 70.5% neither parent had attended university, the large majority of our sample are first-generation university attenders. The educational and cultural implications of this deserve close attention and reflection. Nearly all parents who *had* attended university were in the professional, managerial, or entrepreneurial classes, and they tended to have similar educational backgrounds.

Respondents were asked to report their parents' reading habits (Table 2). Some 423 subjects (72.5%) indicated that their fathers read every day or several times per week ("High") while 133 subjects (23.6%) indicated that their fathers read irregularly, rarely, or never ("Low"). University-educated

TABLE 3
Sample Proportions (%) for Each Bifurcated Variable in Each Occupational Class

Variable		Father's occupation ^a				X^2 ^b
		Prof/man	Ent	Skl	Uskl	
1. Sex	Male	31.7	20.5	25.9	22.0	12.02**
	Female	37.0	27.1	24.0	11.9	
2. Income-producing property	Yes	24.3	51.4	16.7	7.6	77.73**
	No	38.1	14.8	28.3	18.8	
3. Father's birth origin	Canadian	38.1	25.6	24.4	11.9	14.82**
	Non-Canadian	27.8	22.8	25.3	24.1	
4. Mother's birth origin	Canadian	37.7	27.4	22.5	12.4	17.16**
	Non-Canadian	29.9	18.8	26.0	25.3	
5. Father's university attendance	Yes	76.0	16.5	4.1	3.4	120.63**
	No	23.4	27.1	30.4	19.2	
6. Mother's university attendance	Yes	55.1	15.4	23.1	6.4	18.81**
	No	31.6	26.1	25.0	17.3	
7. Father's reading frequency	High	37.1	26.3	23.8	12.8	10.15*
	Low	27.4	22.2	28.2	22.2	
8. Mother's reading frequency	High	38.0	25.6	23.1	13.4	9.68*
	Low	25.8	25.0	27.3	22.0	
9. Subject's reading difficulty	No	36.2	25.6	24.1	14.1	10.06*
	Yes	27.1	21.5	29.1	22.3	

^aProf/man=professional/managerial; Ent=Entrepreneurial; Skl=Skilled labour; Uskl=Unskilled labour

fathers read more frequently than non-university-educated fathers ($X^2=25.78\%$; $df=2$; $p<.001$) as did university-educated mothers compared with mothers who did not attend ($X^2=15.46$; $df=2$; $p<.001$). Reading habits of parents tended to be similar within families.

Data on the number of children and subjects' ordinal position in the family were also collected. The number of children per family ranged from 1 to 13 with a mean of 3.8 ($SD=1.88$; mode=4), which is almost identical to the national Canadian mean (3.9) for the time period 1955–1960, when most of the present subjects were born (Urquhart & Buckley, 1965, p. 38). Nearly one third of our sample (32.6%; $n=190$) were eldest children.

Of the total sample, 25.7% ($n=150$) reported that their parents owned "income-producing property" while 74.3% ($n=433$) said they did not. As might be expected, there was a correlation between ownership of such property and father's occupation, with most property-owners being entrepreneurs ($X^2=77.73$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; see Table 3).

Finally, we collected data on the citizenship and ethnicity of subjects and their parents. The vast majority (92.6%; $n=561$) of the subjects were Cana-

dian citizens. Most of the fathers ($n=410$; 70.3%) and mothers ($n=407$; 69.8%) were Canadian-born. Of the foreign-born parents, 67 fathers (38.7%) were born in Britain or the United States, as were 54 mothers (33.1%); 82 fathers (47.3%) and 83 mothers (50.9%) were born in continental Europe; 21 fathers (12.1%) and 24 mothers (14.7%) were born in Asia, Latin America, or Africa; and 3 fathers (1.7%) and 2 mothers (1.2%) were born elsewhere. Foreign-born fathers were overrepresented in skilled or non-skilled labour occupations, while they were underrepresented in professional, managerial, or entrepreneurial occupations ($X^2=14.82$; $df=3$; $p<.01$; see Table 3).

Table 3 summarizes the notable socio-economic differences in the sample. General patterns are apparent. Lower socio-economic subjects tend to be male, with foreign-born parents who did not attend university and who read little. Subjects' memories of reading difficulties are also associated with socio-economic class: less privileged men most frequently reported difficulties ($X^2=10.06$; $df=3$; $p<.05$; Table 3). Multivariate discriminant analyses also showed that lower class men (who were predominantly in elementary programs) were a distinct group as described above (Wilks' lambda=.69; approximate $F=12.17$; $p<.001$), although these characteristics were not, of course, unique to this group.

Political Orientation and Religiosity

Subjects indicated their generic political orientation. The number and percentages in each category were as follows: 114 (19.6%) conservative; 172 (28.5%) liberal; 122 (20.9%) socialist; 14 (2.4%) radical socialist; 20 (3.4%) anarchist; 45 (7.7%) apolitical or non-political; and 96 (16.4%) "other." More than half—317 (55.7%)—considered themselves religious, and 309 (53.7%) said they had formal religious affiliations. There were no sex differences in religiosity or political orientation.

For further analyses, subjects were classified as Conventionals (conservatives, liberals) or Socialists (socialists, radical socialists) based on self-reported political orientation. Slightly less than half (49.1%) were classified as Conventionals. Several differences by political orientation emerged. First, self-proclaimed religiosity showed Conventionals were more religious than Socialists ($X^2=5.51$; $df=1$; $p<.05$). Second, older (aged 24 or more) more than younger (23 years or less) subjects tended to be Socialist ($X^2=9.52$; $df=1$; $p<.01$). Third, subjects with foreign-born fathers were more often Socialist than those who had Canadian-born fathers ($X^2=5.04$; $df=1$; $p<.05$). And, fourth, subjects from families that had income-producing property were more often Conventional than those whose families did not ($X^2=4.98$; $df=1$; $p<.05$). Thus younger more privileged subjects tended to be more Conventional (and religious) than older less privileged subjects.

TABLE 4
Percentages Nominating Each Theme as Attracting Subjects to Teaching, and Chi-Square Statistics for Sex and Program Differences for Each Theme

Themes	Total sample (N=583)	Elementary			Secondary			Program differences		
		Male	Female	X ²	Male	Female	X ²	Male X ²	Female X ²	Total X ²
Interpersonal	43.6	45.2	47.5	0.07**	32.7	47.3	3.85*	2.75	0.00	2.50
Material benefits	32.4	47.3	28.8	9.67**	29.9	30.1	0.00	5.68*	0.01	0.64
Continuation	23.2	10.8	20.6	3.86*	31.8	33.3	0.01	11.62**	5.37*	14.18**
Service	22.5	18.3	17.9	0.00	31.8	25.8	0.60	4.09*	2.20	8.34**
Time flexibility	9.8	6.5	6.6	0.00	13.1	16.1	0.17	1.75	6.34 *	8.44**

*Yates corrected Chi-Square for 2 x 2 contingency tables.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Reasons for Entering Education

Subjects were asked, "Why do you want to be a teacher?" Response fell into 15 categories, and these were subsequently classified as belonging to one of five themes: interpersonal, service, continuation, material benefits, and time flexibility. Both Lortie (1975) and the NEA surveys (1967, 1972) found that these are the general attractors to teaching.

The interpersonal theme is a consequence of teachers' opportunity to work with people. Lortie (1975) pointed out that the highest-ranked occupations (high government office, learned professions) involve social exchanges; thus for some people, an occupation where one "works with people" has an aura of prestige and dignity. The service theme posits teaching as a valuable service of special moral worth. "Continuation" refers to a desire to remain in a school setting or to an interest in a subject (for example, literature) by which it is difficult to earn a living. Material benefits include money, prestige or status, and employment security. Finally, time flexibility (for instance, summer and holiday breaks) attracts some people to teaching.

Table 4 shows respondents' thematic reasons for entering teaching, along with sex and program differences associated with particular reasons. The following reasons, given by small proportions of the sample, could not be classified under one of the five themes: "didn't know what else to do" (2.1%), "not sure I want to be a teacher" (0.7%), "always wanted to be a teacher" (2.3%), and "it is a route to self-improvement" (2.1%).

The interpersonal theme was nominated by the largest proportion of the sample, with material benefits second, continuation third, service fourth, and time flexibility fifth. (The total exceeds 100% because subjects could, and some did, give more than one reason.) Clearly, both teaching's social nature and its perceived material benefits attract many (76% of our sample).

However, there are notable sex and program differences in expressed motives. Although the interpersonal theme is not linked to sex differences in the elementary program nor to overall program differences, secondary women stressed the interpersonal theme more than did secondary men. Moreover, men in the elementary program favoured material benefits more than did females in the elementary program and more than both men and women in the secondary program. This greater concern for material rewards comes from the large proportion of men among prospective elementary school teachers, men from homes characterized by economic insecurity and low social status (Lortie, 1975; NEA, 1967, 1972). Our study further supports this interpretation in that men tended to come from comparatively less privileged circumstances than did women (see Table 3).

Men in elementary education programs placed significantly less emphasis on the continuation theme ("pass on knowledge" and "interest in the subject matter") than did other respondents. Not surprisingly, there were also overall program differences: both men and women in secondary programs emphasized continuation more than did people in elementary education. The significance of subject matter is less appreciated by people bound for elementary work.

In the service theme ("important work," "influence others"), there are no within-program sex differences, but there are overall program differences: secondary men emphasize this theme more than do elementary men (women do not differ across programs). Finally, the overall program differences show secondary women students value time flexibility more than do other students.

In sum, the interpersonal theme figures prominently in all groups but appeals slightly less to secondary men. The attraction of material benefits was strongest for elementary men, who were also relatively less attracted to the continuation theme. Both men and women in secondary programs found continuation more attractive than did their elementary counterparts. Service was more attractive to secondary men, while secondary women put more emphasis on time flexibility.

These interpretations were supported by multivariate discriminant analyses that revealed that continuation provided the greatest discrimination between gender and program (Wilk's $\lambda = .97$; approximate $F = 6.39$; $p < .001$), and the interpersonal theme provided minimal discrimination.

DISCUSSION

In our study of the backgrounds, habits, and outlooks of Canadian education students, we emphasized two basic categories of variables: first, salient background features of social status, ethnicity, and parental educational example and reading; second, students' political attachments, religiosity, reading habits, and motives for choosing teaching as an occupation.

In exploring the "culture of teaching" (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986) in the tradition of Waller (1932) and Lortie (1975), we looked for important characteristics of prospective teachers. Except for its slight upward bias, our sample resembles a social cross-section of the general Canadian population. In the 1978 Canadian census (Statistics Canada, 1981, p. 271), for example, 23% of the population belonged to the professional or managerial group, 29% to the entrepreneurial group, 20% to the skilled labour group, and 28% to the unskilled labour group. In our sample, there was a slight overrepresentation from the professional and managerial groups and a similar underrepresentation from the unskilled labour group (see Table 2). American teachers also come close to representing a cross-section of the American public but with a slight upward bias (NEA, 1963, 1972).

The sexes differed in socio-economic background. Considered alone, men were 31.7% from the professional and managerial groups, 20.5% from the entrepreneurial group, 25.9% from the skilled labour group, and 22.0% from the unskilled labour group. This distribution resembles the Canadian population more than does the total sample. Fewer men than women from relatively privileged socio-economic circumstances see teaching as an attractive option (Lortie, 1975); the social mobility factor in teaching is more important to men than to women. This interpretation is supported by the fact that men were more attracted by the material benefits of teaching than were women (see Table 4).

Perhaps marriage has been a more viable mechanism of social mobility for women than for men—women typically marry within their social class or above it, while men typically marry within their social class or below it. As Lortie (1975) said, within the usual possibilities for women, teaching has ranked high for relatively advantaged women, allowing them to maintain their social class and leaving open the possibility of social mobility through marriage. For men, this option is less obvious. Teaching offers little or no social mobility if they already have socio-economic advantages.

The data for reading difficulties and leisure time reading habits of our sample indicate reading is a low-frequency activity. Most subjects (83%) do not read in their leisure time, and those that do, read "entertainment" material. Moreover, large proportions of the sample (58.3%) said that television is their main source or one of their main sources of information about world affairs. These general patterns of television use and reading are also exhibited by veteran teachers. Travis and Violato (1981, 1985) reported that veteran teachers were more discriminating in their use of mass media than education undergraduates, but that both groups preferred entertainment fare, whether televised or published. Moreover, both groups trusted commercial mass media as reliable sources of information and ideas.

These patterns of reading and mass media use strongly resemble those of the general Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 1981, p. 638). This

should give us pause, considering what we know of common taste. We have no reason to suppose that the poet Blake was wrong when he said that without the commingling of contraries there is no progression. Accordingly, one might suppose we want to recruit people whose "reflection-in-action" (Schon, 1983) is the reflection of the "educated imagination" (Frye, 1963), not the musings of mass man (Ortega y Gasset, 1961). If a taste for mass commercial culture predominates in education faculties, we can thank those who are not offended by spray-on sentiment, and faddish notions floating on velleity, and short-term "tool thinking" (Bettelheim, 1980, pp. 144–150; Travis, 1989).

About half of our sample of would-be teachers have conventional political orientations and more than half (approximately 56%) consider themselves religious, with no sex differences on these factors. The absence of a Newfoundland complement may affect these results since Bulcock et al. (1973) reported that 85.7% of women teachers in Newfoundland were religious.

Nearly one third of our sample (32.6%; $n=90$) consisted of people who were first-born (eldest) children. Lortie (1975, p. 45) has suggested that birth order might influence children to behave in ways which might elicit labelling as a future teacher; older children nurture and "teach" younger siblings. The large number of eldest children in our sample suggests that this matter warrants further study.

As in previous studies (Lortie, 1975; NEA, 1967, 1972), the interpersonal theme figures most prominently in our subjects' stated reasons for pursuing a career in teaching. High-prestige occupations in our society often entail sociability: the social character of teaching apparently attracts gregarious people. Although in our study the perceived material benefits of a teaching career also figured prominently as an attractor, especially among men, they figured only minimally in American teachers' stated reasons for becoming teachers (Lortie, 1975). (It may be significant that in the past American teachers have enjoyed fewer material benefits than Canadian teachers.)

Lortie (1975) found that teaching was the first occupational choice of only about one third of teachers; most settle on teaching because their original aspirations had been blocked. (For example, many would have preferred to be lawyers or physicians.) By contrast, only a small proportion of our sample said they chose education because of "blocked aspirations"; that is, few said teaching was not their preferred occupational choice. Perhaps the cynics who say that the world (of education at least) "is run by 'C' students" are wrong. However, we should discover how much the heart is at home in school—how many teachers choose this career because of blocked aspirations. To this end, future research might profitably include interviews of subjects.

Finally, the reader should note several limitations in our sample. First, it is difficult to judge its representativeness: although respondents came from all major regions, an ideal random stratified sample should not be assumed.

Given the current requirement that all human subjects be volunteers, and given what is known about the non-representative character of volunteer samples, we adopted a strategy of describing the sample in detail. Feasible alternatives are not obvious. Nonetheless, several characteristics of our sample (for example, gender and program proportions) suggest that it was not markedly biased or skewed.

Second, since some of the data were collected as long ago as 1977, some information may be dated. Although this may be so, there are few reasons to suppose conditions have changed so much that our sample differs markedly from current education students. Indeed, historical studies have shown that some characteristics of classrooms and teachers have been remarkably stable over time (for example, Cuban, 1984). Even so, generalizations from our sample must be made very cautiously.

As we have noted, this kind of research is both scarce and difficult to do. Nevertheless, such work enhances our understanding of teachers and of the "culture of teaching," both at the centre of education. Moreover, effective change and improvement in education must take into account the pivotal people, the teachers whose limitations can in no way be transcended. If we aim to study reflection-in-action, we will be wise to determine whose reflection is under study, and what stocks the imagination of the actor.

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