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Personal Characteristics In Secondary School Social Studies Student Teachers As Related To Certain Measures of Potential Teaching Behavior

by

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In recent years, as attested by the large number of extensive studies, citizenship education has become a major concern. The unique responsibilities of social studies teachers and their optimum personal, social, and professional qualities have been widely discussed. Throughout this discussion, one of the most persistent speculations centers around the importance of the role that the teacher in education—especially in citizenship education—plays in the development of desirable character and attitudes of their pupils. Beck, Cook, and Kearney (1953) said that the teacher is the most influential personality in a classroom situation. Thompson (1952) asserted that the teacher's "psychological needs, attitudes, conflicts and personal-social values are transmitted into behavior patterns which become potent influences on his pupils' growth".

While there is much agreement on the importance of the teacher's personality and there is even some agreement on the effect of the teacher's personality on the behavior and achievement of pupils, there is less agreement as to the specific impact of certain combinations of characterisics in the teacher upon pupil groups under his direction. Even less researched is the unique influence of an individual teacher upon the individual pupil. Lagey (1957) found that "teaching *per se* does not necessarily produce attitude change". Symonds (1954) found no direct relationship between teacher personality or teaching techniques and the attitudes of the students at the college level.

Washburne and Hell (1960), and Bush (1958), however, have found some evidence to conclude that different kinds of teachers may get varying responses from different kinds of children. Cogan's study (1956) lent support to a general proposition that the more friendly and warm the teacher is the more pupils are inclined to be successful in self-initiated and required work.

If it can indeed be accepted that the teacher himself has a primary influence upon the actual nature of the learnings of pupils, parti-

cularly in attitude development, and if social education can be conceived to extend beyond verbal learnings, then it becomes important to understand what specific effect the social studies teacher's status with respect to critical dimensions of personality would have upon his teaching. As an effort in the over-all field of much needed research, this study was undertaken to investigate certain interrelationships of teacher personality and behavior in the hope of providing some useful documentaion for further exploration.

The Problem

The current investigation was directed at the discovery of relationships between certain characteristics in social studies student teachers and certain behavior patterns in their respective secondary school classrooms. Specifically, the investigation undertook to determine:

(1) relationships of measures of certain personal characteristics (degree of authoritarianism, philosophy of social education, and instructional preferences) of a representative group of social studies student teachers to (a) cooperating teachers' reports of those students' classroom behavioral traits, (b) student teachers' self-reports of their classroom teaching activities, and (c) college coordinators' appraisals of pupil behavior in the student teachers' classrooms;

(2) interrelationships among the several measures of personal characteristics of this representative group; and

(3) interrelationships among the several measures of the teaching behavior of this representative group.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were investigated:

(1). There will be signifcant relationships between certain measures of the personal characteristics (authoritarianism, philosophy of social education, and instructional preferences) of social studies student teachers and their classroom behavioral traits, classroom teaching activities, and their pupils' classroom behavior.

(2). There will be significant relationships among the authoritarianism, philosophy of social education, and the stated preferences for instructional procedures of social studies student teachers.

(3). There will be significant relationships among the student teachers' classroom behavioral traits, classroom teaching activities, and their pupils' classroom behavior.

Method and Procedure

The subjects included in this study consisted of 42 male and 18 female (60) secondary school social studies student teachers at North Texas State University, Denton, Texas, during the spring term of the 1962-63 academic year. This group included all prospective social studies teachers in this semester with the exception of three for whom complete returns were unattainable.

The instruments used in this study included (1) Webster, Sanford, and Freedman's *New Instrument for Studying Authoritarianism in Personality* which was chosen to measure authoritarianism in personality (1955); (2) *Philosophy of Social Education Inventory* (1963) which was constructed for the purpose of this study to measure the student teacher's philosophy regarding the secondary school social studies program; (3) Patterson's *Student Teacher's Instructional Preference Scale* (1959) which was chosen to measure pre-student teaching attitudes toward classroom instructional methods; (4) Del Popolo's *Observation Check Sheet for Student Teachers* (1960) which was used to obtain cooperative teachers' assessments of the classroom behavioral traits of student teachers; (5) *Student Teacher's Self-Check List of Classroom Teaching Activities* (1963) which was developed for the use of the student teachers to report their own classroom teaching activities; (6) Ryans' *Classroom Behavior Record* (1960) which was used to record college coordinator's judgments of the pupils' behavior in the student teachers' classroom.

The relationships between "authoritarianism" and the five other measures were calculated in two ways. In one procedure, students in the top third in terms of scores on the *Authoritarianism Scale* were defined as "authoritarians", while those with scores in the bottom third were defined as "nonauthoritarians". The mean scores made by "authoritarians" and "nonauthoritarians" on the other five instruments were analyzed by *t* tests. On the alternative procedure, Pearson r's were calculated between all possible pairs of scores by all sixty student teachers on all six measures. Tests of significance were then made all *t* values and Pearson r's. The results of Pearson r's and measures of their respective levels of significance are shown in the Table.

TABLE

Pearson Correlations Between Pairs of Instruments

	Philosophies	Instructional Preferences	Teacher Behavior	Teacher Activity	Pupil Behavior
Authorita-rianism	-.08	(1) -.32	-.02	-.04	(2) -.25
Philosophies		(3) .59	.11	.19	-.08
Instructional Preferences			.08	(4) .26	.08
Teacher Behavior				(5) .25	(6) .38
Teacher Activity					.17

N = 60

(1) & (6): Significant at .01

(2), (4), & (5): Significant at .05

(3): Significant at .001

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Results

The findings of this study were summarized as follows:

Two measures of the relationship between the personal characteristics of secondary school social studies student teachers and their classroom teaching behavior or their pupils' reactions were found to be significant. A significant relationship was found between the student teachers' stated preferences for instructional procedures and their own reports of their classroom teaching activities (at the .02 level of confidence). The student teacher who stated that he preferred more group-oriented instructional procedures tended to plan classroom teaching activities freer from textbook or teacher domination. It was also found that authoritarianism in personality was significantly correlated with the assessments of pupils' behavior (at the .05 level of confidence). The more "authoritarian" a student teacher was the less desirable his pupils' behavior appeared to be. No significant relationship was found between other measures of personal characteristics of the student teachers and their classroom teaching behavior.

In the determination of relationships among the levels of authoriatarianism, philosophies of social education, and stated preferences for instructional procedures of the secondary school social studies student teachers, significant relationships were found between authoritarianism in personality and their stated preferences for instructional procedures (at the .01 level of confidence) and between the student teachers' philosophies of social education and their stated preferences for instructional procedures (at the .001 level of confidence). The more "authoritarian" a student teacher was the more likely he preferred lecture-oriented instructional procedures. Student teachers leaning more toward a "progressivist" viewpoint tended more to state preferenecs for group-oriented instructional procedures. However, no significant relationship was found between authoritarianism in personality and philosophies of social education of the student teachers.

In the determination of the relationships among the student teachers' classroom behavioral traits, classroom teaching activities, and their pupils' classroom behavior, it was found that cooperating teachers' reports of the student teachers' classroom behavioral traits were significantly correlated to both the student teachers' own description of their classroom teaching activities (at the .05 level of confidence) and their pupils' classroom behavior (at the .01 level of confidence). Thus the more desirable (appropriate, varied, and effective) a student teacher's behavioral traits were reported to have been the more he tended to report that he planned classroom teaching activities free from textbook or teacher domination, and the more desirable his pupils' classroom behavior appeared to be. However, the student teachers' self-reporting of classroom teaching activities was found not significantly related to their coordinators' evaluation of their pupils' classroom behavior.

Conclusions

From the results of this study the following conclusions could be made:

1. There was no clear-cut composite support for the conclusion that personal characteristics in student teachers are related to certain measures of teaching behavior. With two exceptions, student teachers with different personal characteristics did not differ consistently in measures of their teaching behavior.

2. In general, supervisory evaluations were fairly consistent with each other and with student teachers' responses on a more projective measure. Similarly, student teachers were fairly consistent in their responses on measures of their own perceptions and recollections.

3. In most cases, student teachers' responses on measures of their personal perceptions did not coincide with their responses on measures of projective nature or with supervisory judgments based on objective observations. It is possible that in the measures of personal perceptions the subjects tended to give what they believed to be approved responses or to express learned verbalizations which were inconsistent with the factors which conditioned their actual teaching behavior.

4. The fact that the less rigid, dominating, dogmatic, and/or autocratic a student teacher was, the more alert, responsible, confident, and/or self-initiating his pupils were; and the fact that the more friendly, flexible, sympathetic, and/or understanding a student teacher's behavioral traits were, the more positively his pupils reacted lent support to two of the basic hypotheses of this study. These two basic propositions confirmed the findings of a number of other recent studies (Cogan, 1956; Del Popolo, 1960; Ryans, 1960), which could have important implications in teacher education. In cultivating more desirable social attitudes in the nation's youth, it would appear, therefore, to be better to select those students in social education who are found to possess less authoritarian and more democratic characteristics on valid pre-service inventories.

In general, however, the findings of this study were encouraging but inconclusive. Because of the size of subject group and limitations upon the scope of the study, there are a number of questions left unanswered regarding the exact nature of the relationships between what teachers are and how they behave as teachers. A number of additional studies in this area would be highly desirable. For instance, the design and procedures of this study might profitably be duplicated on a larger number of social studies teachers and/or student teachers in order to check the actual significance of several relationships found to exist in this group at levels below the point of acceptable significance. The assumption is frequently made that social studies teachers bear an unique responsibility for the development of readiness for productive citizenship. It would be useful to discover to what extent with regard to these relationships social studies teachers differ from teachers in other academic areas. Further, a study involving employed teachers would avoid some of the limitations imposed upon the present study in that their personal characteristics and qualities of teaching behavior would be more stable than is true of student teachers.

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