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MORAL EDUCATION AND TEACHERS' SELF-PERCEPTIONS: NOVICE MALE TEACHERS IN THE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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This article describes a qualitative study of six Catholic high school teachers, all male and all relatively new to Catholic education. Each subject participated in six hours of ethnographic interviews, yielding a rich description of their self-perceptions, educational competence, and faith background. Teaching as a vocation and moral education emerged as important themes for these teachers and for future study.

One of the more compelling reasons for parents to send their children to Catholic schools is the knowledge that their children will be receiving a moral education that reinforces the value structure which has been carefully developed in the home. And, for the most part, Catholic schools are successful (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Buetow, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1987; Walsh, 1990). Catholic educators have historically taken the lead in providing intellectual, physical, and moral stimulation to the children in their care; yet, historically, those educators were members of religious orders who dedicated their lives to the crafting of all three aims of a Catholic education. As the numbers of lay teachers increase in Catholic schools, the array of philosophical and religious orientations increases as well. Indeed, it is this diversity which fosters the richness of most faculties; however, it is essential that all members of the learning community share in the stated mission of Catholic education if the identity is to be preserved. Therefore, this research sought to investigate the moral perceptions of a small group of first- and second-year lay teachers at three Catholic high schools and analyze those perceptions in light of the mission of Catholic education.

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BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

The current clamor to reclaim moral education in schools is being heralded by philosophers, educators, policy analysts, politicians, and parents. The question is not whether it can be reclaimed, but rather whose vision will prevail. It is a great irony that, as Rorty (1993) points out, "despite the long history of our educational experiments, we are as uncertain—and as conflicted—as ever we were" (p. 33). The confusion regarding moral education stems, in large part, from a deeper confusion surrounding the aims of education. In our zeal to protect the voices of the many parts of the whole, we are in danger of losing the vision which will unify our understanding of the best interests of the child. Given the fact that Americans are in general divided on their views of the good life, it should come as no surprise that young men and women who enter the teaching profession share in that moral confusion. What is of critical importance for the preservation of Catholic identity and aims is that those teachers who enter into the profession recognize and embrace their role as moral as well as intellectual educators. A similar case can be made for public education and the implicit role of values transmission, but that is beyond the scope of this study and far thornier to assess. Catholic education is both explicit and implicit in its aims for moral education, as Purpel and Ryan state (1976):

> The schools cannot avoid being involved in the moral life of the students.... Moral education goes on all over the school building—in classrooms, in the disciplinarian's office, in assemblies, in the gym. It permeates the very fabric of teacher-student relationships. The school, then, cannot help but be a force for growth or retardation—for good or evil—in the moral life of the students. Moral education is an inevitable role of the schools. For the teacher, it comes with the territory. (p. 9)

The teacher, then, is assumed to be able to manage the enormous complexities of a child's moral development; and yet, many young teachers have never had a course in moral philosophy, ethics, or religious education. Many teacher training programs completely omit this facet of teacher education (Carter, 1984; Reimer, Paolitto, & Hersh, 1983). Yet, as Sichel (1988) poignantly asks, "Should we assume that education in moral reasoning and courses in professional ethics will provide the tools for morality in the classroom?" (p. 24). Unfortunately, we all know people who are intellectually capable of articulating the right choice, but in reality may lack the goodness of heart to act upon that inclination. The question which motivated this research project was stimulated not by a lack of faith in the inherent goodness of teachers who are committed to the vocation of teaching, but by an awareness of their increasing inclination toward moral relativism (Bovasso, Jacobs, & Rettig, 1991) as they enter the moral sphere of the classroom. As

Hansen (1994) insightfully notes in his essay on the vocation of teaching, "an individual who is strongly inclined toward teaching seems to be a person who is not debating whether to teach but rather contemplating how or under what circumstances to do so" (p. 267). Herein lies the problem for Catholic school administrators: to preserve the zestful enthusiasm for the classroom while helping teachers assert themselves as moral role models who, by definition, cannot languish in the zone of moral relativism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Central to the theoretical framework of this research project was the concept of implicit theory. Described by Bergem (1990) but echoed in many other theorists' work (Giroux, 1983; Grumet, 1981; Lyons, 1990; Sichel, 1988), this theory holds that a person's basic philosophy of life (i.e., view of humanity, value system, the good, and the ultimate goal of his or her professional life) "nurtures the development of implicit theories related to teaching and teacher-student relationships" (p. 90). To understand how teachers will react to a moral dilemma in the class and whether they will fulfill the role of moral educator, we need to understand the deeply personal side of the moral self. To accomplish this task, a method of investigation was needed that would honor the complexity of the teacher's role and his or her unique history, talents, and limitations. Traditional quantitative methods of research do not take into account the "messiness that enters into research when you study people" (Mertens, 1998, p. xiii). And this project specifically sought out the messiness of people's lives as articulated through language and analyzed that material as a starting point for theory building (Tesch, 1990). Therefore, qualitative research was chosen as the research method for this study since, in addition to the collection of data, qualitative research also takes into account (1) the researcher's view of the world, (2) the nature of the research questions, and (3) the practical reasons associated with the nature of qualitative methods (Mertens, 1998).

No one qualitative method can be held up as better than the rest, but this project seemed suited to the method known as phenomenological research. Phenomenological research emphasizes the individual's subjective experience (Tesch, 1990). It does not attempt to measure, categorize, and generalize; instead, the researcher is involved in a search for a pattern and meaning in which he or she becomes completely immersed with a resulting narrative of experience (Moustakas, 1981; Roman, 1993; Weiler, 1991). The experience of the subjects as well as the researcher in this method are acknowledged as potentially informative (Allen & Baber, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Valle & King, 1978). This researcher's view of the world is situated in the fact that she is a woman who early in her career chose the vocation of teaching, strongly identifies as a Roman Catholic, and is a wife and a moth-

er who has struggled with the synthesis between pedagogy and mission. The development of research questions stemmed from both the researcher's experience and the ebb and flow of the conversations, which led to the third category of qualitative research: practicality. While this research aim does not extend to the extreme of a Freirean emancipatory design, it nonetheless contains an element of transmission: The researcher does not hide behind a cloak of anonymity but, instead, offers information and suggestions to the participants regarding their role as Catholic moral educators.

POPULATION AND PARTICIPATION

The selection process for this project was narrowed to first- and second-year teachers in three Catholic high schools in the United States. The reason for choosing teachers who were new to the field of Catholic education was twofold: first, to investigate the moral orientations of young men and women being hired; and, second, to explore how that orientation affected their duties as moral educators. This selection, it was hoped, would provide beneficial information for hiring practices and staff development.

The principals of the three participating schools enthusiastically agreed to help in a research project they viewed as important to the mission of Catholic education, regardless of outcome. The principals provided lists of all first- and second-year teachers, with the number of potential participants reaching 15; but as part-time teachers and those with significant experience at other schools were eliminated the number was reduced to six young men. It was not the intention of the researcher to exclude women's voices; the sampling population was merely a product of chance. Would the outcome differ had women been included? Most assuredly, but the intention of the research model is not to produce broad generalizations regarding gender, class, or any other category; it is, instead, designed to hear voices—unique, singular, and valid. The group which resulted from this process consisted of six young men, aged 25 to 30, two in their first year of teaching, four in their second.

DATA COLLECTION

The research focused on three two-hour interviews with each participant, approximately three weeks apart. The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed for review by the participants after each session. The participants were asked to assess and refine their responses to each interview during a follow-up session.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the material generated through the interviews sought a general statement about relationships between the categories of data and an understanding of the participants' experiences. In qualitative research, the researcher is guided by the initial concepts and guiding hypotheses, but shifts or discards these criteria as the data are collected and analyzed (Barrell, 1986; Heron, 1981; Roman, 1993). The initial concepts, as stated in the preceding section, guided the development of hypotheses, as did the researcher's own experience as a Catholic educator. They were: 1) teachers function as moral educators, whether they acknowledge that or not, and 2) development is a necessary component of teacher effectiveness and serves as a mediating link between the teacher and the mission of the institution. The interpretive act was processed through the act of reading the transcribed interviews, generating categories of meaning, and reflecting on the original research questions in light of the generated data. This process requires making carefully considered judgments about what is truly significant and meaningful in the data. The use of real classroom situations and hypothetical dilemmas was employed to assist the participants in achieving an understanding of their personal philosophy of education and, subsequently, self-perceptions as a moral educator. Guiding the interpretation of each participant's personal philosophy was an analysis of the historical roots of moral education and, specifically, the Catholic mission of moral education as it relates to the personal stance of the teacher. This process of understanding is, according to Lyons (1990), the single most important factor in determining the development of a moral educator. The analysis, as discussed with the participants, served as a bridge to professional development.

FINDINGS

The six individuals who agreed to the interviews were assured that their identities would be masked; hence the use of fictitious names and a generalization concerning the particulars of their backgrounds. Each of the six young men spoke with candor about his experiences as a new teacher. Upon completion of the interviews the researcher culled three significant themes to explore and analyze: first, the notion of implicit theory, that a person's basic philosophy of life (i.e., view of humanity, value systems, the good, and the ultimate goal of his or her professional life) profoundly influences every aspect of his or her life as a teacher (Bergem, 1990). With this understanding of implicit theory as a guiding force, two subcategories emerged: acknowledgment of teaching as a vocation, and how personal orientation affects the individual's self-perception as a moral role model. These themes are deeply influenced by the Church—either actively or as an obvious absence in the

lives of the young men who were interviewed. The Church (the pastor, the principal, the campus minister, and the various other witnesses to the Church's mission) is itself a theme which is woven into this project and will be referenced throughout each of the three aforementioned themes.

MATT

Matt, a 25-year-old man in his second year of teaching, displayed a high level of enthusiasm for his new profession despite the extraordinary demands of curriculum design, time management, and discipline. Matt attended a diocesan Catholic high school and a public university, but expressed a weak commitment toward Catholic ideals. His motivation to enter the teaching profession was derived less from vocation than from disillusionment toward his first choice of career, medicine.

> I'm teaching here because they had a chemistry opening. I came in, and I told them, I'm not your best candidate due to the fact that I have a degree in the humanities, but I also have a pre-med background. And, you know, you don't have to have a teaching credential to teach in private schools.

Matt's candor could possibly be mistaken for callousness or cynicism, but his basic philosophy of life sets the foundation for his naive approach to the world. Matt perceives himself as an objective observer. He has an easy style but demonstrates little focus or direction in his life. At 25 he has the luxury of being utterly unconcerned about his future; his primary concern is his connection to his students.

> I get along well with the kids. They relate to me, sometimes too well, because of the small age difference. I motivate them better than an older teacher.

Matt's personal philosophical orientation can best be categorized by a vague sense of disassociation. He stated:

> I think there can't be this one doctrine for everybody to follow. The way I make decisions is, if I think it's going to bother my conscience after I've made the decision, then I won't do it.

When pressed to characterize his guidelines for conscience, Matt could not oblige. He said, "It's not really a set of guidelines with rules and steps that I follow. I think there's something in my head from what I've been brought up with that helps me."

Matt's insistence on the relativity of values strikes an obvious discordant tone when viewed against his role as a Catholic educator, but he did not see this as a weakness; he felt his openness was a positive value for his students.

His personal value orientation was, he believed, his own and of no concern to school administrators. The implicit theory which can be culled from Matt's conversation is one of a fluid, ungrounded tolerance. He has a kind and caring character which, unfortunately, has no moral barometer other than the instinctual feel for what is right or wrong.

Matt's stance of extreme relativism has direct bearing on the two professional roles he is called to perform: his dedication to teaching as a profession and the specific function of a Catholic educator as a moral role model.

Teaching as Vocation

Matt's back-door approach to the teaching profession and his lack of preparation were matched with a school that did little to indoctrinate neophytes into the profession. He stated:

> I think it's too bad they don't give a better road map for the new teachers on how to make it in your first few years in the classroom. I was totally lost as far as classroom management goes my first year—and I think the schools should provide more detailed instruction on what works and what doesn't work in the classroom. You wouldn't have to guess.

Matt's difficulties with the profession were somewhat foreshadowed by his interview for the position. He recalled that the interview was:

> ...totally bizarre.... It was cold, very professional. There was no interaction between us. I couldn't ask, "Well, what do you mean by that question?" I think they were trying to get a profile of my values, or whether there was a fit.

From his initial contact with the administration he perceived a distance, an inability to express his needs or frustrations. He was, for example, extremely uncomfortable with the mandatory daily prayer at the school, but did not feel comfortable in verbalizing his feelings for fear of being viewed as less than supportive of the mission. The lack of a staff development program at Matt's school thwarted the potential of a young man who expressed enthusiasm for the profession but lacked the guidance to become a dedicated professional. The confusion that Matt experienced in his role as a teacher can be seen more profoundly in his role as a moral educator.

Moral Education

The students in Matt's classes are receiving moral education, whether or not Matt acknowledges that. And, most certainly, he does not. Matt's personal relativism and his lack of training regarding the mission of Catholic education result in his assertion that:

> When I'm asked something moral in the classroom...because I haven't had any training on it, or any background from the school on it, I just go with what I believe. And I'm assuming that they trust my values here.

But Matt's values, while "totally open and honest," do not reflect the mission of the Catholic Church; for example, when given a hypothetical dilemma involving a student asking her biology teacher about birth control, Matt responded: "Tell me, is it against the Church's teaching to have premarital sex still, or have they changed that a little bit?"

After the Church's position was clarified for him, Matt said,

> I totally disagree with that...I feel strongly about that. I'm not going to say they should have premarital sex, but I'm not going to say there's anything wrong with it. It depends on your intentions when you're having sex.

When this position was presented to Matt as one of extreme relativism and incompatible with being a moral role model, he held firm to the fact that he was not a role model for students, colleagues, family, or friends "because I'm not them, and I wouldn't want them following what I would do because our lives are totally different."

The difficulty in maintaining the organizational aims of the school lies not in subject expertise or enthusiasm, but in vision. The administrators at his school are equally responsible for the type of moral education that passes through the medium of a teacher who is unprepared or unwilling to enforce the mission of Catholic education.

CHRIS

Chris, at 30, was the oldest participant; he had an exceptional college experience as an athlete and in an effort to continue in an area he loved he decided upon teaching. His first commitment was toward athletics, but Chris brought the skills of a coach into the classroom as he settled into his second year on the job. To his surprise, he found himself enjoying the academic aspect of his career. When asked to describe his philosophy of life, he said:

> I've spent a lot of time struggling with the "what's it all about" question. When I was a professional athlete everything was very well defined. You'd finish up the season, go on to the championships, whatever. It was so well planned. Now there's nothing like that. I wonder where I'm going. There's no structure to my life.

When asked if he saw teaching as a career, Chris quickly responded that he did not; indeed, he stated, "I can't see myself doing any one thing for the rest of my life."

Chris takes an approach toward life that is radically individualistic and non-connected. When asked about his religious orientation he responded that he was "probably agnostic, bordering on atheist," but he adds, "I've always felt that I'm a spiritual person, but just not in a religious way. I just don't connect with rituals."

Chris is late in coming to the questions that many people face in college; his preoccupation with sports delayed the inevitable existential questions with which many of his peers have struggled. The implicit theory that emerges from Chris's self-depiction is clouded by his confusion and the search for meaning in his life; however, relativism, individualism, and competition emerge as central features in his orientation.

Teaching as Vocation

Chris began his employment at this school as a coach. After an illustrious athletic career at an Ivy League college and a brief stint as a professional athlete, he was anxious to find employment that included his passion for athletics. After a one-year, highly successful coaching season, he was offered a teaching job to supplement his part-time coaching. To his surprise, Chris found that he truly enjoyed the classroom:

> I have a very well developed, distinct philosophy of the way I want to teach. Very little of it is based on any traditional educational methods; overall, it's based on my approach with the students. As much as I can transfer my coaching method, which is based on positive encouragement, the better. Just, basically, as much friendly role modeling as you can give somebody at this age. Positive support and encouragement—building somebody up is, you know, much better than ever trying to break them down.

This successful coaching technique is the guiding force in his professional life, yet very little connection is made to the specific demands of pedagogy or the inclusion of mission. Chris wants his students to win in the classroom, seemingly despite rather than because of the greater academic community. It is not teaching that he holds as a vocation, but coaching.

Moral Education

While Chris did not see himself as a role model for his students, he did see the need for participation in events, even liturgies, that were of importance to his students.

> There's something nice about everybody joining together focusing on just one thing. It could be basketball for all I care, but everybody focusing on one thing, I think...that's really great.

Because of his genuine concern for his students, he is extremely well received; the message, however, that Chris shares with his students is grounded in good will but skewed by a distorted perception of moral obligation. For example, Chris believed that the principal of his school reinforced his own views on moral toleration in a way that is contrary to Church teaching and potentially dangerous as a facet of classroom pedagogy.

> The principal, two years ago at graduation, talked about how the world was changing, and toleration. He talked about different sexual orientations,...accepting people from every orientation. It was amazing, I had to look around and figure out if I was in the right place.

What Chris heard, he explained, was an acceptance of homosexual lifestyles; what the principal was advocating, one must assume, was an acceptance and love of people but not, necessarily, their actions. In this regard, Chris would benefit enormously from a staff development program or, at the very least, instruction on Church teaching. Throughout the interview process Chris expressed a quiet questioning of his purpose in life and his role as a teacher. When presented a hypothetical classroom dilemma, Chris quickly responded that he would listen but would not involve himself:

> Let them decide. Help them to think about it and make sure they do confront it, but I would give them no direction—no direction about what I thought was right.

His justification for this rather radical stance was that

> There's nothing long-term that any of us can do to shake the grip of peer pressure; it's just going to happen. I tell them to take care of each other, be careful.

While Chris may see himself as a role model from a coaching perspective, he is not the classroom role model that Catholic education idealizes.

SEAN

Sean, a 28-year-old graduate student, was teaching at a Catholic high school while he completed graduate studies. Sean identified as a Catholic and took seriously his role as a moral educator. However, Sean's notion of Catholic educator was ill-defined as he sought to derive meaning for his teaching from his humanities graduate studies. The students were, for him, a vehicle of artistic expression that reflected the spiritual dimension of humanity. He stated that his aim in teaching was to highlight that higher self through the arts: "What motivates me is dealing with the truth in the book.... I would never be a teacher if I couldn't teach books and ideas."

Sean's personal idea of truth is found through the history of ideas, sometimes secular, sometimes religious. The truth that he helps his students to recognize is not easily defined for Sean; he differentiates between "small t" truth, which he considers relative and contextual, and "big T" truth which he sees as being culled from the reasonableness of human insight and universal in its scope and content. Sean adheres to a notion of an enduring form of eternal truth which is recognized through the arduous process of rational reflection.

Sean's personal philosophy is guided by a deeply introspective quality molded by a spiritual formation grounded in Roman Catholic tradition. He does not self-define as overtly religious, but his language connotes a spiritual basis. For example, when asked who determines the "big T" truth, he responded,

> Just sound reason; but, I guess I'd have to say something based on my own religious beliefs as well. And I don't ever force that on anyone.

At the time of the interviews Sean was at an important stage in his own development: recently married, pursuing graduate studies, and beginning a career—in other words, rapidly moving into the adult world. This change, of course, provoked uncertainty:

> I really think of myself as Isaiah going into the desert, you know? Fifteen years of my life was lock-step, but I don't know if I was so much living as reacting. With no one around, you have to ask the important questions. That's why I don't like being alone.

The implicit theory that characterizes Sean's life is grounded in his belief in the intellectual life as an ultimate end; that, however, is the only certainty in Sean's life. He is facing practical demands that are causing him to question many of the values that he had previously blindly accepted.

Teaching as Vocation

Sean, unlike most of the other participants, always intended to teach. He wanted to teach "excellent" students who enjoyed the search for truth.

> I think of how many other things I could have done and made a lot more money, but I can't imagine doing anything other than teaching.

Sean's deep vocation toward teaching grew out of his own experience as a student; like many good teachers, he modeled his behavior on that of his mentor.

> If I teach only half as well as he does, I'd be happy. He has a sensitivity to the text, and his students, and his love of the truth.

But Sean expressed a deep sense of loss in his current environment. He no longer had the mentoring relationship that fed and stimulated his love of the classroom. Additionally, Sean confided that his love of the classroom was, most probably, going to give way to the financial reality of needing to increase his income. He enjoyed his job and believed he was making a difference in the lives of his students, but did not see a long-term future at a school that provided barely enough salary to provide for a single man, let alone a growing family.

Moral Education

Sean did not hold to the extreme of relativism that Matt and Chris did, but he was not comfortable with committing to an absolute standard. His beliefs and values were, in his opinion, firmly grounded; yet he clearly stated that he would never "force those opinions on anybody else." While he identified as a moral role model and explained that it was a part of his vocation, he characterized the role modeling as:

> ...how I carry myself around campus; you know, just keeping my nose out of trouble. If I break the rules, well, that's not very responsible. I see it as part of my vocation to uphold the mission.

Sean passively upholds the mission; he does not see himself as actively fostering the ideals of Catholic moral education in his capacity as a teacher. For him, it is a subtle influence, subsumed by the greater challenge of helping his students to achieve intellectual truth. An introspective-rationalist orientation best characterizes Sean's personal philosophical orientation.

JOSH

Josh, age 24, was a graduate of both Catholic secondary school and a Catholic college. Josh graduated from college with a degree in foreign languages and an unclear idea as to his future. On a whim he called the Catholic high school that eventually hired him and applied for a teaching position.

Josh's personal philosophy was deeply influenced by his own Jesuit high school experience and the Ignatian ideal of being a "man for others." Since graduating from college and beginning his teaching career, however, Josh has begun to reject organized religion.

> It's more important for me to be a good person than to go to church every Sunday. I don't think you really need that ritual. I feel it's just an obligation to go. I still think I have a good relationship with God.

The implicit theory that emerges is associated with the values of social justice that he holds dearest. His ethical orientation is based on the Ignatian principles of social justice, yet Josh has difficulty moving from the general

orientation of "social justice" to the particular of individual codes of behavior. His personal orientation is "a bit uncertain."

Teaching as Vocation

Because Josh graduated from a Catholic college, his principal asked him to teach theology as well as a foreign language. Josh readily agreed. When asked if he became a teacher simply due to a depressed job market, he replied:

> No, I really love it. I wake up every morning and I realize that I'm getting paid to come to work... I mean, we have our problems, but they're not as bad as other places. I couldn't imagine teaching at another school.... I really love it, I love the people who work here, everything.

Asked to describe his teaching style, he said:

> I'm very excitable, kind of wild. When I'm teaching I'm really loud and obnoxious—I'm also kind of a circus entertainer. I feel like a clown. My job is to get them learning without thinking about learning. See, I really love languages, and I want them to have that same love.

Josh embodies the notion of teaching as a vocation. He states, "I see myself in education for the rest of my life," and the reason for his commitment is grounded in the staff development and vision of the administration at his school. The principal, he explained with confidence, hires only "good people, maybe not the best teachers yet, but good people."

Moral Education

The principal also provided Josh with a mentor who not only helped him with the inherent difficulties of the classroom, but also provided him with a perspective on the moral vision of the school. Josh has developed a strong friendship with his mentor, a diocesan priest several years his senior. The mentor has helped Josh to realize that the vocation of teaching is not merely about transmission of information, but about giving a part of yourself to your students. The mentor gently chided Josh early in his career that he did not seem to be having any fun in the classroom, and fun according to the mentor was the essence of the profession. Josh took the advice to heart and, now in his second year, recounted a recent episode in his classroom in which the students were rambunctiously conjugating verbs, making a game of the process, and heartily enjoying themselves. One of the students suddenly became self-conscious of the laughter and, trying to be helpful, reminded Josh that "the class had better get back to work before someone hears us in here." Josh delighted in the reprimand, and assured the student that classroom work could actually be fun.

Josh readily accepts being a moral role model, perhaps more passionately than any of the other participants. He admits to "getting up on a soap box" when a student expresses a racist or sexist opinion; social justice is, for him, the long-term goal.

> I really wonder how much foreign language I really teach.... I teach manners, respect...respect for all people.

However, Josh's vision of social justice, although passionate, is at times in conflict with the vision of Catholic education.

> I think there are tricky situations. We are supposed to be here just presenting what the Church's position is, right? Well, I don't feel comfortable with that. If a kid asked me my opinion on something that I disagreed with the Church on, I'd have to tell him my opinion. That's the only thing that makes sense to me.

In this respect, Josh has not clearly grasped the notion of moral educator from a Catholic perspective. But it seems likely that Josh will grow into his understanding, given his close relationship with his mentor and the supportive structure of the school environment.

MARK

Mark, a 28-year-old first-year teacher, was the only participant to have a military background. He served in the military for five years, and the experience of discipline and training played heavily into his conception of Catholic educator. The implicit theory that emerges from Mark's personality is derived from his close relationship with his father. The Catholic high school where Mark was teaching was his alma mater as well as his father's and several other relatives'. The family held strong values about their faith, public service, and personal honor; all of these traits were demonstrated in Mark's persona. Although his own value system was quite firmly rooted in his Catholic upbringing, Mark was reluctant to divulge much of his deeply held beliefs to colleagues, to students, or to a researcher who assured him of anonymity. He said, "I'm careful not to let people know what my views are," preferring instead to listen carefully to the views held by others and asking questions that he hoped would lead toward truth. His simplistic approach to the moral domain came from his father's advice, "If it doesn't feel good, it probably isn't good." When pressed about determining a course of action in a thorny dilemma, Mark quickly responded that he would consult his father. The basic philosophy of life that establishes the implicit theory of Mark's professional life is one of conventional morality predicated on his religious upbringing as interpreted by his father.

Teaching as Vocation

Mark had a very strong desire to return to his alma mater as a teacher, even though he questioned the longevity of his career choice. What he did not question was his desire to serve a community that he held at the center of his moral universe. He was affirmed in his decision from the earliest stage, the interview. The interview included a lengthy discussion about Mark's educational vision and his ideas about himself as a teacher. He was also given a printed document that detailed the goals and objectives of an education at this particular Catholic high school, a process that helped him to accept the job. Every aspect of the educational environment, from the administration to the students themselves, confirmed his dedication:

> There's something here, something we have in common. You can go somewhere else and get as good an education—maybe even better—but here it's the whole package. It's the discussions you have about life in general, the people who share values, those things.

The teaching, however, did not appear to be a vocation in the sense of a calling, but rather an extension of Mark's obligation to public service. He made very little differentiation between his service as a student at the Naval Academy, his five years in the Navy, and his future goal of working for the Secret Service.

Moral Education

Mark does not hesitate to identify himself as a moral role model:

> That's, I think, just part of the job; it's like being an officer, even when you're not in uniform and you're not on base—not on duty—you're still held to the standards of an officer.

Mark's method of moral education relies upon his father's advice that:

> ...there are stages that kids follow, they should go through. But as they move through those stages they need to hear all sides. I would be very hesitant to ever say, "Oh, that's ridiculous." I would say, "Well, tell me about it; explain it to me."

When presented with a hypothetical dilemma of a student who sought his advice on what to do about his pregnant girlfriend, Mark carefully thought before responding:

> I'd definitely take time, away from school, to talk to him. Just to figure out, make sure she really is pregnant. Then I'd probably tell him to seek advice from as many people as he could. I mean, I couldn't...I'd have to draw from personal experience, and I've certainly known people in that situation.

> There's a quick way out, but I'd have to ask him, "What have we been talking about, and why are you at this school?"

This attitude allows Mark to say about his kids with problems, "I think they're pretty comfortable with me, they always talk to me." But Mark's sense of the good is often portrayed in a secular, duty-bound light; perhaps this perspective explains his ease in shifting from the military community to a religious community to a civil service community.

PAUL

Paul, a 27-year-old theology teacher, is in his second year of teaching. Of the six participants Paul possessed the clearest vision of his vocation, the deepest knowledge of the aims of Catholic education, and the strongest convictions about his role as a moral educator. He was explicit in his desire to shape the moral foundations of young men and women within the Roman Catholic tradition. He attributes this dedication to his family upbringing: "I was brought up in a very religious family; we prayed the rosary every night."

But Paul's early ambition was toward business; it was only in his last year of college that he acknowledged an undeniable calling toward the sharing of his faith through teaching. When asked if he had considered the priesthood, Paul said that he could not have committed to a celibate lifestyle. He recently became engaged to be married, but his ideological conviction was in line with the strictest interpretations of Church teaching.

Paul is extremely intelligent and committed to imparting the true teachings of the Church. His concern lies in what he perceives to be a general movement away from any belief at all:

> I think everyone should believe in something. Kids are not just skeptical about faith, a whole system of skepticism is evident. I teach to counter that.... I try to give them something to believe in—something that's going to make sense. I feed the head, and then the heart.

Paul's religious faith is the defining feature that shapes the implicit theory for his professional life. It is, he says:

> ...like I've rediscovered my faith in the last few years. When I read scripture or the *Catechism* it not only makes sense to me logically, but it resounds through my heart. It has substance.

Paul could not, when pressed, find a single area of disagreement with the Church. It stands for him as the citadel of truth. However, he had difficulty with his colleagues or students who, in his estimation, skirted the truth or misinterpreted teachings to suit their own parochial needs. He described often feeling alone and "out of touch" with the organizational ethos of the lib-

eral Christianity that he felt prevailed at his school. The process of spiritual conflict that Paul experienced was causing him to question his choice of teaching venue; he felt alienated and adrift from his colleagues. For example, one of the members of his department, a priest, advocated the recognition of homosexual rights within Church teaching. This "violates natural law," according to Paul. His staunch belief in the authority of Church teaching guides his classroom behavior and discussions; he does not allow for dissent within the sanctioned confines of a Roman Catholic classroom. For these reasons Paul believes he will look for employment elsewhere, where his modeling to students is not contradicted by his colleagues.

Teaching as Vocation

Paul's desire to teach is woven into his understanding of himself as a person of faith. He described an event, not unlike Paul in the New Testament, that changed him; on spring break and visiting a friend in California, he wandered the beach and contemplated the meaning of his life:

> I had no idea of what I wanted to do with my life. At the end of the week I hopped onto a Greyhound bus and headed home, when I found a book by John Cardinal Newman. On that bus ride it hit me: This is it; I've got to teach.

Moral Education

Paul's method of teaching is guided by his belief that he represents the Church, "kind of like representing God, really." He sees himself as a moral role model, but in different ways for different courses. Once a rapport is established, he explains the ground rules for discussions that involve personal information,

> I tell them there are two rules: number one, this isn't something we blare over the loudspeakers; and number two, they can't make fun of me.

Paul had numerous examples to illustrate his method of moral role modeling, but the one that was most difficult, yet most necessary, was that of responding to the inevitable questions he received from his students about his sex life.

> I'll get down and dirty and tell about my deepest, darkest moments... when I experienced God. I draw on all of my experiences, but I guess I don't go into all the details. I don't describe, like, how the first time I had to decide if I was going to be with a woman. I tell them what happened; but, see, I'm a virgin—and I'm 27 years old. I talked about this in class the other day...and I'm just never comfortable with it. But, on the other hand, I feel it's my job to role model, so I want them to know.

When asked about student reactions, Paul responded:

> It's quiet, very quiet. But here's the thing: I'm honest. I said to them, "Look, I'm 27 years old, and if I can save myself for marriage then so can you, because I'm the horniest son of a bitch you'll ever find."

Paul's commitment toward Catholic education is beyond reproach; however, his intolerance for any variation on Church teaching and his alienation from his colleagues will, by his own admission, drive him from this particular school. The administration was a distant entity, happy with Paul's teaching evaluations and lack of discipline problems, but uninvolved in the deeper issue of job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

This research project sought to add a voice to the conversation among Catholic educators, administrators, and parents concerning identity and formation of both children and the teachers who are entrusted with their care. It is not enough to establish a curriculum committee and achieve competitive SAT scores if we are to develop the moral muscles that children are expected to flex in crisis situations. What is needed, along with intellectual and physical conditioning, is the development of moral leadership in our classrooms.

It is encouraging to note that all six participants saw themselves, in varying degrees, as involved in the Church's mission of moral education. Some, such as Paul, were strict adherents to Church teaching; others, such as Matt, recognized the moral questioning of his students but steadfastly refused to shoulder the responsibility of offering advice. It is equally encouraging to find throughout the hours of conversations with these young men that while confused or uncertain about their roles as moral educators in the formal sense, their informal (or implicit) roles belied a goodness of heart and intentions. Intentions, then, may provide the opportunity for engaging neophytes into this third aim of Catholic education: moral leadership.

Upon entering the profession, all participants were given instruction concerning their academic duties and, a few, mentors to assist them in the daily tasks of lesson planning, homework, and tests. All were struggling with time management, discipline, and development of stimulating pedagogical tools. Several of the young men served as coaches and, again, assistance was readily offered to aid in this aspect. The one noticeable absence was in the area of spiritual development. This is not to suggest that the school administrators were not working for the attainment of all three aims (intellectual, physical, and spiritual), it is simply the case that six randomly chosen young men from three different Catholic high schools did not perceive the adminis-

trators in their schools as emphasizing this aspect of their career. It is of critical importance to note that just as teachers can stimulate moral growth in their students, so too can educational communities stimulate moral growth in new teachers (Parks, Piper, & Gentile, 1993). The Catholic school, then, has the potential to foster growth in a statistically "faith-challenged" group of young adults (Fowler, 1991), and in the process, advance the development of the students whose lives they deeply touch.

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