FUTURE TEACHERS' IDENTITY: BETWEEN AN IDEALISTIC VISION AND A REALISTIC VIEW[1]

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ABSTRACT. This study focuses on the way in which graduating student teachers represent themselves both as individuals and as future professional teachers, and compares these representations by identity status as defined by Marcia (Marcia et al., 1993). Seventy-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with students during their last year of a university elementary teacher preparation program. The results show consistency between personal and professional attributes among all the interviewed students. A high number of participants see themselves as both dynamic and empathic, thus reflecting an idealized conception of themselves and of the profession.

IDENTITÉ PERSONNELLE ET PROFESSIONNELLE CHEZ LES FUTURS MAÎTRES: VISION IDÉALISTE OU REGARD RÉALISTE?

RÉSUMÉ. Cette recherche se penche sur les représentations que des étudiantes en fin de formation des maîtres au préscolaire et au primaire ont d'elles-mêmes en tant que personnes et en tant que futures enseignantes. Soixante-seize entrevues semi-dirigées ont été réalisées dans quatre établissements universitaires. Ces données sont analysées selon les états identitaires des sujets tels que définis par Marcia (Marcia et al., 1993). Les résultats montrent une cohérence entre les caractéristiques personnelles et professionnelles que les sujets s'attribuent quel que soit leur état identitaire. Un grand nombre d'étudiantes se définissent comme dynamiques et empathiques, ces caractéristiques reflétant une représentation idéalisée d'elles-mêmes aussi bien que de la profession enseignante.

In the past years a growing debate has taken place in Europe as well as in North America concerning the recognition of a professional status for teachers. This issue has recently gained a lot of attention in Quebec with the reform in educational programs, including that of teacher preparation, which emphasize competency. Competencies, the creation of a professional order of teachers, autonomy, and professional ethics are the leading words in the new orthodoxy of the teaching profession.

In this context, one must also consider the worrisome fact that there is in North America a growing number of young teachers who turn away from the teaching profession. In Quebec, 15% to 20% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Martel, 2003). In the USA, this number seems to rise to about 30% to 50% (Auffret, 1997). Reasons to explain this phenomenon are still being investigated and links with professional identity are being studied. For instance, Kremer and Hofman (1985) found a relationship between burnout among teachers and a weak professional identity. Nias (1987) states that teachers most resistant to examining or changing their teaching are those who experience difficulty in separating their personal and professional identities. Making a change in their frame of reference is much more threatening because it involves the whole person, not only the professional self.

In this context, it is important to enquire into the nature and the construction of the professional self-identity of present and future teachers with regard to the reality of teaching, starting with the way student teachers represent themselves both as individuals and as future professional teachers. Understanding these representations may shed light on the competencies that the students attribute to themselves or not, and therefore, on those worth developing in the training of teachers to be. From these data, hypotheses can also be made about the conception of the teaching profession underlying student teachers' self representations, the particular focus of this study. Implications for teacher training programs will be formulated in the conclusion.

Theoretical framework

Debates around the recognition of the professional status of teachers refer to the question of professional identity and to its construction on the part of pre-service teachers during their initial university training as well as teachers during their actual practice. This question has led us to develop a definition of professional identity and a model for its construction (Gohier, Anadón, Bouchard, Charbonneau, & Chevrier, 1999, 2000, 2001).

This model, which aims to integrate the psychological and the sociological dimensions, does not pretend to be theoretically exhaustive. The question of the construction of professional identity, when applied to the training of future teachers, is in itself an extensive question which borrows from different disciplinary traditions such as, for example[2], the marxist sociology of Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970), the humanistic psychology of Rogers (1969, 1984), and the cultural approach of Hall (Hall & DuGuay, 1996). In the '70s and '80s, Katz (1972) and Huberman (1989, 1993) were already talking about different identity stages in the career of teachers (Gohier, 1998). A comparison of our model with those of Dubar (1996) and of Sikes, Measor, and Woods (1985) can be found in Gohier, Anadón, Bouchard, Charbonneau, and Chevrier (2001).

In the present study, with reference to Marcia's works (Marcia *et al.*, 1993), the psychological dimension of the construction of the professional identity will be drawn out. Professional identity is not presumed to be conferred through social means only. Teachers' professional identity can be defined as the representation which teachers have of themselves as teachers. It is at the crossroads of the representation one has of himself/herself as an individual and the representation one has of teachers and the teaching profession. The latter refers to one's relationship to the teaching occupation as a professional specialized in teaching and learning, to teaching responsibilities, to students and colleagues, to the teachers' community in general, and to all other actors of the school system as a social institution.

The process of teachers' professional identity formation is dynamic and interactive, and is characterized by in-depth questioning (Marcia *et al.*, 1993; Kroger, 2000) and conflict situations (internal or external to the individual). This process is based on two opposite processes: identification, by which one develops a sense of belonging, and what Pierre Tap (1979) calls "identization," involving "singularization" or individualization. Moreover, this process is facilitated by contiguous relationships with others (Winnicott, 1975), and is regulated by feelings of congruence, competency, self-esteem, and self-direction.

Our theoretical framework asserts the existence of links or interdependencies between personal and professional self-identities. The present analysis will focus on both of these and on their relationship. Our first, two-part research question, therefore, asks what are the characteristics that student teachers attribute to themselves personally and professionally, and how do these attributes relate to one another?

For this purpose, our analysis will use Marcia's classification of "ego-identity" categories (Marcia *et al.*, 1993). On the basis of his research on adolescents, which was later transposed to adulthood, and inspired by Erikson's theory, Marcia (Marcia *et al.*, 1993) posits the existence of four main "identity statuses" with regard to identity formation. They include, among other things, the context of one's occupation. These statuses are not static or definitive but may be conceived of as moments within a self-identity process which mainly evolves through conflicts. They are "identity diffusion," "foreclosure identity," "moratorium identity," and "identity achievement." These statuses are organized around two variables: commitment and exploration. Marcia's model is based on the premise that there is no clear and firmly asserted identity without commitment. Likewise, in order for an identity to be clear and firmly asserted, it must result from an exploratory process; otherwise, it would only be a conferred identity. Thus identity construction is, in part, a process through which the person emancipates himself/herself from his/her surroundings and the constraints it imposes upon him/her. Identity is a self-construction process.

Identity statuses can be defined as follows: "Identity diffusion" describes a fragmented and diffused identity that goes in all directions, with or without exploration, but most of the time without it. In this status, there is no commitment, especially to defining identity roles and values. The locus of control is external to the person, based upon surrounding circumstances. "Foreclosure identity" is a status in which a person is committed to certain roles and values but without being engaged in any exploration. The locus of control is external to the person. The identity of a foreclosed individual is conferred by others. Although his/her self-identity results from a process of internalization, it is only based on an introjection of authority figures without questioning or reconstruction. "Moratorium identity" is characterized by a lack of commitment, although the individual is engaged in an internalization and exploratory process. This status is considered to be transitory. Lastly, "Identity achievement" describes a status that is the result of an exploratory process followed by commitment. The individual is thus moved by an internal locus of control and his/her identity is self-constructed. Marcia's theory (Marcia *et al.*, 1993) is considered for the present purpose as a valid frame of analysis. This study does not propose to validate it, but, nonetheless, remarks will be made on its pertinence in the light of our results.

In this study, the professional identity of future primary school teachers is analyzed according to identity status in order to bring out differences in a population that is often considered homogeneous. For many (see Lessard, 1986; Lessard & Tardif, 2003), this homogeneity comes from the fact that the great majority of primary school teachers are women and that, contrary to secondary school teachers, the disciplinary variable does not contribute to the constitution of their professional identity. In order to define themselves, primary school teachers give priority to pedagogy compared to disciplinary content. But we can assume that a student teacher with an identity achievement status would have more self-knowledge and would show more differences between her personal and professional attributes than a student teacher with, let us say, a foreclosed or a diffuse identity status. Our second research question, therefore, asks how do personal and professional attributes vary according to the identity status of the student teachers?

The study

Our study includes two phases, one to determine identity status and one to identify self-representation characteristics. In the first phase, 405 third-year undergraduates, enrolled in a four-year teacher training program for preschool and primary school in four institutions belonging to the Université du Québec, completed a questionnaire inspired by Marcia and associates' research on identity statuses (Adams *et al.*, 1989; Henry *et al.*, 1993). The questionnaire is a French adaptation of Grotevant and Adams' *Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status* (1984). Based on 64 statements, it measures

ideological and interpersonal components of identity, each comprising four general areas. The ideological component includes professional occupation, religion, politics, and lifestyles and the interpersonal component includes friendship, company of others, gender roles, and leisure activities. Answers are given on an individual basis according to a Likert-type opinion scale of 6 points for each statement. Four scores, corresponding to four scales, one for each of the four identity statuses, are measured according to the presence or absence of an exploratory period and of a commitment period in these eight general areas of identity.

The aim of this questionnaire is to classify each of the participants according to the four main identity statuses described above. The method for the attribution of an identity status to a participant is based on her score on each of the four scales, one per identity status. On each scale, the cutoff point is set at 0.5 standard deviation (SD) above the group's mean (Jones, Akers & White, 1994). The four "pure" identity statuses (diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement) have a score above the cutoff point on one of the scales, and scores below it on the other three. For example, a participant with an identity achievement status has a score above the 0.5 SD from the group's mean on the identity achievement scale and a score below the 0.5 SD from the mean on the three other scales. In addition, some participants are classified in a status called "low profile moratorium" when they have a score below the 0.5 SD cutoff on all four scales. All the other participants who fall into all other categories, e.g., who have two or more scores above the cutoff point, are considered to have a "transitory" status identity[3]. For example, a participant considered in transition between diffusion and foreclosure has a score above the cutoff point on both these scales and a score below the cutoff point on the other two scales. No distinction is being made between the different "transitory" types, since the small number of participants in each category is considered non-significant.

A year later, in the second phase of our study, ninety-six interviews were planned: 48 from pure status students (12 for each of the four institutions and classified as follows, 3 Identity Diffusion, 3 Foreclosure, 3 Moratorium and 3 Identity Achievement), 24 from Low Profile Moratorium status (6 for each of the four institutions) and 24 from the Transitory Status (6 for each of the four institutions). Done on a voluntary basis, only 76 interviews were possible and the frequency distribution per status will be presented here below. We conducted semi-structured interviews with the 76 students while they were in the finishing year of their teacher training program. The great majority of students registered in this program were female, therefore it was decided to carry out the enquiry with female participants since a comparison with the few male students would not have been trustworthy. The participants were middle class francophones with an average age of 23 years (M=22.4, SD=1.5) from four different regions of the province of Quebec.[4] Students

were asked a series of questions through which they were invited to define themselves, first as individuals, and second as teachers[5]. The aim of this second phase was to better understand students' professional identity construction. The present study focuses on the way in which graduating student teachers represent themselves both as individuals and as future professional teachers, and compares these representations according to identity status.

Participants' identity characteristics

Among all the characteristics that interviewed participants attributed to themselves in their self-descriptions, 56 were used for individual self-descriptions (see Table 1) and 57 for professional self-descriptions (see Table 2). Many of the individual attributes are similar to the professional ones, while others differ. Only the most recurrent attributes were used in our classification in order to obtain significant results. Moreover, these attributes were regrouped according to their semantic proximity within ten general categories for the personal self-attributions and within nine for the professional self-attributions.

Categories	Attributes
Resolute (*determinée*)	Resolute (*déterminée*), persevering (*persévérante*), stubborn (*entêtée*)
Dynamic (*dynamique*)	Dynamic (*dynamique*), cheerful (*enjouée*), expressive (*expressive*), humorous (*sens de l'humour*), positive (*positive*)
Empathic (*empathique*)	Empathic (*empathique*), generous (*généreuse*), respectful (*respectueuse*), attached to human values (*attachées aux valeurs humaines*)
Demanding (*exigeante*)	Demanding (*exigeante*), strict (*autoritaire*)
Flexible (*flexible*)	Flexible (*flexible*), open-minded (*ouverte*), versatile (*polyvalente*)
Kind (*gentille*)	Kind (*gentille*), patient (*patiente*)
Perfectionist (*perfectionniste*)	Perfectionist (*perfectionniste*), organized (*organisée*), punctual (*ponctuelle*)
Responsible (*responsable*)	Responsible (*responsable*), resourceful (*débrouillarde*), leader (*leader*)
Sociable (*sociable*)	Sociable (*sociable*), collaborative (*sens de la collaboration*)
Shy (*timide*)	Shy (*timide*), fearsome (*peureuse*), insecure (*insécure*)

TABLE 1. Categories and attributes associated with personal self-descriptions

Categories	Attributes
Autonomous (*autonome*)	Autonomous (*autonome*), responsible (*responsable*), values autonomy (*valorise l'autonomie*)
Strict (*autoritaire*)	Strict (*autoritaire*), demanding (*exigeante*)
Resolute (*déterminée*)	Resolute (*déterminée*), persevering (*persévérante*)
Unobtrusive (*effacée*)	Unobtrusive (*effacée*), accomodating (*non autoritaire*)
Empathic(*empathique*)	Empathic (*empathique*), generous (*généreuse*), respectful (*respectueuse*), interest in student growth (*souci du développement de l'élève*)
Open-minded (*ouverte*)	Open-minded (*ouverte*), versatile (*polyvalente*), pedagogically versatile (*polyvalence pédagogique*), in search (*en quête*)
Organized (*organisée*)	Organized (*organisée*), administrative (*gestionnaire*)
Perfectionist (*perfectionniste*)	Perfectionist (*perfectionniste*), punctual (*ponctuelle*)
Sociable (*sociable*)	Sociable (*sociable*), collaborative (*sens de la collaboration*)

TABLE 2. Categories and attributes associated with professional self-descriptions

When we compare the attributes that the interviewed participants use to describe themselves as individuals with the ones they use for their professional self-descriptions, after having regrouped the closely-related attributes, we end-up with 11 "meta-categories": dynamic, empathic, perfectionist, responsible/autonomous, resolute, organized, shy/unobtrusive, flexible/open-minded, sociable, demanding/strict, and kind (see Table 3). These results show that a high number of participants see themselves as both dynamic and empathic. Among the professional attributes, demanding and organized, stand out.

META-CATEGORIES OF SELF-ATTRIBUTIONS	PERSONAL SELF-ATTRIBUTIONS		PROFESSIONAL SELF-ATTRIBUTIONS	
	n	%	n	%
Dynamic	53	69.7	45	59.2
Empathic	38	50	58	76.3
Perfectionist	34	44.7	9	11.8
Resolute	33	43.4	14	18.4
Sociable	30	39.4	20	26.3
Kind	25	32.9	0	0
Responsible/Autonomous	23	30.2	10	13.1
Flexible/Open-Minded	19	25	19	25
Shy/Unobtrusive	17	22.4	5	6.5
Demanding/Strict	7	9.2	21	27.6
Organized	0	0	32	42.1

TABLE 3. Number (n) and percentage (%) of participants by meta-categories of personal and professional self-attributions (76 participants)

Participants' identity statuses

How do the personal and professional attributes vary according to the identity status of the student teachers? Of the 76 participants who were interviewed, 11 (14%) had a diffused identity, 7 (9%) a foreclosed identity, 9 (12%) a moratorium identity, and 8 (11%) an achieved identity. Moreover, 18 (24%) participants were classified in the low profile moratorium status and 23 (30%) in the transitory status. Of all interviewed students, 30% were considered to be in a transitory phase and 70% could be classified according to a clear identity status if we include the low profile moratorium participants. This status, in which none of the four "pure" identity statuses stands out, is considered to be a "weak" identity status, i.e., a status wherein the individual has some characteristics of the various types of identities and is in search of his/her own identity. Only 46% of all participants were characterized by a "pure" identity status. Moreover, if the students with a diffused identity status are excluded, only 32% of all students were engaged in a clear exploratory process or commitment, two processes that are central to Marcia's identity construction theory (Marcia *et al.*, 1993). These results seem coherent with Marcia's theory where identity statuses are conceived of as transitory moments. Moreover, these results can be explained by the fact that they portray a group of students who had not yet practiced teaching as autonomous teachers and who, therefore, had not questioned their identity in the light of this practice even though they were well advanced in their training.

Table 4 presents the number of students, according to their identity status, by meta-categories of personal and professional self-attributions. The dynamic and empathic attributes are found among participants from all identity statuses, although in different proportions. As for the other meta-categories, they are unevenly distributed among all the identity statuses. For personal self-attributions, the meta-categories that are shared by at least 40% of the participants are: Perfectionist: Identity diffusion, 55%, Foreclosure, 57%, and Identity achievement, 50%; Resolute: Foreclosure, 57%, Moratorium, 44%, Identity achievement, 50% and Transitory, 57%; Sociable: Foreclosure, 43% and Moratorium, 67%; Responsible/autonomous: Moratorium, 44% and Identity achievement, 50%; Flexible: Foreclosure, 43%; Shy/Unobtrusive: Foreclosure, 57%. For professional self-attribution: Flexible: Identity diffusion, 55%; Organized: Foreclosure, 57%, Identity achievement, 88%, and Transitory, 43%.

These results need to be analyzed within the global context of the answers given by the participants. Some of these results are consistent with Marcia's identity profile (Marcia *et al.*, 1993). For example, it seems coherent to have a high number of identity achievement participants and foreclosure participants that describe themselves as being organized: the first because

Meta-categories of self-attributions		Identity Diffusion (N=11) Pe	Pr	Foreclosure (N=7) Pe	Pr	Moratorium (N=9) Pe	Pr	Identity Achievement (N=8) Pe	Pr	Low Profile Moratorium (N=18) Pe	Pr	Transitory Status (N=23) Pe	Pr
Dynamic	n	8	7	6	4	7	5	5	5	12	13	15	11
	%	73	64	86	57	78	56	63	63	67	72	65	48
Empathic	n	6	7	5	7	2	8	3	5	12	14	10	17
	%	55	64	71	100	22	89	38	63	67	78	43	74
Perfectionist	n	6	0	4	0	2	1	4	1	6	2	12	5
	%	55	0	57	0	22	11	50	13	33	11	52	22
Resolute	n	3	1	4	2	4	0	4	2	5	4	13	5
	%	27	9	57	29	44	0	50	25	28	22	57	22
Sociable	n	4	2	3	2	6	1	3	3	6	5	8	7
	%	36	18	43	29	67	11	38	38	33	28	35	30
Kind	n	5	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	6	0	9	0
	%	45	0	14	0	22	0	25	0	33	0	39	0
Responsible/Autonomous	n	3	1	2	0	4	2	4	0	1	3	9	4
	%	27	9	29	0	44	22	50	0	6	17	39	17
Flexible/Open-minded	n	2	6	3	2	2	2	3	2	4	4	5	3
	%	18	55	43	29	22	22	38	25	22	22	22	13
Shy/Unobtrusive	n	2	0	4	1	0	2	2	0	4	1	5	1
	%	18	0	57	14	0	22	25	0	22	6	22	4
Demanding/Strict	n	0	4	0	2	0	2	3	2	3	6	1	5
	%	0	36	0	29	0	22	38	25	17	33	4	22
Organized	n	0	2	0	4	0	3	0	7	0	6	0	10
	%	0	18	0	57	0	33	0	88	0	33	0	43

TABLE 4. Number (n) and percentage (%) of participants by meta-categories of personal (Pe) and professional (Pr) self-attributions for each identity status

they feel in full control of their assigned task and because they have a clear understanding of who they are with regard to their profession; the second because they tend to lean on a well-established structure. Likewise, it would have been surprising to find identity diffusion participants that claimed to be resolute. These individuals are in search of their self-identity and thus less confident in their chosen way. On the other hand, it seems somewhat awkward to find foreclosure identity participants mentioning flexibility. These results demonstrate the limitations of the strict analysis of the attributes that participants give themselves. They also show the limitations of this descriptive approach, which needs to be complemented by a more thorough analysis.

Lastly, the presence among the four identity status groups of the dynamic and empathic meta-categories is questionable. The challenge posed by this fact to Marcia's theory will be discussed further on.

Concordance between professional and personal meta-categories

When we compare the attributes used by interviewed participants to describe themselves both as professionals and as individuals, we find that there is not always a clear concordance between these attributes, although a concordance can be found when comparing the meta-categories these attributes refer to. For example, some participants who describe themselves as dynamic persons also use that attribute to describe themselves professionally, but for other characteristics, they use different yet similar attributes. The explanation for this lack of total concordance may be found in the repetition of questions during the interview. A given participant might not have wanted to use the same attributes to describe herself both as an individual and as a professional.

Nonetheless, on the whole, there is consistency between the personal and professional attributes among all the interviewed students. For example, the attributes used by six participants, one for each identity status, to describe themselves both as persons and as professionals, are presented in Table 5. The portrait of these six chosen participants reflects the general level of concordance among the attributes for all the participants.

Discussion

Given the fact that a large majority of participants from all four statuses use the same attributes, i.e., emphatic and dynamic, to describe themselves as persons and/or professionals, we are led to question Marcia's theory on the distinctions between identity statuses (Marcia *et al*., 1993). To examine this issue, we will now compare these results with those obtained by a previous analysis of the same interviews (Gohier, Chevrier, Anadón, in press). In the latter, five participants from each of the four main identity statuses were chosen for a vertical analysis (intra-participant). This analysis aimed to show whether their profiles matched Marcia's identity characteristics with regard to exploration and commitment (Marcia *et al.*, 1993). It found the main characteristics mentioned by Marcia. Thus, identity diffusion participants were found not to be involved in a clear exploratory or in a commitment process. They were also found to have an external locus of control, an unclear sense of self-direction, and a professional identity that is not well asserted. Foreclosed identity participants on their part were found to have a low sense of exploration, but unlimited commitment. However, for these participants, the framework was external and the identity was externally conferred. The influence of parents, often parents who were themselves teachers seems to have been a decisive factor for the career choice of these participants. They also had a tendency to be strict, yet at the same time, they showed a lack

IDENTITY STATUS	Personal Attributes	Professional Attributes
Identity Diffusion	• Intelligent (*intelligente*) • Patient (*patiente*) • Gentle (*douce*) • Shy (*timide*) • Creative (*créative*)	• Patient (*patiente*) • Gentle (*douce*) • Creative (*créative*) • Optimistic (*optimiste*) • Positive (*positive*) • Welcoming (*accueillante*)
Foreclosure	• Enjoy life (*aime la vie*) • Smiling (*souriante*) • Hardworking (*travaillante*) • Sensitive (*sensible*) • Child loving (*aime les enfants*) • Reliable (*fiable*) • Calm (*calme*) • Honest (*honnête*)	• Sociable (*sociable*) • Understanding (*compréhensive*) • Team-spirit (*esprit d'équipe*) • Efficient in management (*gestion efficace*) • Tenacious (*tenace*) • Fragile (*fragile*) • Insecure (*insécure*)
Moratorium	• In process (*en projet*) • Positive (*positive*) • Dynamic (*dynamique*) • Sociable (*sociable*) • Curious (*curieuse*) • Involved (*impliquée*) • Multi-talented (*généraliste*)	• In process (*en projet*) • Open-minded (*ouverte*) • Curious (*curieuse*) • Dynamic (*dynamique*) • Involved (*impliquée*) • Prone to teach children responsibility (*volonté de responsabiliser les enfants*)
Identity Achievement	• Sociable (*sociable*) • Open-minded (*esprit ouvert*) • Generous (*généreuse*) • Available (*disponible*) • Active (*active*)	• Trust in children (*confiance aux enfants*) • Available (*disponible*) • Team spirit (*esprit d'équipe*) • Involved (*impliquée*) • Creative (*créative*)
Low Profile Moratorium	• Positive (*positive*) • Enthusiastic (*enthousiaste*) • Humorous (*sens de l'humour*) • Sportsmanship (*sportive*) • Energetic (*énergique*)	• Humorous (*sens de l'humour*) • Positive (*esprit positif*) • Willing to help children become active and autonomous (*volonté de rendre les élèves actifs et autonomes*) • Knows how to establish rules (*sait établir des règles*)
Transitory status	• Adaptable (*capacité d'adaptation*) • Autonomous (*autonome*) • Strong (*vaillante*) • Persevering (*persévérante*) • Dynamic (*dynamique*)	• Adaptable (*capacité d'adaptation*) • Smart (*vivacité d'esprit*) • Creative (*créative*) • Dynamic (*dynamique*) • Open-minded (*ouverte*)

TABLE 5. Concordance between attributes for chosen participants from each identity status

of confidence (this appears clearly in the foreclosed identity participant portrayed in Table 5). Among moratorium identity participants, we noticed little commitment but a great deal of exploration, mostly in three of the

five participants, one of whom even decided to leave the profession. Their framework was mostly internal. As for the identity achievement participants, they were found to be engaged in both exploratory and commitment processes. Identity achievement participants put emphasis on the importance of knowing oneself, of being open-minded, and of being capable of self-reflexive analysis.

Contrary to what one could first be led to think, these previous results do not invalidate those of our present analysis with regard to the attributes used by participants, because different parameters were used. In the previous vertical analysis, the main focus was on the exploration/commitment axis which is fundamental to Marcia's theory of identity (Marcia *et al.*, 1993). Moreover, the results were based on all the answers given by each participant during the interviews. In the present study, our attention is focused on the attributes that participants gave themselves. There is a clear recurrence of certain attributes across identity statuses. This recurrence appears most clearly for the dynamic and the empathic attributes. All other recurring attributes, found in various proportions according to identity statuses, are mostly positive, and describe open-mindedness and personal resolution.

Conclusion. Between an idealistic vision and a realistic view

We can formulate the hypothesis that this concordance between personal and professional attributes is due to two distinct factors. First, the use of the same attributes by participants for both personal and professional self-descriptions might suggest a lack of self-knowledge or an idealized representation of oneself. The quasi-absence of difference between the personal and professional attributes seems to indicate the presence, in the mind of the student teachers, of what Sugrue (1997) calls a "teaching personality," a "particular kind of personality which is ideally suited to teaching" (p.217). To define themselves as professionals, the student teachers seem to choose these ideal personality traits for teaching over pedagogical, didactical, and subject matter expertise (or even preferences). This reduction of the professional identity to the personal sphere could mean that successful practicum experiences are reinforcing this conception. Also teaching problems may be interpreted by the students as a "personal failure" ("I do not have it" or "I am not made for it") instead of as an indication that they have competencies to learn. The implications for trainers are many. They should take into account how the student teachers understand the concept of being a good teacher, acknowledge the necessity of having certain personality traits (such as being dynamic and empathic) but also help the student teachers realize that these traits are not sufficient to define oneself as a teacher. As Weber, Mitchell and Nicolai (1995) propose: "It may be more fruitful to work with rather than 'undo' existing images of the teacher."

Second, we may posit that this concordance is a result of the training received by the participants during their program, which has largely been influenced by a humanistic approach to teaching and by teachers with a rogerian perspective. This non-directive approach, centered on helping, emphasizes certain teacher characteristics such as empathy, congruence, and positive consideration for the person (Rogers, 1969). During their formation, have we not trained future teachers to be empathic, generous, and caring?

Without questioning the humanistic approach in teachers' training programs, we can nonetheless recognize that the image of teachers one can find in these programs has led to an idealized conception of the self and of the profession. We may also assert that the practice of teaching portrayed in these programs is far from the reality of teaching. The practice of teaching, one might say, is clearly not as angelic as these programs might have led students to believe. The real pedagogical or educative relationship to children consists of more than just being helpful. Teaching is an interactive and complex activity. It can provoke defensive reactions on the part of some children. Others will have learning difficulties that may lead to failure. Thus, a better knowledge of the profession and of oneself as a professional could possibly lead to better preparation and the retention of more teachers in the profession.

The results of this study suggest that in order to improve future teachers' training and to enhance the construction of their professional identity, activities should be developed to help self-reflexive analysis, i.e., activities to help student teachers define themselves using professional attributes and better understand who they are both as individuals and as teachers. For example, micro-teaching accompanied by self-analysis and reflexive analysis of one's actions in practicum is one of the means to better know oneself as a teacher (see Gohier, 1998).

We also suggest a more realistic portrayal of the practice of teaching in order to show more accurately the complexity of this profession and all the difficulties associated with it (socio-economic, ethnic, pertaining to training or to the relationship with colleagues, etc.). The difficult, sometimes trying situations teachers experience don't have only negative effects. In fact, the dynamics of the development of a professional identity imply both contiguity and conflict. One has to learn to cope with conflict.

Without diminishing the importance of promoting the attainment of an ideal – the ideal that ought to be sought by teachers in terms of educative goals and quality of teaching – teacher training programs should also portray more realistically what teaching is in reality. An ideal can best be pursued and attained if it is aimed for in the context of a concrete situation. Otherwise, there is a high risk that unattained ideals will lead to self-devaluation, to the incapacity of practicing one's profession, and eventually to one's abandonment of it altogether.

NOTES

1. This research has received financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC, 410-99-1519 and 410-2003-0979). We owe special thanks and appreciation to Ms. Diane Léger, Chantal Déry, and Mr. Danic Parenteau for their work on this project.

2. The recent edition of the French eJournal *Éducation et Francophonie* XXXIV (1), under the direction of Diane Gérin-Lajoie, deals with the identity of teachers in a minority milieu, and some of the articles deal with the construction of teacher identity (http://www.acelf/ca/revue/sommaire).

3. This result could be explained by the dynamic, thus changing, aspect of identity development, especially in the early moments of the construction of professional identity.

4. The Montreal region, the Outaouais region, the Saguenay (Chicoutimi) region, and the Rimouski region.

5. In the interview, participants were asked to describe themselves on a personal level as well as on a professional level, to see whether they acknowledged or not having the same characteristics, or a certain degree of congruence between the characteristics, on both levels. Then, strictly on the professional level, they were asked about their competencies, the way they perceive themselves as similar or different from the in-service teachers, about their conception of teaching as a profession, and about the aspects of their training program that had influenced the development of their professional identity. This article focuses on two of these questions: "I would like to hear you talk about yourself as an individual. Could you give me some words that best describe who you are?" The same question was then asked of the person as a teacher.

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