

“I WANT TO USE MY SUBJECT MATTER TO...”:  
THE ROLE OF PURPOSE IN ONE U.S.  
SECONDARY HISTORY TEACHER’S  
INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION MAKING

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In this study, we explore the instructional decision making of Charlotte, a graduate of an intensive social studies teacher education program. Charlotte articulated a sophisticated conception of historical thinking and appeared to possess exemplary pedagogical content knowledge. Her classroom practice did not incorporate the approaches to historical thinking and inquiry that were discussed in her methods course. She possessed a clear view of her purpose of history teaching, which was to impart a particular set of moral values; her practices were consistent with her purpose; and she controlled her class to accomplish that purpose.

Key words: instructional decision making, history teaching, social studies, historical inquiry, document-based instruction, methods courses, beginning teachers



Dans cet article, les auteures analysent une décision pédagogique de Charlotte, diplômée d'un programme de formation à l'enseignement spécialisé en sciences humaines. Charlotte, qui a développé une conception avant-gardiste de la pensée historique, semble posséder une connaissance exemplaire du sujet. Ses pratiques pédagogiques n'incluent pas les approches discutées dans son cours de méthodologie quant à la pensée et à la recherche historiques. Elle a une notion claire du but qu'elle poursuit en enseignant l'histoire, à savoir la transmission d'un ensemble précis de valeurs morales. Ses pratiques vont de pair avec ce but et elle contrôle sa classe de manière à atteindre son objectif.

Mots clés : décision pédagogique, enseignement de l'histoire, sciences humaines, recherche historique, enseignement à l'aide de documents, cours de méthodologie, jeunes enseignants

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We conducted a case study of Charlotte, a vivacious, popular second-year high school history teacher who had graduated from an intensive masters/certification program that emphasized historical thinking and historical inquiry. The strongest student in her class, Charlotte could articulate a sophisticated conception of historical thinking and appeared to possess exemplary pedagogical content knowledge. Nonetheless, her classroom practice revealed that Charlotte did not incorporate the historical inquiry and historical thinking approaches that were discussed in her methods course, including the use of multiple perspectives and sources. Charlotte's understandings about the interpretive nature of history were not evident in her instruction. Rather, Charlotte's instruction was highly self-oriented; she lectured in a narrative fashion that allowed her to present her own interpretations of history and to control the conclusions she thought her students should draw from the material.

Implicit in the data on Charlotte were intriguing questions about her goals and purposes for history instruction. Thus, this study explores the following research questions: What did the notion of purpose mean to this secondary U.S. history teacher, and how did her sense of purpose or her goals influence her instructional decision making? We discovered that Charlotte possessed a clear view of her purpose of history teaching, which was to impart a particular set of moral values; that her practices

were consistent with her purpose; and that she controlled her class in accomplish that purpose.

#### BEGINNING TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION MAKING

Several key issues underpin our research. First, teachers are decision makers, and we need to better understand what influences their decisions. Second, previous research has identified a wide variety of factors that influence teachers' practice; this research has been summed up in the concept of pedagogical content knowledge. Third, methods courses typically focus on pedagogical content knowledge, but this focus does not always result in practices that are consistent with what is actually taught (for example, in a history classroom). Fourth, perhaps the strongest influence on practice is not pedagogical content knowledge but purpose.

Beginning teachers face numerous challenges and often struggle with stress, loneliness, isolation, disillusionment, and fatigue (Gold, 1996). Within this context, the learning curve for beginning teachers is enormous (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, 2003). Research has documented that beginning teachers' instructional practices are mediated by their beliefs and experiences, coursework, and perceptions of curriculum, students, and pedagogy (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Pajares, 1992). The relative influence of teacher education appears to depend on a complex confluence of factors, including how messages sent by teacher educators mesh with prospective teachers' beliefs and attitudes, and the level of congruence between teacher education experiences and field experiences (Angell, 1998; Clift & Brady, 2005).

With regard to social studies teaching, several important studies by Adler (1984), Goodman and Adler (1985), and Ross (1987, 1988) have drawn from literature on teacher socialization to examine the role of teachers' perspectives in relation to their classroom practices. Adler (1984) and Goodman and Adler (1985) analyzed elementary student teachers' perspectives on social studies and found that, although they initially expressed beliefs about social studies that seemed consistent with those of many social studies educators, the student teachers' interpretations of their teaching situations were varied, with some

perceiving constraints that could hinder their ability to act on their beliefs. Further, their life experiences and preexisting beliefs likely shaped their perspectives on teaching as much as the student teaching experience itself. Ross (1987) examined secondary social studies student teachers in a similar vein, finding that the participants took an active role in mediating their student teaching experiences. Ross (1988) also studied the extent to which student teachers believed they could use their own judgment or needed to conform in their school placements. He found some who acted independently, some who did conform, and others who only gave the appearance of conforming while holding on to their own beliefs. In addition, Cornett (1990), in a case study of a high school social studies teacher, concluded that the teacher viewed curriculum development as a distraction from her most important task: instruction. The teacher stated that, although curriculum mandates were often formally and externally imposed on her, she had the freedom to choose how to present and sequence the content.

#### TEACHING AND LEARNING HISTORY

Although multifaceted and contentious discussion of notions and definitions of effective history teaching is ongoing, a substantial body of research demonstrates that children are capable of engaging in historical interpretation and analysis, and that these are important skills for students to learn (Barton, 1997; VanSledright, 2002). Presumably, then, for students to learn these skills, their teachers must possess these understandings and must be willing to make curricular and instructional decisions to foster students' ability to engage in historical thinking and historical interpretation. But what, then, do teachers need to know to make these types of instructional decisions? Shulman (1987) argued that teachers' knowledge base should include knowledge of content, general pedagogy, curriculum as well as pedagogical content knowledge, which he defined as "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics...are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (p. 8). If teachers possess these types of knowledge, Shulman argued, they would be more likely to engage in effective instructional practice.

In *Teaching History for the Common Good*, Barton and Levstik (2004) offer another approach to examining teacher decision making. They question “whether sophisticated disciplinary understanding, even when combined with pedagogical knowledge, will have an impact on instruction” (p. 248), and whether “teacher knowledge is the variable that predicts classroom practice” (p. 251). They argue that existing empirical evidence reveals that teachers are expected to cover the curriculum, and maintain control, and that, in most cases, teachers do just that.

Research indicates that teachers believe that they have to cover a prescribed curriculum (state standards, textbooks, district curriculum guides), and often view historical inquiry and interpretation as time-consuming and distracting practices. Further, teachers are focused on controlling their classroom – on maintaining a quiet, orderly environment. Historical inquiry/historical thinking, often associated with group work or group projects, could potentially lead to undesirable student behaviors (movement, loud talking). Barton and Levstik assert that two possible motives behind coverage and control include a desire for group acceptance, and practicality. In other words, the desires to fit in, to be viewed as a competent professional, and to maintain a reasonable workload compel many teachers to focus on covering the curriculum and maintaining control of a classroom. However, teachers accomplish these two goals in very different ways.

Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that the key variable, so to speak, is purpose, that “teachers’ goals appear to have more impact on practice than their pedagogical content knowledge” (p. 258), and that teachers with strongly held and clearly articulated purposes make instructional decisions consistent with these goals. They cite several research studies that paint portraits of teachers with purposes that directly influence how they choose to cover and control (e.g., Fickel 2000; Grant, 2003). Grant (2003), for example, in his case study of two experienced American history teachers, argued that although teaching could be partially understood by examining teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, other factors influenced their instructional and curricular decision making. He noted that the teachers in his study engaged in instructional decision making through their content decisions, materials decisions,

and instructional decisions, but more importantly, the goals that teachers held appeared to significantly influence how each crafted their teaching practice.

In light of Barton and Levstik's and Grant's arguments as presented above, we chose to explore Charlotte's goals and purposes for teaching and to examine the question: What did the notion of purpose mean to Charlotte and how did her sense of purpose or her goals influence her instructional decision-making?

#### RESEARCH METHODS

Using a case study method (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995), we studied one secondary United States history teacher in her second year of teaching. This approach enabled us to examine a "bounded system" in great depth and allowed the richness and complexity of Charlotte's teaching to emerge from the data (Stake, 1995). The data sources for this study included fifteen classroom observations, five semi-structured interviews with Charlotte, one group interview with seven of Charlotte's students, documents that Charlotte produced as part of her unit planning, and a reflective research journal. Data analysis included several stages. First, we independently conducted a systematic content analysis of the interview and observation transcripts (Stake, 1995). Secondly, we each prepared a research memo detailing our analyses. Third, we collaboratively generated an extensive list of codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Fourth, we compared our coding and generated an outline of the major themes and issues identifiable in the data, noting codes that might capture the notion of purpose: purpose, philosophy, beliefs about content, goals, aims, reasons for teaching history, and definition of history. The first author also conducted a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990) with the study participant to confirm and/or disconfirm the findings.

We chose to focus on Charlotte Plath (identified by a pseudonym), a white female in her early 20's, on the basis of three criteria. First, Charlotte graduated from the masters/certification program in social studies education at a large, southeastern university. As a graduate of this program, she took a semester-long secondary social studies methods course taught by the second author. Second, Charlotte earned her

bachelor's degree in history, the content area being examined. As a history major, Charlotte took extensive coursework in historical content, with a particular focus in United States history. The second author believed that Charlotte was one of the strongest students in the program that year on the basis of multiple criteria (e.g., course grades and internship performance). Third, Charlotte had developed a reputation as one of the most popular and effective teachers at her school.

It is important to point out that, although the second author was Charlotte's instructor in her masters program, she and Charlotte had no further contact once Charlotte graduated from the program. The first author collected all the data and showed it to the second author only after she had completed all observations and interviews. Also, the first author completed a member check after the key patterns and themes had been identified. Charlotte confirmed and agreed with all the findings presented below and stated that she was pleased with our portrayal of her and that we had accurately characterized her purpose for teaching history. Thus, for our findings section we selected quotations from our interviews with Charlotte to capture this portrayal as fully as possible.

The social studies methods course that Charlotte took was offered in the first semester of the program, meeting three hours each week. In this course, the second author addressed a number of topics related to teaching social studies. Several weeks of the course focused on the teaching of history, particularly the use of historical inquiry methods and activities to develop students' historical thinking abilities. The professor emphasized the critical use and analysis of a variety of primary sources including diary entries, letters, pictures, photographs, paintings, and oral history testimony. The students constructed and taught several lessons that incorporated historical inquiry methods and document-based instruction. During their internships the students were expected to incorporate historical thinking activities into at least one planned lesson that the instructor observed.

In the interviews for our study, Charlotte expressed an in-depth understanding of historical inquiry and historical thinking that closely matched what the second researcher believed she had taught in the methods course. She described historical thinking as trying to understand the process of historical interpretation: to understand



historical context while examining the actions and motivations of people within that particular time frame. Charlotte explained: "Historical thinking is bringing in all different perspectives because to be a historian [is to] analyze things so you can bring in all sorts of primary sources and documents to collect information, quotes, and try to understand the time period."

Charlotte credited her methods course with teaching her how to analyze history from multiple sources, as well as encouraging her to examine personal biases and assumptions in presenting historical information, in order to

... realize what my passion is and notice how I emphasize certain points when I'm teaching and leave out certain points and that's because of my own personal bias, so I learned to kind of realize and recognize that, think about it, and try to supplement what I personally leave out. I realized that history is very biased. (Interview)

At the time of the study, Charlotte was in her second year of teaching eleventh grade honors United States history at Valley High School (a pseudonym) located in a small city in Florida. A large, diverse high school of over 800 students, Valley comprised a mix of students, including African Americans, Whites, Asians, and Latinas/Latinos. In this high school, honors classes were open to all students, resulting in classes of students with varying levels of achievement and motivation. The observations took place in a United States History class over the course of three units: Westward Expansion, Progressivism, and World War I.

## FINDINGS

We have categorized our findings as follows: Charlotte's ideas about what history is, her conceptions of history teaching, and how "coverage and control" issues helped her to put her ideas into practice. Charlotte certainly focused on coverage and control in ways that silenced perspectives that differed from hers, and also reflected her lack of confidence in her students' abilities. She also possessed a very clear and well-developed goal or purpose for teaching history that seemed to influence how she chose to cover content. Her goal did not reflect ideas

presented in her teacher education program; rather, it reflected deeply held values and beliefs about life, content, and students. Her primary purpose was to convey moral lessons to her students.

*History as a Moral Vehicle*

Charlotte's main purpose for teaching history was to convey a sense of morals and values through historical stories so that she could shape her students' thinking and help them to grow into productive adult citizens/members of society. Charlotte discussed how her vision of being a history teacher differed from other teachers in her department: "I feel like history is a vehicle for making students better people...and for teaching lessons with morals and philosophy." When asked to describe her philosophy of teaching, she revisited this idea: "I believe that you, the teacher, are supposed to be a role model for making people better humans. And so I want to use my subject matter to make students better people, make kids grow and learn." When asked to define history, she said, "I think that history is a huge story with lessons, morals, values, and we learn from the past to make life better for the future." She added that students should learn history because they were the ones who would "shape our country" in the future, and thus she tried to bring "morals into history" so students would understand "right from wrong."

When directly asked the purpose for teaching history, Charlotte reiterated her belief that teaching history should include attention to morals, and also mentioned the potential for history to teach the "truth" and foster empathy and sympathy in students. She stated:

I think [that] the purpose of teaching history is not only to instill a sense of pride or understanding or empathy but also teach the truth. Teach what we have done wrong as a nation, and what we have done right. I like to bring morals into history. Like why are we doing what we are doing? Do you think that's OK? Like, look at Vietnam, now look at what we're doing with the Middle East, and should we be involved in the civil war. Look at World War II, like teaching lessons, and asking why? ...To me, history is a lot like psychology and sociology, you can link it all together and look at people and their mentality, and hopefully through understanding history we can use it as a springboard for discussion of where we're going in the future because [the students] are the ones who will shape our country.... I think that by learning history it helps you understand you

as a person and maybe helps you come to grips with your own past so that you can not only adapt to other people away from school but other cultures and understand other nationalities and be more sympathetic and empathetic towards others. (Interview)

Our general impression of Charlotte's beliefs and of the morals she was trying to impart was that they reflected a "flawed but best" view of the United States: that there are problems in American society, but its citizens are trying to address them. At times she seemed to convey her belief that the U.S. is a morally superior nation, but at other times she seemed to take a more critical view. Charlotte provided examples of how she accomplished this critical view in the classroom. In her lessons on World War II and Europe post-World War II, Charlotte noted that she tried to make her students "see the realities of war" and to "learn to feel." She also talked about the moral of each topic; for example, when teaching about Stalin, she hoped her students would see that Stalin acted out of fear, and that bad things can happen when one is afraid:

I think that if you think and discuss and you live and you learn, you can come to realistic conclusions, and you can also understand why certain people behave the way they do, you don't have to accept it, but you can understand. Like I understand now through my teaching why the Soviet Union and Stalin did everything...why, after World War II, he didn't trust [the United States] because he made a pact with Hitler and Hitler invaded [Russia] and caused them to lose millions of people, so he was afraid that the United States was going to do the same, so it was out of fear. Before, I thought the Soviet Union was the worst, that they sucked and were evil and were our enemy. So this is what I try to explain to students, that's the moral. That if we could see eye to eye we can learn that this is why Stalin did what he did instead of [thinking that Stalin] was wrong, that the Soviet Union sucks...So [one of my goals] is to get people to think and feel and to be empathetic. (Interview)

For her unit on Vietnam, Charlotte expressed the hope that her students would walk away from it thinking that the war was wrong, but also realizing that they should empathize with those who believed in and supported the decision to send troops:

[With Vietnam] I do have, and I'm honest with, my agenda. I feel that Vietnam was entirely wrong and I tell them that up front. [But] I'm going to have a man who was pro-Vietnam come in and speak so that my views don't get skewed...That's my goal, that's the moral I'm trying to teach, to make you a better person, to make you realize why [Vietnam] veterans are the way they are, why people are so passionate about [Vietnam], you know?" (Interview)

Charlotte also stated that she wanted to ask her students to think about how a war like Vietnam would change people, particularly veterans. She also intended to

...help students understand why we got into Vietnam, why no presidents wanted to pull out and why half of the country was against it...and why the younger generation was against it because they were being affected, they were sitting in the classroom watching their friends get pulled out and blown up. Then I want [the students] to understand the fear and the unrest that is left in so many people. (Interview)

Charlotte said that she tried to situate her unit on Vietnam in the context of the Cold War. According to Charlotte, the larger lesson of the Cold War and Vietnam was the "danger of fear," a continuation of the idea she mentioned in relation to Stalin. She explained this notion of the "danger of fear":

We fought the Cold War out of fear. We feared the Soviet Union had more weapons than we did, we feared [nuclear war] was going to happen, it escalated out of fear. And that's the danger, it's all fear. We fear what's happening in the Middle East, we fear Kosovo, and out of this fear comes hatred. What is the biggest lesson? The dangers of fear. But fear is an honest emotion; if we can talk about it and understand why we did something, then maybe down the road we can learn from it...I want [students] to get that there's a story and it all makes sense and we all fit and we all play a part in history...This is humanity, this is our life, and some people take it for granted...I want them to understand that you have to live, and you have to think, and you have to grow, and you have to learn. (Interview)

#### *Teaching as a Moral Vehicle*

Charlotte's teaching reflected her expressed purpose in many ways. As a charismatic young teacher, she regularly taught history through lecture

with her own lively story of the past, infusing her instruction with the moral lessons she deemed important for students to know and making sure to tell them what conclusions should be drawn from various historical events. She was fond of "telling the stories" of the frontier, Populism, Progressivism, and World War I, but also of telling students what these meant, how the topics were relevant to their lives, and why they were significant from a moral and/or philosophical standpoint. She did not favor relinquishing control of the content so that students could draw their own conclusions or fashion their own meanings of historical events.

For example, in an introductory lesson for the unit on Progressivism, Charlotte opened by saying: "We're going to talk about Progressivism, and we're going to talk about it paralleling today. I think we are living in a society where I personally, maybe I'm too optimistic, see change, where we're trying to do things to help everyone." She then proceeded to elaborate on the four major goals of progressivism presented in the students' textbook. To define the second goal of "promoting moral improvement," Charlotte used examples from Oprah Winfrey's television show. She described an episode in which Oprah examined sexual activity among teenagers, specifically focusing on a small town near Atlanta, Georgia, where the rate of syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers was particularly high. Charlotte shared her views with regard to morality and personal ethics, noting that abstinence would be "awesome," that a moral "crisis" was taking place, and that moral improvement programs are one approach to mending society. Further, through this discussion of an Oprah episode, Charlotte introduced her moral of Progressivism: that moral improvement programs tried to address the troubles facing society in the early 1900s. She reiterated this point throughout her discussion of the Progressive Era.

Charlotte also provided students with her interpretation of historical events, particularly when discussing war or world conflict. In every discussion of war, in some form, Charlotte presented her belief that war is inherently bad. For example, when lecturing about the United States' decision to enter World War I, Charlotte said:

[Initially] the United States is not involved. For once, we do not want to get involved in the war...We get pulled into it because of propaganda and the Anglo-Saxon myth. [But] the United States, for once, wanted to have no hand in this. (Observation)

When describing the chain of events that “pulled” the United States into the war, Charlotte said:

World War I and World War II are considered the ‘good wars’ or the ‘wars to end all wars’ – that was the mentality. And they were fighting fair, fighting good fights. The reason these wars were so different from Vietnam is because they were honorable wars in a sense, if you can call war honorable...look on your outline. How did the United States get involved in World War I? I can honestly say – and I am proud to say this – the United States tried to stay out of the war as long as they could but were pulled in due to a variety of different incidents.... (Observation)

Even during classes structured as a “discussion day,” Charlotte tended to dominate the discussion and to directly contradict students who disagreed with the interpretation or message she presented. For example, she took a “break” from World War I to dedicate a class period to a discussion of the media coverage of the acquittal of four police officers accused of shooting an unarmed immigrant. She opened the discussion by saying:

I feel like we as a society have a long way to go with race relations. And I know that I will talk about this until I am blue in the face and most of you, and it’s no fault of your own, either don’t or can’t see this yet...You [the students] probably [think] that racism doesn’t exist, but I think that your generation is what’s going to change it because you are younger and you are more open-minded.... I’m not trying to sway your opinion, but I want you to think about this. One Black man, four White undercover policemen who do not identify themselves as cops, tell him to stop, he runs, they fire. They fire forty-one bullets. Forty-one! (Discussion)

She then proceeded to read aloud several newspaper articles and editorials. After each article, Charlotte asked students to share their reactions. She positively reinforced students who expressed horror and shock at the actions of the policemen, but cut off students who attempted

to offer opposing viewpoints. She exhorted them to listen carefully to the next article before they offered their opinion or asked more questions. Thus, the class discussion consisted primarily of Charlotte reading articles and providing her interpretation/opinion of each reading.

In day-to-day instruction, Charlotte consistently followed a format of presenting the "big ideas" of history in a lively, narrative form, infusing these stories with a moral, and directly tying historical events to students' lives. Thus, Charlotte's actual teaching of history was highly consistent with her expressed purpose for teaching history.

#### *Coverage and Control*

The data also revealed that, consistent with Barton and Levstik's (2004) assertions about coverage and control, Charlotte did express major concerns about these issues. The data also illustrated the interesting nature of Charlotte's concerns. When asked to describe her planning process, Charlotte admitted that her curriculum centered on the textbook; she noted that her department chair expected all teachers to cover the 40 chapters of the textbook by the end of the school year. She explained that she felt compelled to make sure she covered the entire textbook to avoid being perceived as a *laissez-faire* teacher.

To Charlotte, controlling the class and covering the content also seemed to mean keeping a tight rein on teaching and learning in her classroom to ensure the predominance of her moral vision of history, her views of its lessons, and her sense of how to "make a better country." The notion of control did not appear to relate to behavioral concerns, but rather to controlling students' understanding of historical content. It also reflected her beliefs about students; that is, Charlotte believed that her students never read assigned sections of the textbook, could not engage in critical thinking, and needed history spoon-fed to them. Charlotte's planning process reflected these beliefs about students. She described the process:

Every Sunday morning or during my planning period I go through [the chapter] and outline it for [the students]. I read the chapter because I know they don't. Last year I assigned reading chapters all year long and they never did it. It is my goal to teach them and it is my goal take each chapter and make it meaningful.... I decided it is my job to sift through all the crap [facts in the textbook] and find

out what is important and help the students by providing them outlines. I decide what I think is interesting and what I think is important and what I think is the bigger lesson to be told. I just try to make it poignant. I read for the students [because] what I find boring reading is what I'm sure they'll find boring. I give them my outlines and they can write on their outlines (Interview).

Here, Charlotte was essentially describing how she controlled the content. She did not assign reading; rather, she read the textbook for the students. She determined the important facts and then decided the "bigger lesson," the "poignant" story to be told.

Charlotte also stated that her preferred instructional strategy was lecture, but not "the boring way." Rather, she described herself as "hyper" and enthusiastic, and said she tried "to teach it like it would be in college." She explained that her decision to rely heavily on lecture emerged, in part, from her doubts about her students' ability to work independently or to think critically. She stated:

My kids don't know how to think. Every time I try to do a critical thinking activity, it's either they're so stuck and they push it off as boring work, or they define it as busy work, or they just roll their eyes. And I don't think they see the value. When I do critical thinking [activities], I find that I give them the answers. (Interview)

This emphasis on outlines, lectures, and "bigger lessons" manifested itself in Charlotte's teaching. For each topic, Charlotte provided students with in-depth outlines of each chapter, and then told students what to write down for each item on the outline. A section of the outline for World War I, for example, focused on "American Neutrality" and included two sub-terms: Opposition, and Sympathy. In her lecture, Charlotte said, "Look at your outline. American neutrality. I want you to put that we were opposed to fighting the war because many Americans had ties to all of these cultures ... [and] we said that this was a European War, we didn't want to pick a side, we didn't want to get involved." Later, Charlotte told students the "bigger lesson" to be learned was that Germany was misunderstood. She introduced this idea by saying, "I feel really bad for Germany," and she then defended Germany's U-Boat attacks by telling students that Germany gave fair warning to all



countries, a warning that the United States chose to ignore. In this lesson, Charlotte used, as she often did, a short simulation-type activity to elaborate on a point or to emphasize a conclusion. After she completed her lecture on America's entrance into the war, she paused and asked students to hide under their desks. Charlotte then put on a military helmet, and she read a description of life in a trench to her students. She did not ask students to interpret the activity or to draw their own conclusion; rather, she told students what they should have learned from the activity: that trenches were a nightmare, full of rats and corpses. In these ways, she controlled the content of the class as well as the conclusions students drew from the content presented.

Although Charlotte relied predominantly on lecture, she did structure one group activity that served to highlight her emphasis on controlling the content. Charlotte divided the students into groups and assigned them a section of the textbook and a topic that addressed some aspect of American society at the turn of the century (1890s). She provided each group with an outline of their textbook section and asked the students to figure out a way to teach the material on the outline. During the group presentations, Charlotte interrupted the students an average of 10 times per group. For each presentation, she added information, corrected statements, told a story related to the content, and/or told the class the main points they should know. Thus, the student-centered group activity became a teacher-centered activity, with Charlotte actively dictating the scope and direction of the content.

These examples illustrate Charlotte's focus on coverage and control. Her concerns about coverage appeared to derive from external departmental pressures and were largely unrelated to classroom management, administration, or a standardized testing agenda, as may be the case with many new teachers. More importantly, with regard to the issue of control, Charlotte's sense of purpose was operative. Because she believed so strongly in presenting the moral lessons of history, and because she believed that her students were incapable of engaging in critical thinking and of reaching correct conclusions on their own, she decided that how she assumed an authoritative role in the classroom would determine the extent to which she realized her instructional goals.

## DISCUSSION

This study reveals a consistency among Charlotte's sense of purpose, her beliefs about the nature of history, her beliefs about the abilities of her students, and her instruction. Charlotte's sense of purpose and her belief that history served as a vehicle to "make students better people" trumped other possible influences on her teaching, particularly that of her methods course with its emphasis on historical inquiry. Throughout the interviews, whether asked about aims, philosophy, goals, or purpose, Charlotte was able to clearly articulate a well-thought-out approach to her teaching of history, and she implemented practices that were consistent with her aims.

Our findings seem consistent with those of Adler (1984), Goodman and Adler (1985), and Ross (1987, 1988) regarding teachers' perspectives in relation to their classroom practices. Charlotte initially expressed beliefs about teaching that seemed consistent with those of her methods course instructor and her teacher education program in general, but it was clear to us that the main influences on her instruction were her own moral views and her beliefs about her students' abilities. Moreover, although she clearly covered the adopted history textbook because it was expected of her, Charlotte – like the high school teacher in Cornett's (1990) study – viewed instruction as her most important task, and she exercised a great deal of autonomy in choosing how to present and frame the content for her students.

This finding also reflects the argument advanced by Barton and Levstik (2004). They asserted that teachers with strongly held and clearly articulated purposes make instructional decisions consistent with those goals. Thus, to change the nature of history teaching, "focusing on teachers' purposes rather than on their pedagogical content knowledge" (p. 258) might have a greater impact. Our study, nonetheless, complicates Barton and Levstik's argument that the purpose of asking students to learn history is to enable them to contribute to a participatory, pluralistic democracy, and that this goal can "provide teachers with the intellectual purpose necessary to break out of the mode of coverage and control" (pp. 259-260). They conceive of participatory, pluralistic democracy in a way that extends beyond the traditional conception of "political democracy" to the Deweyan (1916) notion of

democracy as a way of life and "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 101). Certainly, a citizen in a participatory, pluralistic democracy needs to possess certain habits of mind, including the ability to make reasoned judgments, to see beyond his or her own perspective, and to take part in collaborative discourse about the common good (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 260). History instruction can teach these habits of mind through approaches that allow students to engage in "meaningful and relevant historical inquiries, examine a variety of evidence, consider multiple viewpoints, and develop conclusions that are defended and negotiated with others" (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 260).

The case study of Charlotte raises questions about these notions of the purpose of history teaching. As evidenced by her comments and reflections, it is clear that Charlotte firmly believed that her instructional purposes did indeed further the goals of democratic citizenship. Yet it is also clear that her instructional style seemed to contradict her expressed purposes, given the fact that she preached democratic values but did not offer opportunities for engagement and discourse and did not have any confidence in her students' ability to think for themselves. Charlotte's example calls attention to Barton and Levstik's (2004) statement that "it may be easy to convince teachers that history should serve the goals of democracy, but it will be more difficult to help them see how that goal can be achieved" (p. 260). Indeed, Barton and Levstik argue that "if we want to change teachers' practices, we must change the purposes that guide those practices," and that this purpose must be "more than lip service; it must be a goal to which teachers are deeply and genuinely committed, a goal that will inspire efforts to make actions consistent with beliefs" (pp. 258-259). Charlotte did seem deeply and genuinely committed to her goal of promoting democratic citizenship; however, it was her conception of democratic beliefs and values that dominated the discussion to the exclusion of all else. In fact, she constantly described her vision of a better society and world, believing that her role was to tell students what should be learned from history and how they could apply those lessons as citizens.

Charlotte's case presents a challenge for teacher educators. Her approach to teaching democratic and moral values (which she often

viewed as one and the same) was based on indoctrination, which seems directly at odds with the habits of mind, participatory skills, and discourse that democratic citizens need. Yet teacher educators also realize that their students' beliefs and values must be taken into consideration as part of the landscape of teaching them how to use specific instructional methods. But how do teacher educators influence deeply held purposes? How do they change beliefs? Such questions echo those raised throughout the research on social studies teacher education and teachers' instructional decision-making (e.g., Adler, 1991; Angell, 1998). Barton and Levstik (2004) admit that there is no "magic formula," and that if teachers do not "think in terms of the participatory and pluralist elements of democracy, then coverage and control are likely to continue as the principal actions of history classrooms" (p. 260).

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