

**What Teachers Look Like:
Preservice Teachers' Representations Through 15 Years of Images**

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Abstract

This study examined teacher images created by preservice teachers over the course of a 15-year case study. The focus of this essay is on the results of the physical characteristics attributed to teachers in the resulting images. The preservice teachers were asked to draw an image of a teacher during a foundational course in their teacher education program. Semiotic analyses of the images showed that preservice teachers drew teachers with physical characteristics that did not have equivalent correlations to concrete United States statistics for those same characteristics, with the exceptions of gender and hair color. Percentages of some teacher physical characteristics were nearly contrary to concrete statistics, such as those for age and body shape/weight. Through images, preservice teachers in this study revealed expectations of teacher appearance that were not based in reality, but rather on internalized assumptions, stereotypes, personal experiences, and self-projection.

Key Words: visual semiotics, preservice teachers, produced images, perceptions of teaching, longitudinal case study

1 Introduction

A few years ago, on a trip to a local Pennsylvania winery for a small festival event, I was waiting on line when two women that I did not know walked up to me and asked, "Aren't you Mrs. S_____? Are you the new sixth grade teacher?" When I replied that I was not one of the local sixth grade teachers, but that I was in fact a teacher by profession, one woman exclaimed somewhat self-satisfactorily, "I knew you were a teacher because you look exactly like one!" Turning to the woman at her side, she asked, "Doesn't she look just like a teacher?" and the second woman agreed, "Oh yes, absolutely!" At the time, as a festival participant, I simply smiled and wished them a good evening. However later, as a teacher educator, I began to wonder what they had meant by saying that I looked like a teacher. Why did they single me out from the many different people waiting on line? Did nearby onlookers who witnessed this interaction now see me differently or were their initial reactions to me confirmed? What was the tell: my physical characteristics, my clothing, my deportment, something else? How did I give myself away? What did it mean to "look like a teacher?"

We come, we see, we arrive at a personal discernment. It is only human to look at others in order to try and understand who, what, when, or how they might be. Sometimes we look and new schema are created; other times we look and find previous schema (or biases) confirmed or dismissed. A teacher's appearance is likewise (wittingly or unwittingly) constructed. Like any other constructed appearance, a teacher's appearance transmits social signals that shape the responses the teacher may receive from those who view or encounter them. In order to learn more about teacher image, appearance, and effect, I designed a study years ago to gather data to explore these concepts. In my study, preservice teachers were asked to pictorially render their interpretations of what they thought teachers looked like while in my foundational college course during their teacher education preparation program. This essay will explore some of the results of those rendered teacher appearances and postulate inferences about preservice teachers' perceptions and expectations of teachers and the teaching profession.

I intentionally selected a pictorially-based mode of data collection when first thinking about study design. Images give us a different way of looking at human meaning-making, for they can express elements of the subtle and inexpressible that may perhaps elude textually- or quantifiably-

based modes. Concepts may surface in a finished visual product that perhaps did not seem to be present in the image-making process or context, revealing nuanced layers of contrapositions. Although the educational field of inquiry has tended to encourage forms of research that focus on words and numbers, images remain important to achieving a holistic understanding of data as they may “express that which is not easily put into words, the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the sub-conscious” (Weber and Mitchell 1996: 304).

Eco's theory of unlimited semiotics (1976) states that meaning-making is necessarily individualized. The ways in which a learner signifies different objects or relationships encompass particular meanings which span from that learner's lifelong trajectory. Children begin to internalize their perceived understandings of teachers even before they interact with their elementary school teachers (Weber and Mitchell 1995). For example, representations of teachers in children's books or cartoons may become a part of a child's internalized image of a teacher before they actually meet their genuine Kindergarten teacher. Some of these internalized sensibilities may remain unchanged even after a succession of different teachers throughout elementary school: “They become part of the images that children construct when they are invited to ‘draw a teacher’ or ‘play school’” (Sandefur and Moore 2004: 43). By maturity, some aspects of students' internalized images of teachers have undergone a long and complex process of reconstruction and re-identification on multiple levels, influenced by personal as well as public forces. Other aspects may retain the original, and relatively unchanged, perceptions and judgments.

As a teacher educator, I recognize that my students bring their own personally constructed and internalized perceptions of teachers to my courses, perhaps little adjusted over time from their inceptions. As durable as these perceptions may be, there is an inevitable struggle with these long-established perceptions as my students explore the development of their own professional teacher identities, social expectations of teachers, and institutional pressures to adapt to district norms. Students' development of their professional identities can be understood by examining their positions with respect to the image markers or sociocultural values that they use to construct their images. Their positioning decides the kinds of teacher identity features that are more meaningful and useful among different sets of teacher identity features from different communities of practice. Students construct their professional identities not only by looking inward, but also by looking outward and around themselves. Often, students respond by fashioning identities that are “closer to

the imagined 'normal' behaviors. These patterns are sustained by a broad spectrum of social and school-based practices" (Fischman 1999: 7).

When preservice teachers are asked to create representations of teachers, the resulting teacher images can be understood as modeled forms that directly speak to the preservice teachers' mental pictures of teachers and the teaching profession. Preservice teachers' approach (and/or motivations) in rendering such images may also be indicative of particular values (i.e., personal, social, or cultural) or of their own experiences in the communities of educational practice they have encountered. These representations can be a map (or a maze) of meanings and may sometimes stray from their conscious intents because of how personal meaning is constructed for each preservice teacher. A student may intend to draw a teacher that is "correct" or "acceptable," according to social precepts, but personal and individual aspects may inevitably find their way into the details (and sometimes overall gestalt) of the final image. Weber and Mitchell (1995: 32) suggest that "by studying images and probing their influence, teachers could play a more conscious and effective role in shaping their own and society's perceptions of teacher and their work."

Future teaching practices are often greatly influenced by who preservice teachers are, where they come from, and how they perceive teaching. Understanding student ideologies is an important component in helping teaching educators aid preservice teachers' development. Critically examining images of teachers, particularly in terms of appearance, is one way of understanding some of the messages that preservice teachers may be (literally) embodying and how these messages may be interpreted by others. In this vein, this essay looks particularly at how preservice teachers presented the physical characteristics of teachers in order to take a more conscious and purposeful approach to understanding how the teacher is construed through such external signifiers and how these signifiers may be interpreted.

2 Methodology and Data Collection

The setting for this study was a required teacher education program course that focused on foundational principles and practices of education, designed specifically for all beginning preservice teachers, regardless of content area discipline or type of teacher certification. The course term was one semester, during which time a mandatory clinical experience component (20 hours of fieldwork in a classroom within an urban school setting) also needed to be simultaneously completed. It took

place at a small, liberal arts college in New Jersey, in the northeastern United States. This case study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to focus on the ways that students attributed certain characteristics to the teaching profession based on visual signifiers in their drawings of teachers.

In a study that concentrated on identifying preservice teacher concerns, Swennen, Jörg, and Korthagen (2004: 265) found that drawings appeared to be “a reasonably reliable and valid means of assessing concerns” when used in mixed methodology that combined image-based and more traditional research techniques. While this study used a mixed-methods approach, it was conducted using primarily qualitative research methods. In order to analyze the images in this research, I drew on the social semiotic approach to reading images, as described by Rose (2008) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). Signifiers in the images did not have a priori meaning, rather, meaning emerged from the ways in which the signs were constructed and used. I felt that these analytical approaches emphasized not only the importance of an image's elements, but also how these elements (and consequently the image as a whole) were situated and shaped by the student's motivations and social contexts. In addition to an ethnographic approach to the research (Cresswell 1998) and methods for visual semiotic analysis of the teacher drawings (Rose 2008; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996), quantitative methodology was used for statistical inquiries in order to generate numerical data such as percentages (Jaeger 1993). All images and accompanying textual data (n = 854) were used for analysis.

Data collection for this study included both teacher images as well as textual responses to prompts after the images were created. I collected images of teachers (n = 854) created by students (n = 854) over the course of 15 years (30 consecutive semesters) from fall 2005 to spring 2020. Preservice teachers were given a sheet of blank paper, a week to create their teacher images, and straightforward directions: “On the blank piece of paper, using colored markers, crayons, pencils, or paints, draw a teacher. Include as much detail as possible. Relax and enjoy the process. Do not allow yourself to be interrupted. Do not worry about artistic ability—this is not an art activity. While I am aware that not everyone prefers visually-oriented tasks, I am also aware of the difference between a solid effort and a five-minute effort.” No prior context was given, such as what details the students should include or why they were drawing a teacher, in order to minimize the direction or influence of the context/s while drawing.

After drawing their teachers, the students were asked to respond to a series of textual prompts that were designed to clarify their motivation/s, thoughts, and feelings during the creation of their

images: "Examine your completed drawing and write down your thoughts and reactions to what you have drawn. Answer the following questions: 1. What did you think, feel, or set out to do when beginning this task? 2. Who or what does the drawing remind you of? 3. Who might this drawing be based on? (for example, fictitious or real teachers, media images, a composite of past teacher, etc.) 4. How does the drawing relate to your personal life experience?" An intentional discussion of the first set of teacher images and textual prompt responses was held in class after the first images were created. In addition to discussing the actual teacher images that were created by the class, this discussion also focused on the ways that teacher identities can be constructed through dominant narratives, ideologies, and existing stereotypes as well as assumptions, responsibilities, and factual statistics related to the teaching profession. While all these topics were again referred to during the remainder of the semester, they were not revisited with the same intensity as during this initial discussion.

All elements of the rendered teachers' appearance, dress, and accessories in each drawing were coded, as well as perceived genders, facial expressions, and items, tools, and props that were present in the drawn classrooms. Codes were not developed a priori, but rather became part of the working code list as each drawing was coded. For example, in the first drawing where a teacher was rendered with short, dark hair, at that time the codes "Short Hair" and "Dark Hair" were added to the working code list and would remain as possible codes for all following drawings. The final code list consisted of 111 specific appearance, dress, color, and item codes. This essay focuses on 26 of those 111 specific codes, namely those identifying the physical characteristics of the teacher images. Responses to textual prompts were used to verify questions during the coding process in order to make sure codes were accurately assigned to different image signifiers, based on the student's intentions and motives when rendering their images. For example, if a student rendered a teacher with a brown skin tone, textual responses to the prompts were used to determine which race the student intended to portray. In the few instances that such data was not present in the textual responses, the student would be briefly interviewed in order to verify or correct the accuracy of the coding.

3 Results and Discussion: Physical Characteristics of Teacher Images

An individual's physical appearance has a nonverbal immediacy that is observed, processed, and judged in an instant. It often has, rightly or wrongly, a significant impact on another's perception of that individual. Students often size up their teachers on the first day of school based solely on their appearance, as other aspects of the teacher (such as actions, ethics, and values) are not immediately available and instead are ascertained more slowly over the course of the school year. The following code data was selected from the data corpus in order to represent various physical characteristics attributed to the teacher representations: age, gender, race, physical body shape, overall appearance, hair color, hair length, facial hair, and facial expression (See Table 1).

3.1 Age

A majority physical characteristic across all drawings was that teachers had a youthful appearance (See Figures 1, 3, 6, 7, & 8). The average median age of teachers in the United States during the 2017-2018 school year was 42 years and 85% of all teachers were over the age of 30 years (NCES, 2018). Representative teacher ages in the images were almost in direct inverse to real-life teacher ages as youthful appearing teacher images totaled 81.62%. Few students drew observable signifiers that indicated an older individual, such as wrinkle lines, undereye bags or grey hair (See Figure 2). That students consistently drew teachers that were not the in the majority age range may indicate self-projection to some degree, as the majority of the student sample ranged in age from about 19-23 years. In addition, prevailing societal expectations in the United States (particularly for women) to appear enduringly youthful may have subconsciously played a part in the rendering of teachers' ages in the drawings. Finally, students may have also unwittingly reflected efficacious representations of teachers from various media, where teachers tend to be portrayed as youthful in order to appeal to a wide audience already indoctrinated to prefer youthful appearances.

A youthful physical appearance may have also been intentionally rendered to indicate an entertaining, pleasant, and relaxed teacher. Although class discussions and student textual responses yielded some data to the contrary, most students expressed that a youthful appearance seemed to indicate a teacher that would be fun or engaging. Conversely, middle-aged or older looking teachers were perceived as having more rigid and boring personalities. Students also associated a youthful

appearance with confidence and a “cool” factor, while an older appearance was associated with competence and composure. Students expressed that youth and confidence seemed linked, whether merited or not. Youthful appearing teachers might also share similar interests or recognize the same popular culture references as their students, as they would be (relatively) closer in age. These shared connections emphasize the parallels between teacher and student and give the youthful teacher a cool factor that older teachers cannot bring off, as they (or their attempts) are considered out of touch or old-fashioned. However, older teachers were perceived to be more competent and composed. The majority of the students who rendered older teacher images explained through discussion and textual responses that their images incorporated facets of past teachers that they considered knowledgeable, accomplished, and in possession of formidable classroom management skills.

3.2 Gender

The number of female teacher images in this study (77.28%) was quite close to the recent national average of 76.5% (NCES 2022; See Figures 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, & 8). This may be due in part to historical legacy, as women have made up the majority of the teaching population (particularly in the elementary grades) ever since the mid-19th century. At that time, teaching became a pursuit only just suitable for women (should they choose a pursuit other than marrying and child-rearing), as it was considered somewhat akin to child-minding and therefore suitable to assumed, innate maternal instincts. In addition, although women completed the same teacher education programs and internships as men, they could be paid significantly less than their male counterparts and schools took advantage of this fiscal serendipity (Rury 2016). Women, both as students and as teachers, outnumbered men in educational domains by the beginning of the 20th century and this legacy maintains consistent into the present day. Through discussion and textual responses, preservice teachers of both genders shared their educational experiences as K-12 students and the predominance of female teachers in their past classrooms. In addition, art may be reflecting life as the majority of the student sample were female preservice teachers. While not all female students drew female teachers, many did, and the high percentage of female teacher images may also be a result of self-projection as female students made up 72.37% of the study sample population.

3.3 Race

Although 84.66% of the study sample self-identified as white, 7.5% of the study sample self-identified as non-white, and 7.84% declined to self-identify their race, 91.92% of the teacher images were rendered as white (See all figures save Figure 3). This percentage is somewhat higher than the actual percentage of white teachers in the United States. About 79% of teachers in the United States are white and teach both in schools where the majority of students are white (93% white students) as well as in schools where the majority are students of color (54% black, 54% Hispanic, 60% Asian, 61% American Indian/Alaska Native; NCES, 2020). It is reasonable to assume that the high percentage of white teacher images may have reflected the students' own observations and resulted in likenesses of teachers that had taught them in the past, that they had seen in their schools, that they had seen in the media, and that looked like themselves. The greater percentage of white teachers in the United States may be a contributing factor as to why both white students and students of color drew fewer teachers of color (See Figure 3, drawn by a white female student). It may also contribute to why students of color may have difficulty seeing themselves as members of the teaching profession, as well as the relatively small number of students of color in collegiate teacher education programs despite multiple diversity and retention measures implemented by these programs to attract this population.

3.4 Overall Physical Appearance/Physical Body Shape

Similar to the percentages on race, teacher images were rendered with overwhelmingly "normal" or "average" appearances (91.69%) and healthy body weights (92.15%; See Figures 1, 3, 6, 7, & 8). Normal or average appearance was coded for any human figure that did not use drawing elements/techniques that called attention to a physical characteristic that was out of the ordinary or abnormal (i.e., horns protruding from forehead), intentionally unattractive (i.e., yellowed teeth), or traditionally associated with an ugly or unsavoury appearance (i.e., witch-like, complete with wild black hair and warts). Most teacher images were harmlessly unremarkable in their normalcy as their appearance fell well within the mean and not the ends of the appearance continuum. Healthy weight was coded for any size or shape human figure that did not use drawing elements/techniques that called attention to extra weight (i.e., intentionally drawn extra weight around the torso; See Figure

4) or an unhealthy constitution due to extra weight (i.e., sweat droplets coming from the head on a figure with a profoundly rounded mid-section).

While there were some teacher images that were rendered as intentionally unattractive or abnormal in some way, student textual responses explained that these relative anomalies (5.39%) were based on negative teacher representations in media (See Figure 5) or negative experiences with teachers in their own K-12 education experiences. Students also shared that teachers generally looked rather ordinary in their experience: “appropriate, but forgettable” was one student’s pithy summation. They were generally not eye-catching, trendy, slovenly, or degenerate.

They were also all able-bodied, with the exception of eyeglasses (19.20%) on nearly one fifth of the teacher images (See Figure 6). Although the textual response data and class discussions did not explicitly indicate a handicap or disability through the rendering of eyeglasses, it is possible that this could be inferred. According to the Center for Disease Control, nearly 26% of all adults in the United States have some kind of functional disability, but of those, vision disabilities (blindness or serious difficulty seeing) comprise only 4.6% (CDC 2018). No teacher images were rendered to represent any of the remaining categories of functional disability, such as mobility, cognition, independent living, hearing, or self-care.

The teacher images were also an extremely fit and healthy group (92.15%) in stark contrast to the somewhat unfit and unhealthy United States population. Data on actual teacher’s weights and/or physical body shapes was unavailable, but according to the Center for Disease Control and the National Center for Health Statistics, 76.3% of American adults (aged 20 years and above) were overweight and 41.9% were both overweight and obese (CDC/NCHS 2022). Although data was not collected on the students’ body weights, based upon observation the study population included a variety of body weights and shapes that also did not reflect the 92.15% of slim and fit bodies rendered in the teacher images. Slimness and fitness can be associated with health, vitality, and attractiveness, which are all positive attributes that can be subsequently attributed to the teacher images. In contrast to the results on gender, and to some degree race which both aligned more closely to concrete United States statistics, it can be inferred that the teacher images conveyed perhaps more of what the study population hoped or wished to see/be, rather than what they actually saw/were.

3.5 Head Hair/Facial Hair

There are more naturally dark-haired people (75-84%, depending on the study) than light haired people on earth (Wood, 2022). The teacher images aligned somewhat with these authentic percentages with 68.85% of the teachers rendered with dark (brown or black) hair (See Figures 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 8) and 21.71% with light hair (blonde or red; See Figure 7). Negative hair-related stereotypes in professional settings do exist and are associated with certain hair lengths and colors. Long, feminine hair is often perceived as being superficial or overly focused on appearance, while shorter, darker hair is often perceived as more masculine and focused on practicality and substance. Societal conditioning, cultural ideologies, and popular media all also promote messages that successful professionals have more “masculine” hairstyles (shorter, or pulled back to appear short) in darker, “more serious” colors (Manning 2010). The hair shades in the teacher images may have correlated well with actual hair color percentages, but the images did not correlate well with the preferred hair lengths for success. Teacher images were rendered with short hair in 40.98% of the images but with long hair in 55.85% of the images. Short hair was coded for any hair that was approximately chin length or shorter (See Figures 2, 5, & 6) or that was pulled up and/or back so that the bulk of the hair was above the chin and gave the appearance of shorter hair (See Figure 7). Long hair was coded for any hair longer than chin length and hanging (or relatively unbound). Hair was considered loose and unbound even if headbands or hair clips pinned back a small portion, as long as the majority of the hair was loose and hanging (See Figures 1, 3, & 8).

The longer hair lengths may reflect an intentional legitimization of non-dominant hair lengths in professional fields to negate the dominant norms. It is possible that students rejected the assumption that successful educators sported shorter, more practical hair lengths. It is also feasible that students' teacher images reflected self-expression and self-projection, as the study sample was primarily composed of women with various hair lengths, a good deal of them longer than chin length. Perhaps students felt more empowered and authentic when rendering individuals that reflected their own identities and appearances. Facial hair (i.e., mustaches, beards, or stubble) was not a majority characteristic and was rendered in 7.73% of the drawings (see Figure 6). The scarcity of facial hair may reflect a desire to portray a more professional appearance, as facial hair can also be associated with an unkempt or ungroomed appearance.

3.6 Facial Expression

The majority of teacher images had a pleasant or smiling countenance (76.93%; See Figures 1, 2, 3, 7, & 8). Students who pursue teacher education are often drawn to the profession's humanistic, interpersonal, and caring aspects, so it was not very surprising to see many smiling faces in the drawings. Through discussion and textual prompt responses, students expressed that a smiling teacher was associated with a fun and engaging classroom. A teacher with an unpleasant expression was associated with a less enjoyable classroom, but also one where respect, security, and competence were likely present. Few of the non-smiling teacher images were drawn as actually frowning or scowling (such as in Figures 4 & 5), but rather had neutral or "busy" expressions (as explained in students' textual prompt responses), as they taught, worked with students, or planned their day (such as in Figure 6).

4 Discussion

Fifteen years of teacher images represents a satisfactory, if not conclusive, amount of data. In this essay, I looked at the physical characteristics rendered in this set of teacher images spanning more than a decade in order to further understand what my preservice teachers believed about teachers: who they were based on what they looked like. I believe that this kind of data could furnish an additional lens with which to create customized curricula, navigate individualized advisement, and perhaps better understand retention rates for different groups of students. Although this is a small sample, located in a particular region of the United States and localized to a single preservice teacher program, I found certain interesting, but not unexpected, elements present in the final coding array. On the whole, the teacher images portrayed predictable and somewhat idealized versions of teachers. Some physical characteristics did not correlate to actual and reportable statistics of United States teachers and/or the general adult population.

First, students often drew what they knew, had experience of/with, or wanted to become. The majority of images were of young, white women with longer hair and the sample majority was also young, white women with longer hair, although this correlation was not exclusive as even some non-white and male students drew young, white women with longer hair. It is not unreasonable for students to create images that reflect themselves. I do not believe my students set out to consciously and/or intentionally to exclude older teachers or teachers of color from their collective images. I

think that drawing (especially by individuals who are not practicing and trained artists), unlike more manipulated methods of meaning-making, “leaks” core assumptions, understandings, and beliefs that are difficult to veneer or package with deft use of text (as in writing) to convey calculated meaning.

In drawing their teachers, students may have also reflected their past experiences of teachers. Many of my students had in fact, had teachers whose physical characteristics matched those that were most frequently coded. In students' textual responses and class discussions, I regularly read/heard variations of the following statements over the years: “I didn't have a male teacher until I got to high school and then I had only Mr. R_____ for math,” or “I loved my second-grade teacher because she was like a second mother to me,” or “I totally remember my high school Art teacher. She was a new teacher and had us do some really interesting projects.” In listening to my students and reading their words, I learned that many of them were exposed to more female teachers than male teachers over the course of their K-12 educations, had teachers that resembled or mirrored what was familiar and/or familial (and thus comforting), or remembered teachers that were young, cool, recent graduates with high energy levels and perhaps more adventurous lesson plans.

Finally, it is not unreasonable for students to self-project their own goals and desires in images that connect to their potential futures. Some of my students revealed that the teacher in their drawings was a likeness of what they hoped would become their future “teacher” selves. They could explain in great detail various elements of their teacher image's physical characteristics, some of which they already possessed (i.e., skin color or hair color), but others which they would eventually attain (i.e., muscular arms, because they intended to volunteer as a tennis coach at their future school). Some teacher images were a composite of a teacher in a student's past, combined with the student's own personal preferences, physical characteristics, and finishing touches. Variations of the following sample statements were common in explaining these composite drawings over the years: “This is me as a teacher, but it's also my 2nd grade teacher, Mrs. T_____, as well. My teacher in the image does X (insert change in preference of appearance such as, ‘wears her hair down because Mrs. T_____'s bun always looked painful’), has Y (insert change in physical characteristic such as, ‘has blonde hair because I've been dyeing my hair for years’), and is Z (insert finishing touches such as, ‘would not let herself get so fat after having her kids’).”

It is also possible that the teacher images reflected an assumption that teachers possessed dispositions that were more approachable and “proper” than the general population, and thus needed

to appear that way. As my students had taken at least two prior, required teacher education courses before qualifying for enrollment in my course, it is highly probable that they had already begun discussions about how certain expectations for teacher behaviour, appearance, and demeanor were different from that of other professionals. Perhaps on this basis of “distinction,” preservice teachers subsequently rendered their teachers with qualities that they felt better suited who they believed teachers should be: fit and health conscious, engaging and attractive, clean and appropriate.

Perhaps students attempted to portray the physical characteristics they felt best suited a workforce that worked with a special population (children). That teachers should be “appropriate but forgettable” and have a smile on their faces, might have been a way of indicating that the work teachers did with a protected and safety-sensitive population required physical and dispositional characteristics that would garner the most success. We know that a teacher’s appearance can have a significant impact on the nonverbal messages sent to students, but we do not know how far that influence extends. The teacher images induce us to reason that teachers should appear “normal” and approachable. Teachers should smile and appear welcoming. Teachers should appear in ways that reflect the high value of their students: competent, approachable, friendly, able-bodied, and attractive. Although their students might not ever consciously arrive at such a conclusion, this message of their importance could certainly be subconsciously conveyed.

The teacher images may have also been shaped by the portrayals of teachers in media and culture. For example, Swetnam (1992) analyzed eighteen popular television programs and films with teacher-centered plots and compared her findings of media demographic characteristics of teachers to demographic realities. For example, she compared the 31 percent of the nation’s actual male teachers to the 78 percent of media-portrayed male teacher characters and the 24 percent of the nation’s single teachers to the 78 percent of media-portrayed single teacher characters. Swetnam went on to state that media portrayal of teachers can contribute to several cultural stereotypes of teachers, either negative or incompetent teacher stereotypes (i.e., the Autocrat, the Jerk) and unrealistically positive teacher stereotypes (i.e., the Perfect Teacher, the Superhuman Teacher).

The teacher images may have been reflecting how teachers are/were often represented in media and other socially available advertising, in order to submit a rendering that would be considered socially correct or appropriate. For example, various media currently portray a national racial diversity that overreaches actual national demographics (Texeira 2005, Jensen, et. al. 2021), but youthfulness has long been an overreaching characteristic that has been overly (and overtly) predisposed for decades. My students (and in fact, myself) have long been programmed to

recognize youthfulness as desirable and preferable. Such cultural understandings may contribute to student ideologies of teachers that are misinformed or skewed. Student ideologies that understand teachers to be individuals who are forever young may have a negative effect not only on preservice teacher recruitment but also on in-service teacher morale and self-identity.

Teacher images can help us to gain deeper understanding of student ideologies, which are an important component in helping teaching educators aid preservice teachers' development: "Through examination of student teachers' perceptions and concerns, an insight can be gained about the problems teachers face and the knowledge they find of most worth" (Guillaume and Rudney 1993: 65). It is important to consider whether preservice teachers' perceptions and learning trajectories which may depend heavily on their own experiences, values, and communities of practice, can or should be influenced towards more balanced or pragmatic realities.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

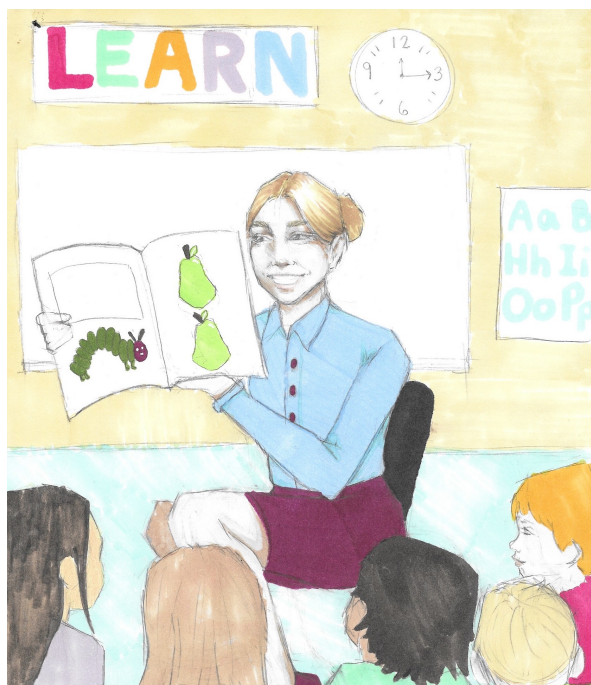


Figure 7

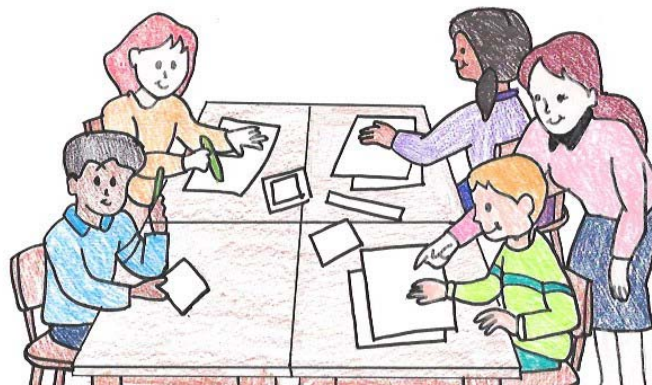


Figure 8

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