Choosing to Teach Study

Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) Report*

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This report is a work in progress and parts of it are expected to be published in education journals. We share them at this stage to communicate our current findings and help facilitate the discussion on teacher preparation for urban schools. Please send feedback and comments to Dr. Eran Tamir, etamir88@brandeis.edu
If you wish to cite this report please submit your request to mandelcenter@brandeis.edu

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INTRODUCTION

This program report has been prepared as part of a larger study entitled Choosing to Teach: Enacting Values in Practice. A Comparative Study of Beginning Teachers in Public, Catholic and Jewish Schools co-sponsored by the Mandel Center at Brandeis University and the Institute for Educational Initiatives at The University of Notre Dame. The original research team included Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Brandeis University; Bethamie Horowitz, Mandel Foundation; Susan Kardos, Brandeis University; John Watzke, University of Notre Dame, Eran Tamir, Brandeis University, and Karen Hammerness, Stanford University, joined the project in the Fall, 2006.

The report consists of three sections and two appendixes. The first section provides an overview of data collection procedures and basic descriptive analyses used to prepare the report. The second section provides descriptive statistics on aggregate participant responses to interview protocol questions. The third section summarizes common themes across the set of UTEP participant interviews. Appendix A (Participant Interview Summaries) provides an individual narrative for each UTEP participant interview. Appendix B provides the original interview protocol. The authors look forward to sharing future monographs from the larger study as analysis and writing continues.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Ten participants from the Urban Teacher Education Program (UTEP) were interviewed. Susan Kardos and John Watzke recruited participants in January, 2006 using
contact information provided by the UTEP staff for 15 teachers from cohorts 1 and 2 residing in the Chicago area. Of the 15 teachers contacted, we selected and interviewed 10 UTEP teachers, based on their order of response to the invitation to participate. The sample included five cohort 2 interns who were enrolled in teacher education courses at the University of Chicago and teaching internships in local schools at the time of the interviews and 5 cohort 1 program graduates who were currently teaching in Chicago public schools.

The interviews took place at the UTEP offices during March 2006 and were conducted by Kardos and Watzke. Each interview followed a standard protocol developed to elicit responses about the teachers’ decisions to teach and to teach in urban schools, their teaching practices, and the influences of the teacher education program and the school context (see Appendix B). After each interview, participants completed a questionnaire that collected additional background information. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed.

Kardos and Watske wrote brief interview summaries to provide initial overviews of the transcripts and to stimulate the identification of emergent themes. Initial coding scheme was developed and then analyzed in ATLASI to develop general descriptive categories of response to protocol questions. These data were imported into SPSS for development of descriptive analysis output. Following are the results of the descriptive analysis and transcript summaries.
DECISIONS TO TEACH

The findings presented in this section are based on an initial coding system designed to capture the responses of interviewees to the basic research questions. By exporting this coding system from ATLASti to SPSS and through a process of “variable recoding,” we created a set of dichotomist variables that were aimed at mapping the distribution of variables across interviews. The results presented in this section represent general descriptive findings. Future monographs will describe deeper contextual relationships within the data.

Figure 1 displays participants’ responses to the question – why did you choose to become a teacher? As can be seen, all participants noted a commitment to social justice and social change as a prime motivation for becoming teachers. 70% of the participants added that they decided to teach because they wanted to make a difference in children’s lives. 80% also mentioned past teaching experience (mainly their tutoring experiences as undergraduates) which helped them grasp the challenges and treats involved in teaching as an important factor in their decision. A few participants mentioned other factors, like parents and friends’ positive or negative responses to their decision, or their personal benefits. Half of the participants emphasized aspects of their background such as parents’ upbringing, religious upbringing, and educational experience (negative and positive) as something that affected their decision to become teachers.
Figure 2 illustrates participants’ expected career duration in teaching. As can be seen, 20% of the participants showed clear interest in pursuing a long-term career in teaching; the rest were undecided (70%) or articulated short term interest of up to five years in teaching (50%). Figure 3 provides a complimentary perspective on participants’ future career preferences. As can be seen, 20% of the participants stated they would like to pursue a teaching career (which is consistent with the findings presented in Figure 2). The majority of participants (80%) noted that they would like to stay in education but wanted to impact the system mainly through leadership positions in educational administration or academia. In addition, some (30%) said that (because of various reasons and concerns,) they (currently and in the future) might consider other career options in addition to teaching and education.
Figure 2: Participants’ Expected Career Duration in Teaching

Number of participants (n=10)

Teaching is my career | Unclear/Unsure for now | Up to five years
---|---|---
2 | 7 | 6

Participants' coded responses

Figure 3: Participants' Future Career Preferences

Number of participants (n=10)

Education | Teaching | Other
---|---|---
8 | 2 | 3

Participants coded responses
A related question asked whether participants could imagine themselves teaching in settings other than urban public schools. As can be seen in Figure 4, half of the participants do not consider this a viable career option, while 20% say this is something they do not oppose and might possibly do in the future. The rest of the participants (30%) were unclear about this option, saying in some cases that this is probably not something they would do now, but might consider it under certain circumstances. For example, one interviewee said:

While I only joke about it now, I could see myself taking a break and going and teaching in a more experimental school where it’s more progressive. To find that, most of those schools are out in the suburbs or private schools. The chances of that happening are pretty small though.

![Figure 4: Teachers Employment Preferences](image-url)
TEACHING PRACTICE

Figure 5 describes participants’ image/s of good teaching. As can be seen, all participants were able to articulate an image of good teaching – an ideal aim they would strive and hope to achieve as teachers.

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Another section of the interview focused on issues of personal and religious identity. Some participants chose to discuss their religious identity and how it fits with being teachers (since this particular question was not part of the UTEP question protocol, not all interviewees discussed this issue). The findings of Figure 6 suggest that 30% of the participants felt a strong fit, 20% felt a weak fit and 10% were unsure about that. Considering the fact that UTEP does not recruit teachers for religious day schools, the
fact that 50% percent of the teachers expressed some meaningful connection between their religious identity and their identity as teachers is noteworthy.

Figure 6: Participants’ Perspective on the Fit of their Religious Identity to Teaching
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The interview also tried to get at participants’ perceptions of the teacher education program and its impact. As seen in Figure 7, participants overwhelmingly agreed that UTEP has an image of good teaching.

As can be seen in Figure 8, the majority of participants (60%) perceived a strong fit between the program and their personal images of good teaching. The rest (40%) indicated that there is somewhat of a fit, but also noted that the program’s standards are sometime too demanding and rigorous, which makes them almost impossible for a novice to achieve.
We also wanted to know how teachers describe the influence of the program on their teaching practice, their interactions with colleagues, parents and students, their definition of themselves as teachers and as social activists. As shown in Figure 9, most teachers mentioned acquiring learning strategies for teaching (80%) and classroom management (70%) from the program. Many (80%) also described how the program influenced their relationship with students. Only 20% thought they learnt how to build relationship with community.
Figure 9: Participants' Perspectives of the Program’s Influence on their Teaching

SCHOOL CONTEXTS

Figure 10 describes participants’ responses to the question, does the school allow, enable, or prevent you from teaching according to your preferred approach? 30% of the participants felt they were allowed to pursue the kind of teaching they valued (mainly because the principal “trusted” them or because administrative control was unorganized or lacking). Most participants (40%) felt that their schools enabled them to pursue the kind of teaching they preferred. The rest (20%) indicated that their schools are preventing them from pursuing their preferred teaching approaches.
Figure 10: Does School Allow, Enable, or Prevent Participants to Teach According to their Preferences

Number of participants (n=10)

Participants' coded responses
COMMON THEMES ACROSS TRANSCRIPT SUMMARIES

Although the analysis of data is on-going, several common themes have emerged across the ten UTEP interviews that suggest some general findings. The following seven themes may be read with Appendix A for a summary picture of the participants’ backgrounds and their views on the UTEP program’s professional preparation, program and community. Theme summaries are followed by supporting quotes from participant transcripts.

1. **Undergraduate Linkage to UTEP**—The UTEP program provides an immediate pathway for University of Chicago students to pursue a developing interest in education as a means to achieve social justice. Interview participants referred back to undergraduate service experiences in the Chicago community adjacent to the university and to undergraduate courses when describing their decisions to apply to UTEP. The participants noted the match between their own views toward social justice and UTEP’s commitment to education in urban schools.

Sample Transcript Quotes: Undergraduate Linkage to UTEP

I had a class here called Racial Segregation, and it was all about Chicago’s segregation, and I read a book called “American Apartheid,” and after reading that book I started just really analyzing what was happening and thinking about just kind of how like I said like social forces are at work and how the institutional frameworks that were going on and all that stuff. And then I had received an email about UTEP, and I ignored the email my junior year because I was like still thinking that I was going to do something with the nonprofit sector, or social work or something of that nature, and then in the summer they sent out another recruitment email and I really looked at it and I was like, you know, something I’ve always wanted to do and I’ve always been interested in teaching and I feel that this is kind of the perfect opportunity. Participant 10
I majored in psychology in undergrad because I’m interested in how people think and why they make the choices that they do and that sort of thing as well but the opportunity came along for this program through the University of Chicago and I had kind of been thinking about teaching…And, as I said, the drive to do something positive for the community, to sort of give back the resources that I have had and put that back into the community is also a drive for teaching generally and teaching specifically underprivileged children. And so when the opportunity for UTEP came along I was also looking at teaching and going to school in Colorado because I like the environment but as I understood the UTEP program, as I experienced it in my fourth year of undergraduate work, the hands on experiences, the close relationships with clinical instructors and mentoring and coaching were all really, really important in the decision to stay with the UTEP program as opposed to going to Colorado. Participant 5

2. **The Community of New Teacher Network and UTEP Educators** - Participants described fellow UTEP participants, those who attend and work for the New Teachers Network, and UTEP clinical and program faculty as critical in their professional development. These descriptions highlighted the strength and support provided by professionals with common goals and a common language for education. Access to NTN and UTEP net of support was emphasized, particularly in situations when a local school context did not reflect the individual’s beliefs or practices in teaching.

**Sample Transcript Quotes: The NTN and UTEP Community of Educators**

[NTN is] another program basically offered by the Center for Urban School Improvement. [I]t, kind of, … came out of that. And it's for--like, it's really for, like, first- and second-year teachers, but there's teachers that are--like, that still come to the meetings that are, like, six-, seven-year teachers. And they provide just, like, models of good teaching practice in literacy and in all the different subject areas. They provide coaching for you, like, in your classroom.  
Participant 7

Q: Who do you consider to be your important teaching colleagues?  
The UTEP people, I mean NTN is a huge resource…so you go there and you meet people and you talk and there was like a list host. But I would say that last year it was the UTEP…I trust my directors, after two years of working with them I know that they were fabulous educators, and all the feedback I ever got from them was
so on target and so on point, and I don’t feel that I would be the teacher I am now and the way I think about learning without the UTEP program. Participant 10

3. **Culturally Responsive Teaching - Good teaching is culturally responsive**

   **teaching.** The program participants consistently stated that good teaching is responsive to students’ social environment and cultural backgrounds. The participants emphasized that curriculum should not be static, but is revised and enhanced to meet this goal.

   **Sample Transcript Quotes: Culturally Responsive Teaching**

   [The program] has made me realize how important it is to try to be a part of that community, or try to understand where the kids are coming from, and really building a relationship with the parents and the community. I guess I thought experience in an immigrant community and also right now in an African American community, both neither of which I am really a part of, obviously, and just dealing with their ideas about me and possibly my ideas about them, just try to reach an understanding, but being really positive about it. I mean, I do not know, we have always had discussions about race and how a lot of us feel guilty at times or what right do we have to be in front of the class saying these things. So it has just made me aware. Participant 2

   [Good teaching is] a teacher that is committed to working with the community. A teacher that is really engaging to the kids and really focused on where the kids are coming from. There’s been a lot of focus on culture and community and environment. Sort of figuring out, studying the kids. We spend a lot of time studying the kids, where are they coming from, figuring it out, then making the teaching fit that. Participant 4

   What they taught and making it culturally relevant or socially relevant and making sure that, you know, all kids were included and even if a child was misbehaving they weren’t cast to the side, they were somehow always brought in, that was important and I mean we got so many like just philosophical readings on what good teaching is, you know, get to know the child, very reflective, you know, [a] good teacher not just reflects on his own practice but actually reflects on the students and you know what they’re going about again, you know, knowing the culture, knowing the geography. Participant 8
4. **Balanced Literacy** - Balanced literacy is the approach advocated by the program and preferred by the UTEP teachers. Participants described balanced literacy as enabling them to teach in ways that meet students’ needs, challenge and motivate students, and meet school or district learning goals. The participants advocated this approach to literacy and described school contexts as either incorporating this approach or lacking in its tenets.

Sample Transcript Quotes: Balanced Literacy

I think that they [UTEP] have certain philosophies on what kind of like literacy curriculum, etc. that we would most likely decide to choose. Participant 3

I think we're definitely not all clones of the program necessarily, that there's variety among us, but also there's really strong shared beliefs and I think we all have a really strong social justice orientation, and we all really believe in balanced literacy. Participant 9

Q: In what ways has the program influenced your classroom teaching practices?

Definitely by introducing the model of balanced literacy, which is the balance between teacher instruction and independent work by students and sort of there’s a continuum along which that goes and that includes guided reading and includes using the children’s literature instead of the basal readers and it’s really about that dynamic element of teaching, matching books to students so that they’ll be inspired to read and they’ll find something that they really like, creating classroom libraries where there’s tons and tons of literature so that students who like everything from dinosaurs to the intricacies of the human body to fantasy can find something that will inspire them and that they’ll be able to enjoy. Participant 5

I…chose to work at this school because they use the balanced literacy program, which was the literacy program taught at UTEP. Participant 7

5. **Social Justice through Teaching.** The participants identified the UTEP program’s commitment to urban schools and social justice orientation as a primary reason to apply to the program. They described a program experience that strengthened their personal commitments to social justice and focused their
knowledge and skills on teaching as a means to practice or contribute to social justice. This often included references to readings and discussions related to the program’s Soul Strand. The participants view their decision to enter the UTEP program and to teach as a commitment to social justice. The participants describe teaching as enacting social justice through empowering students, developing positive management systems, providing excellent education, and providing space for students to reflect on the social conditions of their community in order to bring about change.

Sample Transcript Quotes: Social Justice through Teaching

Q: Does the program’s stance towards social justice fit your own views? Yes, definitely. Definitely. I mean that was one of the factors for me choosing the program. [It’s]...just feeling like you're giving everyone an equal opportunity, you are providing an equal footing for whatever, whether it's college, economic prosperity, civic skills, or just my idea of leveling the playing field, that's what I feel is social justice. And also just equipping them with the knowledge and the tools, and I guess my little rebel is to be an activist, you know, to be the change I wish to see in the world, so. And like I said, I think that it was UTEP’s vision of social justice where I really felt like I can do this. Participant 10

The[ys] were very similar, like, views about it [about teaching]. Like, teaching is one of the, like, you know, most important ways of trying to achieve that social justice, like, which is, like, what I came into the program with and, like, was just, like, solidified even more by the program. Participant 7

The focus of the program is very social justice based. It’s what attracted me to it in the first place. Every person that we’ve interacted with through the program has basically just been like, “You guys are doing the most important job. You’re doing the most difficult job. This is how-- you’re helping your students achieve, you’re helping them become more successful in life. A lot of it is just a lot of cheerleading, but it helped. I believe that, to an extent. I’m still pretty idealistic about it. I think that I’m here to help a bunch of students who may not have otherwise been successful in life. Participant 6

Q: How did you learn about that image [of good teaching]?
Our first year I think the soul strand was a big part of it. That’s actually where we just talk about the heart and soul of being a teacher and I think a lot of that came out of those sessions. Participant 1

We had a lot of good discussions, over readings and the readings were about, like, What make a good school? And from that it became the next quarter … What … you saw what a good school is now what would be [a] good teacher in that good school? … So … we had our readings, we had our site visits, what just what we called soul strand where we would more reflect. Participant 8

6. **Support Oriented toward Beginning Teaching - UTEP supports beginning teachers through its ties to the New Teacher Network.** Some participants described their present teaching context as one that does not fit with their visions of good teaching. Examples include differences in approaches to classroom management and discipline and curriculum and teaching methodologies imposed by school administrators. The participants described the support UTEP provides as, at times, compensating for the lack of local school support and, at other times, facilitating their reflection and capacity to understand and improve difficult contexts.

*Sample Transcript Quotes: Support Oriented toward Beginning Teaching*

Well there’s a lot of feedback. I’ve got this coach and she’s telling me what’s up every day. And sometimes she’s telling me one thing, maybe I think I’m hearing a different thing from one of the professors, so I tell her, or I tell one of my professors, or I tell one of my peers, and we start talking about it and start figuring it out. So the relationships are sort of mediated I guess, ‘cause the professors are sort of like “Oh, you’ll work it out,” but they poke their head in. They won’t come in and sort of tell either one of us what to do, but they’ll be like “Oh, well try telling this to her. Try smiling at her more. Have you tried sort of sucking up to her more?” Or on the other hand “Oh, you really need to tell her to devote at least an hour of her time to you. This is something that is required, she should do that.” Something like that, you know? Different schools and different people they’re more connected with. Sometimes it’s a matter that they’re really connected with this person, so they’re there and they’re talking to them and always checking in. Sometimes they know less about the person, so they’ll start checking in more to help you out. If there’s a person at the school who you want to connect with more,
and maybe they didn’t answer your email, maybe one of your professors will try to email them again or something. Maybe the principal is like “What’s UTEP?” That’s something that they’ll go take care of and figure out because it’s really more their job to do. Participant 4

They really encouraged a lot of collaboration with other teachers. There are a lot of reasons why I haven’t completely embodied their vision of interaction with other teachers. They really push for us to find more experienced teachers in the school to help us through both administrative crap that you deal with in CPS and with our teaching, like getting ideas for our lessons and stuff. One reason-- I haven’t really done that. Participant 6

I mean it was just something we've, you know, I mean because we would come back with stories about “Well, this teacher was so nasty to me,” and then it was like the triage session of “Well, this is what you might need to do, and this is what's going to-- that you might be judged how good your line looks instead of how good your instruction looks, so just make sure you spend that extra day or two on the line but don’t,” you know, like just these little things that you're not going to think about. But also the fact that like they were like you need to build good relationships, you cannot isolate yourself, so. Participant 10

7. **Teacher Reflection - Teaching is a reflective practice that demands critique and professional development.** The participants attribute the habit of reflection on teaching to their preparation in UTEP. By reflection, the participants describe the process of critiquing, discussing, justifying, and modifying a framework for teaching.

**Sample Transcript Quotes: Teacher Reflection**

And we had like a mentor who would observe us and we got videotaped, and so we would sit around and all just talk how were we reflecting on the lesson. And then we got feedback form the directors but also form your colleagues, so we were not just like being told what to do, it was collective feedback. I guess [the program] has given me a way to think about it like very systematically instead of oh, this is fun. I am going to do this, because whatever I think intuitively, it has given me a very systematic way to think about the whole, if you want to call it an art or a science of teaching. Participant 10

[The program] focuses on thinking of ways you can make your instruction better, and not blaming the students, which I see a lot sometimes. Just constant reflection on your work, assessing the students, meeting them where they are…I think it will
help me improve as a teacher, because for example, especially about reflection. After a lesson, I can think about oh, that went pretty well. But really to sit down and think about how did this go? How did this go? How was my management? How was the lesson lines? Really think about each aspect and then, o.k., next time I am going to work on this. Thinking about it that way…It is just the ways that they have exposed to the different thinking, and the discussions that we have had. I think we share some common ideal among us, so that helps. Even if we might have individual differences. But I think through discussions. Participant 2

We were expected to, like, be thoughtful and reflective about what we were doing. And the discussions that we had about teaching were also, like, very--like, they really tried to push us to be, like, very, like, analytical. Participant 3

I do a lot of reflecting about okay, this lesson didn’t go so well, here are some reasons why, or wow, this lesson went really great but I still want to tweak it a little bit because I think it can go even better. And so to really be reflective professionals and to look at the students instead of looking at them from a deficit point of view so what they can’t do, looking at what they can do and seeing evidence not just in their written work but also in the way that they participate or the way that they interact to see their strengths. Participant 5

Q: In what specific ways has the program influenced your classroom teaching? It…impacts on how I reflect. I reflect a lot, I should reflect on paper but I often reflect in verbal conversations with other teachers like this is what I did, this isn’t what worked, this is what worked, what do I do. Participant 8
APPENDIX A: Participant Interview Summaries

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<th>Participant 1</th>
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**Choosing to Teach:**
Participant 1 had experienced teaching middle school students in a suburban/urban area during the summer before her freshmen year of college and enjoyed the experience. She felt she “always could relate to kids” and that teaching was a natural choice for her. She stated that she views teaching as a primary means to make a difference in kids’ lives, to be “that one teacher that sparks something” in children. As a student in school herself, she was never really “excited about school.” She stated that teaching is a means for her to give students a different experience and to be “excited about learning.” She is attracted to UTEP as a means to bring “equity” into education.

**Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program:**
Participant 1’s image of good teaching is “teaching to students’ needs and interests” and integrating this into “coherent units of study.” She sees this being accomplished through integrating subject areas, such as finding literature on topics be studied in social studies and making this thematic literature part of the literacy curriculum. Participant 1 feels becoming a teacher has changed her as a person, making her more confident and reflective. She was attracted to UTEP because of her commitment to social justice. The program is helping her to grow as a person that can teach toward this goal. Participant 1 feels the UTEP program’s image of good teaching fits her own, but that influence runs both ways—she had brought ideals and has the program in regards to social justice. She feels it is a good fit and believes the program promotes teachers who are: reflective; do not blame students; who are committed to teaching effectively.

**Fit or Misfit between Self and School:**
Participant 1 feels that in her present school many of the teachers have low expectations for students and have grown tired of the profession. Although the CPS in which she is currently placed has transitioned to a balanced literacy approach, many teachers remain frustrated with this programmatic change. The image of good teaching promoted by the school is focused on managing students, being “strong”, “loud”, and “confident”—“it is very discipline oriented.” “They focus on management and not so much on content.” The school seems to base management on discipline and fear, which is not her style. She feels school’s image of good urban teaching does not fit her own. This may be due to the fact the school is on probation for low testing scores and this drives much the focus of the classroom being worksheet and drill oriented. She feels her most important colleagues are her peers in the UTEP program because they share a similar vision for teaching.

**Other Noteworthy Things:**
As with some of the other first-year UTEP teachers, currently in their internship year, the interview produced a sparse transcript—many pauses and restating of questions.
Participant 2
Summary Date: 5/16/06
Choosing to Teach:
Participant 2’s discussion of choosing to teach initially focused on the UTEP program as a means for students like himself and others in the program, who are looking for ways to help others, achieve this. He noted that he has been told he has a “savior complex.” Participant 2 tutored school-aged kids throughout his undergrad years at U of C and this helped him come to the decision that teaching was a means to help others in the community. He was attracted to UTEP because it was a chance to teach in an urban environment. He was adamant, both in terms of teaching and other career opportunities, that he wants to serve others in need and is not interested in more privileged school contexts or corporate work. Participant 2 stated that he went through public education and thought it was “great” until he arrived at U of C and “realized it sucked.” He wants to change public education. He stated his Catholic upbringing instilled helping others as part of this “value system.” He views teaching as a means to help others achieve a “better life.”

Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program:
Participant 2’s image of good teaching is one who listens to the students and is willing to put in large amounts of time for the students—“who just puts their heart and soul into it.” This is reflected by a highly organized and well-prepared teacher and classroom. Teaching is a means to help kids learn about their environment and the system under which they live in order to help them “get out of it if they need to.” Participant 2 feels the UTEP program’s image of good teaching did not necessarily originate from urban teaching—that the readings and theory is not necessarily specific to urban teaching. However, he agrees with the program’s image of a teacher who is at the center of many individuals and resources in a community for the benefit of students. He stated that he learned this from the Soul Strand portion of the program. Participant 2 feels that the level of time and dedication expected of a teacher that the program promotes is unrealistic. He feels the program has greatly influenced every aspect of this classroom teaching.

Fit or Misfit between Self and School:
Participant 2 distinguished by class between the university lab school and the university charter school where he had his first internship experiences and the Chicago Public School where he is presently placed. Describing the lab school, he noted “I always had this issue with upper class society because of my background so I always felt a little bit of anger, a little bit of resentment that- of all the privilege that I didn’t have. So I definitely reflect-deinitely have expressed that sometimes because I worked at an upper class school too, the University Lab School right here. That’s a private school, $14,000 a year tuition, and-- Yeah. I didn’t really like it.” He described the charter school as “a middle class black community and even there I was kind of reluctant to be there because of the little privilege that they had. I really wanted to be in the lowest tier schools that I could be in.” Participant 2 feels his place is in CPS in order to change this system. At his current CPS, he feels much fit with the current principal, who is new to the school and also reflects the kind of teaching the UTEP program promotes. However, the classroom teachers are more narrowly focused on skill development and teaching only within their contracted school hours.

Other Noteworthy Things:
Participant 2’s family came to the US as refugees. He described his family upbringing as speaking no English, Catholic, and of very limited means (income)—he stated that the poverty in which he grew up is similar to that of his current students.


**Participant 3**

**Summary Date:**
05/30/06

**Choosing to Teach:**
Participant 3 stated that he had been teaching in one form or another since high school, when he worked in an educational program aligned with city gardens. He worked as a teaching assistant in the CPS during his undergraduate time in U of C. He felt UTEP was a natural progression for him. Participant 3 felt that the fact that UTEP begins during the senior year at the U of C, that this helped his transition into teaching – that this became a natural decision as an outgrowth of his work and studies at U of C. He developed a relationship with ELL students during his undergraduate work—Participant 3’s immigrated to the US and he, therefore, could relate to these students. He stated that teaching allows him to pursue “ethical and social goals” for students and that teaching is a means for him to act on social justice, something he has been more inclined to read about, rather than act on in previous years.

**Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program:**
Participant 3 stated from the onset of the interview that he continues to find challenging meeting greater goals for students in relation to social justice as his current focus in his teaching that has been on achieving better classroom management with his students—he sees these two areas as potentially in conflict: “sometimes you have to wonder if the way that you get the kids disciplined, is that socially just?” Participant 3’s image of good teaching is one who knows the community and the background of students and works to incorporate this into instruction—to make learning a relevant experience to students’ lives. Although he believes the UTEP program provides ample support for him to teach in this way, he feels the pedagogy is ultimately “teacher-centered”, which may be because the urban teaching context requires that a teacher be an “authority” figure in the classroom. The program stresses learning much about child development and background and working with parents and services for students. He feels the UTEP program has not yet touched upon gender equity in its preparation of teachers (see more on this below). In sum, he feels the program has provided his model for teaching, one that fits his own views. However, the program also places an “urgency” on developing classroom management, which he finds in conflict with his views on a socially just classroom.

**Fit or Misfit between Self and School:**
Participant 3 is currently in a predominantly African-American CPS magnet school, which takes students by lottery. He feels the school’s faculty and administration is “tuned in” to the students and that most teachers focus on children in terms of background and experience to shape their teaching, something Participant 3 considers a vital part of socially just teaching. On the other hand, there is an authoritative nature to the way kids are treated. Participant 3 feels that the school’s image of teaching matches UTEP’s and that this is in agreement with his general principles. However, he feels that within this righteous philosophy there can be authoritative ways of treating kids, which “make you a little nervous and suspicious.” He stated that students can sometimes be treated like “drones” follow orders of conduct. He believes there is a great amount of uniformity among the teachers and professional staff and for the most part this supports his views on teaching.
Other Noteworthy Things:
Like participant, Participant 3 has a first generation immigrant experience.
**Participant 4**

**Summary Date:**
05/08/06

**Choosing to Teach:**
Participant 4 stated teaching was a primary means for her to “give back to the community” after receiving what she described was a “privileged” education in private schools with excellent teachers and a generally well-off family life. In particular, Participant 4 attributes her interest in teaching to her high school teachers, who made subjects “come alive.” She had experienced Chicago schools as a teenager coming on summer mission trips focused on service in education. She described these programs as scripted, not “alive”, and “punitive.” She had been considering teaching as a career when the UTEP opportunity arose and the fourth-year/senior-year experiences as part of the UTEP program sequence solidified her commitment to the program as it served “underprivileged” communities. Participant 4 has considered ministry as a career; she cited her own Christian orientation towards bettering the community as well as her mother’s social activism, interfaith community work, and service in school as influences on her decision to teach as means to “build up the community.”

**Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program:**
Participant 4’s image of good teaching is promoting independent student learning through individualizing and supporting student personal interests and abilities. She describes her role as a facilitator of learning rather than teacher as focus in the classroom. She also views teaching as “exposing” students to “opportunities” around them (universities, museums, etc.). UTEP’s image of good teaching fits with Participant 4’s memories of the excellent teachers she experienced growing up—she returned at several points back to these experiences when speaking about UTEP. Participant 4 stated that the program has not influenced her personal commitments to social justice or image of a teacher, rather, it has provided the tools for her to be more effective in an urban classroom. UTEP’s greatest influence has been in introducing to Participant 4 balanced literacy and “mini lessons” which enable her to serve a facilitator role to her students’ learning. The program also have her more confidence to be firm with students rather than punitive in order to facilitate learning.

**Fit or Misfit between Self and School:**
In terms of literacy instruction, Participant 4 stated there is fit between her teaching and that exposed by the school and the lead literacy teachings. The main area of misfit is with the school leadership, which is not supportive to teachers. Participant 4 states that she has heard many teachers will not return next year. The administration does not provide instructional leadership and has “given up on parents.” Participant 4 stated several times that the curriculum is heavily weighted towards literacy at the expense of science and social studies. A large source of frustration for Participant 4 is the limited preparedness of students for fourth grade, the need to focus on social skills, and the affect these have on her ability to do “really cool learning stuff” with her students.

**Other Noteworthy Things:**
Participant 4 self-identifies as Lutheran.
Participant 5

Summary Date:
05/30/06

Choosing to Teach:
Participant 5 felt that teaching was a fundamental way for her to serve society, by serving the great need for good teachers. She recalls many discussions with her family about education as the root of the major problems which plague society. She recalls having several conversations with family, her mother, and friends about teaching — generally negative about teaching as a career, yet she felt drawn to pursue it as an occupation. She stated that the UTEP e-mail announcement followed one of these conversations and was exactly what she was looking for—to teach in an urban context. Participant 5 is very committed to providing quality education to students in contexts in which they do not have access to it.

Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program:
Participant 5’s image of good teaching is one who facilitates learning, gets students interested to the point of allowing them to manage their learning, helps students identify a problem and then helps them solve it through project-based learning. She identified UTEP’s influence as promoting balanced literacy, modeling effective instruction in the field, and providing support to enact it. She felt a very good fit between her own and the program’s view on social justice.

Fit or Misfit between Self and School:
Participant 5’s first teaching full-time assignment after UTEP ended during the first semester because there were severe behavior problems that she could not manage. She felt great support from the New Teachers Network and UTEP faculty. She understands that the situation was one that she could not have managed as a beginning teacher. She is presently in a long-term subbing position in a special education resource classroom. Her current school is on probation due to low testing scores and has a singular focus to bring these scores up. She feels the school’s emphasis on data is not accurately reflect achievement due to pervasive cheating or the inability of students, such as her special ed students, to even complete exams. The school promotes and provides in-service on the Accelerated Reading program, which is an approach to reaching development that is not in agreement with Participant 5’s views on literacy. The current vice-principal of the school will become the new principal next year. This individual is an acquaintance of the UTEP director and shows promise to Participant 5 as a person who first her and UTEP’s image of good teaching. Participant 5 stated that she is not interested in being in a school long-term that has a program and teachers who do not share her philosophy and approaches to education. However, the incoming principal gives her some hope to remain or to find a school context that is a better fit.

Other Noteworthy Things:
One interesting aspect was that Participant 5 was raised Catholic, but now describes herself as atheist—she attributes the importance of acts in Catholicism as an expression of faith as possibly having an influence on her. She also discussed the great need to focus on the social development of students, even at the loss of academic-focused learning.
Participant 6
7/25/06

Choosing to Teach
Participant 6 went into teaching because she likes teaching and tutoring, but also because she didn’t want to go right away into medical school. Being committed to social justice, she wanted to make a difference in the life of poor children, providing them with tools to compete and survive. She also mentions a financial incentive: after 5 years in urban school her federal lawn would be waived. She describes herself as idealist and sees teaching in urban schools as something that is her way to make a difference in society. She is proud with her decision to go into teaching and knows that her parents are also proud with her. Her mother taught her how much is it important to volunteer and was her role model in doing it. Her decision to teach might not become a long term commitment. She talks about a five year period (because of loans) but also mentions how burned out she feels after the first year. She didn’t get a teaching contract for the summer and thus found a tutoring job in the University of Chicago, which now she might decide to stay in. Nothing also changed about her plans to go into medical school.

Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program
Participant 6’s image of good teaching is the same as the UTEP image. There is no differentiation. She loves UTEP and completely respects their model of a professional community, their emphasis on making practice public and seeking out for advice, being open to the experience of other teachers, and constantly reflecting on ones own teaching. She talks about how she tries to take this into class and how hard is it to focus on making children love learning, while most of her attention is drawn into dealing with their behavior problems. Her first year was extremely hard and demanding.

Fit or Misfit between Self and School
Participant 6 agrees with many of the school approaches to literacy studies and differentiated instruction. She believes that the school administration staff is trying to foster a professional community, but falls short, because it sets up wrong priorities that put emphasis on bureaucratic skills rather than professional skills. For example, she as a teacher is evaluated on her filing skills, and ability to follow instructions and change her practice according to the administration demands. As a result, she developed resistance to some of theses demands within the boundaries of her classroom.
Participant 7

7/25/06

Choosing to Teach

Participant 7 went into teaching because she thought teaching is the place where she can make most difference for society and take responsibility for helping at least some children to become good people. She always liked teaching as a child, but in school thought on becoming a professional in another field. In U of C she studied psychology and sees a lot of resemblances between it to teaching. She considered working in the sport industry and had some business related internship experience, but didn’t like working at a desk. She believes that teaching is important in helping students to realize their potential and became convinced that she is best in doing that. She sees herself staying in teaching or educational administration till retirement. Her parents were not fully supportive and didn’t understand why she spent so much money on her education in U of C, while she could go for that into a state school. All the while, her mother said that she should consider teaching and would be good at doing that. Other reasons that she indicates for her decision are her love to education and being a life learner. Last, she mentions that she would be interested as a Catholic also to teach in a Catholic and private school as an option too, but right now because of her heavy loans she needs to stay in an urban school.

Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program

Participant 7 believes in creating differentiated teaching that provide learning opportunities and is adjusted to each child development. A good teacher for her is one that is flexible and responsive to the interests and needs of his students. The program’s image of good teaching, she believes, focused on helping students understand how to set up a classroom for a child centered type of teaching. The program believes in a balanced literacy approach with mini lesson, independent time, group time, and shared time. There was also an emphasis on making teaching culturally and socially relevant, making sure all kids were included and even if a child was misbehaving they weren’t cast to the side. Establishing meaningful relationship with parents was part of it too. Teachers were taught to reflect on their practice and the practice of their students, have open practice, be open and seek feedback and professional development opportunities. She feels that the program has strong ideals of social justice, but it never gave them the false impression that they are going to create huge changes instantly after their arrival to school.

Fit or Misfit between Self and School

Participant 7 feels that her relatively progressive agenda (compared to other school teachers) is taken well in school because the school gives relatively high autonomy for teachers to decide how exactly they want to teach in class and achieve certain aims. She generally agrees with the school strict discipline policy. Sometimes she feels that the school went too far in being strict, but she provides examples of how the disciplinary power helps her as a teacher to help her students, compared to another school where she served as an intern and where the discipline was poor. She thinks that the school administration is doing poorly in terms of professional development, but does not see it as a reason to leave school or teaching.
Participant 8
7/25/06
Choosing to Teach
Participant 8 did not consider teaching as a career, but rather thought about becoming a lawyer or doctor. Her father mentioned to her that her work as a volunteer always included teaching aspects and that she should consider it. Her mother was less enthusiastic about teaching and was worried about the low salaries of teaching. She came to the decision that teaching should be her career after understanding that one of the only institutions that can help shift the social economic status of people is school. Nevertheless, she still considers other plans after two to five years in the classroom that will involve staying in the field but having other position, like becoming a lawyer, educational administrator, or professor of education. She feels she will always be committed to improving the opportunities of students learning in poor urban school. She mentions having certain autonomy in class to control curriculum as a must in her decision to teach in a certain school. Participant 8 has no family relatives who were teachers. She feels that her religious beliefs have strengthened her conviction to continue doing what she does. Last, she mentions that she would consider as a Lutheran to teach in a religious school as long as it serves disadvantaged children who are given financial assistance to enroll.

Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program
Participant 8 believes in a child centered classroom, where students actively participate in shaping their environment. They set the rules with the teacher, and are responsible for managing significant parts of class. She feels that almost everything she does in class is the product of her UTEP preparation. She is in favor of integrated teaching and balanced literacy, positions, that she believes are shared by her program. A good teacher should set an example in his behavior to students that are constantly watching him/her. He/her should be patient, professional, not yell or gossip, be aware to the social and cultural background of his students and families and meet them where they are. The program’s image of good teaching, she believes is almost completely aligned with hers.

Fit or Misfit between Self and School
Participant 8 feels that her progressive agenda is colliding with the conservative approach of some of the veteran teachers. She believes the school has no clear direction at the administration level and there are forces pulling to each side. While the principal doesn’t care too much about curriculum and is close to retirement one of his assistants pushes toward prescribed curriculum and the other pushes to a more open progressive approach. She is excited to take part in this struggle, but says she would continue to serve in the school only if it provides her with the autonomy to control her own class curriculum.
Choosing to Teach
Participant 9 went into teaching because she was really committed to the idea of “leveling the playing field” for all students. She got a mediocre education in a Catholic school in Chicago and was amazed to be a student at U of Chicago and have her “horizons” completely broadened by the experience. She mentioned a “new ideology” and “new ways of thinking.” She became very interested in urban and race issues and decided she would teach. She always played teacher when she was a kid, but there were also practical reasons: financial security, job right out of university, advanced degree in one year. She explains that after UTEP, her commitments to urban education became “super-firm.” The decision to enter teaching was more abstract, the decision to remain is clear. She imagines she’ll stay in for at least 10 years, but imagines wanting to do an advanced degree or policy work.

Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program
Participant 9’s image of good teaching is exactly the same at the UTEP image. There is no differentiation. She loves UTEP and completely respects and admires Marvin and Kavita. She sees the teacher as the “educated facilitator” who scaffolds and organizes, but the students actively seek out their learning. She talked a lot about mixed methods of pedagogy (read alouds, manipulatives, open ended questions). The teacher also respects the cultural background knowledge that the kids bring. Her language reveals the joy she feels in being a teacher of young urban kids. She teaches kindergarten.

Fit or Misfit between Self and School
The school, in some ways is an extension of UTEP. This is great for her because it wasn’t so much of an adjustment. The school is affiliated with the UTEP program (the principal is a UTEP instructor?). She really likes her colleagues. Even the experienced ones are seeing themselves as learners. The school is sponsored by a law firm. The firm offers great resources, but doesn’t infringe on the running of the school. The school is big into socials justice (a UTEP and a Participant 9 commitment). It believes in incorporating community knowledge, providing positive community role models for kids, and professional development. She is thrilled at how much more she has grown since being at the school.
Participant 10
05/06/06

Choosing to Teach:
Participant 10 stated that she never considered being a teacher growing up. As an undergrad at the U of C, she helped in a kindergarten classroom in an urban school through the university sponsored Neighborhood Schools Program. She then received an e-mail about the UTEP program and found that its philosophy fit her own feelings and experiences volunteering in this school. Growing up in rural area, she found parallels to inequities in education in urban settings and she wanted to work to address these. She states that it is “in her” to teach—that by knowing about social injustices, there came a point where she faced a “point of no return” in which this was her decision to act on these injustices.

Image of Good Teaching and Influence of the Teacher Education Program:
Participant 10’s image of good teaching is instruction that is culturally relevant to students, intrinsically motivating, and promoting an independent learning environment. She stressed the social dimensions of independence, in which students can solve their own disputes in order to serve them as adults. Good teaching also creates a classroom environment in which students feel safe and draws students out to participate and share. The UTEP program’s influence has been felt most in it’s balanced literacy approach and positive approach to classroom management—good pedagogy in an urban setting. Participant 10 states that there is an on-going discourse about social justice, with which she agrees, but the focused influence has been on her pedagogy. She attributes more her commitment to social justice as a result of being as student at U of C.

Fit or Misfit between Self and School:
Participant 10 has followed the same split internship experience as other UTEP 2 teachers, working at the NKO charter school sponsored by U of C and then in a CPS. She describes this second and current experience in CPS as a “shocker.” She noted “my beliefs, my values that I carried with me were different than theirs” and “extremely polar opposite it was from my own.” She is coming to learn “not to buy in to a certain philosophy” and she has learned from these teachers and has also brought innovations, such as “morning meetings” and writer’s workshop. She used the term “humiliate” to describe experiences when she has observed students’ being disciplined—a source of misfit with her present CPS school. She also does not agree with the assimilationist approach to ELLs advocated in the school.

Other Noteworthy Things:
Like each of the four UTEP 2 teachers currently in their internship year, Linda has a particular focus on social classroom dimensions and classroom management. Although Participant 10 was raised Catholic, she states she is “not extremely religious” although it may have “kind of gear[ed] me in the direction of seeing the potential in everyone.” Participant 10 came back to her experiences growing up in a rural setting at several points to draw parallels to the urban experience. Her father is Hispanic. Participant 10 identifies herself as Hispanic and speaks Spanish.
APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

DECISIONS TO TEACH

1. Tell me about your decision to teach.
   a. How did you arrive at this choice?
   b. Why is teaching important to you?

2. Is there something about your personal beliefs or values or religious beliefs that influenced your decision to teach in any way?
   a. C: Did your being Catholic influence you in any way?
   b. J: Did your being Jewish influence you in any way?
   c. U: Did anything else influence you [draw on answer to Q1]

   Possible Probes: childhood, childhood environment, own schooling, family

3. What did/do you hope to achieve by becoming a teacher?

4. Have you ever considered other career directions, aside from teaching?

5. How long do you think you’ll stay in teaching?

DECISIONS TO TEACH IN CATHOLIC, JEWISH, PUBLIC URBAN SCHOOLS

1. Tell me about your decision to teach in a Catholic/Jewish/Urban school.

2. Can you see yourself teaching in another kind of school? Please explain.

TEACHING PRACTICE

Next, I’m interested in learning more about your teaching.

1. What is your image of good teaching?

2. If I were to observe you in your classroom, what would I see you doing that fits your image of good teaching?

3. How does being a teacher fit with how you see yourself as a person?
   a. C: How does being a teacher fit with your being Catholic?
   b. J: How does being a teacher fit with your being Jewish?
   c. U: How does being a teacher fit with your commitments to social justice?
TEACHER EDUCATION

Now let’s talk about your teacher education program.

1. Did/Does your teacher education program have an image of good teaching in a Jewish day school/Catholic school/Urban school?
   a. How would you describe that image?
   b. How did you learn about that image in your program?

2. How does that image fit with your own vision of good teaching?

Let’s talk about the relationship between the teacher education program and your work as a teacher.

3. In what ways has the program influenced your classroom teaching?
   a. Can you be specific?

4. In what ways has the program influenced your interactions with your students?
   a. Can you be specific?

5. In what ways has the program influenced your interactions with the teachers in your school?
   a. Can you be specific?
   b. Who are your important colleagues?

6. In what ways has the program influenced your views of parents, students and the community in which you teach?

7. In what ways has the program influenced your definition of yourself (or how you see yourself) as a teacher?
   a. Can you be specific?

8. J: In what ways has the program influenced your sense of yourself as Jew?
   C: In what ways has the program influenced your sense of yourself as a Catholic?
   U: In what ways has the program influenced your sense of yourself as someone teaching as a means of achieving social justice?

9. Did/Does the program’s philosophy or mission fit with your own values and beliefs? In what ways? Are there ways in which it doesn’t fit?
   a. J: Did/Does the program’s stance toward Judaism fit your own view of Judaism? In what ways does it fit? Are there ways in which it doesn’t?
   b. C: Did/Does the program’s stance toward Catholicism fit your own view of Catholicism? In what ways does it fit? Are there ways in which it doesn’t?
   c. U: Did/does the program stance towards social justice fit your own views?
SCHOOL CONTEXTS
Let’s talk about the school in which you work.

1. What is the image of good elementary school teaching promoted by your school?
   a. How do you know?

2. In what ways does your school enable you to teach that way?

3. Does the school’s image of good teaching fit with your image of good teaching?

4. Does the school’s philosophy or mission fit with your own values or beliefs? How does the fit or lack of fit affect you?
   a. J: Does the school’s image of Judaism fit with yours? In what ways does the fit or lack of fit affect you as a Jew?
   b. C: Does the school’s image of Catholicism fit with yours? In what ways does the fit or lack of fit affect you as a Catholic?
   c. U: Does the school’s image (the school you are currently placed in) of appropriate urban education fit with yours? How does the fit or lack of fit affect you?

5. Is there anything else you’d like to tell me or any questions I can answer for you?