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Narratives of Pedagogical Journeys: Exploring the Intergenerational Transmission of Teacher Habitus

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Abstract

Anticipatory socialization for a teaching career involves shaping a social representation of the profession by adopting values, beliefs, and behaviors. Pre-service teachers have many vital experiences before entering teacher training programs, which influence their understanding of what teaching entails. Primary socialization, during which the family transmits cultural capital and habitus to the younger generation, impacts their motivation to become teachers and sometimes provides role models for this career. This study is based on grounded theory research of autobiographical essays collected over the last five years from pre-service teachers enrolled in the final year of master's level studies in various specializations, as well as in the second level of teacher training at a Romanian university. To analyze the intergenerational transmission of teacher habitus, a theoretical sampling of 43 essays was selected, comprising narratives by pre-service teachers whose family members were teachers. The qualitative analysis of the essays reveals subtle mechanisms through which the teacher-parents influenced their children and often shaped an ideal image of the teacher role. By observing their parents (or other members of the extended family) playing the role of a teacher, the pre-service teachers internalized values and beliefs that form the ground of their teacher identity.

Keywords: intergenerational transmission, habitus, pre-service teacher, anticipatory socialization, autobiographic narrative

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1. Introduction

Anticipatory socialization for the teaching profession involves the assimilation of the attitudes, behaviors, and values of the professional group to which those who wish to become teachers aspire. While many studies have focused on the professional socialization of teachers within teacher education programs or in the workplace (Zeichner & Gore, 1990; Alhja & Fresco, 2010; Amorim & Silva, 2023), the anticipatory socialization that occurs before the start of formal teacher training has often been ignored. As Richards (2015) notes, prior socialization experiences can be considered an essential component of the professional identity of future teachers.

This study aims to explore how pre-service teachers develop their teacher identity through autobiographical narratives by reflecting on their primary socialization experiences and the role that significant others, such as family members who were teachers, played in their journey to become educators. Using a qualitative research approach to analyze these socialization experiences, the study identifies the main pathways of intergenerational transmission of teacher habitus. It highlights shared values and behavioral patterns within a specific group of pre-service teachers and how their family background influenced the development of their social representation of the teaching profession.

1.1. The role of family in the anticipatory socialization for a teaching career

In sociology, socialization is defined as the broad process through which the individual acquires values, roles, and behavioural patterns necessary for integration in society (Grusec & Hastings, 2014). According to constructivist sociological theories, people are not born social beings; instead, they become members of society by internalizing the social world (Borich, 1999; Berger & Luckmann, 1999). Socialization is based on social interaction and communication, and a multitude of factors shape it, making it a unique and personal path. At the same time, the analysis of the socialization patterns can reveal similarities and common experiences shared by a particular group of people.

The family plays a key role in the process of socialization. Through primary socialization, the parents or other members of the extended family play the role of significant others. These people have a position of intermediaries between society and the child, shaping social reality according to their own position in society, their values, and their life experience. In the process of socialization, the individual assumes not only the roles and attitudes of significant others but also their world, which becomes the only existing or imaginable world for the child, being much more firmly planted in the consciousness than the world internalized later during secondary socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1999). As the children grow, they progressively withdraw from the roles and attitudes proposed by others. At the same time, an assumption of general roles and attitudes is achieved in the individual's consciousness. Parents pass down not only a genetic endowment but also a social inheritance. Children are often seen as inheriting

their parents' social traits or living out unfulfilled ambitions. However, whether a child chooses to follow the modeled expectations or forge their own path depends on their individual qualities. Transmission is both personal and collective, and it always involves both sides. During primary socialization, the family plays a pivotal role in creating the child's first images of various social roles, including professional roles. As Musolf (1996) points out, comparing previous theories about socialization, the process through which children are socialized and develop their selves implies taking the attitude of the significant others and role-taking.

Early studies in teacher socialization showed that student teachers strongly identify themselves with the teacher role before actual field experience (Staton & Hunt, 1992). Moreover, recent studies revealed that parents who see their children as having an aptitude for teaching are much more likely to encourage them to become teachers (Christensen et al., 2022). According to these authors, other factors that predict parental encouragement for children to pursue a teaching career include support from family or other significant individuals. Jacinto and Gershenson (2021) analyzed an American cohort of teachers and found that children of teachers were seven percentage points more likely to choose a teaching career compared to children of nonteachers. From a historical approach, the intergenerational transmission of the teaching profession is stronger between mothers and daughters (Marklund, 2021).

The process of anticipatory socialization is not passive. It is an active process in which the individuals have the power to reinterpret their experiences and influences and to construct a personal perspective and set of beliefs about teaching (Richards et. al., 2024). Emphasising the importance of the individual characteristics of future teachers, McLean (1999) observed that those who participate in teacher education programs bring a wealth of personal experiences, including substantial knowledge of what the didactic process entails. The professional identity of future teachers is often shaped by early experiences in roles similar to those of a teacher, frequently modeled after their parents' professional roles. Many aspirants for a teaching career had the opportunity to practice their teaching skills by tutoring other colleagues or replacing teachers in teaching activities. Their „teaching personality” (Brizman, 1986; Surgue, 1997) has been shaped by various experiences, including informal teaching experiences such as private tuition, babysitting, volunteering, or helping younger siblings with homework (Kaynak, 2019). Richardson and Watt (2006) found that positive past experiences in teaching and learning are key motivators for choosing a teaching career. Early play experiences, family influences, and previous academic successes were also noted as important factors influencing the decision to become a teacher (Olsen, 2008).

According to Moscovici (1984), a social representation is a system of values, ideas, and practices that helps individuals orient themselves in the social world and communicate with others by providing a shared code for classifying and naming aspects of reality. The social representation of the teaching profession is shaped by the way in which the family relates to the teaching profession and how much they value it. In

particular, if there are teachers in the family, the children are exposed from an early age to everything that the teaching profession entails, gain inside knowledge of the role of a teacher, and have the opportunity to form a more realistic image of this profession (Rothland, König & Drahm, 2015).

1.2. Cultural capital and the construction of teacher habitus

In Bourdieu's view, cultural capital, as one of the multiple forms in which capital can be found in society, has three distinct forms: it can be embodied, objectified, and institutionalised (Bourdieu, 2018). The three forms of cultural capital are reflected in the way the individuals perceive themselves and their position in the world and society. Bourdieu defined this set of dispositions that guide the individual to act or react in a certain way as habitus (Bourdieu, 2017). The power of habitus lies in the fact that it is a „grammar of life“, which we learn when we are children. While it encourages individuals to pursue possibilities that seem accessible, habitus also helps them explore alternative career paths. As Reay (2004) notes, habitus can be duplicated through exposure to environments that reinforce certain dispositions or altered to either elevate or diminish a person's aspirations. The reproduction of social inequalities is correlated with the interaction of habitus with capital (resources—which can be economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) and field (social contexts) (Archer et. al., 2012).

Teacher habitus is the result of primary and secondary socialization on teacher practice. It is described as a nexus of practice (Gubbins, 2023), or the connection between various socialization experiences. According to Grenfell (1996), pedagogic habitus includes those elements of habitus that significantly impact practice in educational settings, such as the social background of pre-service teachers and their experiences as students. Therefore, pedagogic habitus consists of embodied pedagogical dispositions that influence the way in which future teachers enact their teaching practices (Fieldman, 2016).

Bourdieu (2018) emphasizes the contribution that the educational system has in the reproduction of the social structure through the hereditary transmission of cultural capital. In his view, habitus is the product of a pedagogical action carried out by the family or collectivity; therefore, it is the result of a process of socialization and education (Bourdieu, 2017). The family transmission of cultural capital is diffuse, continuous, and challenging to observe or quantify, often being neglected. In Bourdieu's view, the family is the agent of a primary pedagogical action, fixing in the individual the social class habitus – the first schemes of perception, ways of thinking, and action. Children interiorize the way in which parents understand what is appropriate or inappropriate, desirable or undesirable, the feeling of one's place in society, and the limits of one's social position (Johnson, 2003).

The intergenerational transmission of capital in teachers' families involves both a transmission of cultural capital and of social capital. Social capital, which is developed through frequent interactions with teachers, mediated by families, strengthens future

teachers' sense of belonging, trust, and professional solidarity (Demir, 2021). Previous studies addressed the challenges faced by pre-service teachers who have a low-income family background and focused on their adaptive strategies used in the teacher training programmes (Lampert et al., 2016; Unal & Kurt, 2018). On the other hand, the cultural capital of the members of the family is related to the embodied cultural capital of the students who choose to become teachers (Curry, 2010). Pre-service teachers with high educational attainment and embodied cultural capital demonstrate an intuitive understanding of the practices and procedures of the educational field (Park et al., 2016).

1.3. The autobiographical essay as a reflective practice in teacher education

Biographical methods, used by the first representatives of the Chicago School of Sociology, have increased in popularity during the last decades. Biographies offer a means of exploring how identity and the sense of self are constructed in a fragmented world (Tedder, 2021). Life history shapes the belief system of future teachers and forms an image of themselves as teachers (Knowles, 2013; Furlong, 2013).

Personal narratives, in written or oral form, are an essential resource in analyzing the beliefs, attitudes, and ways of structuring the identity of future teachers (O'Brien & Schillaci, 2002; Betourne & Richards, 2015; Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). Through them, pre-service teachers can reflect on personal motivations and discover what elements define positive relationships between teachers and students (Binks et al., 2009). Pre-service teachers' autobiographical narratives, or life histories, enable us to understand how their ideal selves as teachers were constructed and examine their tacit beliefs and preconceptions (Alsup, 2006; Furlong, 2013). As Chang-Kredl and Kingsley (2014) point out, the purpose of investigating pre-service teachers' memories is to focus on understanding their psychological motivations to teach and become teachers. Therefore, future teachers can learn from reflecting on their experiences (Dominice, 2000; Chang-Kredl & Kingsley, 2014).

Previous researchers have emphasized that even in the later stages of teacher training, pre-service teachers need help to articulate their sense of identity as teachers (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007) and often feel uncertain of their capacity to meet institutional demands (Everitt & Tefft, 2019). Reflecting on the experiences and interactions that led to choosing a teaching career can help future teachers construct a subjective interpretation of their life course (Johnson, 2007).

2. Methods

The research design for this paper is exploratory. It uses constructivist grounded theory to analyze 43 autobiographical essays written by pre-service teachers in their final year of master's level teacher training. As part of the Sociology of Education course, students were asked to write an essay about their anticipatory socialization process related to their teaching careers before starting the teacher training program. They were encouraged to reflect on how primary and secondary socialization affected their

motivation to become teachers and to describe the key experiences that shaped them during this journey. Additionally, pre-service teachers were asked to discuss their role models and significant others who served as examples or influenced this process.

The essays analyzed in this study are part of a collection of over 200 autobiographical essays collected in the past five years and selected through theoretical sampling. The main criterion for selection was that these essays were submitted by pre-service teachers whose parents or close relatives are teachers. The secondary criterion was that the essays contained a detailed description of mechanisms of anticipatory socialization for a teaching career conducted by family members. The pre-service teachers' average age is 22 years. The distribution of essays based on students' specialization is as follows: Visual Arts – 9, Mathematics – 8, Physical Education – 7, Music – 7, Psychology – 4, History – 2, Geography – 2, Social Work – 1, Physics – 1, Theatre – 1, and Informatics – 1. Although informed consent was obtained from all essay authors, quotes from the essays are anonymized throughout this paper, using a code made up of the initials of the name and the student's specialization (e.g., „A.B., Geography”).

The research design was developed based on grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory is a qualitative approach where theory is generated directly from data collected through social research (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). This design is inductive and contrasts with the positivist method in sociology, where theory is created through logical deduction from existing assumptions and is subsequently tested with empirical data. As Glaser and Strauss mention in their key work on this methodology, generating theory from data means that most concepts and hypotheses not only arise from the data but are also systematically refined in relation to it during the research process.

The first step taken was to identify the emerging categories of significant interactions that shaped the process of anticipatory socialization of pre-service teachers before their enrolment in the teacher training program. The codes and categories generated from the analysis of the essays were constantly developed through the five years of data collection. The theoretical assumptions evolved through a continuous interplay between analysis and data collection.

Constructivist grounded theory, developed by Charmaz (2006, 2017), emphasizes how data and analysis are products of symbolic interactionism. Through data coding, the data was explored and uncovered significant themes or categories. The essays were coded using broad labels. Thus, the essays were analyzed based on key concepts or themes, and the fragments corresponding to the main thematic categories were organized into separate folders. The next step was focused coding, which involved categorizing the data closer to the theory. In selective/focused coding, the researcher frequently uses the initial codes that reappear in the process of sorting and analyzing a large amount of information. The focused codes are more abstract, more general, and more "incisive" than the initial ones, thus becoming more theoretical and applicable to a greater variety of observations.

Research questions and objectives

The primary objective of this exploratory research was to analyze the intergenerational transmission of teacher habitus for pre-service teachers, as it is described in autobiographical narratives. The research questions were as follows:

1. How do pre-service teachers describe the forms of primary socialization within their families that contributed to the development of their emerging teacher habitus?
2. How do autobiographical narratives portray the professional life and role enactment of family members who were teachers?
3. What characteristics of teacher family members are highlighted in the autobiographical accounts as significant in shaping pre-service teachers' social representation of a good teacher?

3. Findings

3.1. Primary socialization: the role of Significant Others in developing the teacher habitus

The first research question explored in the autobiographical essays concerned the role of pre-service teachers' families in developing their teacher habitus. Under this theme, the analysis of the essays revealed several categories of experiences and interactions that shaped their axiological patterns and career choices. Pre-service teachers commonly describe educational family practices and acculturation experiences as part of the context surrounding their decision to become teachers. Therefore, the codes used to select the categories of experiences were initially general codes regarding: 1) family members (parents, grandparents, or other relatives); 2) words that described the action (develop, influence, play, grow up, and so on), and 3) words that described the emphasized values and behaviours.

The repeated process of data analysis and data collection over the years revealed childhood experiences that shaped the pre-service teachers' identity and also encouraged them to pursue their interests:

Being born into a family with a musical history on the one hand, and on the other hand with mathematicians of different generations, I was able to develop in an environment in which both my creativity, sensitivity, and perception were stimulated, as well as the inclination towards rigor, seriousness, and analytical spirit (S. B. Musics)

The essays describe ways of living and experiences that broaden a person's understanding of their social and natural surroundings. As the next student writes, their grandparents' roles as teachers were crucial in shaping the child's interest in school life and in revealing talents and values aligned with the teaching profession:

My grandparents played a significant role in this stage of my life. My grandmother was a teacher, and my grandfather was a priest and professor. The fact that we spent most of our time together greatly influenced me. Additionally, their influence made the transition to school smooth, fueled by curiosity and creative energy.

Although naturally introverted, my favorite childhood game was gathering my toys in my room, giving them notebooks, and teaching them. I would then correct their homework, which I also wrote, as a way to exercise imagination and self-awareness. My family supported me throughout. My grandparents were key figures in the cultural capital I acquired within my family. Through their example, I built my own identity; through their approach to society, I discovered my own resources. My grandfather encouraged me to improvise and be present, while my grandmother taught me to be discreet and in control. Later, my mother's influence became prominent, as she was the female role model I looked up to during my early years. Through her, I found the motivation to create, to explore, and to contribute. (A.G., Visual Arts)

The autobiographical narratives describe the presence of teaching materials in the home where pre-service teachers grew up, or the memory of iconic objects related to a teacher's life, such as lesson plans, textbooks, or the red pencil:

The bookcases I played in front of were populated with textbooks, exercise books, and lesson plans. (T.M., Visual Arts).

I grew up among students' graded papers and the famous red pencil. (I. O., Visual Arts)

Pre-service students with family members who are teachers often received strong support and encouragement for learning:

Since I was little, I was encouraged to learn and practice extra, and I appreciated that. I was privileged in this respect because I had access to additional help from my uncle and aunt, both math teachers. (B. L., Math)

On the other hand, pre-service teachers trained to teach physical education emphasize the stereotypical features associated with this field, confirming the connection between occupational stereotypes and the self-perception of pre-service teachers as analyzed in previous studies (Spittle et al., 2012; Richards & Gaudreault, 2016).

As most of my family members are teaching physical education, I grew up in a sporty, disciplined, and authoritative environment. (S.A., Physical Education)

Pre-service teachers bring a set of predispositions and traits to teacher education programs that make them suitable for the teaching profession. The ones who developed a greater interest in pursuing a teaching career frequently played teaching pretend games as children, instructing peers, younger siblings, or dolls. This type of role-play helped them practice some key skills of a teacher, like empathy, organization, clear communication, and taking on a leadership role. Students from all faculties mentioned that teacher role play was a favorite game during their childhood:

Since childhood, I began to show an attraction towards a teaching career, being encouraged by my family, because a simple play with dolls turns into a math lesson in which I taught what my teacher taught me, I gave marks to the dolls, and my parents bought me a small board and helped me transform my corner of play into a small classroom. (A.G. Mathematics)

Teacher role-play was a valuable opportunity for students to internalize the behavior of their parent-teacher and replicate it:

What was my favorite game in middle school? To play school, of course. I liked to imitate my teachers and pretend to teach lessons to imaginary pupils. (L.P. Musics)

3.2. The observation of the teacher's role enactment in the family

Since childhood, many pre-service teachers have had the opportunity to get accustomed to the teaching role and to learn the practices of a teaching profession, observing their parents playing the role of a teacher. Under the broad category of role enactment behaviours, the codes that were developed over the analysis of the autobiographical essays were related to professional practices, such as teaching. Many pre-service students recall attending classes taught by their parents, which gave them the opportunity to observe them in the role of a teacher:

When I was little, because I finished classes early and my parents had no one to leave me home with, they decided to take me to their classes, so I ended up attending many courses taught by my parents. (S. L., Physics)

All students who are trained to become teachers come to the teacher training programs with hundreds of hours of observation of people performing this profession. Lortie (1975) called the influence of the internalization of teaching models during the time spent as pupils in close contact with teachers „apprenticeship of observation”. Under this theme, the autobiographical narratives reveal both positive and negative experiences related to the life of a teacher. In the case of pre-service teachers who had teachers as family members, this process of observing the teacher's work was part of their family life:

I come from a family of teachers, so I spent my entire childhood crafting various teaching materials for my parents' students that were essential in their classes. Most of the time, I was disappointed with the activities in my class compared to what my mother and aunt were teaching their students. I did not want to choose a teaching career because I witnessed the stress, fatigue, and the tremendous amount of work my family put in to have outstanding students. When I chose history as my passion and decided that this was what I wanted to pursue, I had other plans. Nevertheless, I ended up becoming a substitute teacher for one year, and it was the most beautiful experience of my life. (M.P., History).

Empathy and willingness to provide support are fundamental aspects of teachers' professional roles. Pre-service teachers appear to recognize the significance of these qualities for a teacher, as their autobiographical narratives reinforced their sense of presence among their families:

I grew up in a family environment where empathy, patience, and a desire to help were valued. (G. L., Theatre).

Therefore, having the opportunity to observe their family members enacting the teacher role, the pre-service students internalised the desirable behaviours of this profession and acknowledged their importance for their future career. Being a

teacher also means mastering didactic communication. The frequent observation of the didactic process led to a better understanding of the didactic strategies and of the process of student–teacher communication:

By witnessing the interactions between students and teachers, I was able to understand didactic communication and learn empathetic skills. (M. M., Visual Arts)

3.3. Family members as teachers – Role models in the family

The family (both nuclear and extended) has a decisive role in building the social representation of the teacher role. The autobiographical narratives show that many of those who opt for a teaching career had role models in their family that they followed throughout their childhood and adolescence, from whom they assimilated values, principles, and behavior models specific to the role of teacher, and to which aspirants for a teaching career refer when they define themselves professionally. Under the category of role models, the first type of selected codes was related to the family members who were mentioned as professional models. Some codes describe the central node of the social representation of a good teacher, meaning the most stable, consensual, and enduring elements of the representation (Abric, 1993), such as dedication and passion for teaching. Other codes were used to identify aspects of the peripheral system of the teaching profession's social representation.

The qualitative analysis of the autobiographical essays of pre-service teachers confirms the conclusion of Jacinto and Gersherson's quantitative study (2021), showing that mothers are the most influential figures:

I think that the primary model that influenced me to pursue a teaching career was my mother, because she was a teacher. Ever since kindergarten, I have spent quite a lot of time with her, observing her teaching. She encouraged me and continues to do so, and she has guided me towards this career. (E. A., Physical Education)

In my case, I can say that the teaching profession is inherited, because my mother is a teacher, a sensitive and devoted person to the profession. (D. B., Math)

Role models, with their transformative power, play a pivotal role in shaping anticipatory socialization and the construction of the social representation of a profession. The authors who have studied role models have also identified how they impact the individual: they can be a) behavioral models, b) representations of the possible, and c) sources of inspiration (Morgenroth et al., 2015). As behavioral models, role models can be explained through social learning theory, which states that new skills and behaviors are learned by observing or reproducing those relevant behaviors observed in role models (Bandura, 1969):

My mother is teaching at the University of Medicine. I have always seen her working with passion and preparing for her lectures. I have attended my mother's lectures since I was little, and she is a role model for me, with her quiet and calm, but at the same time very explicit way of teaching her students. (C. A., Psychology)

The role models in pre-service teachers' families taught them to choose the profession that is in agreement with their aspirations and inspired them to follow their professional path. The dedication, professionalism, and passion are mentioned by all the subjects, being incorporated in the central core of the social representation of this profession (Abric, 1996).

My grandmother, a Romanian language teacher, inspired my passion for learning, and especially for teaching others. Her dedication and professionalism made me want to follow in her footsteps. My mother was an educator, and one of the most important things I learned from her was to choose my profession in such a way that, when I arrive at work, I feel like I belong there. My mother's passion for her profession and her involvement made my path to choosing my future profession easier. (S. A., Social Work).

The vital role the teacher plays in the life of a child was also often highlighted by the autobiographical narratives:

My parents, both teachers, instilled in me the importance of education and respect for teachers, which led me to consider teaching a particularly valuable and respected career. (R. G., Physical Education)

For pre-service teachers, the social representation of the teaching profession includes not only positive features but also negative aspects of being a teacher. Among the elements in the peripheral system of the social representation of a teacher, autobiographical narratives mention the workload associated with this profession. Their own children have noticed teachers' exhaustion from a young age.

I grew up in a family of teachers: my father, mother, and grandmother were all teachers. I remember that, ever since I was little, I would see my parents coming home from school exhausted, even if they did not admit it. (S.A., Physical Education)

Despite being aware of the tremendous work of a teacher, the aspirants for a teaching profession learned that this is a gratifying career:

From my parents, I learned that the teaching profession requires much work, but also that a dedicated teacher has many rewards. (G. A., Maths)

4. Discussion

The family passes on to the next generation social values, aspirations, views on life, attitudes, and behavioral patterns. According to Bertaux and Thompson (2005), transmitting cultural and moral values is a long-term process, extending throughout childhood and schooling, and its effects are often still visible many years later. The autobiographical essays of pre-service teachers with teachers in their family reveal that their anticipatory socialization was fuelled by significant interactions and experiences that are incorporated into their teacher habitus. Their narratives show similar social and cultural values and attitudes, despite the different academic backgrounds of pre-service teachers. These findings align with the results of other studies, including Butt et al.'s

(2010) study, which emphasized the high professional status and acceptability of teaching within the families and communities of teacher candidates.

Habitus, as a framework of dispositions that guide children's future decisions, is connected to the family environment. It acts as a „micro-climate” (Aschbacher et. al., 2010) in which future teachers begin to develop a perception of what it means to be a teacher. Previous studies on the relationship between family habitus and academic aspirations have shown that family encouragement of learning and fostering science in the family's daily life are among the most important predictors of a child's future educational goals (Archer et al., 2012). Pre-service teachers share common socialization patterns, characterized by observing their family members in the teacher role and by active involvement in work related to the teaching profession.

Early studies in teacher socialization revealed that pre-service teachers strongly identify with the teacher role even before gaining actual field experience (Staton & Hunt, 1992). The analyzed essays offer detailed descriptions of how the teacher's role was performed during childhood. Female pre-service teachers often engaged in teacher pretend games, mimicking not only their teachers but also their parents in this role. Although pretend play alone does not determine career choices, it can influence a child's social, cognitive, and professional identity. The numerous examples in the autobiographical essays show many similarities in the early childhood experiences of pre-service teachers, as many participated in babysitting, tutoring, volunteering, or other informal educational activities that provided opportunities to practice the skills needed for teaching. These shared experiences contributed to the development of similar identity traits and a collective understanding of the teacher's role.

For pre-service teachers whose parents were teachers, the many hours spent observing their parents as educators form a latent culture that significantly influences their perceptions of the teaching role and their performance in that role (Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Gore, 1989; Borg, 2004). These meaningful interactions shape the social representation of a teacher's career. Pre-service teachers learn the most essential qualities of a good teacher and how society perceives teachers. They also understand the challenges of this profession and become aware of the hard work and exhaustion often experienced only by those who live with teachers—having the chance to grow up close to a teacher-parent enriched their image of a teacher with a multitude of shades.

As previous research has shown (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Butler, 2012; Aldrup et al., 2022), empathy is linked to high-quality teacher-student interactions and emotional support for students. The result of empathetic teacher behavior is effective classroom management and positive student growth. Many pre-service teachers highlighted empathy as a key trait of a good teacher, demonstrating their awareness of the importance of the emotional support that teachers provide to students.

Role models establish norms, attitudes, and values, inspiring future teachers to act in certain ways or take on specific roles. Previous research has shown that teachers' passion for teaching is a strong driver and has a motivating effect on students (Day, 2009; Serin,

2017). All family members who positively influenced pre-service teachers demonstrated a passion for their profession. Their enthusiasm was observed and internalized by future teachers since their childhood. As role models, all family members mentioned in the autobiographical essays who shared a passion for teaching offered future teachers numerous opportunities to observe and praise this behaviour. Family members, therefore, became not only behavioural models but also primary sources of inspiration for the future teaching career.

While this qualitative approach focused on pre-service teachers' subjective interpretations of their prior socialization toward a teaching career, future quantitative research will provide a more objective perspective. Since this research is based on autobiographical narratives and, therefore, on participants' memories, we should be aware that memory always constructs the past through social and cultural frameworks (Halbwachs, 2024). Narratives are often shaped by the "biographical illusion" (Bourdieu, 1986), which tends to present the past in a more positive light than the present. Another limitation of this study is that the sample consisted of pre-service teachers enrolled in the Sociology of Education course; thus, some academic specializations were underrepresented. Last but not least, the researcher also taught the Sociology of Education course. The roles of teacher-educator and researcher overlapped over the past five years, which could have influenced how the participants described their socialization process.

5. Conclusions

The teaching profession plays a crucial role in education, as teachers are often the most influential figures during critical stages of personal development. The quality of teachers, their levels of motivation, perceptions of a teaching career, and the values that guide them significantly impact the educational process and student-teacher interactions. Like many other countries, Romania faces a severe shortage of teachers, along with inadequate training and motivation for those entering the profession (Kitchen et al., 2017; OECD, 2020). In a society grappling with anomie and increasing polarization, teachers often feel confused about the expectations placed on them and about their professional identity.

In this context, exploring the role of prior socialization experiences that guide Romanian students toward a teaching career gave the chance to discover the teacher habitus that shapes their identity as educators. Although for those who are responsible for training future teachers, all these previous experiences are seen as incomplete, distorted, or representing myths or cultural representations of teaching, for students preparing to become teachers, this is the foundation from which they begin assimilating new knowledge. The pre-service teachers' primary socialization in relation to significant others who were teachers taught them not only about the duties and routines of a teacher's life but also how to interact with students, inspiring them to love a particular subject or aspire to become teachers themselves. This influence may be subtle, but it is strong and pervasive, manifesting itself later in a teaching career.

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