Social class (in)visibility and the professional experiences of middle class novice teachers.

Authors:

David Hall*,
School of Education, University of Manchester, Ellen Wilkinson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester.
M13 9PL. UK dave.hall@manchester.ac.uk   ++44(0)161 275 6946

Lisa Jones, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Wilberforce Building, Cottingham Road,
Hull. HU6 7RX. UK. L.M.Jones@hull.ac.uk

*Corresponding author

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Author biographical details:

David Hall is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester. He is an education policy researcher
whose work has focused upon teachers and educational institutions responding to social change.
His research has been funded by organisations including the Economic and Social Research Council and
the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Lisa Jones is currently involved in both teaching and research at the University of Hull. Her research
interests focus on issues of social class and social justice in education, with a strong interest in schooling
and teaching in areas with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

Abstract:

This article focuses upon the classed and early professional experiences of middle class novice teachers in England experiencing and contemplating working in schools serving socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Through an examination of the visibility and invisibility of social class in education set within an increasingly unequal and changed social landscape the article reports upon research which seeks to better understand the class identities of these teachers. Evidence is presented of the key, yet complex role that social class occupies within the working lives of new teachers and reveals the different ways in which teachers respond to the classed dimensions of their early professional experiences. It is concluded that the fundamentally important role social class plays in terms of shaping early professional experiences in teaching suggests the need not only for a commensurately enhanced focus as part of early professional development, but also for attention that is sensitively attuned to the class identities of teachers.

Key words: class identity; social class; middle class; socio-economic disadvantage; novice teachers.

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Introduction

Previous work focusing upon the professional experiences and social backgrounds of those working in education has largely focused upon teachers from working class backgrounds making the transition into a predominantly middle class profession (Maguire 2001; 2005a; Burn 2001). There is good reason in the current context to also explicitly focus upon the professional experiences of middle class teachers. Evidence from the higher education sector (Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2010) points to a narrowing social class basis at the more elite universities in the UK restricting the social mix to which many undergraduates are exposed, potentially limiting the range of social experiences of some middle class graduates. This has significant implications for those teachers who progress to initial teacher education programmes in such universities in terms of their prior social and educational experiences. It is interesting in this regard that recent developments in teacher training in England have actively encouraged middle class teachers from elite universities to pursue careers in schools serving working class communities. The rise to prominence of Teach First, in particular, has had the effect of placing significant numbers of middle class graduates in schools serving some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged working class communities (Smart et al. 2009).

The changes to both higher education in general and initial teacher education more specifically are, of course not restricted to either England or the UK. For example, the rise to prominence of Teach First was directly linked to the development of Teach for America which, in turn, has spawned a globally branded movement including Teach for Australia. Similarly changes in the social composition of elite universities can be viewed as reflecting wider social and economic change. In particular, the restructuring of society around starker and steeper social inequalities with an accompanying widening of social divisions (OECD 2011) has potentially important implications for teachers entering the profession in many countries. They are beginning their working lives in a much altered socio-economic climate in which, it might be anticipated, widened social inequalities have led to changes in the recognition of social class differences. These developments raise questions about how new teachers from middle-class backgrounds in this much changed

socio-economic landscape experience teaching or the prospect of teaching in environments potentially socially and economically different from those with which they have been previously familiar. How far have their professional identities been formed in relation to their social class? Has there been a blunting of perceptions in relation to class differences or has social class persisted as a means by which new teachers make sense of their experiences when faced with such differences?

Asking these questions was part of an attempt to understand better how social class has endured in the working lives of new teachers from middle class backgrounds. Whether the actuality or prospect of teaching in socio-economically disadvantaged working class schools enables such teachers to recognize themselves as classed and correspondingly whether it might be akin to the removal of a social class invisibility cloak.

Social class visibility and invisibility in education

Education and social class in affluent capitalist societies have for a number of decades been viewed as inextricably linked in a range of complex and dynamic ways (Jencks 1972;   Mortimore and Whitty 1997) and schooling has been seen to play an active role in (re)producing class inequalities in wider society (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). In England, the context for the research reported upon in this paper, as in other affluent countries (Raffo et al. 2010) working class children in general do less well than their middle class counterparts in an education system that can act to exclude them whilst simultaneously systematically advantaging middle class children (Ball 2006). It follows from this analysis that education is best viewed not as a class-neutral space but instead as 'classed' in ways that have endured through widespread socio-economic and cultural change. So whilst class formations may have changed and the lived experiences of individuals and groups may have shifted in line with the transition to a post-industrial society, the importance of class in making sense of education in general and schooling in particular has the potential to remain as a highly visible presence.

Although as described above the importance of social class to an understanding of education remains pressing, social class also occupies a simultaneous role as an invisible feature of education. Here social class within education can be viewed as the means through which dominant middle class values are normalised (Bourdieu 1984). This invisibility of social class can be located at least in part within the very different experiences of education by middle class and working class young people. Such invisibility is viewed as reflecting wider evidence of changes in the place of social class in contemporary Britain where it has been commonly spurned by research participants who have frequently ceased to view social class as a valued means of discussing their lives (Savage et al. 2001; Skeggs 1997).

Within this complex terrain of simultaneous class visibility and invisibility an exploration of the class identities of teachers, and in particular, novice teachers, offers important explanatory purchase in terms of better understanding how ongoing educational processes may simultaneously cause and be caused by class inequities. This paper therefore works actively with Van Galen's (2004) argument that teaching and understanding the identities of teachers should, at least in part, be seen as 'class work'. It builds upon previous work which reveals how the class experiences (and values) of novice teachers are not only diverse but are likely to pre-dispose them to having affinities to some teaching contexts whilst distancing them from others (Hall et al. 2005; Ash et al. 2006; Raffo and Hall 2006).

Class identities and the normality of middle classness

The notion of a class identity (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2001), as used in this paper, draws on cultural understandings of class (Bourdieu 1984) locating our work within notions of social class that focus not just upon economic factors, but also upon its reproduction and transformation through culture and social interaction. As the cultural and social aspects of class become more central to understanding those ways in which class may work, the formation of (class) identities and associated attitudes and social practices become particularly pertinent (Devine 1997).

Such understandings of class identity and the importance of social and cultural reproduction in education (Bourdieu 1973) whereby middle class cultures are both normalised and 'invisibly' reproduce

social inequalities have found particular resonance in England (Ball 1993; 2003; Gewirtz et al. 1994; 1995). English education policy has worked in ways that have been seen to prize 'middle class rather than working class cultural capital' (Reay 2006, 294). An important consequence of this has been the normalisation of middle class practices in schooling which render social class as invisible in relation to middle classness whilst simultaneously distancing themselves from working class children, their families and communities; a process commonly referred to as 'othering' in sociological literature (Gewirtz 2001; Maguire et al 2006; Reay 2008).

The invisibility of social class is also a feature of official documentation relating to the professional preparation of novice teachers (Reay 2004; Gazeley and Dunne 2007) including the non-appearance of references to social class and/or its relationship to education in the nationally prescribed standards for Qualified Teacher Status in England required of all new teachers in this context. Instead a strong emphasis is placed upon the technical aspects of teaching aiming to equip teachers with skills that are deemed most likely to contribute to the raising of nationally measured attainment levels. This approach is largely replicated in the initial teacher education and training (ITET) programmes operated by higher education institutions and schools in which tightly monitored and prescribed programmes offer strictly limited exposure to ideas about the relationship between education and social class.

In line with these arguments, there is good reason to believe that the early professional experiences of novice teachers occur in school settings that may also encourage class invisibility. Many middle class novice teachers train to teach in universities and schools where for a variety of reasons, including for example the predominantly middle class profile of young people attending those institutions, the normality of their middle classness may be neither challenged nor interrupted to any significant extent. In schools the educational attainments of working class students may be either rendered invisible via a 'classless' discourse or viewed as a natural outcome of class related deficits in their lives both inside and/or outside of the school gates. In those schools serving high proportions of young people from working class backgrounds a focus upon the technical and performative aspects of schooling may also serve to distract from social class as a

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factor shaping educational experiences whereby reflective and reflexive practice is limited to those aspects deemed most likely to lead to higher attainment in national tests (Ball 2003).

This simultaneous visibility and invisibility of social class within education in England raises important questions about the early professional experiences of novice teachers. As referred to earlier, research has focused upon the classed experiences of teachers from working class backgrounds as they move into the professional world of the middle classes (Maguire 2001; 2005; Burn 2001), but rather less attention has been paid to the experiences of middle class teachers as they encounter the working classes. It raises questions for those middle class novice teachers who, for whatever reason, actively seek to work in or find themselves working in schools serving large proportions of working class young people about the extent to which social class is a visible or invisible presence in their professional lives and whether social class invisibility can indeed remain tenable for middle class novice teachers who experience the working class 'other'. This has important implications not only for better understanding the early professional experiences of novice teachers in an increasingly unequal wider socio-economic context but also for understanding how middle class novice teachers experiencing or choosing to work in such settings might be better supported and developed as reflexive practitioners.

Researching classed identities

This article reports upon one strand of the findings from two closely linked and small scale qualitative studies of novice teachers (Hall et al. 2005; Jones 2010). The research participants, all graduates, were enrolled on Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programmes at one of two research intensive, Russell Group universities located within large cities in England. In total nineteen novice teachers were interviewed (ten in the first project, nine in the other), selected via purposive sampling from an earlier questionnaire that all beginning teachers at these institutions were asked to complete. Semi-structured interviews were the main method of data collection and interviews took place on at least three occasions during the PGCE year and then subsequently during their first year post-qualification. Pseudonyms have been given to all research participants reported upon in this article.

Before examining these novice teachers' accounts of their early professional experiences it is important to briefly comment upon a significant change to our questioning of participants that occurred during our research. In the first project, when interviewing participants, social class was not explicitly discussed as part of the research. This reflected a concern at the time of the research that imposing the concept of social class upon our research participants might inappropriately pre-empt a discussion of social class and serve to displace other conceptualisations of their professional experiences. Pete, reported upon below, was a participant in this project. However, in the second project the notion of social class was specifically raised by us during interviews. Simon and Lucy, reported upon below, were participants in this second project. This change of approach between the two projects reflected our emerging experience of researching in this area where, as we had found, failing to specifically raise the issue of social class was frequently met with silence. Whilst this might be interpreted as supporting the view that social class occupies a position of declining or limited importance (Lash and Urry 1994; Beck 1992) in the lives of our participants, it was viewed by the researchers as potential evidence that the difficulty many people have in articulating social class is part of its enduring power   (Sennett and Cobb 1993). Therefore the issue of social class was explicitly raised with participants in the second project so that they could be afforded the opportunity to speak to this matter for themselves. Either way this issue serves to highlight the constructed nature of the narratives offered in the accounts that follow in which both our research participants and ourselves as researchers played important roles.

In presenting our findings from this work we have focused upon three individuals. We do not offer these cases as representative of the experiences of teachers from middle class backgrounds contemplating and/or experiencing working in schools serving socio-economically backgrounds nor do we claim that their experiences are necessarily typically middle class. Indeed, given the diversity and range of middle class experiences in contemporary England combined with the sharpening of divisions within the middle classes themselves, this seems an increasingly implausible notion. Nevertheless we do believe that they help to illuminate the different ways in which class visibility and invisibility play an important but far from straightforward role in the early professional lives of teachers.

The professional and classed experiences of three novice teachers

Pete

Pete was in his mid-thirties when he began his PGCE course. He was brought up in a large, relatively socio-economically advantaged town[1] located in a semi-rural part of the county in which it was located; the son of parents who both worked for the Civil Service. He attended a local comprehensive school whose pupil population largely reflected the demographics of its locality and attended a Russell Group university. Prior to joining the PGCE course Pete had pursued a career working for multinational businesses in various management capacities. He explained his decision to make a career change into teaching as follows:

> Because I lost the appetite for business and I enjoyed management. I enjoyed leading people, leading teams, delivering…but… I lost the rationale about why I was doing it…so I moved into teaching with the specific intention as a career to develop …hopefully one day becoming a head teacher myself…because while I lost the desire for doing it for profit I found after I spent a lot of time thinking about it, I have always been interested in education and developing people. Therefore this was an opportunity to combine that with my management skills.

The ambition to become headteacher of a school was reinforced later in the first interview:

> I have come in to become a headmaster of schools which have failed and become one of those people that make a difference in terms of that. As I said it is my ambition and long term aim, whether I achieve it or not is another thing. I have no desire to work in schools which currently already are great.

When Pete began a period of continuous school experience during his PGCE year he described his school, Sewell Row, serving a high proportion of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds as follows:

> My experience so far has been one of genuine shock. I was blown away by the attitude and the almost viciousness with which the children treated each other and the staff.

Pete's initial reaction to this in an early interview was not to explore differences between this school and the one he had attended as a pupil; instead it was to stress the commonalities between this secondary school and the one he had attended as a pupil:

> I am sure that my school was very similar to the school I am in, but when I was a kid it did not really seem that bad

There may be a variety of reasons why Pete chose to stress these commonalities. They might reflect childhood memories possibly less attuned to socio-economic difference or they may have enabled Pete to gain a sense of security when faced with what was clearly a significant professional challenge for him. Equally this focus upon commonalities might have acted as a valuable discursive tool allowing for the avoidance of a sense of distance between himself and his new pupils as he sought build working relationships with the children in this new context. It must also be noted that there is also some tension with this notion of commonality as he adds 'but when I was a kid it did not really seem that bad', as if he is not entirely comfortable with the account he is offering. Nevertheless in stressing these commonalities, Pete is rendering social class invisible by overlooking important and class based differences between this school and the one he attended himself as a pupil.

For Pete an important mediating factor in terms of his capacity to adapt to the 'shock' of working at Sewell Row was the nature of the newly appointed leadership team of the school possessing what Pete recognised as a very strong focus upon raising attainment levels. Pete was very admiring of this leadership team and readily identified with their aims. Similarly when discussing the inner city school with a high proportion of young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds where he had secured his first teaching position Pete said:

> It fitted every single one of the things that… I was looking for….It's a school with a very strong headteacher, good leadership team... a reputedly very good staffroom… it's got a very tough catchment area, but its result…a very slow gradual process, not a quick charge up the league tables, but it's slowly improving.

From this perspective the nature of a school leadership team's orientation can be seen as contributing to Pete's capacity to accommodate himself to those school contexts in which he found himself.

In understanding this it is important to refer again to Pete's ambitions for himself in the teaching profession. Pete regularly discussed his career change and new experiences on his PGCE course with a group of close friends and with his parents. He referred to his friends as largely very supportive:

> It's getting to the point where occasionally where I feel I am some kind of martyr, because they end up singing my praises to everyone saying, you know he's given up his job and he's gone into teaching what a hero.

What emerges from this is a clear sense that there is status and kudos to be derived by Pete from his peer network directly arising out of his move into teaching and, in particular, into teaching in 'inner city' areas. However, Pete's perception is that his parents did not necessarily share this view:

> I was the shining star…I was earning more money than….and to some extent money is always seen as a bit of a sign of social status and I think my parents were very proud…now they have to explain that their son is a teacher rather….or just a teacher…as opposed to being the manager of a blue chip company, which was far more exotic. I guess they'll be slightly happier if I do become a headmaster. They are not unhappy. They are not unsupportive

Here there is again evidence of social class in Pete's account linked to his anxiety about his change of status and how it might impact on his parents. His ambition to become a school headteacher can be seen in this context as being directly linked to the bridging of a perceived class based status deficit, both in terms of the increased remuneration received by headteachers and the accompanying status associated with the occupation. As such, this may be viewed as a strategy designed to bolster his position within the middle classes at a time when it is under some threat from his transition to teaching.

In this account of Pete's early experiences in the teaching profession social class is never explicitly discussed. There is no direct recognition of classed dimensions of his work as a teacher and there is a sense that the normality of his middle classness is being maintained by seeking fragile comparisons with his own experiences of school. In this way Pete's anxieties about handling social and cultural distance between himself and his pupils and their families can be viewed as remaining submerged beneath this lack of

recognition. For Pete this invisibility of social class may well serve at least some of his ambitions, not least smoothing his intended path to becoming a leader in a 'tough' school and it may well be that our omission as researchers of social class was not entirely unwelcome for Pete. Indeed, it might be speculated that any troubling of his middle class identity may well have been viewed at this particular point in his professional development as at best inconvenient and, at worst, an unwelcome intrusion. However in creating this account of Pete as a middle class entrant to the profession intent upon rapid promotion to a headship, it is important to remind ourselves that Pete did not have the same opportunities as Simon and Lucy to discuss his own class identity including the description of himself as middle class. In constructing this narrative the invisibility of social class can therefore be viewed as very much a joint enterprise between the researchers and Pete.

Simon

Simon was in his early 20s at the start of his PGCE. He grew up in a relatively advantaged semi-rural area and was, like Pete, the son of civil servants. He attended a single-sex 11-18 independent boarding school throughout his secondary education, then a Russell Group university for his first degree. On completion of this, Simon worked for a governmental agency for one year before deciding 'desk work' was 'not for me' and enrolling on the PGCE.

Unlike Pete, Simon was asked at the beginning of our research to state his social class in a short questionnaire. Simon had left this blank and on being asked why, he responded this way:

> Simon: Well, I'm probably about as middle class as they come. I don't know, I just felt a bit weird, I don't feel particularly affiliated to a social class, but I can see a lot people probably do. In terms of accent and playing rugby or whatever, people sort, make kind of, you know, but like I don't feel particularly affiliated.
>
> Researcher: So for mainly that reason do you see class as something that is there and relevant but that you don't particularly affiliate to those definitions or…
>
> Simon: Yes, I just like, there's loads of middle class kids in Willow [one of his PGCE placement schools] and you can probably see the parents fashioning them to be lawyers or whatever it is what you want to be…

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As can be seen, Simon explains that from an outsider's perspective, he would look 'as middle class as they come'. However he then talks of his lack of affiliation to and discomfort with this self-identification with being middle class; something he believes others might place him within. In part at least this can be associated with his perception that it infers a set of negative attitudes associated with a middle classness highlighted by his comments about the 'pushy' nature of middle class parenting practices.

Simon further distances himself and his choice to be a teacher from his 'class' and educational background when he talks of his peers from school and whether any of them had also gone into teaching:

> …they might be a little bit too money driven to go for it themselves but erm, they've been very encouraging but it was something they hadn't considered themselves and, knowing them as I do, probably never would.

However, when asked about any situations in which his middle class identity is more pronounced, he said:

> I think the spur for success that I had at my school and from my family, you know my family wouldn't accept less than, as in my exams and stuff, and equally my school wouldn't accept anything less than 100% success. I think, the spur to success I think is something that is quite middle middle class… and materially, part of what I do is teach languages and you know one of my kind of hobbies is travelling so I think sort of getting the money to go on holiday and to travel was something that is quite middle class.

In tension with his earlier account of his social class, Simon here is exploring those aspects of his background that identify him as having come from a middle class background. In particular, he can be seen aligning his class and educational experiences to those children and parents at the placement school that he earlier distanced himself from. In part at least this tension in his class identity can be viewed as being tied to his desire to become a particular type of teacher; one that is positioned as being at odds with the 'middle class' traits described above. This type of teacher is one who works in an inner city comprehensive, a setting very different to his own education:

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> I think that in terms of education… a lot of the challenging things around socio-economic issues, these are the sort of issues I would like to work with... I feel that I have been what you would say quite privileged in my personal education and I would like to give a bit back as it were… I'm in danger of sounding a bit clichéd but y'know the problems of drug abuse, real poverty, violence, underachievement in education, and it's something I would like to contribute to.

So, as we saw earlier, when faced with class difference, Pete seemingly attempted to address this by likening his own class background and educational experiences to those of the children he taught in a way that can be viewed as bolstering the normality of his middle classness. Simon however attempts to handle this very differently. Instead of seeking to normalise his middle classness, he distances himself from a classed value set associated with being middle class. So for Simon the importance of social class invisibility can be located less in the class 'other' than in a desire to make invisible, or less visible, his own middle classness. It is quite possible that at this stage in his career Simon views his middle class identity as potentially threatening to his desire to become a successful teacher in a predominantly working class school.

Lucy

Another response to handling a middle class identity is offered by Lucy, an independently educated graduate of a Russell Group university in her early twenties. When explicitly prompted Lucy identified herself as having a middle class identity:

> I suppose it's a cultural thing isn't it? Partly, my parents' professions with them both being teachers, I see my dad as being middle class from a middle class family, as in being relatively comfortable in money terms, whereas my mother comes from a working class Newcastle family, her dad was an engineer and I see my mum as being middle class because of education in a way… I don't know, I do sometimes feel I've had a very, almost embarrassingly middle class archetype and lots of my parents' family are artists, or there has always been lots of talk of art and literature, and my mum's really into theatre, and they've kind of thrown culture at me all the way through in that kind of way... So, I think it's that, a cultural thing.

Here Lucy sees her own class as linked primarily to culture and her own background as being an 'almost embarrassingly middle class archetype', yet despite this clear representation of herself she also highlights through reference to her mother's working class background some complexity in her class location.

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For Lucy, an acknowledgment of having had a privileged education created tensions with deciding where she wanted to teach after the PGCE programme:

> I mean it's a really difficult decision for me that question…coz politically I want to teach in a comprehensive school and I feel committed to that but I also had a fantastic time in independent education and loved the school I was at… I think it's really difficult because there's the kind of, there's a real pull between the idealist in me and the kind of crusading teacher which is horrible as well and you're kind of thinking you've got to be realistic but you know, part of you thinks yeah I want to go make a difference and be constructively useful somewhere… that would be far more challenging for me as a person than going in somewhere where I found things much easier… but there is of course the other side that makes you feel well I don't want to, and I'm a worrier as well so I'm aware that wherever I am, I will worry and I will sort of want to do my best and want to be effective and there's a balance between driving myself mad and actually being comfortable…

Here Lucy discusses the notion of the 'crusading' teacher as being something that was simultaneously both appealing and distasteful to her and the tension between what might be described as the 'idealist' and 'realist' in her. These tensions can be interpreted as being classed as Lucy chooses between schools where she would feel more 'comfortable' and find 'things much easier' and those where she might drive herself 'mad'.

Lucy only applied to one school towards the end of her PGCE and was offered a post there. The school was a state maintained institution but a high attaining one that was much sought-after by local parents, serving a semi-rural area that is relatively advantaged with low levels of socio-economically disadvantaged pupils. This school seemingly enabled Lucy to reconcile her earlier tensions about finding a school environment that was as enjoyable as her own experience but that was not at odds with her perception of herself. However, even though Lucy recognised the social advantages of the school: 'I think the area that it's situated in kind of makes it strangely selective in a way just because we've got a very high proportion of kids coming in from quite wealthy backgrounds', she also felt keen to defend its 'comprehensive' label:

> …[it] is possible that some people would resent the school or would feel that as a school it's easy for it to be a good school because of where it is situated or whatever… Well personally I don't sort of agree with that because I think you can't know what kind of lives these kids have just because there are always going to be issues...

Here Lucy is defending the school's comprehensive intake but this follows talk of how the area has a kind of selective effect, referring to it as 'a covetable catchment'. These are arguably classed processes but interestingly these are not named as such by Lucy. She also fails to later identify the school as having a predominantly middle class intake when given the option to do so. Instead class is rendered invisible in discussing the context in which she now founds herself. Lucy's unease at using explicit and visible class discourses in the context of schooling is again highlighted when she was asked to reflect whether she felt class impacted on a child's educational outcomes:

> I feel as though it does but then I feel uncomfortable saying that because I don't want it to be true but I sort of feel as though... some of the students at school kind of do end up being very much grouped together perhaps because of the setting like we talked about whatever and seem to have quite similar experiences of background and education and that it does seem to kind of pan out that way... I suppose as well I feel kind of, I feel it's very difficult to talk about it without kind of saying things that feel unacceptable or you know what I mean like I sort of end up saying things and then feeling that they don't quite sound how I mean them to sound or they sound very judgmental or whatever

Here Lucy appears to be aware of class differences in education but struggles to talk about them without fear of being 'judgmental'. Thus Lucy identifies as having a middle class identity and by implication rejects the invisibility of class. Simultaneously however as talking about class is uncomfortable territory for Lucy, a veil is drawn over social class when discussing class in relation to those groups/individuals less socio-economically advantaged than herself.

Conclusion

The article offers evidence of complexities in the role that social class plays within the professional lives of a group of early career teachers from middle class backgrounds. The way in which these teachers experienced professional tensions linked to their classed identities has been demonstrated to vary significantly between the individuals discussed and linked in part to the visibility. When as part of the research the term 'class' was not used in order to enquire into the early professional experiences of middle class novice teachers it remained largely absent from the discursive constructions of the research participants. When conversely the term 'class' was used research participants were largely willing to engage

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in explicitly classed discourses in which the visibility of social class, most especially in relation to their own lives, was clearly present. Although as Lucy's case attests, once class had been introduced into the research process it could fade from accounts of educational experiences.

These findings can be usefully contrasted with research reported upon earlier in this article where social class was frequently rejected by research participants as not offering a valued means of representing their lives. What distinguished the research participants here was their willingness to readily engage with the concept of class once it had been explicitly introduced into our interviews suggestive of an appetite for an explicitly classed focus upon their professional experiences. This is viewed as reflecting the troubling, at least in class terms, professional experience and anticipation of being required to teach in schools with significant proportions of young people from working class backgrounds.

So although social class occupies a troublesome and complex role within the professional lives of these novice teachers its' fundamentally important role in terms of shaping their early experiences of the profession suggest that it merits a commensurately enhanced attention as part of their early professional development. However, whilst for all three of the teachers there were tensions between the teachers they wished to become and their classed identities, the forms which these tensions took varied significantly for each individual and required extensive discussions to explore and unravel. As seen earlier in this article Pete sought to normalise his middle classness, Simon sought to distance himself from his middle classness and Lucy moved between openly identifying with her middle class background, whilst simultaneously struggling to talk openly about class in her work. In addition, the relationship to the class 'other' was found to be more complex than a narrow interpretation of class 'othering' might suggest. In particular, for Simon the importance of social class invisibility was located not so much in relation to the class 'other', but more in relation to his discomfort with his own middle classness.

This complexity in the relationship these novice teachers had both with their own class identities and the (in)visibility of social class suggests that a one size fits all approach, bounded by one or a small number of teaching 'inputs', will not offer the kind of support required by novice teachers if they are to engage with social class in ways sensitive to their own classed identities. Indeed, it is reasonable to speculate within the

context of the cases presented that such limited exposure might contribute to social class invisibility as novice middle class teachers threatened by such divulgence retreat into a discourse of classlessness. In short it can be argued that sensitive recognition of middle class novice teachers' class identities is an important prerequisite to further exploration of and challenge to these identities as part of their continuing education as teachers.

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