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DISSERTATION

**THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHER FORMATION
AMONG 1ST-YEAR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS
IN A COMPOSITION PROGRAM**

Submitted by

Sue R. Doe

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fall 2001

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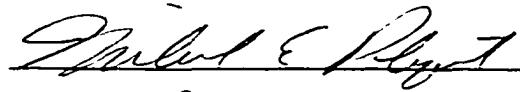
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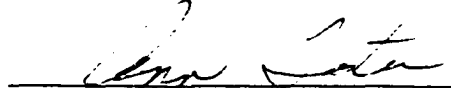
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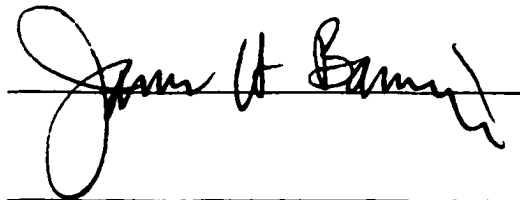
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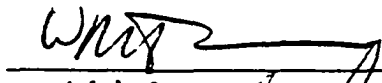
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TEACHER FORMATION AMONG 1ST-YEAR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN A COMPOSITION PROGRAM

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of 1st-year graduate teaching assistants (TAs) engaged in their first semester of college teaching and a rigorous teacher training program. TAs were interviewed about their educational life stories at the beginning and at the end of the first semester of teaching. They also maintained a daily teaching log and wrote one or more critical event narratives, recounting teaching experiences that changed their teaching practice or their thinking about teaching. TAs were also interviewed about their analyses of critical events. At the end of the first semester of teaching the study group TAs gathered together to share teaching stories in a Story Swap.

Subsequent to the first phase of the study, two focus groups were formed—one representing 2nd-year TAs and the other representing faculty/supervisors in the composition program. These focus groups were queried for confirming and disconfirming data regarding the experiences and observations of the 1st-year TA group. They were also encouraged to discuss their own teaching experiences, educational histories, and current teaching concerns.

The results of this study suggest a grounded theory for understanding teacher formation among graduate teaching assistants. TA teacher formation can be understood to be a constellation of complex forces, including an evolution from novice to expert practice, adult development issues, psycho-social influences from individual educational and life histories, sex-class linked discourse practices and gender influences more generally, the individual's narrative reconstruction of teaching experience and identity, and the natural rhythms of the teaching semester and year.

Finally, this study demonstrates that the TA experience is a uniquely human experience, filled with both the pain and joy of new learning.

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In 1903, William James lamented the rise of the “Ph.D. Octopus” which he described as the disdainful and self-serving process undertaken by universities to preclude many and promote a few from ever achieving access to the rewards of the academic life style. His choice of the octopus—a deep-dwelling marine animal with eight sucker-bearing arms—was a deliberately monstrous and wretched analogy, meant to startle his colleagues and warn his protégés. Beware, he more or less urged. The ocean is deep, dark and unfathomable.

Having spent the last twenty or so years teaching within institutions of higher learning—first as a graduate teaching assistant, then as a part-time adjunct, later as a full-time adjunct, and only once as a fully paid professional, I seriously weighed the frightening prospects of meeting the Octopus against the everyday miseries of adjunct teaching. For years I kept the Octopus as a figment of my imagination, and then one day I decided to meet him on his own terms. Alas, the monster does not suffer fools gladly, and having met him, I tell you I would not care to meet him again. With the help of a good many people, however, he has allowed me to pass through his murky world.

First among these good people were past teachers Tom Newkirk and Robin Metz, whose advice and support were always central to my decision-making. Both of these teachers made me a believer in the power of story. Second were the several people who supported my study through their generous contributions of money that funded my research—Kate Kiefer, Mike Palmquist, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the CSU English Department, and the Center for Research on Writing and Community Technologies. I would also like to thank Donna LeCourt and Steve Reid, whose willingness to help with my study was both generous and brave. Pattie Cowell, former chair of the English Department, was also instrumental in providing access to the resources of the English Department. Office managers Cathy Topf, Marcia Aune, and Sue Russell were always willing to help, no matter what the question.

Fellow creative writers and writing group members, John Calderazzo, SueEllen Campbell, Pattie Cowell, Mark Fiege, David Mogen, and Gerry Callahan were sources of inspiration and support. They were always willing to discuss my dissertation as if it were a piece of inspired creative writing, and their own remarkable writing contributed directly to my sanity and healthy perspective.

Behind every successful woman, there's another woman, and so I would like to thank Jan Spight for keeping my house clean and Joan Karston for making my haircut appointments (the appointments, not the haircuts) the only funny thing that would happen for, often, six weeks at a time. Joan, you are the best kind of therapy. Also CSU student Alicia Bagherian, who supported my family throughout this ordeal; Alicia, I am happy to call you “friend.” Thanks also to my dear friends bun-a Hunter, Carrie Bailey, Suzi Moran, Angela Calabro, Karen Hawkinson, and Betty Ince, who could always be counted on for a good laugh, a phone call, or even a meal.

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I thank my committee—Professors Bill Timpson, Jim Banning, Ann Foster, and Mike Palmquist for their support throughout the process, and especially for always treating me like a colleague. Thanks also to Jody Moore, the best public school teacher I have ever known and to Karen Catalano, the best college teacher I've ever known. Together, the two of you inspired me to seek the Ph.D. in the field of education. Thanks, also, to Andy Kinard, who shared his first-year public school teaching stories with me as they were happening and in so doing enormously enriched my understanding of induction issues.

Also I would like to thank my children—Adam, Steve, and Maggie--whose zest for life could not be squashed by a simple thing like a preoccupied mother. Dear ones, I do not deserve you. Thank you so much for giving me daily reasons to get out of the house.

Thanks especially to my husband Bill, who warned me that I would be sorry I sought out the Octopus. Alas, you are still the only Ph.D. I know who wrote his dissertation in 10 days. May your record stand forever! Thank you for all those trips to the library, for your reluctant though accomplished computer savvy, for content suggestions and editing corrections, for meals you made and meals you went without. Here's to our next great adventure. May it, at long last, involve some fun!

And finally, to the six 1st-year TAs who participated in this study. I am forever indebted to you for your courage, openness, and collegiality during the course of my research. Although not your true identities, Jen, Mark, Jack, Sadie, Leah, and Tess, you know who you are and you know what you've done! It would be a gross oversimplification to say that your teaching stories and life stories provided a far richer and more meaningful context than I could ever have imagined. Thank you for taking me along on your journey. I hope that my record here of your pain and your celebration does justice to your rich experience. I know that the university joins me in thanking you for the dedicated way you approached your first experiences in college teaching. Thank you as well to the 2nd-year TAs and faculty who participated in the focus groups. By participating, you have contributed to the future of college teaching.

DEDICATION

**To Bill, the only person who knows the whole story behind this story.
Thank you for keeping the faith, even when I could not.**

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Higher Education Context

In today's university, both veteran and novice college faculty are under increasing pressure to improve their teaching, especially in light of widespread demands for accountability in undergraduate teaching (See, for instance, Boyer, 1990; Glassic, Huber & Maeroff, 1997). At the same time, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs or, simply TAs) account for a large proportion of the teaching done in introductory courses taught at large, research universities. Of 393 institutions surveyed in the 1992 National Survey of Teaching Assistant Training Programs and Practices, commissioned by the American Association of Higher Education, 71% indicated that they have TA training programs in place (Lambert & Stice, 1993, p. 5). Meanwhile, the unionization of TAs on campuses across the United States is a relatively new phenomenon, suggesting the growing ambivalence TAs feel about their roles. In 1999, for instance, University of California TAs received union recognition and produced over 9,000 card-carrying TAs, readers, and tutors for the local United Auto Workers Union. Some skeptics have argued that in an age of radically diminishing union rolls, it's unclear whether TAs are being exploited more by their employers or by their unions.

Today's TAs, like their professor-predecessors before them, possess little teaching experience--and often, little inclination to teach--when they arrive at the university. Once at the university, TAs' teaching preparation varies greatly, depending upon the size, history, and mission of the institution and the program. Yet TAs are the

so-called “future professoriate,” and, as such, represent the future of college teaching. They also represent an important opportunity for universities to demonstrate their commitment to the professional development of the college teacher.

Access: The Demographics of Higher Education

The new emphasis on undergraduate teaching derives in part from the new demographics of higher education. The trend in the United States, since at least 1862 and passage of the First Morrill Act, has been toward increasing levels of educational attainment for greater numbers of citizens. In 1990, for instance, the U.S. Bureau of the Census reported that over the period 1940-1990 the percentage of high school graduates tripled from an average 25% to 75% of the relevant population and the percentage of college graduates quadrupled from 5% to 20% (p. 1A). Open enrollment policies at publicly funded institutions of higher education have further expanded the educational opportunities to an increasingly diverse group of U.S. citizens, with the Census reporting in 1990 that among adults age 25-34, nearly the same proportion of women as men earned bachelor’s degrees (p. 1A). Further, the Second Morrill Act of 1890, which secured land-grant college status for a number of traditionally Black American colleges, came on the heels of the Civil War and helped mark “the end of a 244- year era (1619-1863) during which the Negro was held in slavery, an era in which it was considered a criminal offense to instruct the Negro in any but the most rudimentary of domestic skills” (Neyland, 1990, p. 1).

One hundred years later, college access was still expanding when the land-grant mission was extended via the 1994 passage of the Native American Land Grant Universities and Colleges Act, authorizing \$23 million for 29 existing Indian institutions

of higher education (S1345, 1993). Recent analyst of land-grant universities, John Campbell (1995), has suggested that one direction of higher education must be toward increasing levels of responsibility for the access-performance equation; that is, as access broadens, skill levels of graduate must keep pace.

Accountability: The New Performance Agenda

We find ourselves in a new age of accountability in higher education (Scanlon, 1999; White, 1998). James Carlin, former chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, has pointed out that colleges and universities amount to a \$200 billion-a-year industry (Clayton, 1999). As a result, performance-based budgeting (Marklein, 1998) has resulted in university publication of performance outcomes and indicators (Draper, 1996), in college warranties (Marklein, 1997; Colvin, 1999, Magnuson, 1996; O'Dell, 1998; Zwerdling, 1998), and in calls for visionary, new leadership in higher education leadership (Eddy, 1997).

It should be said, however, that accountability efforts are occurring at the same time that public funding of public higher education is declining. Since 1980, federal funding of publicly supported higher education has declined from a high of 13% in 1980 to a low of 10.3% in 1990 (Statistical Abstract, 1998, p. 164). Nationwide, state funding over the same period has declined from an average 46.4% in 1980 to 35.9% in 1995. In fact, other forms of funding, mostly tuition costs passed along to consumers, have flip-flopped with state funding, growing from 37% of overall higher education funding in 1980 to 49% in 1995.

Such numbers call into question whether the long-standing trend of increasing educational attainment for an ever-enlarging segment of the U.S. population can long

endure. And the question is an important one since workers' incomes are directly tied to education levels. The U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, reported that adults with bachelor's degrees earned an average of \$40,149 annually, compared to an average \$23,549 per annum for high school graduates possessing no college degree (p. 5).

In the U.S. in the year 2001, higher education is in a precarious position. With both a strong history of unrelenting growth in educational attainment *and* a new call for increasing accountability, universities must be increasingly able to respond to several masters. At the same time The Statistical Abstract for the U.S. for 1998 reports a drop in full-time faculty from 78% in 1970 to 59% in 1995, with a corresponding increase in part-time faculty over the same period—22%–41% (p. 196). The challenge before higher education is to reconcile the demands of a public that wants an improvement in undergraduate education while simultaneously downsizing its budget and personnel. In this climate of increasing demands, diminishing public support, and declining professor ranks, universities have been increasingly mandated (1) to produce research applications that are relevant to constituent communities, (2) to provide visible services to those communities, and (3) to provide demonstrably useful and up-to-date education for those communities' college-age children (Campbell, 1995).

The Faculty Development Movement and the Teaching Mission

Prior to 1970, there existed very little research on the professional development of college teachers, much less on the inductee phase known as the teaching assistantship. The faculty development movement in American colleges and universities dates to the work of Eble (1971), who analyzed the career development of effective college teachers and the professional development systems that support them. Even at this early stage,

Eble showed interest in the beginning college teacher, calling for the direct and sustained involvement of senior faculty in TA training, in partnered teaching with TAs, in undergraduate teaching, and in education in a larger sense. More than a decade later, Brooks and German (1983) reported that teaching typically receives little attention during the years of graduate school. Demonstrating that the need for faculty development continued two decades after Eble's first analysis, Katz and Henry (1993) recently argued that an understanding of the developmental issues of the college-age student is a necessary component of the college teacher's professional development. In recent years, a number of books and studies have been dedicated to college teaching (Eble, 1994; McKeachie, 1999; Cyrs, 1994; Lowman, 1995; Gross Davis, 1993; Cowan, 1998; Timpson & Bendel-Simso, 1996; Timpson, Burgoyne, Jones, & Jones, 1997).

Interest in TA professional development has grown steadily since the early 1980s, and both discipline-specific and university-wide literature abounds in this arena. Among the various literatures on the topic of TA training, however, there is a remarkable dearth of research around the lived experiences of TAs in the midst of their training and development. Weiser (1990) has surveyed TA experiences, needs, questions, and worries as they arrive on the scene of their TA training program, and Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) have provided a detailed study of one graduate student's socialization into a professional (and academically rigorous) discourse community. Bishop (1990) has contributed a multiple case study of four graduate students in a TA training program and the effects of that program on their teaching practice. None of these studies directly addresses what it is like to be a TA in today's large public university. The salient issues, from the point of view of the TA himself or herself, remain more or less a mystery.

Unlike the public school (K-12) arena, which has studied the induction (or new teacher) phase of teacher development rather thoroughly, the experience of new teachers in higher education has been relatively ignored.

Purpose of the Study

In an effort to develop an initial understanding of the processes by which graduate teaching assistants, or TAs, perceive their first steps in becoming college teachers, this study describes and analyzes the lived experiences of six graduate teaching assistants during the inductee stage of college teacher training known as the teaching assistantship, or TA. One purpose of the study is to identify those factors--whether background knowledge, training, critical events, reflective practice, or some unforeseeable "other"—that challenge and propel TAs toward professional development, or, more specifically, toward formation into teachers. A primary focus of the research has been to examine the reflections of TAs as they proceeded through their first semester of teaching. Their experiences and their analyses of those experiences provide insight into the developing expertise of mature and intelligent young professionals who are faced with the authentic, daily challenges of teaching, which lie to a large extent outside their area of expertise. The study argues for the use of reflective practice in TA training programs and suggests the promise and interest of ongoing, self-directed faculty development for college teachers at all levels of experience. The research further suggests the utility of both various forms of unrehearsed personal documents and polished narratives (written and oral) as promising catalysts for teacher education and professional development.

Research Questions

Through case study design and constant comparative data analysis, this study will ask six questions.

1. What are the patterns of teacher formation among first-year graduate teaching assistants in an English composition program? Focusing on the pre-service stage, the study will also ask,
2. How do TAs describe teaching and learning as they have experienced them? And, how do they envision themselves in their first university classrooms? In the midst of the first semester of teaching, the study will further ask,
3. Do TAs engaged in a training program undergo any discernable patterns of change in their teaching points of view, and, if so, at what stage and through what influences? As they emerge from their first semester of teaching, the study will ask this series of questions,
4. What critical events do individual TAs draw upon for future practice? Do they learn from one another's stories? Do they help one another sort and evaluate critical events as they've experienced them?
5. To what extent do TAs reflect movement such as that theorized by a shift from declarative to procedural knowledge or from teacher-focused planning and execution to student-focused planning and execution? Or, alternatively, does a different pattern or theory of teacher formation emerge from the data?
6. To what extent do events from the college teacher's educational history influence his or her teaching practice?

Significance of the Study

This study goes some distance toward offering new understanding of the lived experiences of teacher formation in the post-secondary teacher, specifically the graduate teaching assistant. The study also suggests some of the milestones, markers, or critical events that impact TA teacher formation. Of further interest from this study is the potential application of reflective practices and self-directed learning in the professional college teaching environment. Finally, the study demonstrates the importance of the educational life story to teacher formation among college teachers.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

It is assumed that the participating TAs and faculty focus group members described their experiences and feelings about their experiences as honestly as possible. It must be noted that in qualitative studies the perceptions of the participants are considered of primary importance. As such, while we would expect that others who witnessed or were involved in these events would report them somewhat differently, the fact of difference alone (among subjectively felt and evaluated events) is of little consequence.

Finally, the study is delimited to a description and analysis of a small sample of six TAs within a single department, and over the course of a single, first semester of teaching. A possible additional limitation of the current research is that composition TAs' interest and advanced abilities in textual documentation, particularly written biographies, teaching logs, and narratives, may not be representative of the preferences and abilities of most TAs across the university.

Where would we all be if we were not so rejuvenated by a good day in class? Perhaps we would agree with Chris Anson when he said that he “had stumbled into the most distasteful profession on earth.” But the rules of nostalgia govern us, which enable us to forget, or at least gloss over, the bad memories, leaving us free to enjoy the present, the possibilities for the future, and our own edited version of classroom achievements and failures.

--Sadie, Subject #4
Critical Event Narrative

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a commission of educators, has twice called for undergraduate education to reclaim its rightful place among the priorities of college and university faculty (Boyer, 1990; Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997). Describing a trend which has emerged since World War II, Boyer (1990) suggested that research has taken on inappropriate levels of importance, in part because of its quantifiable nature, sometimes overshadowing the faculty member's responsibility to undergraduates, who "all too often are the losers" (p. xi). Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) followed this charge with recommendations for standards in scholarly work that would change the way that scholarship is defined. They recommended that universities adopt an Academic Bill of Rights guaranteeing a quality education for every undergraduate.

In response to these calls for a newly amplified emphasis upon undergraduate teaching, universities around the country, including Stanford, SUNY at Stony Brook, Duke, University of Maryland, University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, Harvard, Syracuse, and University of Virginia, to name but a few, have responded with special programs for undergraduate research; with freshmen seminars and senior-capstone courses; with innovative peer instruction centers; with centers for teaching and learning offering assistance in college teaching improvement; with programs which aim to develop the teaching abilities of graduate teaching assistants (Weiss, p. B2).

Furthermore, a plethora of book-length literature on enhanced college teaching has emerged since 1990, notably Eble (1994), McKeachie (1999), Cyr (1994), Lowman (1995), Davis (1993), Cowan (1998), Timpson and Bendel-Simso (1996), and Timpson, Burgoyne, Jones, and Jones (1997).

The future professoriate might be expected to serve local, regional, national, and international communities in increasingly complex ways. College faculties might well be expected to do at least three things differently in the years to come:

1. produce research that demonstrates relevant applications to society's needs
2. provide highly visible services that extend beyond the doors of academe to local and regional communities
3. provide increasingly meaningful education (grades 13-16) for its emerging young professionals.

Faculty Development Literature: Giving the Cats a Bath

The new mandate for the future professoriate is the goal of turning professors into teachers. Such efforts actually date to the early 1970s, which has sometimes been called the beginning of the faculty development movement (Katz & Henry, 1993). It has been suggested that attempts to conduct meaningful faculty development must integrate an awareness of the career phases of college professors. One example of an early response to this need was Eble's groundbreaking *Career Development of the Effective College Teacher* (1971), which was sponsored by the American Association of University Professors and Association of American Colleges and set out to evaluate faculty development systems. Hoping to identify effective systems, Eble's results were almost entirely negative, with only six of the 150 respondents reporting effective faculty

development at their institutions. Of particular interest to this study was Eble's call for an awareness of both pre-service and beginning college teachers. Current systems, Eble wrote in 1971, do little more to identify and support this future professoriate than to "select those in conformity with existing patterns and to weed out those who don't fit a rather narrow range of academic achievement" and based upon "the decision to become a college teacher comes late...and for many may not be a firm decision until after the individual has begun graduate work" (p. 15).

Among Eble's recommendations for improving the graduate teaching assistantship period of faculty development were (1) involvement of senior faculty in lower-division courses in order to suggest to graduate students that undergraduate teaching is honored (2) participation in team teaching with graduate assistants and beginning faculty (3) direct and sustained involvement in GTA teacher training, and (4) development of concern for education in a larger sense (pp. 22-23). On this latter point Eble wrote: "A well-established faculty member who ventured out of his or her department to experience public school teaching first-hand would not only have his own horizons expanded but those of his graduate students who became aware of the experience" (p. 23-24).

Brookes and German (1983), writing about the TA period of professional development, and acknowledging their debt to Erikson, Levinson, Gould, Sheehy, etc., suggest that the principal task of the adult between the ages of 25 and 45 is "establishment" of the career that is compatible with the values and goals of the individual. Brookes and German's work suggests, like Eble's, that while most faculty spend the majority of their time teaching, few of them have that as a career goal.

“Teaching,” Brookes and German report, “tends to be a more or less inevitable consequence or by-product of staying in the academic world” (p. 17). Brookes and German further report that “During the years of graduate study, teaching typically receives little attention. The focus and emphasis in graduate school are on the chosen discipline or specialization. This same scale of values carries over into the attitude of many full-time faculty” (p. 18).

Allan Dittmer (1999), writing for the Rentel and Dittmer’s (1999) faculty development anthology, Themes and Issues in Faculty Development, has described professional development for university faculty as “sort of like giving your cats a bath. They clearly don’t believe they need it . . .; they have to be dragged kicking and screaming to it; they hate every minute of it while it’s happening; and they mostly shake it off and go about their business afterwards as if nothing every happened” (p. 25). Dittmer goes on to contrast the professional development culture of the university to that of the public school: “The public school exists for students. Period. The university exists primarily for its faculty” (p. 26). Yet Dittmer also points out that new paradigms are revolutionizing the consequences of teaching—specifically Kuhn, Dewey, Vygotsky, and Chomsky—and creating a new educational paradigm that is relevant to college faculty development. That new educational paradigm, Dittmer says, is

based on a constructivist, developmental theory of learning having historical roots in works which have shaped thinking throughout this century. And those who subscribe to this new paradigm subsequently realize the need for a different way and place in which to situate their work. What is evolving is a bridging of this century’s best theory, research, policy, and practice (p. 33).

Sigel (1990) has argued for the importance of the K-12 teacher’s understanding of human development, particularly Piaget. The same could be made of the professor’s

responsibility to understand the development of the college-age student. Katz and Henry (1993) have added an important element to this discussion by pointing out that theorists of student development—notably Perry, Loevinger, Kohlberg, and Gilligan—have played an important role in the initiation of faculty development efforts. Each of these theorists challenged the notion that the traditional college student arrives at college a fully integrated adult. As a result of this work, there has been an increasing realization that professors can, do, and should play an important role in assisting students regardless of their intellectual and developmental status.

Such realizations have served to encourage and embrace faculty development at all stages of the professional faculty career. As Katz and Henry point out, the challenge for mass institutions (as opposed to elite colleges and universities) is to make possible a kind of education that goes beyond mere preparation for occupational skills. This kind of education requires individualized instruction in which professors understand and work with “the state of mind, the preparation, the cognitive and emotional dispositions” (p. 154) of the student. Tirrell (1986) has added to the developmental discussion by arguing its relevance to the TA training mission, suggesting that TAs must come to understand the developmental issues of their undergraduate students.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Training: Literature

The literature on graduate teaching assistants (henceforth, simply, TAs) is significant and can be divided into two categories—the literature regarding teaching assistants in general and the discipline-specific literature. It can also be divided along the lines of problems related to the development of TAs (outsider viewpoint) as well as problems associated with the experience of the TA (insider viewpoint). Furthermore, the

literature seems also to fall into the following additional categories: anthologies of TA training, the international teaching assistant or ITA, role ambiguities and mentoring by TA supervisors, teaching strategies for TAs, and discipline-specific training and program development/evaluation.

Several editors have compiled anthologies related to TA training (See Nyquist, Abbott, & Wulff, 1989; Van Note Chism, 1987; Lambert & Tice, 1993; Andrews, 1985; Nyquist & Wulff, 1996). Bridges (1986) and Hult (1994) have edited discipline-specific anthologies in the field of composition studies. Abbott, Wulff, & Szego (1989) compiled a review of research on TA training, and Lewis (1993) has edited the proceedings of the 3rd National Conference on Training and Employment of GTAs. Among the more popular topics in these anthologies are role ambiguity and confusion, the importance of senior faculty in mentoring TAs, and diversity training for TAs. Addressing the knowledge base of beginning teachers, these anthologies have shown interest in classroom teaching models, retention of undergraduates, collaborative and direct teaching choices, social norms for TAs, and problems with “natural teaching” assumptions in the higher education setting.

Research studies have included both quantitative and qualitative studies. Quantitative studies have included training needs surveys, of TAs (Zabava Ford, 1993), confidence evaluations (Streveler, 1993), attitude and anxiety surveys of the students of TAs (Smith & Morris, 1993; Buerkal-Rothfuss & Gray, 1993; Jenkins & Rubin, 1993; Bomotti, 1994), perceived training needs (Goodlad, 1997), teaching effectiveness comparisons (Jerich & Leinicke, 1993), identification and validation of important content areas for TA training (Ford, 1993), and a survey of training techniques utilized in training

programs (Puccio, 1988). In 1980, Carroll compiled previously published empirical work in TA training in a meta-analysis.

Qualitative studies have included case studies (Petrulis, Carroll, & Skow, 1993; Rando, Diaz, & Mintz, 1993; Bishop, 1990) and discourse analysis (Robinson, 1993). Using the Delphi method, Simpson and Smith (1993) queried a panel of national experts on teaching assistant training to produce a validation of 26 teaching competencies for TAs.

Discipline-Specific (Composition) TA Training: Literature

It should come as no surprise that a good portion of the literature on TA training does in fact come from the English and Biology disciplines. This finding is consistent with Eble's 1971 observation that both Biology and English departments confront problems with TA training. Recall that these departments address large numbers of lower-level students, frequently employing teaching assistants to teach the core courses—i.e., Introduction to Biology, and Freshman English. More than one critic has pointed out the attendant problems of assigning the core, introductory course, where perhaps the greatest number of developmental issues among students will almost certainly lie, to the least prepared of the professoriate. Eble (1971) pointed out that such contradictions reflect the low status associated with teaching (lower than research, that is) and the widespread belief that “subject matter training is...all that is necessary for the training of college teachers” (p. 19).

Specific to the composition discipline's attention to TA training is Latterrell's (1996) overview of TA education curricula, which delineates various existing approaches to TA education in composition. She places them on a continuum from most practical to

most abstract, with apprenticeship at the far end of the pragmatic and theory seminars at the far end of the theoretical. She points out the dangers of both purely practical and purely theoretical approaches to TA training. She recommends that training should strike a balance between the two. She recommends the building of teaching communities by “multiplying the places and the people GTAs interact with” (p. 21). Grading workshops, writing center tutoring, classroom visitations, workshops, research groups, team-teaching, and committee meetings are some of the mechanisms she suggests for such multiplication of interaction. Through such interactions TAs might be helped, she says, “to learn to view teaching as a vibrant, constantly evolving, and valued practice” (p. 21).

Bridges (“Basics,” 1986) supports the idea of the importance of continued practice in writing, arguing the benefits of a testimonial approach to teaching. TAs should be, he says, “talking about their own experiences with writing, what they do to write, to get over stumbling blocks, to generate ideas, to revise, to edit” which also serves, he says, “to break down the ‘them and us’ distinction so often signaled by the desk at the front of the classroom” (p.17).

McBroom (1992) traces TAs from their novice beginnings to their emergence as teachers over the course of their first year of college teaching. She accomplished this study through document analysis of the TAs’ teaching journals where they recorded their early anxieties, their emerging teaching styles, their interactions with peers, and, toward the end, their expectations for employment.

Becoming a Teacher—Public School and University Settings: Literature

One thing is very clear from the public school literature: Becoming a skilled teacher in the public schools generally involves a long, difficult apprenticeship. Some of

the elements of this apprenticeship point to the key differences between K-12 and post-secondary orientations. For instance, Frank Murray (1996), Professor of Educational Studies and Psychology at the University of Delaware, has likened public school teaching to an “art.” Murray dispels the myth of “natural teaching,” saying that most novice teachers make predictable mistakes “unless they also have had the opportunity to practice some counterintuitive and learned teaching techniques” (p. 5). In turn, Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996), have called teaching a “craft” while Goodlad (1990) has likened public school teaching to a vocational “calling.” It is hard indeed to imagine such terms applied to career interests of most college faculty.

Important commentators on public school teaching such as these would suggest that the public school teacher’s “becoming” involves high levels of self-knowledge and a deep commitment to ongoing development. Feiman-Nemser and Remillard go on to remind us that “No one learns to teach in a year” (p. 66), yet there is little doubt that the first year of teaching, often called the induction period, is crucial to the career teacher’s long-term stability, attitude, and approach. Goodlad has also pointed out that teaching “principles” don’t carry teachers very far because so much is fluid and singular in every teaching event and situation. Like Goodlad, Murray contends that contextual factors and individual needs assure that teaching will never be fixed or static.

In addition to a long apprenticeship, skilled teaching involves pedagogical awareness of a rather specific sort. Murray points out that a number of pedagogical mistakes are common to the unpracticed teacher--regardless of the grade level taught—including, among others, the “kindness error,” the “showing and telling error,” the

“practice makes perfect error,” the “misunderstanding of fundamental disciplinary ideas error,” the “positive reinforcement error,” and the “bell curve error” (p. 5-6).

Informed public school teaching also involves an awareness of the varied educational needs and readiness of learners. Murray argues that public schooling is often held back by its failure to connect to the educational needs of children and adolescents, to their real problems, as well as its failure to insist upon student understanding, rather than simple exposure. And here, I believe, we get at one of the timeless questions about university teaching as well. Is it enough to simply present material to college students, to expose them to it—regardless of their readiness? Or is it a teaching responsibility and standard even at the college level to ensure that understanding occurs? If the latter, then Murray would argue that much, much more than a natural or naïve teaching approach is needed.

Another area in which public school educators distinguish themselves from college faculty is in the moral/ethical domain. Soder (1990) has pointed out that the nature of the relationship of teacher to child lies at the crux of the moral imperative of the public school classroom. Parents are required to submit their children to the process and its practitioners (teachers)—a notion known as “equality of surrender”—which in turn leads to the teaching imperative of “equality of treatment,” or the teacher’s ethical imperative to avoid differential treatment of children based upon background. A system of compulsory schooling, Soder posits, treats the “deprivation of opportunity” as a thing as revolting as physical deprivation.

Of course, college students do not “surrender” to a higher education in the same way that children must surrender to mandatory schooling. However, the logic for

“equality of treatment” follows since, having met the admissions requirements of the university, every student should be qualified to expect a reasonable shot at success.

John Goodlad has suggested that the moral imperatives of public school teaching are what separate the teacher from other professionals and provide explanation for why a “critical perspective” is essential in the public school teacher. In other words, Goodlad argues, the principled teacher must come to understand inequities in schooling opportunities and suffer, as he calls it, a “necessary loss of innocence” (p. 22). Such loss of innocence, Goodlad has pointed out, informs teachers that dropouts, or any child lost to the schooling system, is a burden shifted from one segment of society to another and hence is not a viable alternative to success in school. For many, the same argument is made regarding dropouts from college. College may not be for everyone, but the democratization of the higher education opportunity, especially given its clear correlation to an enhanced standard of living, has led many to see it that way.

In most colleges and universities, faculty acknowledge that at least one-third of their professional obligation lies in teaching (along with, convention has it, (2) professional productivity in the form of research and publication, and (3) service to the academic community). Yet the attention devoted to better teaching at the university level remains dishearteningly small. And so it is to the public school teaching literature that we inevitably turn, for it is in the public school arena that the teaching responsibility has been the focus of sustained and systematic study.

We see both the plethora of material from the public school arena and the dearth of material from the higher education arena in a specific teaching topic such as induction—or the initial period of socialization of the teacher. At the university, a notion

like “induction”—so central to the public school teaching arena—is utterly alien, nonexistent even in the vocabulary. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that there is no common way of entering the university teaching ranks, no licensing or credentialing system, for instance, beyond the acquisition of an advanced degree. Further, only some faculty, it must be admitted, get their teaching start as TAs. At the same time, many do begin as teaching assistants, and since work with established faculty has been likened to “giving the cats a bath” (Dittmer, 1999, p. 25), the teaching assistantship, that typically one to two-year formative period of college teaching induction, may represent the university’s single best opportunity for providing systematic introduction into responsible and effective teaching practice. This may be especially true because since the induction period precedes the research and service encumbrances faculty eventually must shoulder.

Induction and Teacher Stage Development: Literature

Teacher education literature often defines the strength of the teacher preparation program through evidence in seven areas 1) specific disciplinary content 2) broad and deep field experience (as in student teaching), 3) integration of theory and practice 4) cohort group or peer interaction/feedback experience 5) inquiry and reflective methodologies, 6) preparation in teaching foundations including grounding in moral/ethical issues, classroom management, youth development, and appropriate disciplinary content and 7) program standards (strength of both teacher educators and cooperating teaching in student-teaching/mentoring arrangements. Mantle-Bromley and Foster (2000) have found that new teacher perceptions of the relative strengths of these pieces of teacher education programs negatively correlate to new teacher concerns (worries, anxieties); in other words, the stronger the preparation in a particular area, for

instance disciplinary content strength or field experience, the lower the level of new teacher concern in that area (p. 6). Further, the higher the overall ratings of their teacher preparation programs, Mantle-Bromley and Foster found, “the more likely they were to report a successful first year of teaching” (p. 6).

Teacher educator literature also suggests that development of teaching concerns occurs over time. Moir (1990) has described the phases of first-year teaching attitudes as proceeding from 1) anticipation—pre-service to two weeks into the term to 2) survival—first month to six weeks to 3) disillusionment with self and teaching experience—six to eight weeks into the term to 4) rejuvenation as a slow rise in attitude—beginning mid-way through the year and finally toward 5) reflection as reinvigoration and recommitment become possible at the conclusion of the teaching year and during time off and away from teaching. A question worth asking is whether college teachers (both beginners and veterans) experience the same waves of enthusiasm.

Other writers commenting on the public school arena, including O’Dell (1986), have described teaching concerns as moving developmentally over the course of a teacher’s professional maturation. O’Dell suggests—a theme repeated throughout teacher preparation literature—that novice teachers worry most about basic classroom management in the early stages of teaching. These worries eventually give way to concerns about instructional competence and then later, as the teacher becomes more expert, to concerns about student progress. Fuller and Brown (1975) have similarly posited that concerns move from self to task to learner as the teacher becomes more experienced, and Rutherford and Hall (1990) have suggested that this movement takes, on average, five years to accomplish. Karge (1993) has suggested that this apparently

necessary evolution of teacher concern might be eased through certain approaches to pre-service preparation. Enright (1979), in a dialogic journal between herself and a mentor, described the evolution of her teaching philosophy as moving from a self (teacher) to them (student) orientation. Thornbury (1991), using teaching logs to promote “autonomous development of the ‘reflective practitioner’” and to also encourage trainer responsibility through monitoring of the logs, found that beginning teachers are generally preoccupied with roles, tasks, and subject matter but nonetheless show evidence, as revealed through their logs, of concern for their students. Thornbury’s point seems to be that despite the body of literature that has built up around the idea that novice teachers are self-absorbed and unable to focus much on their students, their teaching logs provide evidence to the contrary.

Moving from the public school arena to the university setting, we see similar themes of teacher concern development. Boehrer and Sarkisian (1985) identified a developmental pattern in TAs in which worry about personal display, or what we might think of as performance anxiety, eventually gives way to concerns about student learning; put another way, a TA seems to move from concern about teacher adequacy through concerns about teacher accuracy to student understanding. McBroom’s (1992) study of first-year college teachers’ concerns showed a similar movement, proceeding from high levels of anxiety to more realistic expectations of self as teacher and student as learner. McBroom describes her own evolution as also reflecting a change from focusing on her own solitary teaching concerns to more global generalizations about teachers and teaching.

Similarly, Dalke (1995) describes the evolution of her first-year course, called **Composition and Literature**, as a movement that “began by focusing on the careful reading of texts” and evolved toward “recognition that the class itself and the students in it, are worthy of the same attentiveness and care” (p. 168-69). Jane Tompkins (1998), in discussing her professional training in graduate school and her first decade of teaching, describes a similar progression of teaching concerns. Early in her career she learned, largely from reading and having thrust upon her the worldview of T.S. Eliot, that “the correct posture was a refined, well-educated despair” (p. 3). Yet later she learned that

what matters to me most in teaching is the way things are done, the presence of the teacher and the students to one another, how they inhabit a common space. I want to know what happens inside students when they sit in class, how their breathing is, whether their heartbeats accelerate or slow down, how their stomachs feel (p. 5)

It thus appears from the descriptions of practicing teachers at both the K-12 and college levels that the general direction of teaching concern is away from an early, internal focus on professional competence and toward a later, external focus on impact upon the student or learner. It may also be that there is a consequent lessening of angst that occurs over time, as the novice teacher becomes more passionate about helping students and less preoccupied with matters of performance style or what might also be called “professorial artifice.” The question remains as to how best support this movement and whether the progression can be impacted—either slowed or accelerated—through professional development. Thornbury’s article provides one suggestion, implying that teaching logs may reveal and even liberate an external or learner focus that is there even when it seems not to be.

However, it may be that some level of difficulty simply must *be*, and simply must be endured. Wayne King, accomplished journalist turned university professor, remarks in his “Notes From the Diary of a Novice” (1994) that “Some of the things known with absolute certainty for decades suddenly seem a bit less certain when you walk into a classroom and have those certainties mauled by the minds of the young” (p. 32) and

The first five years that I was in front of a classroom—mere weeks, actually, measured by the calendar—I felt as if I had wandered into the pages of some Kafkaesque novel...I began to envision it. A student would silently rise to his feet, march to the door, close and lock it, and come slowly to my desk. “I’m sorry, sir,” he would say, “but we have to kill you. In self defense. There is no other way. If we don’t, well, we’re afraid you will bore all of us to death. Please rise and face the blackboard (p. 33).

Teaching Self and Identity: Literature

Lipka and Brinthaupt (1999) in their recent book, *The Role of Self in Teacher Development*, SUNY Press, have anthologized a discussion of the identity issue, categorizing it along a developmental timeline—when a person decides to teach, when a person has his/her first teaching experience, and when a teacher is an established professional. Their essential research questions are: “Who are those individuals who decide to dedicate themselves in service to others, at a time when the teaching profession is under attack from seemingly every corner?” And “Why would anyone decide to take such a journey?” (p. 1). One contributor to Lipka and Brinthaupt’s book, S. Vianne McClean, argues for the exploration of self-reflective processes and documents, such as autobiographical stories, so that prospective teachers might begin to construct a sense of the overlap between their general identities and their teaching. Similarly, Freeman (1992) suggests that a good way to study identity is to analyze the stories that people tell about who they are, who they’ve been, and who they are becoming.

Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin (1999), also writing for Lipka and Brinthaupt's anthology, suggest that observation, coursework, and biography can play important roles in the beginning teacher's development of professional identity. Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin point to the so-called "apprenticeship-of-observation," saying it can be very influential; in other words, the influence of the prospective teacher's own previous teachers cannot be denied or casually dismissed. This point has also been made by Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996), who have said that "Probably the most important recognition of these various teacher education reforms is that prospective teachers must be taught in the same ways in which they will be expected to teach" (p. 46).

This view is also suggested by Bishop's (1990) work with TAs, when she found in her multiple case study that, despite programmatic goals and demonstrations, graduate students tended to teach from their own pre-existing models (p. 130). However, Bishop also makes the point that follow-up work with her case study subjects demonstrated that new ideas had been "stored," "sub-typed," and "reactivated." Bishop says, "Teacher change, then, can occur unexpectedly and at a later date, the seeds for change still having been sown...." (p. 143).

Most important to the early practice of emerging teachers, according to Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin—and confirmed as well by Bishop—appears to be personal biography, or the experiences and constructs from which the novice teacher functions. For the beginning teacher, previous teaching, coaching, child care, and mentoring experiences can be very influential to the novice teacher's professional identity formation, as can experiences as a student. Furthermore, an analysis of one's

autobiography can reveal to the beginning teacher the knowledge, values, and experiences upon which his or her professional practice will be grounded.

In keeping with this line of thinking is Tickle (1999), who has also explored the potential, positive outcomes of self-appraisal processes undertaken by beginning teachers. Tickle proposes a unit of study for beginning teachers that is essentially action research, engaging the new teachers in the development of personal research topics. In such a unit, the teachers identify a problematic issue in their own teaching and then gather information on the topic, analyze it, take justifiable action based upon the discoveries of their inquiry, and ultimately evaluate the effectiveness of their own actions. Tickle suggests that a key ingredient to such a self-appraisal process is deep mentor support since the new teacher will find him or herself simultaneously engaged in establishing his or her own credibility while challenging his or her own practice.

TA Point of View: Literature

According to Boehrer and Sarkisian (1985), 85% of teaching assistants in biochemistry and nearly 100% of teaching assistants in English plan to teach upon graduation. These graduate students also associate their professional self-esteem with their teaching, seeing their graduate studies as a continuation of their preparation but their teaching as bona fide professional performance; simultaneously they also learn quickly the academy's ambivalence toward teaching as evidenced by its seemingly arbitrary hiring practices and weak ongoing commitment to developing its newest faculty. TAs, Boehrer and Sarkisian report, frequently encounter a range of problems, including complexities in classroom dynamics, varied needs and development of students, instructor discretion difficulties in terms of grading, discipline, etc., problems related to

the exercise of authority, and disappointing self-discoveries regarding overall teaching ability (p. 15). Mostly, Boehrer and Sarkisian report, TAs need support and feedback of a certain kind to develop into better teachers. That feedback should attend to the TA's perceived problems first and only then move to problems perceived by the observer.

Anderson and Swazey (1998) report that 71% of graduate students go to graduate school because they have at least some desire to teach in higher education while 94% indicate an interest in doing research in their field. Fully 82%, over 10% more than those who hope to teach, desire to benefit others through their learning in graduate school, presumably if not through teaching then through research discoveries or enrichment through the arts. Discouragingly, 60% of TAs feel they are not carefully supervised by faculty, and 35% feel that their TA duties delay their progress through their graduate studies.

Anderson and Swazey's findings are supported by the work of Bomotti (1994), who found that 73% of her sample's queried TAs anticipate that teaching will be their primary focus after graduation. Of the seven factors Bomotti studied as influences upon TA plans to continue college teaching--including training, supervision, peer relationships, TA-student relationships, pragmatics, departmental issues, and TA perceptions of self as teacher--the strongest predictor was good supervision. Good supervision came from "respected scholars who place a strong value on quality teaching and concern for students" (p. 378). These mentor-supervisors were described as "collegial," "constructive," and "supportive" in their feedback. Bomotti says "The evidence... indicates that a teaching-oriented, collaborative relationship between teaching assistants and their supervisors may be the most critical factor in improving the quality of

undergraduate instruction and nurturing future professors” (p. 388). The importance of mentoring is echoed throughout the literature. Darling-Hammond, Gender, and Wise (1990) in their Rand Report commissioned by the Minnesota Board of Teaching, propose a staged process for promoting and assessing teacher competence that includes academic training followed by a year-long internship, the chief feature of which is high quality supervision/mentoring.

As a final note, over the course of three years, Sinclair Goodlad (1997) surveyed 282 new TAs regarding anxieties and problems and found that their patterns consistently revolved around (1) coping with inattentive and disruptive students, (2) not knowing answers to student questions, (3) not being able to explain things clearly/interestingly (3) getting students to think for themselves, and (4) lack of clarity regarding TA roles (p. 86). These problems mirror the classroom management, content area knowledge base, methods awareness, critical thinking orientation, and professional identity issues indicated in studies of novice public school teachers.

University Faculty and the Teaching Mission: Literature

James Slevin (1992), who authored the Association of American Colleges report, *The Next Generation: Preparing Graduate Students for the Professional Responsibilities of College Teachers*, also known as the AAC project, advises that future teachers develop their teaching habits and sense of priorities during the graduate student years. The AAC project linked graduate students from their universities (Duke, University of Chicago, and Brown) with faculty from small liberal arts colleges (Guilford, Knox, and Connecticut Colleges)—the latter, the kind of institutions in which new faculty are likely to find themselves after graduation. The graduate students participated in a seminar that

included a series of extended campus visits to the small, liberal arts campuses. There the TAs found that the “culture of silence” around teaching (p. 13), so evident on their graduate campuses, was completely absent on the liberal arts campus. Here the commitment to undergraduate teaching was explicit and unmistakable.

The overall effect of the project was to enable “graduate students to rethink the ‘possibilities’ currently available to them” (p. 18). Slevin argues that “faculty development begins in graduate school” (p. 20) and the “Graduate training must include preparation for the full range of professorial responsibilities, especially teaching” (p. 20). In keeping with K-12 literature, Slevin reports that so much “depends on a good mentor” (p. 25) and that the semester at the liberal arts college became a kind of field experience, highly valued in much the same way as student teaching is valued by the beginning public school teacher. Where possible, Slevin recommends TAs receive multiple field experiences at varying institutions of higher education.

Like Slevin, LaPidus (1998) believes that even if a TA gets some exposure to teaching, the experience is too often confined to lower level courses and not generally “thought of in terms of faculty preparation” (p. 99). Gaff and Pruitt-Logan (1998) put it bluntly:

Many graduate students...acquire no experience in the complex tasks of teaching: determining proper goals for student learning; designing courses, selecting learning materials, making assignments, and assessing the achievement of those goals; understanding and working effectively with diverse students, giving academic and career advice; and constructing and assessing curricula in the department (p. 77).

Reflective Practice in TAs: Literature

An important step in the TA training literature would appear to be toward fuller emancipation of the teaching assistant through the introduction of reflective, self-directed teaching and learning processes. Such processes serve at least two purposes: one, they are consistent with the lifelong learning approach of the reflective practitioner and the developmental stages of adulthood and two, they allow the TA to both inform and be informed by the merging of theory and practice. Dantonio (1995) says reflection is a key to teaching development in general (p. 63).

Many sources point to the timeliness of such an approach. Douglas Hesse (1993), Director of Writing Programs at Illinois State University, has used reflective practice in his graduate teaching seminar to demonstrate to students that all of us tend to resort to “resistance” when we are exposed to texts that are new to us, that fail to fit into existing schemas we hold. Hence, graduate students often respond to academic writing in specialized journals in much the same way that their own students respond to college-level texts. Hesse’s point is that graduate students “performing the dual roles of teacher and student stand in a wonderfully reflexive position” (p. 225). He goes on to say that his own position as Writing Program Director necessitates that he “foster that reflection.” He quotes a TA who wonders whether she is committed enough to endure the demands posed by difficult texts and difficult student problems, and Hesse reminds us that her question is a central one. If the TA is to become qualified to teach writing, then he or she must be prepared to defend a position via theory and be able to reflect on how that theory informs practice in the classroom. With Hesse, we begin to see the value of reflective practice in the TA.

When Schon wrote The Reflective Practitioner in 1983, he said he set out to understand the similarities and differences between “the kinds of knowledge honored in academia and the kinds of competence valued in professional practice” (p. vii). He discovered that universities were committed to “a view of knowledge that fosters selective inattention to practical competence and professional artistry” (p. vii). He argued for a change in the paradigm that would lead to a kind of knowing that he described as “the epistemology of practice” (p. viii). In his study he chose to concentrate on vignettes of practice in which a senior practitioner (in architecture, medicine, and town planning) helped a junior practitioner. It seems appropriate that reflective practice (so-called “reflection-in-action”) is filtering into academe now, and perhaps there is no better occasion for its introduction than in the relationship between TA and TA trainer, for here we have an opportunity to impact not one generation, but two or even three. The TA will benefit, but perhaps, too, the TA’s students will benefit along with the TA’s mentor/supervisors.

K-12 teacher education literature is ripe with reflective practice. Taggart and Wilson (1998), for instance, have suggested that chief among the reflective processes are journal keeping and narrative writing. Taggart and Wilson also recommend the reflective use of a case study approach to teacher education, which helps to “bridge theory into practice” and “enables analysis of problems and development of solutions” (p. 165). One can imagine a scenario in which teaching journals or logs are combined with narrative accounts of teaching episodes/critical events and observations of teaching to provide points of discussion for small groups/study circles of TAs.

The Use of Personal, Reflective Documents as Catalysts for Change and as Data Sources: Literature

Several sources have suggested the power of the teaching log to the development of the novice teacher. Holly (1989) has provided a significant justification for the keeping of a “personal-professional” journal. She takes the would-be journal writer through a process of exploration of the medium and also provides an explanation of what is gained from personal and professional inquiry, especially when it is conducted in writing. In her work on this topic, she is endeavoring to add to the knowledge base of teaching by getting at the phenomenology of classroom teachers, specifically seven of them, over the course of a year. Her questions get at the heart of formative assessment of teaching, asking about teachers’ thought processes, about the events that shape their thinking and teaching, about the helpfulness of professional development activities, about the impact of reflection, about teachers helping each other, and about improvements that are needed for training and professional development (p. 175).

Via the journal entries and stories of novice teachers we get a glimpse into the large and small challenges that face them in the classroom. Teaching assistant Beth Rapp Young (1994), for instance, speaking before the Conference on College Composition and Communication (4 C’s), told the story of her hostile classroom and an utter failure she experienced there. “The first day started this way, and it never improved,” Young writes (p. 1). She tells the story of her attempts to get help from colleagues and superiors, and she concludes that graduate students are nearly inevitably destined to fall into the “performance model” in which they worry less about how to help students and more about how to perform for them.

An example of an article on graduate student socialization, which uses the academic documents of the graduate student in question, is Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman's (1988) "Conventions, Conversations, and the Writer: Case Study of a Student in a Rhetoric Ph.D. Program." This study analyzes the written documents of a graduate student and is conducted principally from the point of the view of the graduate student's superiors—his advisor and committee members—who make the goal of their inquiry the recording of the TA's progress toward mastering the conventions of academic discourse within an empirically-oriented research program.

McBroom's (1992) approach differs from Berkenkotter's in that while Berkenkotter *et al.* examine the developmental process of a graduate student researcher, McBroom examines the development of an increasingly fluent and confident teacher. Lipka and Brinthaupt (1999) would say that McBroom's approach is exactly the needed antidote for the common "deficit models" of teacher development. Perhaps particularly relevant to the higher education setting is their observation that the challenge for teacher educators is "to balance the preoccupation with the technical competencies of the prescribed knowledge base against the importance of personal knowledge of self-understanding and self-esteem processes" (p. 27). Among college faculty, instructional delivery as well as teacher learning and self-understanding are routinely dismissed in favor of the kind of content expertise to which Lipka and Brinthaupt refer.

Of additional interest, particularly in view of novice versus expert practice as it relates to the teaching arena, is the possible relevance of Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) description of knowledge telling and knowledge transforming cognitive processing, which they used to describe the two modes of composing (written

composition) based on the differences between novice vs. expert and natural vs. problematic composing practices. Bereiter and Scardamalia were interested in the differences between those writing skills that are acquired naturally and those that require an expenditure of effort in order to pass beyond natural occurring limitations. In written composition, they found that the use of intact knowledge (via knowledge telling processes) implies a significant human capability yet also requires much less “start-up time” than does knowledge transforming, whereby the writer must gain knowledge in the midst of the task and thus is slowed in his or her processing. Over time and via learning and practice, Bereiter and Scardamalia imply, those things which must undergo transformation at the beginning can become more automatic, more natural, if not easy. Might the same be true of teachers in regard to their methods and their increasingly natural awareness of learner needs?

Setting the precedent for applying cognitive processing to areas outside the original domain in which it was studied was Hillocks (1986) who used the conceptual apparatus of Bereiter and Scardamalia (as well as others working in cognitive psychology) to describe the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge in writing. Here Hillocks applied the ability to identify, name, or recall phenomena (declarative knowledge) and the ability to produce or perform that knowledge (procedural knowledge) to describe processes of learning forms of written expression. Hillocks, describing a teaching process congruent with Bereiter and Scardamalia’s description of how writers deal with problematic composing issues (versus natural or easy ones), advocated the agency and responsibility of those who teach to take novices through sequenced and

well-considered processes by which the novice's schema is enlarged and his or her declarative knowledge becomes procedural.

Some relevance may reside here in terms of the TA educator's role in developing the thinking processes of TAs. The current study asks whether there may be some applicability of cognitive theory, which has been applied by cognitivists to the complex tasks of reading and writing, to the highly complex performative and reflective actions of teaching.

Kathleen Boardman (1998) studied the use of TA stories as an authorized way of generating knowledge. She found that bringing such stories out of the private realm and into the public realm caused more difficulty than she could have predicted. In her participant-observer study of new TAs, she discovered that TAs were skeptical of the validity and reliability of narrative; were worried when they perceived that certain kinds of stories seemed to receive preferential treatment; and were concerned about how their stories would be put to use—even, perhaps, for institutional surveillance. Such concerns, Boardman argues, suggests that students aren't sure whether they are the subjects or objects of their own stories, when such stories are used for instructional purposes. Also, Boardman says TAs often disbelieve in narrative's potential as a knowledge-making enterprise.

These findings point to the care that must be taken when using personal documents as instructional tools. Yet given a collegial setting, TAs might feel free to express themselves, to experience their own authority in the telling of their stories.

In other words, what teachers might achieve through the telling of stories is precisely the kind of reflection-in-action that Schon talks about.

Boardman points out a problem with TA narratives, however, and that is the TA's relative dearth of teaching stories, which situates them in a position of wishing "to be told" rather than "to tell." "New teachers," Boardman correctly points out, "do not have much lore—if we define lore as practitioner knowledge of teaching" (p. 8). Yet Boardman also points out that they have plenty of experience of classrooms that they can draw upon. The most important factor in the success of narrative as reflection, however, is the question of how stories inform knowledge of the classroom. Thus, discussion should include not only the stories themselves but also "critical discussions of why something worked, why it makes a difference, who benefits" (p. 9). Storytelling might allow for the multiplication of experience as well; that is, since TAs lack a foundational teaching repertoire, they might gain a vicarious one by hearing the collegial storytelling of their mentor/supervisors. Such potential argues for more cross-generational interaction.

In a TA training program it may be helpful to include narratives of both beginner and veteran teachers. The literature suggests at least three recent narratives that may serve as models: Bishop's (1997) Teaching Lives: Essays and Stories, McCracken, Larson, and Entes, Eds. (1998) Teaching College English and English Education: Reflective Stories, and Trimmer's (1997) Narration as Knowledge: Tales of the Teaching Life. Recognizing not only the teaching expertise described in these narratives but also the authors' tentative approach to making claims of teaching authority, reluctant TAs might be emboldened to try their hands at the enterprise of making knowledge by narrating the events of their teaching lives. Similarly, veteran teachers might be inspired to mentorship through the dialoguing of stories with new teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The rising faculty development movement in the United States, the increasing use of graduate teaching assistants, the new demographics of higher education, and a climate of fiscal accountability among public institutions of higher education have combined to create a need for the professional development of GTAs, the next generation of college and university faculty. To date, the corpus of research on TA issues has been quite varied, proceeding along both empirical and qualitative veins, with some particular emphasis upon role ambiguity and training program development. However, there exists a dearth of research on the lived experience of TAs, especially as they develop as college teachers. This study attempts to understand that development, studying an incoming group of graduate teaching assistants in the English department of a Carnegie I research institution.

The purpose of this research was to extensively describe the experiences of a handful of new TAs in their first semester of teaching and to begin, through constant comparative analysis, to examine whether existing hypotheses of teacher formation can be confirmed by the experiences of one small group of TAs. Existing theories that were examined for confirming and disconfirming evidence included Timpson and Bendel-Simso's (1996) multiple method approach (or methodological fluidity), Karge's (1993) theory of teacher concern development from self to task to learner, Moir's (1990)

analysis of first-year teacher attitude phases, moving from anticipation to disillusionment to rejuvenation to reflection and recommitment. And O'Dell's (1986) thesis regarding the evolution of teaching concerns over the span of a career. Further, Boehrer and Sarkisian's (1985) identification of patterns of TA concerns, positing a movement from worry about personal display toward worry about student performance may be validated by this study. Finally of some relevance may be McBroom's proposal that high levels of first-year anxiety eventually evolve toward more realistic expectations of both self and student.

Of additional interest is the possible relevance of Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) description of knowledge telling and knowledge transforming cognitive processes along with the notions of declarative and procedural knowledge distinctions, as again described by cognitivists and appropriated to the field of composition studies by Hillocks (1986).

Miles and Huberman (1994) have said that "qualitative research can be outright 'confirmatory'—that is, can seek to test or further explicate a conceptualization" (p. 17). They add that qualitative research often requires the discovery of categories, "Starting with them (deductively) or getting gradually to them (inductively)." To not use our conceptual frameworks, our background knowledge, can be "self-defeating," Miles and Huberman report, and they continue, "Something is known conceptually about the phenomenon, but not enough to house a theory.... At the outset, then, we usually have at least a rudimentary conceptual framework, a set of general research questions, some notions about sampling, and some initial data-gathering devices" (p. 17). Potentially applicable theories, therefore, can be said to provide anchors for the data—offering

mooring in a gale of data--but ought not determine the direction or summarily set the azimuth for analysis of the data.

Constant comparative analysis is a fundamentally inductive approach to data synthesis and reduction. Patton (1990) says, "Where the focus is on individuals, an inductive approach begins with the individual experiences of those individuals, without pigeonholing or delimiting what those experiences will be in advance of fieldwork" (p. 45). Then, before unique cases are combined, "findings are grounded in specific contexts; theories that result from the findings will be grounded in real-world patterns."

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), constant comparative analysis proceeds from a development of categories of information (open coding), to interconnections among such categories (axial coding), toward the building of 'story' around the categories (selective coding), and concluding with a set of theoretical constructs--precisely the sequence followed for analysis and reduction of the data in this study. Overall, Creswell (1998) says, "this is a process of reducing the database to a small set of themes or categories that characterize the process or action being explored in the grounded theory study" (p. 151). The overall goal of such a study is "an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, that relates to a particular situation" (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). Several relevant yet unanticipated schemas that derive from the data of this study are proposed at the conclusion of Chapter Five.

Researcher Perspective

For this study, fieldwork consisted of engaging in direct contact with participants within their own environments. Using the qualitative researcher's worldview that detachment and distance are of limited utility, this researcher sought out empathic

understanding of the participants. As a graduate student myself, although admittedly twenty years senior to most of the participants, I hope to have achieved high levels of comfort, familiarity, and trustworthiness with the participants. Furthermore, my lengthy experience as a college teacher has provided, I hope, high levels of researcher credibility and authority. Throughout the study, it was my aim that my presence cause neither tension nor the so-called “halo” effect (Patton, 1996), and I endeavored over the two years prior to the study to establish myself as a trusted colleague and routine presence in the English department. My hope is that the informal conversations I engaged in, in hallways, at Xerox machines, and in the lounge, have gone some length toward ensuring credibility and trustworthiness.

Another danger of researcher perspective has to do with distorting instruments as the researcher herself undergoes change. Hence, personal involvement can lead to a loss of sensitivity. As such, I endeavored to supplement my own observations and analysis of 1st-year TAs with member-checking (the 1st-year TAs themselves) and with outsider-checking (2nd-year TAs and mentor/administrators), seeking discrepant interpretations throughout the study’s course.

Patton reminds us that in qualitative research the researcher is the instrument. Hence, disclosure of previous experience and training is obligatory. A graduate student for the first time in 1979, in 1997 I returned to graduate study, and although I do not currently hold a teaching assistantship, I did from 1979 to 1981 and have taught freshman composition (the most commonly assigned course for English TAs) nearly continuously since 1979 at two and four-year colleges scattered throughout the country. As an adjunct instructor at numerous institutions, I have repeatedly experienced that feeling of newness

and outsider discomfort normally associated with novice instructors such as the TAs. Additionally, I have been a course director for the freshman seminar at a prestigious undergraduate institution and have developed my understanding of undergraduate teaching issues. Also, because I am a creative writer, with a graduate degree in fiction writing, I share with the study's participants a lifelong interest in language generally and both writing and storytelling specifically. Finally, my recent coursework in a specialization called "teacher education and staff development" has provided me with grounding in the teacher education/development literature.

I am, furthermore, the mother of three children, the oldest of whom entered college at the same time as this study began; a member of the high school graduating Class of 2000, my son became part of the newest generation of undergraduates to receive instruction from graduate teaching assistants.

As a first-time graduate student in 1979, I was the unwitting beneficiary of a powerful faculty development program at the University of New Hampshire which became a national model for the writing process movement as well as for development of composition faculty. There, where I hoped to become a writer and accidentally became a teacher in the process, I was exposed to a systematic faculty development program before such programs were common. Pre-service training, ongoing (weekly) noontime sessions during the semester, and required theory and pedagogy courses combined to compel me toward becoming a better teacher than I could ever have become had I been left to my own devices. At the close of my teaching assistantship I was funded by the university to travel to a national conference, where I presented a paper on teaching. Thus, despite the fact that by the time I left New Hampshire I was fully engaged in the teaching aspects of

my assistantship, at the time I started, teaching seemed to me a necessary evil, a roadblock (however financially essential) to my real ambition, which at the time was to become a fiction writer.

I suspect that my own experience mirrors the experience of many TAs who enter graduate programs in order to become researchers or to advance in their fields—and not to teach—or become strapped to the lectern or to the blackboard. At the same time, my example is also noteworthy because by the end of the course of my Master's degree, I had changed. I had discovered the satisfactions of teaching. This “becoming” eventually turned into a twenty-year career as a college instructor, a journey which eventually led me to the doctoral program in education from which this current research study derives.

The Participants

The participants for this study were drawn from three populations—(1) the incoming (fall 2000) class of teaching assistants in the English composition program at Colorado State University, referred to throughout this project as 1st-year TAs; (2) a focus group of 2nd-year TAs; and (3) a focus group of faculty/supervisors of the composition program. Typically, an incoming group of TAs numbers around 20 graduate students spanning the range of program offerings in the English department, including, for instance, communications development, literature, linguistics, and creative writing.

I recruited representative samples from the incoming group of TAs (n= 20), from the 2nd-year class of TAs (again approximately n=20), and from the composition faculty. As might be expected of the recruited TA samples, a certain number were not interested or able to participate. Nevertheless, I believe I maintained a maximally varied participant group, especially given the small numbers. My goal was to include, especially for the 1st-

year group, TAs from various regions, from both genders, of differing ethnicities, from differing program specializations, and possessing varied career aspirations. I believe that I was successful in nearly all ways except ethnic variety, but it should be said that the current TAs in this department are not a particularly diverse group.

Within-case sampling (a single case being one 1st-year TA) drew upon multiple data points—particularly analyzing the multiple discourse sources – teaching/learning biographical interview, written teaching logs, and critical-event narrative discussions – all of which were captured at strategic, sequential points of the semester in an effort to understand the formative processes of the developing teacher. Multiple-case sampling (the several TAs who participated in the study) was also used to add confidence to the findings by showing that the “emerging theory is generic, because we have seen it work out—and not work out—in predictable ways” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29).

The second portion of the study, in which the 2nd-year focus group and the faculty/supervisors were queried, was treated as confirming and disconfirming data, the patterns they have observed compared to my own findings. Additionally, and coincidentally, another layer of information about teacher development was added through query of two focus groups. Encouraged to share their own stories and perspectives, the focus group data yielded unexpected insights about veteran and novice college teachers alike.

Method of Data Collection

A qualitative study was selected for this research project in order to (1) explore theory, (2) obtain data rich in detail, (3) work closely to the participants and their lived experience, and (4) embed the research in an authentic context. Ongoing fieldwork,

training program observation, large and small group discussions, interviews with the TAs and focus group meetings were data collection techniques used. Field notes, memos, and interpretive summaries were undertaken throughout the process.

Prior to the start of each phase of the study, Informed Consent forms were distributed to the participants so that they were fully informed of the study. TAs were introduced to the project toward the conclusion of their initial training week, August 14-18, which preceded the start of the teaching semester. The purpose, length, and scope of the study were explained and TAs were invited to participate. Also, during the pre-service training period, August 14-18, I engaged in observation and note taking of the orientation training. I continued this practice throughout the semester, attending and observing the periodic training sessions as they occurred.

1st-year TAs who chose to participate in the study were met with individually and informally interviewed, the study's purposes and processes explained in detail, and the Informed Consent forms further clarified and collected at this time. The six participating 1st-year TAs were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Privacy and anonymity assurances were made and an explanation given for the methods for retaining and then destroying the collected data. TAs were assured that the information they conveyed would be shared with mentors, supervisors, teachers, advisors, peers, or administrators only after the fact of the study and only then as aggregated data or data from which their names were withheld. Questions were answered at the time of this initial discussion, and the Teaching Log Prompt was then given to each TA, with further explanation provided. At this point, a teaching/learning biographical interview, here called the Life Story Interview, as suggested by the example of Atkinson (1998) was also

conducted and audio-taped, for a period of approximately 60 minutes. At the close of the interview, TAs were reminded that the Teaching Log was an ongoing project, to be undertaken as nearly daily as possible.

During the course of the semester, I collected the Teaching Logs approximately once per week, watching particularly for critical events. If I saw hint of one, I asked the TA to consider writing a brief account of the event. Such written narratives were then followed by reflective interviews, in which the TAs discussed interpretations of the events and the events' importance to the TAs' teaching.

Near the close of the semester I organized a Story Swap in which the participating six 1st-year TAs took turns narrating their most significant teaching stories of the semester. This storytelling and subsequent discussion were recorded with videotaping equipment.

At approximately the same time as the Story Swap, I began recruitment of 2nd-year TAs for the focus group that met at the beginning of the spring semester 2001. At this point I had begun the interpretation of the 1st-year TA data, and I asked the 2nd-year focus group to comment on my interpretations, based upon their own experiences. Subsequently, I asked these 2nd-year TAs to discuss their own experiences, both during the first and second years. This focus group event was audiotaped. In mid-April, I then conducted the second focus group meeting with faculty/supervisors. This focus group was queried about familiar themes as seen in the Story Swap transcript, and the faculty were also asked to reflect upon their own experiences, both as new college teachers and more recently. Again, these interviews were recorded on audiotape.

Data Analysis

As a result of the multiple data points of this study, I captured large quantities of data that required reduction, theme identification, and theoretical analysis. Because of the scope of the study, data analysis was necessarily ongoing, with collection and review undertaken daily and involving descriptive analyses as well as interpretive searches for themes. Patton (1990) says that, "The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to produce findings. The process of data collection is not an end in itself" (p. 371). As such, I then carefully began with the detailed work of culling the dense descriptive data before beginning the analytical portion of the process, this analysis deriving from the original research questions. This portion of the data analysis constituted the "conceptual, question-focusing phase of the study" (Patton, 1990, p. 375).

Data obtained from the audiotapes required transcription before coding and analysis could be done. Subsequent to transcription, I engaged in initial multi-pass reading of the data before undertaking the use of electronic spreadsheets, which I used for the detailed content analysis via layered (sequential) coding. Coding then involved the classic constant comparative analysis sequence, which begins with open coding, moves then to axial coding, then to selective coding (or story line) and then to conditional propositions and interpretive display (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). Data collection was ongoing, and saturation occurred in many areas of analysis (Creswell, 1998, p. 57).

From these coding efforts and through interaction with the participants, I hoped to derive "indigenous typologies," (as Patton, 1990, p. 393, describes them), doing member checking consistently and continuously to obtain the insiders' views or actors' definitions of their teacher formation. Through attention to indigenous typologies, I hoped to draw

upon the participants' categories/frameworks and compare these to my own interpretations, as well as to categories derived from the literature and from the focus group discussions.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability in qualitative research depend on the "methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher" (Patton, 1990, p. 11). Patton goes on to say:

Systematic and rigorous observation involves far more than just being present and looking around. Skillful interviewing involves much more than just asking questions. Content analysis requires considerably more than just reading to see what's there (p. 11).

Where the instrument is the researcher, as in qualitative research (Patton, p. 14), the internal validity of the study is deeply connected to the skill of the researcher. Therefore, it seems important to note here that I have some degree of training and skill in writing descriptively and analytically, in keeping detailed field notes, and in theme clarification. A background in English and particularly creative writing has helped with these aspects of field note taking, as have several occasions for ethnographic observation in coursework. Furthermore, I have spent considerable time developing interviewing skills, especially through my work with writing conferences undertaken with student writers. Finally, as a full-time lecturer in the department where this study was conducted, I am a known and, I hope, a trusted entity. My efforts throughout the study were committed to making the participants comfortable. Therefore, interviews were conducted on familiar turf, specifically in a faculty office in the English Department, and focus group meetings were similarly held in the department's conference room.

Still, to further enhance the internal validity of my data collection, I attempted to engage in regular member checking as well as triangulation of data collection methods in order to strengthen the internal validity of the study. Data triangulation occurred in this study through three basic mechanisms--multiple data points, multiple collection methods, and the multiple points of view of 1st-year TAs, 2nd-year TAs, and the faculty/supervisors.

Subjects engaged in numerous data generating events, including the educational life story interviews, the daily teaching logs, the critical events written narratives and interviews and the concluding Story Swap. Triangulation of method was sought through a combination of interview and varying kinds of document analysis, the latter specifically utilized with the daily teaching logs and the written critical event narratives. Interviews were undertaken on at least three occasions and queried varied events—an introductory educational life story, a follow-up educational life story, and follow-up interviews to one or more written critical event narratives. Oral storytelling constituted yet another methodological variation. Finally, the use of focus groups offered an additional research strategy.

Constant comparative analysis and narrative analysis were differing analytical tools used for contemplation of the data. Additionally, internal validity in the study was strengthened through theory triangulation as I considered the possible applications of various teacher development theories, adult development schema, novice vs. expert practice theory and—as eventually was inductively required by the data—other theoretical constructs related to discourse theory, teacher identity, and caring pedagogy.

External validity has to do with the transferability of findings, or the degree to which findings apply to contexts other than the one being studied. With qualitative research, the onus for transferability rests principally on the shoulders of the reader, who must discern the level of fit between the studied case and his or her own context (Erikson, 1986). On the other hand, my own efforts to establish external validity have revolved around the density or “thickness” of the descriptions reported in my findings. My hope is that through such “thick descriptions” readers may recognize familiar themes as they read about the teaching experiences described in this study.

Reliability, which is defined as the degree of replicability of a study, is obtained in qualitative research via sufficiently detailed description that the study could be done again by another researcher. The notion of “thick description” is relevant here, since it is through extremely detailed description that a reader recognizes (or doesn’t recognize) similarities to his or her own circumstance and is able to repeat the research process himself or herself. Notes were kept on the study virtually from the moment of its acceptance at the proposal defense, and a continuous audit trail has been maintained.

CHAPTER FOUR

Report of Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I will provide a brief review of the research methods and sampling procedures to precede the report of findings. I will present the report of findings in chronological order, beginning with an overview of the larger context of the study, as derived from document analysis, interview, and ethnographic observation. In this contextual portion of the findings I will describe and characterize the setting of the study. Included will be a description and analysis of the training that teaching assistants receive in this study setting, to include a description of “Orientation Week” (otherwise referred to here as “orientation”), which is an intensive 40-hour week of training that immediately precedes the start of classes and “Tart,” the weekly meeting of a small group of 1st-year teaching assistants with their advising lecturer during the first half of the first semester of teaching.

In the second portion of this report of findings, I will document the constant comparative analysis used to analyze the interview data, teaching logs, and written narratives of the six teaching assistants who participated in the study during their first term of college teaching (August through December of 2000). First, I will provide across-case analysis and then within-case analysis, using extensive description and analysis of these participants’ experiences as evidence of their lived experiences as new college teachers. Evidence in this portion of the discussion will be drawn from the four central data collection methods—Life Story Interview I, Life Story Interview II, the

Teaching Log, and the Critical Event Narrative(s). The participating TAs are represented in the order in which I met them for the first Life Story Interview and were originally named simply Subjects 1 through 6. The pseudonyms subsequently developed for the TAs were, in their respective order, Jen, Mark, Jack, Sadie, Leah, and Tess.

I will follow this portion of the analysis with a description and interpretation of the Story Swap event, an hour-long concluding activity that took place at the end of the semester. Here the TAs orally shared one or more of their critical events with one another and then discussed the themes that they saw emerging from their shared stories. They also commented on their levels of enthusiasm throughout the term and commented on the theorized progression of teaching concern from self to task to learner and whether their own experiences mirrored that sequence. This portion of the analysis will involve narrative interpretation since it is my belief that the story swap event constitutes a public, oral performance that is different from the personal documents of the interviews and the teaching logs. --

In the next two portions of the report of findings, I will discuss the two focus group meetings which were conducted subsequent to the semester in which the 1st-year TAs were studied. For this discussion I will again engage in narrative analysis to interpret these story performances, which I believe are narrative constructions undertaken with awareness of a more public audience. First among these focus groups is the five-member group of 2nd-year teaching assistants, who gathered for a one-hour focus group discussion on February 1, 2001. I provided these five with the transcript of the 1st-year TA Story Swap and then asked them to compare their experiences (from their own first year and more recently) to the experiences of the 1st-year TAs. I also asked them to think

about the relationship of their own educational life stories to their teaching and to convey any old or new critical events from their own teaching experience. Finally, I invited them to discuss their evolving teaching concerns, and especially, any changes they have noted in their areas of concern over time.

In the final section of findings I report on the second focus group, which was a five-member faculty supervisor-administrator group that met on April 13, 2001. The faculty ranged in experience from a 1st-year lecturer to a 25-year tenured veteran, with points in between represented as well. I provided this group again with the transcription of the 1st-year TA Story Swap, and I asked them to comment on the familiarity of the themes discussed. I then asked them to discuss their own teaching development and the relationship of their life stories to their perspectives on teaching. I encouraged them along the way to weave in specific stories, or critical events, from their own experience. Finally, I asked these faculty members to discuss their current teaching concerns and how these have changed over the years of their experience.

Research Methods

This qualitative study employed case study for the collection phase of the study. Constant comparative analysis strategies, including first-level, second-level (axial) and third-level interpretation were employed for the analysis phase. The study sought to describe the lived experiences of 1st-year college teachers, in the *case* of a small group of teaching assistants responsible for delivering freshman composition at a particular *site*—a large, land grant university’s English department, specifically the one at Colorado State University. I also thought of the individual participants as *subset cases* within the larger case, and the guiding question throughout the study was “What is it like—at this *site*, in

this *case*, and among these *subset cases*—to be a novice college teacher, solely responsible for a classroom of approximately 20 students, and to simultaneously pursue a graduate education?” A further goal of the study was to develop and test themes related to the evolution of *teaching concerns* over the course of the first year of teaching and beyond, as previously suggested by the 1st-year TAs and then enlarged through discussions with 2nd-year TAs and veteran faculty. Furthermore, developmental and experiential theories relative to the *teaching performance* of novice and veteran teachers provided a backdrop for these considerations. An additional aim of the study was to query the narrative knowledge-construction of teachers—that is, the relationship of life story to teaching story, of teaching story to practice, of organizational story (or folklore) to assumptions and convictions about teaching.

All of these questions were directed by certain assumptions regarding the appropriateness of self-directed, reflective thinking to the development of the knowledge base of professionals (Schon, 1983; Taggart & Wilson, 1998). As the study progressed, it became clear that some additional understanding of adult development and life structure theories as well as work-place discourse theories would be needed; for adult development needs I consulted Levinson (1978), Erikson (1980), and Gilligan (1993). For the work-place discourse discussion I consulted Ervin Goffman (1977) and Deborah Tannen (1996). Furthermore, both the data collection and data analysis were guided by theories of narrative knowledge-construction, especially that theorized by Jerome Bruner (1990, 1991) and Clandinin & Connelly (1991), as well as the role of self in teacher development as suggested by Witherell (1991), Grumet (1991) Schubert (1991), Tickle (1999), and Schempp, Sparkes & Templin (1999). Finally, given the concerns that

evolved from the personal and public documents of the TAs, especially the female TAs, it became important to consult the literature around caring pedagogy such as that theorized by Noddings (1992) and Agne (1999).

Concretely speaking, the six 1st-year TAs were interviewed twice about their educational life stories, and they maintained a daily dialogic teaching journal (or log) over the course of their first semester of teaching. Furthermore, they recorded one or two important teaching stories derived from their everyday experience, and these became known as “critical events.” These critical events were first written as “narratives of teaching discovery,” were subsequently discussed and analyzed for meanings in interview with me, and ultimately were shared with fellow study participants in an hour-long oral story exchange otherwise called here the “Story Swap.” Additionally, the focus groups were also asked to share stories from their own teaching experience, both from recent and not-so-recent history.

Sampling Procedure

This research study used purposeful sampling within a bounded population, specifically the new class of approximately 20 teaching assistants in the English department of Colorado State University [henceforth referred to as “CSU.”] 1st-year teaching assistants were first recruited at the conclusion of the TA orientation conducted the third week of August 2000. At that time, I made a formal presentation to the new class of TAs and offered a letter of invitation to the group of approximately 20 [See Appendix A: Recruitment Letter of 1st-Yrs.]. I indicated that six TAs would be selected from among those interested, and that my selections would be based on maximizing the

diversity of the group and seeking, as nearly as possible, a representative sample of the overall group's regional, gender, and ethnic composition.

Of note here is the seeming ethnic homogeneity of the population queried. Only two minority students were in attendance at the orientation, and both were African-American. Seeking "politically important cases" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28), I approached both of these individuals privately and sought their participation in the study. The female, an active duty Air Force officer, was not a candidate to participate because she had no teaching duties at the university; she was sitting in on the orientation in preparation for her imminent teaching duties at the Air Force Academy subsequent to her graduation from the composition development program at CSU. The African-American male indicated initial interest in participating and eventually offered a written teaching narrative to me, but he felt unable to make the time commitment the study required.

The six-member 1st-year TA participant group was comprised of four females and two males. Five out of six were in their first year of graduate school, and one was in his second year of graduate school. All were Caucasian. One was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest. A second was raised and educated almost entirely in Eastern prep schools although he was born in the Midwest, a third was from the deep South, a fourth came from a coastal Mid-Atlantic state, and the remaining two came from the Midwest. Three of the subjects graduated from private colleges. The other three attended large, public universities. Five out of six were raised in middle-class homes, and the sixth participant described herself as "proud working class." Two of the subjects were married at the time of the study. None had children. At the outset of the study, three of the participants possessed strong aspirations to become teachers either in the public school or

university setting. Two others were committed to pursuing careers outside of teaching, and the last participant was unclear about career direction, but was keeping teaching open as a possibility. Each of the 1st-year TAs was compensated \$100 for participating in this study.

The six participants initially selected for the 2nd-year TA focus group were chosen based on interests and availability subsequent to the recruiting presentation I gave at a PIE (required 2nd-year TA training). [See Appendix B: 2nd Yr Recruitment Letter and Focus Group Agenda.] However, one selected participant could not participate in the study because she moved away for the term and, when asked, did not wish to participate by conference phone. The remaining five members of the 2nd-year TA focus group were engaged for a discussion of the teaching concerns articulated by the 1st-year TAs. They were also asked to describe their own teaching concerns to see if there were differences between these slightly more experienced teaching assistants and the 1st-year TA group. The 2nd-year TA group was comprised of four females and one male, and all had been 1st-year TAs at CSU the previous academic year. One 2nd-year TA had secondary public school teaching experience. Two of the five described themselves as Christians, a point that became important to the discussion. Also, two of the five volunteered that they were married, another point that became important to their self-characterizations. One 2nd-year TA was in the creative writing (MFA) program, while the rest were distributed among the composition development, literature, and Masters-in-Teaching programs.

Of the six faculty members who were purposefully selected for participation in the faculty focus group, all agreed to participate except for one member who could not due to sabbatical leave and a second who withdrew at the last moment due to illness. An

appropriate substitute was found for the individual on sabbatical, and so the five-member faculty focus group met on a Friday, April 13, 2001. [See Appendix C: Faculty Focus Group Agenda.] Again, diversity of background and experience was sought, and the group members ranged in experience from a first-year lecturer (Master's degree from CSU) to a composition specialist who has been tenured for over 20 years. Between these extremes were two past lecturers (both hold Master's degrees from CSU), who now adjunct for the department and an experienced lecturer who holds a doctorate in literature from another university. The current lecturers who participated in the focus group were also involved in the curriculum development of the course the 1st-year TAs teach, and the senior professor who participated was the 1st-year TAs' instructor for the required teaching methods course (E684 Supervised College Teaching).

Data Collection

Data collection began for this study when I observed the orientation training conducted the week before classes started. I maintained detailed observational notes from this 40-hour training module. I continued to observe TA training during the course of the semester, attending a full semester of the TAs Supervised College Teaching (E684) class and attending one lecturer's Tart meetings, which were held once a week for an hour and involved ongoing feedback and suggestions for a small group of five TAs.

The 1st-year TAs in this study were interviewed twice (once at the beginning of their first term of teaching and a second time at the conclusion of their first term of teaching). The focus of the interviews was the educational life story. They were also interviewed subsequent to the writing of one or (in a few cases) two critical event narratives. Furthermore, they maintained a dialogic teaching journal or log. At the

conclusion of the 1st-year TAs' participation in the study, we gathered for a story exchange (called a "Story Swap"), at which they shared their critical event narratives with other participants in the study.

The Life Story Interview (LSI) was conducted twice, first at the end of the first week of classes, and second, at the end of the last week of classes. All interviews were audiotaped and were one hour in length. The interviews explored the TAs' current graduate school aims, family and cultural backgrounds, educational histories inside and outside of schools, teaching influences and educational philosophies. The interviews were guided by an interview questionnaire [Appendix D: LSI I and LSI II Questionnaires] that I provided the TAs before the interview. The idea for this interview was derived conceptually from Robert Atkinson's (1998) work in life story interview as well as the work of Mary Louise Holly's (1989) work in educator autobiography.

I asked the TAs to prioritize the questions by relevance and interest to themselves, and I followed their guidance when conducting the interview. Moreover, I asked them to maintain control of interview questions and to self-guide their hour of recitation. To the greatest extent possible, then, once the TAs began their life story interviews, I tried to minimize my guidance and interruption of the interview process, allowing the narrative flow of the subjects' interviews to follow its own course. Subsequent to the interviews and during the transcription phase, I engaged in what is known as "member checking" to see if I had understood them correctly; this involved conversing with them about their thoughts, particularly in locations of the transcription where their meaning puzzled me.

During the course of the semester these TAs were asked to stay alert for specific "critical events" or moments of discovery. [See Appendix E: Critical Event Prompt.]

The idea of “critical event” in the life of the professional educator was suggested by Holly (1989, p. 129) Having identified a “critical event,” these novice teachers then wrote the event as a narrative, telling the story of “what happened” and then interpreting its meaning for the reporting teacher’s praxis. The TAs was encouraged to write two narratives during the course of the term, but only two of them did this. Two others merged two events into a single theme. The remaining two reported a single event. Once I received a written narrative, I then made an appointment with the TA for a follow-up interview, which I audiotaped. At this interview, the participating TAs explored their interpretation of the events they chose to write about.

For the dialogic teaching log, two of the TAs used Syllabase classroom management software. For these two TAs I imported the template for the dialogic journal entries and they entered their logs and submitted them daily to their individual web sites. The other four TAs used hard copies of this same dialogic journal form, which I supplied to them on a weekly basis. [See Appendix F: Dialogic Journal Form] The dialogic daily log asked them to report 1) what they had done in class, 2) how and when their approaches deviated from the master syllabus, 3) memos to themselves about plans for the next time they taught this class, 4) information relevant to the following class meeting, 5) experience of any memorable events from the day’s teaching, and finally 6) reflections on the day. In all cases, whether computer-generated or handwritten, the logs were submitted daily and I responded in kind. In only one case did a TA fail to complete the full course of daily logs, and this individual stopped approximately half way through the course. Finally, in the case of the Syllabase users, I was able to engage them in follow-on discussion of their entries.

The culmination of the 1st-year TAs' participation in the study was the Story Swap, an informal audiotaped get-together in which the TAs told their stories to the participant group. [See Appendix G: Story Swap Prompt.] The storytelling was followed by an analytical-interpretive discussion in which I asked them to identify recurring or important themes that they heard among their peers' stories. I also asked how these stories might impact their teaching. I also asked them to identify the teaching concerns that they heard implicitly carried by the stories. Further, I asked them to analyze their growth/development over the course of the term and to respond to the fit of a few teaching development theories to their own experience. Finally, I asked them to graph their levels of enthusiasm for teaching throughout the term using an x-axis of time (weeks 1-16) and a y-axis of enthusiasm. The slopes of these graphs generally indicated their initial high enthusiasm and rather dramatic fall into disappointment, dread, and even despair, which was followed, at the close of the semester, by rising levels of optimism and renewed hope for the upcoming semester, [See Appendix H: TA Enthusiasm Graphs.]

The 2nd-year focus group met on February 1, 2001, approximately two weeks into the spring term of classes and subsequent to my transcription of the 1st-year data. The faculty focus group met on April 13, 2000. Both focus group meetings were audiotaped. Approximately one week before each group met, I sent each participant a copy of the 1st-year TA Story Swap, accompanied by copies of the prompts for the life story interviews, the critical events, and the teaching log. I also asked them to think about whether the TA story themes were familiar to them, whether they recalled themselves going through similar experiences, whether they gained any new insights into TA issues, and what they

saw as the central teaching concerns of these new teachers. I also asked them to think about the relationship of their own educational life stories to their teaching practice. Further, I asked them to recall any critical events from their most recent year of teaching.

Data Reduction and Analysis

I first transcribed verbatim all audiotaped events—the interviews, Story Swap, and focus group discussions—into word processing software. I transferred the dialogic teaching logs into word processing files and imported the critical event narratives into word processing software as well. Then I transferred the word-processed documents into automated spreadsheets. In the spreadsheets, I divided each line of print into meaningful word/phrase units and conducted first-level coding. [See Appendix I: Sample Spreadsheet Coding Using Jack's LSI I Data.] My work was guided here by Stewart, Franz, and Layton (1988), who used personal documents to study historical lives via the lens of adult theory development; my application of their processes had to do with their “meaningful phrase” as the coding unit, which they defined as “whatever amount of content constitutes a codable image,” which “may be contained in a single sentence, none may occur for several paragraphs . . . or a codable image may only be clearly defined by several adjacent sentences” (p. 57). Also, drawing on the work of Miles & Huberman (1994) I worked carefully so as not to rush to compression of this material. Since I believed my work fell broadly under the heading of phenomenology, I considered Miles and Huberman's advice regarding coding:

Phenomenologists often work with interview transcripts, but they are careful, often dubious, about condensing this material. They do not, for example, use coding, but assume that through continued readings of the source material and through vigilance over one's presuppositions, one can reach the “Lebenswelt” of the informant, capturing the “essence” of an account. (p. 8)

Seeking a middle ground between this purist approach and traditional coding procedures of qualitative data reduction, I applied the inductive coding technique of Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), who recommend review of the data line by line, typically in paragraph units, writing beside or below the paragraphs the categories, themes, or labels that match the data. Then, at the first level of coding—again as suggested by Strauss and Corbin—I applied labels (codes) to the language units, recording these conceptual labels in cells to the right of the raw data, in a second column generated on the spreadsheet. Second-level coding then was recorded in a third column, frequently yielding somewhat more abstract labeling of paragraphs, events, or similarly larger units of analysis. Subsequent to generating these three columns of parsing, I engaged in third-level coding in which I wrote the “story” of the data set being analyzed, attempting to identify themes and larger patterns as well as to render as a meaningful whole the transcribed document in question, whether life story interview, critical event, or teaching log. [See Appendix J: Third-level Coding or “Story” Example Using Jack’s LSI I Data.] I then anthologized these stories and cross-coded them, lining them up in columns within-case (that is, for each individual TA participant) to compare their “stories” across data collection types. [See Appendix K: Within-Case Analysis of Jack’s Data.]

To allow for cross-case or multiple participant comparisons, I also then compiled the data in a different format, with each individual’s segmented data set alongside the similar data of the other participants. Finally, I created concept maps to aid with thematic analysis.

Much the same process was followed for data reduction of the Story Swap and focus group transcriptions, which were coded at first, second, and third levels. The one deviation here was that it was not possible to do anthology cross-coding for these events. Instead, subsequent to doing the third-level coding, I generated individual concept maps for the Story Swap and for each of the focus groups. [See Appendix L: Concept Maps.]

Finally, because this study was situated within the context of a particular department, within a particular university, and among TAs receiving a particular set of training information, I attempted to immerse myself in the TAs' learning environment for a period of one semester, their first, attending their 40-hour orientation training, their semester-long methods course, and the weekly small-group meetings with their assigned audit lecturers. From these events I took observational notes and memos. Also, as a full-time lecturer in the department where the study was undertaken, I had a particularly good vantage point from which to observe the daily workings of the department, the TAs, and their mentor/supervisors as they went about their daily business, thus enlarging my overall sense of the site where the study was undertaken. Finally, over the course of the academic year I taught five sections of the same course these TAs were teaching, electing to teach my sections from the master syllabus provided to the TAs and thereby engaging in similar lesson preparations. Through this vital piece, I was able to become intimately familiar with the daily teaching issues they were engaged in, and I was able to respond (in particular to their dialogic journals) with full understanding of the lessons, themes, and problems they were reporting.

The Site

This study was undertaken in the English Department of Colorado State University, a public land grant Carnegie I research institution of just under 23,000 students, approximately 4,000 of these graduate students. CSU is located in Fort Collins, Colorado, about an hour north of Denver, along what is known as the Front Range, a corridor of rapidly developing commercial and technological growth. Fort Collins was recently featured in National Geographic Magazine as one of a handful of the most rapidly growing American cities where urban sprawl is a major concern, and this small city of 115,000 has also been featured as a “best choice” for family and retiree living by several popular magazines. Demographic features of Fort Collins reflect the larger demography of the state—over 90% Caucasian.

Among the several public universities in Colorado, CSU is widely held as somewhat less selective than the University of Colorado, Boulder, and somewhat more selective than the University of Northern Colorado. As a land-grant university, CSU is historically known for its work in agriculture, veterinary science, and occupational health. It has been acknowledged as a top state university in research and technology. More recently, characterizing a renewed focus on undergraduate education, CSU has implemented several innovations to the undergraduate curriculum, including revisions to the core curriculum, the addition of a required first-year seminar, an honors track and dormitory, and the creation of an administrative office devoted to student retention.

At the same time, recent articles in the local community newspaper, The Coloradoan, have documented the concern of some CSU faculty that while undergraduate enrollment is burgeoning, standards for admission and undergraduate post-secondary

preparation for an ever-enlarging population are declining. However, this trend mirrors similar perceptions nationwide, as ever greater numbers of high school graduates and their families approach college as the 16th-20th years of school, in effect an extension of an obligatory public education.

The English Department at CSU is comprised of approximately 45 tenured and tenure-track professors and approximately 30 adjuncts, which together serve an average of 400-500 undergraduate English majors and around 100 graduate students. The department is also responsible for delivery of the only core requirement in writing, CO150, or freshman composition, and it is this course that teaching assistants, several adjuncts, a handful of lecturers, some tenure-track, and the occasional tenured professor teach. CO150 is administered by a revolving group of tenured or tenure-track composition specialists, who for a period of usually three years serve as composition director. The emphasis of the course changes somewhat as new composition directors assume control and administration of the course. Most recently, the composition director has taken a cultural studies approach to the course, reflecting one of the three or four most popular approaches to composition administration. The previous course director took a somewhat different approach to the course, emphasizing discourse communities, particularly as they exist (and differ) within the academic community. Having taught for both of these composition directors myself, I can testify to the rather different emphases of the courses yet the similarity of the larger writing requirements, especially in terms of breadth, length, and complexity. Over at least the past half dozen years or so, therefore, the writing requirements have remained more or less the same, with four major papers required of students over the course of the term. These include a research paper that

familiarizes students with library processes, computer databases, and “live-source” research approaches, including interview and observation.

In recent years because of university budgetary issues and resulting personnel shortages, a backlog of students needing to take CO150 has developed, with many sections of the course comprised of equal numbers upper-class students and the intended freshmen. Even more recently, the liberal arts college and English department have undertaken an aggressive plan to “catch up” in the next year or so and, as such, have hired several lecturers like myself to teach heavy loads (4/4) for a period of two years. Initial indications suggest that CO150 enrollments are indeed catching up, and most TAs are now teaching predominantly freshmen.

Most of the English Department resides on the third floor of Eddy Hall, a centrally located building on campus, and sections of CO150 are taught mostly in this building with a few taught in buildings in the immediate vicinity. Most faculty offices are located on the third floor of Eddy, and post office boxes are maintained there as well, as is a faculty lounge that is open to TAs. Teaching assistant offices, however, are located in an adjacent building, Aylesworth, and this is where TAs conduct conferences and share conversations. During the course of this study, my office was located in Eddy, but my visits to TAs in Aylesworth suggest that the TAs find a degree of comfort in having their own space. Their offices, while shared, are generous in size, brightly and naturally lit, and, in many cases, creatively furnished. The TAs seem to navigate the hallways with rather more freedom and openness than they do the third floor of Eddy, where they go for clerical support and to visit their mailboxes and graduate professors. I believe that the separate accommodations probably aid the productive hallway conversations and teacher

storytelling that new instructors seem compelled to engage in. On the other hand, certain opportunities for collegiality across generations of experience may be lost through this arrangement, and, given the important role of both teacher folklore and collegiality, this loss may be a significant one.

The Course

CO150 is a challenging course for both student and teacher. It entails significant amounts of reading, writing, discussion, and grading. Four major papers are called for by the master or standard syllabus, and these papers increase in both length and difficulty. The basic approach to the current version of freshman composition taught in this department is consistent with social constructivist philosophy in which the “texts” of our daily lives are examined critically against the backdrop of contemporary culture. Texts in this setting are not the privileged texts of the traditional canon; rather, the course takes a postmodern approach to the contextual features of all texts. A triad of essential context considerations (or the so-called “holy trinity”) consisting of audience, purpose, and occasion are posited as the essential features of every writing circumstance, whether done for school or elsewhere.

To demonstrate their mastery of this concept and of writing for context, students are taken through four sequenced writing assignments. The first asks them to read and critically query several contemporary personal experience narratives essays and to respond to a single one that they choose, incorporating into their response both textual and personal evidence of their own. A second paper moves students into critiquing several texts for their usefulness in an academic setting. They are asked to recommend one of the texts to a sociology professor, developing criteria for the text’s usefulness and

evidence of its suitability for an undergraduate course in sociology. For this section of the course, students read several additional texts, which represent both more scholarly as well as very popular pieces related to the common theme.

The third paper is the central assignment of the semester, asking students to use their developing abilities to critique a text by extending the concept of text to media sources, specifically television. Students select a television show and analyze it thoroughly, suggesting whether the “reading” of this text, or watching of it, reinforces or challenges dominant (and theoretically dangerous) cultural myths. For this assignment, the writing task is quite complex, as students must identify an audience that “needs” to hear what they have to say. Also, they must also identify and demonstrate that the myth in question exists before demonstrating how the television show reinforces or challenges it.

The final paper of the course is the researched argumentative paper, in which students are asked to identify a specific and debatable issue on some given topic (last year the topic was “education”) and then research the issue, declaring an argumentative position on the issue. Here the idea of text is again extended, as students are required to question or critique an institution or institutional by-product as if it were a text. This most complex of the writing assignments requires again that the students develop individually appropriate audiences for their paper, identifying and selecting an audience that will be resistant to their position. They must provide sufficient evidence for the claim they take on the issue, and they must include among their research sources not only database retrieved scholarly articles but one “live source” interview or observation.

Daily activities in the course are directed toward classroom discourse via discussion in large and small groups, the querying of assigned texts, the critical examination of texts, and writing for explanation and argument with an emphasis on writing as revision and writing as choice. Students learn to declare a focus and then explore it via textual and personal evidence. Daily homework is a labor-intensive feature of the course, for both student and teacher, as students are asked to engage in a series of activities leading them toward the paper they will eventually write. Also, daily in-class writing, known as the Write-to-Learn or WTL is another feature of the class that requires daily feedback from the teacher. Classroom time is typically divided among brief lecture or explanation followed by small group work, whole class discussion, in-class writing, and/or discussion of homework. A strong emphasis on cooperative learning is present in this course, as is class participation and group presentation. At least once per assigned paper students read sample papers and also once per assignment they do an in-class workshop of a peer's paper.

Additionally, for many of the classes, the classroom discourse is extended beyond the class itself and into a virtual classroom discussion forum, using the classroom software Syllabase, which resembles the more familiar WebCT but contains several unique features that make it rather more accessible and useable for students and teachers alike. One unique feature of this software is its capability of being entirely administered by the individual instructor, which permits maximum freedom of use but also maximum additional responsibility for the instructor, as discussion groups must be created and discussion input monitored. All 1st-semester TAs added this capability to their repertoires during the orientation week and several began using it regularly with their classes during

the first semester. A few of the TAs in my study reported being overwhelmed by the additional work created by using this software, even though they were excited by the potential uses they could imagine for it, especially, as one TA put it, the potential use by computer-savvy students who might not otherwise engage in classroom discourse.

Throughout the course, classroom activities recommended by the master or standard syllabus (and presented to the TAs in a packet during orientation training) are geared toward helping the student writer with the current writing assignment. The acronym used in the department is CSOW (Connect to the Students' Own Writing).

The Syllabus Packet, Writing Center, and On-Line Writing Center

A new master or standard syllabus is produced each summer and sometimes revised between semesters, subsequent to feedback on the past semester's outcomes for the teachers who use it. It offers both highly detailed daily lesson plans as well as ample discussion of the rationales for each of the paper assignments, the overall unit objectives and the course goals as a whole. Additionally, the syllabus packet contains assignment sheets ready for duplication, as well as the key class supplements, such as workshop sheets, backwards outline examples, supplemental readings for the individual instructor to place on reserve, library research tools and other daily teaching instruments.

An additional resource is the Writing Center, which is located in the basement of Eddy Hall and offers individualized writing help to students from across the campus. As such, it is a useful resource for new TAs as well as veteran teachers at the university. While the Writing Center prides itself in helping all levels of writers, including doctoral candidates who are composing their dissertations and creative writers who are finishing novels, most of the students who are seen in the writing center are students of CO150

who need additional help with focus and development of their papers. The tutors at the Writing Center do not proofread or edit papers but instead provide additional instruction to writers in the midst of their composing process. The Center is open most days, many evenings, and often on the weekend as well.

The On-Line Writing Center is an additional source of support to TAs and their students. The largest on-line writing center of its kind, the OWC can help writers even when the physical writing center in Eddy is closed. It offers advice on virtually every imaginable form and problem with writing as well as a full range of writing support, including the "Send a Paper" function, which promises a detailed response to submitted papers within 24 hours. Now over 25,000 web pages in length, the OWC is best navigated via the index. During the orientation training TAs received, they were exposed to several potential uses of the on-line writing center

The Student

The CO150 student is very nearly the Everyman and Everywoman of the CSU campus since 95% of CSU students take CO150. Only about 5% of students do not take the course, 2.5% not qualifying for standard CO150 and thereby required to take either CO192 Academic Writing or the tutorial and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, another 2.5% either passing out with an Advanced Placement (AP) score of 4, testing out with a score of 6 on the department's entrance exam, or taking a transferable course at a Colorado community college. TAs are shown during their training orientation examples of entrance exam papers and the range of scores associated with them, running from a score of 1, which moves the student into a one-on-one tutorial, to a 2, which qualifies the student for CO192, or a 3, 4, or 5, which places the student in CO150. A score of 6,

which is needed to pass out of CO150, is rare indeed. It is sometimes astonishing for students to learn that they must get an AP score of 4 to test out of CO150, and it is especially surprising for students who have completed AP Literature and Composition in high school to find themselves scoring a 2 on the entrance exam and placed into CO192, a full semester of work required of them before they can even qualify for CO150.

Placement tests are scored using established holistic methods. To the credit of this department, it undertakes this gargantuan project several times a year, rather than surrendering to the simplistic grammar/mechanics testing of days gone by.

The Training

TA training is divided into several key pieces. First is the 40-hour intensive orientation training conducted the week before classes begin, a synopsis of which follows. Second is E684 Supervised College Teaching, a three-credit course required the first semester for all new TAs. Third is the CO 150 Audit Section, which involves each TA observing, in the first semester of teaching, a lecturer teaching CO150 every day up through Unit II. Observation subsequent to Unit II is optional for the new TAs. Fourth is P.I.E. (Professional Internship in English), which involves bi-monthly meetings with all TAs for continued professional development during the second semester and on through to the end of the assistantship. Fifth is Tart (little pie), the weekly meeting of a small group of TAs with the audit lecturer during the first semester of teaching and focused on day-to-day teaching issues. Finally, observations and grading conferences are done three times during the first semester of teaching and offer feedback from a member of the composition faculty, usually the audit lecturer.

Orientation

The 40-hour intensive orientation training I observed occurred August 14-18, 2000, and was conducted by the composition director and several lecturers, most of whom will be audited by the new TAs. The graduate students in attendance included 19 teaching TAs, plus a graduate student who would work in the writing center instead of teaching, a graduate student scheduled to begin teaching at the Air Force Academy and thus doing no teaching, and a 2nd-year graduate student who would be teaching in the honors seminar.

The orientation began with a welcome by the department chairperson who emphasized the two roles of a TA as student and as teacher. This welcome was followed by a statement from the head of graduate studies (reminding the TAs not to forget that their main reason for being here is to get a master's degree), and an introduction of the writing center director who also coordinates writing-across-the-curriculum efforts on campus. Additionally, throughout the week, various people from the department "dropped by" to offer expertise in certain areas. For instance, the course instructor for the Supervised College Teaching course attended most of the training, modeled a grading and commenting session, and explained the entrance essay testing and scoring procedures, taking the TAs through a mock placement exercise with this. Also, the composition program's tenured technology expert and previous composition director gave a presentation on the use of Syllabase. Several faculty assisted on the day TAs did micro-teaching; here the TAs tried their hand at teaching a lesson in front of an audience of their peers and a few faculty members, then submitted themselves to critique.

Most of the training was conducted by the composition director and lecturers, however, within a traditional classroom setting. Lecturers stood at the front of the room, and TAs sat at the desks their students would inhabit the following week. Typically, each lecturer gave a one-hour presentation and then switched off to another lecturer. Questions were answered, but a definite agenda was maintained with minimal interruption.

Given the influence such early models can be expected to have upon a new teacher's approach to the classroom, one wonders if the fast pace and unilaterally teacher-centered method represents the best delivery method; on the other hand, this early approach was eventually tempered by more involvement by the classroom of TAs, and it is understandable that the directors wished to establish a businesslike tone and quick pace in the opening minutes. Also, it should be noted that occasionally the composition director checked in with the TAs to see if she was moving too fast. Stretch breaks were granted every two hours or so, and lunch breaks varied in length but averaged a full hour. Training began at 8 a.m. and generally ended before 5 p.m. The TAs were given homework to complete before the next day's sessions began, and prior to arriving on campus, they had also been sent textbooks, readings, and several papers to write—the same papers their students would be asked to do during the semester.

Over the course of the five days, the basic course was laid out, beginning with a brief history of the freshman composition course since the 1970's. Write-to-learns (WTLs) were explained very early in the training, and during the orientation the lecturers modeled use of the classroom space, the overhead projector, and the marker board, varying their use of physical movement in the classroom as well. On the first day especially, all of the lecturers and the composition director were professionally dressed, a

strong statement to the TAs, although other faculty who dropped by during the week were dressed far more casually.

Discussion on the first morning centered around the positives and negatives of a course on writing. An interesting aspect of the training, which was established early, was the occasional “aside” in which a lecturer gave practical and explicit teaching instruction. For instance, an early aside demonstrated how to have students count off in order to get the number of small groups you desire in a room of nineteen; another involved how to write using transparency markers on the overhead projector.

At the end of this first morning, training turned to the particular philosophy of the course, of seeing writing as a situated event bounded by context (topic, audience, and purpose) and driven by a writer’s conscious decision-making and the revising of those choices. Then discussion turned to the difference between process and product, clarifying that intervention via homework and write-to-learn responses is the process in action, while evaluation occurs at the level of product, and the quality of the product is the student-writer’s grade.

The lunchtime meetings each day provided the composition faculty an opportunity to check in with each other regarding the morning’s events. These meetings made it possible to tailor and revise the afternoon plans immediately, rather than wait and debrief the successes and failures at the close of the day or at the end of the training. Quieter TAs were noted by the faculty as was one TA who appeared to be a natural performer who, the trainer felt, might need to be kept in check because of perceptions of his potentially negative impact on other TAs’ learning. An alternative interpretation of

this TA might have embraced his enthusiasm or perhaps have found a way to focus or redirect his high level of engagement.

Later that first day, the clerical staff was introduced and office hours were explained. Reading assignments were explained. Teaching sequencing and transitioning was explained and demonstrated, with introductions, conclusions and transitions modeled for the TAs. There was also a broader explanation of rhetorical context as the focus of the course's approach. Some ideas for how to explain this to students were provided along with another instructional "aside" about getting people to read aloud so that they break through their silence in a low-risk manner. Finally, an explanation of holistic placement grading was provided, and the TAs tried their hands at it.

The subsequent days of training were equally as full as this first one. Later days provided an introduction to the library assignment and the librarian assigned to CO150 as well as a detailed modeling of the third essay, which is the central assignment of the syllabus. Classroom time modeled various classroom situations, including group work, doing read-arounds, anticipating problems with the assignments, going over—and then practicing for an extended period of time with real papers—methods for providing better comments marginally on papers and on end comments. There were extensive group efforts aimed at rehearsing the kinds of group activities these TAs would later be asking their students to do. Importantly, at the conclusion of these group efforts, the TAs were asked to present their findings using the overhead projector or marker board and thus also modeling for themselves how students might be held accountable for group work.

Also, in detailed ways, the TAs were asked to examine the goals of each writing assignment. Additionally, in talking about these assignments concretely, TAs began to

anticipate some of the problems they might expect students to have. Also, lecturers provided models of how to engage a classroom in discussion, as well as how to deal with the constantly contributing student as well as the silent one. TAs were encouraged to continually think about how to make class time more effective and how to deal with unprepared students. A key moment was the clear statement on Day 2 from the course director who advised them to stick to the assigned essays but feel free to change lesson plans, a clear statement of the degree of academic freedom they can enact in the classroom. This was followed by an afternoon session in which they revised lesson plans in groups. Different groups selected different class days to revise, and some simply re-sequenced events while others made more dramatic changes, coming up with completely original methods for achieving the lesson goals.

A presentation late in the week had to do with preparing for class—how to do it, how to memo a lesson plan to oneself, and moreover how to prepare lesson plans so that the goals rather than the detailed plans were visible at class time. Subsequently, TAs did micro-teaching in front of four or five of their peers and a faculty member. Later, a senior faculty member discussed the instructional benefits of using the overhead projector instead of providing handouts.

The preference for criterion grading over norm-referenced grading was discussed before the TAs actually tried their hand at it. TAs were told that “it is very rare to grade too harshly” and that “comments should match grades.” Concern was expressed that too little commentary on papers can seem to tacitly endorse the papers, while too much is often overwhelming and unhelpful. Also, classroom management and movement through an hour-long class was dealt with, as was productive and enlivening use of classroom

space and establishing good habits with students, such as starting and ending promptly, listing the day's goals on the board, getting students to quiet down at the beginning of class, using attention grabbers to get things going in the right direction, making connections for students from previous class sessions to the current one, maintaining a positive attitude, handling tardy students, and the importance of the first and the last five minutes of class. Developing discussion questions that work was dealt with for one entire afternoon, as were some of the more common problems with discussion-oriented classes.

Toward the end of the orientation, the discussion moved to practical matters such as what to wear for class, how to be addressed by students, how to set up a grade book, how to handle official rosters and add/drop requests, as well as how to disrupt voluntary (and often disastrous) seating patterns. Perhaps most importantly, at the very end, the course director advised the TAs to be equitable, just, and fair to all students, and to consider their decisions about individual student requests with justice in mind. However, neither illustrative cases nor concrete information about such ethical problems were provided. This advice accompanied a conversation about professionalism and presenting oneself in a professional way. Finally, on the last day TAs were shown sample policy statements, then wrote their own together in the computer lab and also received training in Syllabase classroom management software.

This summary of the orientation training, despite its length, barely scratches the surface of the training I observed. When lecturers delivering the training occasionally commented that their own experience as TAs was to be handed a textbook and told to "go forth and teach," I swallowed hard with recognition. For many of us who have been

teaching more than 10 years, this description rang with a great deal of truth. Not so many years ago there was virtually no training provided to new TAs before we walked into classrooms. I suspect that in other parts of the campus, such models of neglect still prevail.

Tart

I attended the Tart meetings of one lecturer and the five TAs assigned to her for not only these meetings but to audit her class. Also this lecturer was assigned to do three observations of the TAs in her Tart as well as to do grading conferences with them as a way of helping them refine their assessment and commenting skills. Tart meetings were held from noon to 1 p.m. on alternating Wednesdays in a department conference room. TAs and the lecturer generally brought lunch to the meetings and these were informal get-togethers. During these meetings, the lecturer basically opened the door to respond to questions, and TAs brought up specific problems they were having in the classroom—stories of problematic students, struggles with time management, or questions regarding the goals of certain lesson plans. Occasionally, they tried out ideas they had for adapting the lesson plan to better meet their sense of the lesson objectives and their own talents. As *de facto* leader of the meeting, the lecturer would make suggestions or refer to something she did (and they observed) in her audited section. However, the TAs would also use these meetings as an opportunity to share stories from their own classes, and generally the lecturer took an interpretive and sometimes corrective role in the discussion, making recommendations or explaining what she had learned from experience. While the lecturer generally provided the last word and usually was deferred

to for final advice, the TAs often laughed among themselves and reaffirmed one another quite apart from any deferential treatment of the lecturer.

On one occasion the lecturer from this Tart approached me with a concern she had regarding one of the TAs in her audit/Tart group. With this revelation, I was reminded that lecturers and even senior faculty still have teaching problems. The lecturer reported that the TA in question had begun to function as an unofficial, unappointed intermediary between the lecturer's students in the audited class and the lecturer. This TA was providing off-site, one-on-one additional assistance to a select few students from the class. The lecturer's concern (and it was an appropriate one, I felt) was that the TA was not only providing preferential assistance to a few students but was also becoming a student advocate and a teacher adversary.

The lecturer asked me for advice, and I told her I thought her concerns were legitimate and that she might talk with the professor of E684 about the problem, to see if he had suggestions for how to resolve this issue, ideas about how he might discuss such issues in his course, or a suggestion for how she might herself handle the situation. The lecturer reported to me later that the professor had agreed to take up the issue in E684 in a general way and that she had directly discussed the issue with the TA. This episode brought to light that TA training must include socialization into the ethical norms of the community of college teaching. Among other things, TAs must be made to recognize that additional instruction must be meted out equitably—or not at all.

E684

For the fifteen weeks that Supervised College Teaching met, I attended the first hour to hour and a half, an arrangement the teaching professor recommended. The second

half of E684 is mostly devoted to TA practice teaching of upcoming lessons. The philosophy of this course can best be described in the words of its professor– “Students have no choices if they have no repertoire.” The course sets out to expose TAs to a variety of teaching theories, methods and options, and while the professor’s words were given in reference to freshman writers, I believe that they apply equally well to the TAs in this course. Over the course of the term, as the TAs develop a teaching repertoire, they begin to realize the number of choices available to them for conducting their classes.

E684 is a student-centered, de-centralized class, with the professor seated at the front and the TAs arranged in a semi-circle around him. Group work is undertaken daily. The professor told me that the first hour would probably yield the most useful data for me, since he always began class by opening the discussion to “things that happened this week” in the TAs’ classes. I found that during this time the TAs would share teaching stories, vent their frustrations, laugh, and even ask questions of one another. This storytelling time, roughly the first 20-30 minutes, provided an official opportunity for what TAs reported (and I observed) happening unofficially all the time in the hallways and offices of the building. As such, through this investment of classroom time, their teaching stories were essentially legitimized, deemed worthy of the time and energy of the group’s (and their professor’s) time, and treated as a knowledge-construction activity. Further, this time was also the one official opportunity for hearing a senior faculty member’s teaching stories. It was during this time that I was also able to hear the voices and stories of many TAs who were not part of my study group, and I got some sense of the richness of their varied experiences.

Subsequent to the storytelling time, the professor would lay out the plan for the rest of the day's instruction, which involved not only practical advice about upcoming lessons and units but also grading practice on sample essays, discussion of teaching issues such as individual conference techniques, nuts and bolts advice about bookkeeping methods and simple statistical calculations involved in weighting papers. TAs would frequently pose questions, asking "What do I do if...?" and the class time provided opportunity for exploration of anticipated problems, as well as experienced problems such as the difficulty many of them had with generating classroom discussions. Additionally, the course also involved reading and discussion of various theoretical issues in the field of composition; hence, reading theories, revision strategies, student feedback prompts, technology issues, writing center work, writing across the curriculum, the various theoretical camps in composition studies and innumerable other considerations were discussed and read about in class. In general then, the course provided a healthy combination of approaches and demonstrations; it was both practical and theoretical, abstract and concrete. In short it was a very effective course, especially in its balance of the utilitarian and the theoretical.

Summary of TA Training

The continuum of training described here, especially with its multi-faceted approach via multiple discourse sites, exemplifies a model approach to TA training. In fact, the training program described here is illustrative of the kind recommended by Latterell (1996), who recommends "multiplying the places and the people TAs interact with" (p. 21). The TAs in this program are provided many windows, or discourse sites, from which to engage and be socialized into the world of college teaching generally and

composition instruction more specifically. Through such multiplication of interaction GTAs are exposed to a program that views “teaching as a vibrant, constant evolving, and valued practice” (p. 21). This program offers, I believe, very nearly as many windows on teaching as time and practicality could manage. Programs across this campus and on campuses elsewhere would do well to implement even a portion of the teaching development strategies conducted by this English Department.

Having said that, I believe there are still areas ripe for development, particularly in the arenas of sustainable self-directed learning/training, professional collegiality and caring pedagogy. Such changes would require no further saturation of the training environment (with saturation’s associated potential for burnout) but instead would offer a different, no-cost approach to improved training, a training that more aggressively and generously welcomes these young adults and new teachers into collegial and adult relationships with mentor-supervisors while building elements into the training that encourage lifelong learning, which is one of the hallmarks of expert practice in all professional domains. An additional bonus of such an approach is that TAs (and all new teachers) tend to model their own behavior after those they’ve observed. In fact, Bishop (1990) has suggested that TAs resort to what they’ve had modeled for them in classes they’ve taken, regardless of the formal preparation they have received subsequently. Therefore, one might hope that less rigid and more collegial relationships between these teachers and their undergraduate students might follow from modeling of the same by these TAs’ supervisors. I will provide more discussion of these issues and of caring pedagogy in general in Chapter Five.

The Case—and the Cases Within the Case

The inclusive case described here is a small group of graduate teaching assistants whose experiences cohere around a common moment and a common challenge—their first teaching experience in a college setting.

The subset cases within the more general case are the six participating teaching assistants. To suggest the evolving nature of the TAs' discoveries, and mine as well, the presentation elements that follow are given in the same chronological order as I received them, from the first educational life story interview to the teaching log then to the critical event(s), and finally returning to the second life story interview. Subsequent to the discussion of each of these data collection elements, I will pull the data sets together for each of the study participants so that it is possible to see the themes that are relevant for each subject, across data collection types.

Next, the Story Swap will be treated under a separate data analysis, approached in much the same way as the focus group discussions, all of which I view as oral storytelling events, or public performances, and as such a different kind of data than, especially, the personal documents of the life story interviews and the teaching logs.

First, I will introduce each of the participating TAs via introductory information from their first educational life story interviews, as condensed and interpreted to third-level coding. Then I will follow with the remainder of the elements of the life story interview, followed by the other personal documents. It should be remembered throughout this discussion that the reduced data of the personal documents represent the TAs' construction of their teaching-educational lives, further compiled and shaped through the filtered analytical lens of the researcher.

The introductory information that follows explores how the TAs arrived at the university as well as the goals they arrived with. In the following portions, we will examine the TAs' preliminary sense of how teaching and training are going after one week of classes. Next we will learn of the TAs' family, work, and non-school influences on the educational life story. Finally, we will learn of the educational histories and educational philosophies that have shaped these TAs.

Life Story Interview I—Profiles of the TAs

Jen

In the fall of 2000, Jen was a 30-year-old TA and a 1st-year graduate student specializing in literature but “with one foot in the door” of creative writing, as she described herself. She was from the Pacific Northwest and received her bachelor's degree from a large public university in the Northwest after taking a nontraditional path through college, going first to a community college and later to a small private four-year institution before finishing up at a large public university. Between the community college experience and the first undergraduate institution, Jen left academe to work for a 10-year period in retail. Subsequent to this work in retail, she finished her undergraduate degree in English/Creative Writing. The youngest of several children, Jen was raised in a working class family with strong family ties and characterized herself as a proud aunt to several nieces and nephews. She is married to a community college teacher and has no children.

Jen reported in some of her first words of the interview that “she sees no break or division between creative writing and literature. That's a university division,” Here, Jen stated one opinion among many that she held on campus politics, a theme that resurfaced

throughout her discussions and written documents and characterized her as strongly suspicious of university programmatic divisions and organizational decision-making. Jen showed a strong tendency to question the status quo, especially as it has been institutionalized.

Jen also showed early on her belief in the finite space of her thinking and energies and a desire to conserve her resources. As such, she seemed older (and is) than her peer TAs, and perhaps better understands her own limitations than do her fellow novice teachers. On the other hand, her tendency to live within the limitations of her personal resources may occasionally have led her toward conserving her energies when she might profitably have exerted them more forcefully. For instance, explaining why she elected not to register for a creative writing class her first term, even though she was very interested in pursuing the MFA, she said she discovered that she “didn’t have the brain space” for it and that taking the class was “not in the place I need to be.” She also expressed her disapproval of the creative writing professor’s “technical approach” to the class.

When asked if her current TA position and graduate school program were the fruition of a dream or goal, Jen indicated that going to graduate school was not a particularly conscious choice. She also explained this most recent educational experiment as part of her larger nontraditional educational path. When Jen left academe to work in retail, she had found herself taking drama and English classes but without an idea of “how to turn these into a paying job or career.” After some time working in retail, she discovered that although she was gainfully employed, she was also unhappy and she decided that money and employment were not worthy substitutes for “doing what you

love.” After returning to complete her degree, she thought about entering a master’s program in teaching but, after shadowing a high school English teacher, decided that high school teaching looked like too much work: “I’m a naturally lazy person,” she said. Observing the high school teacher, she reported, contributed to her decision to seek the GTA.

Mark

Mark began his discussion of being a TA and taking a program specialization in literature by discussing it in terms of his undergraduate program, a highly academic experience at Middlebury College in Vermont. He had not come directly from the undergraduate degree but had been working, “building his outdoor resume” for the past few years and now was interested in picking up some of the thesis work he did with multi-text layering and “metafiction,” which he defined as the overlap and interplay of multiple stories and their tellers, specifically looking at the Latin American novelist, Borges, as well as the Americans Faulkner and Morrison. He was interested in the manipulation of histories and the fallacy of historical fact, saying he hoped to explore “those textual layers and the ways in which you can’t tell one story without the other four stories. You can’t isolate one story from the others. They’re speaking the same language despite their geographical and temporal differences.” Mark showed a highly intelligent, academic, and even philosophical background informed by what I believe we might describe as a postmodern perspective.

Recently he had been considering a career in teaching, probably at the secondary level, but he wished to avoid traditional certification and obtain an alternative license. Initially he applied for the Masters in Teaching program, but he realized that this would

require nearly a full additional year to complete. He imagined himself teaching in a private, alternative school setting, perhaps like the one he attended as part of his prep school preparation.

Specifically, although he was originally from Ohio and attended prep school on Long Island, Mark's most important secondary experience occurred as part of a semester in Vermont, where he attended another prep school on an exchange program. There he was able to follow an earlier passion he had enjoyed at camps—working outdoors. At the Vermont school, the day was divided between academic discussions, work on the school's organic farm, science hikes, and writing. The goal of this program was to “craft a body of critical thinking skills to be able to confront not just environmental issues but other issues as you go through life...to create active citizens.” This other side of Mark, the one interested in the outdoors and particularly outdoor experiential education, is the one he is struggling to balance with the highly academic side of himself as he begins his graduate schooling. This pair of distinct interests seemed to form the central conflict and struggle guiding his current circumstance. It would appear that Mark was looking for a current situation like the Vermont school, where he could “feed both my academic interests...and at the same time feed my other interest in outdoor education and experiential education and the overlap between those.”

In questioning Mark about the consciousness of his decision to attend CSU and the closeness of CSU's fit to his current ambitions, it became clear that his CSU decision was not a particularly focused one. He applied online, did not visit CSU before showing up for his TA prep course, and talked with no one about the program before arriving on campus. When friends asked him about the program, he admitted that he doesn't even

know how many people are in his program, and he confessed that he started looking for graduate schools when he was doing a kind of oral history project with indigenous peoples in New Mexico, and he found himself bored, with time on his hands. He more or less ran into the CSU graduate program when he was killing time on the computer. Colorado also held allure because his brother lives and works in the area.

He described CSU as “such an ag school” making some attempt to distance himself from the non-intellectual climate of CSU. He also distanced himself from the education interest he indicated he has. He seemed to be looking for a program combination that would be both applied (practical) and “would feed intellectual interests.” He withdrew from the MAT program because “that’s not where I’m at intellectually” and because he believed the degree in his discipline may be “more marketable and useful than an education degree.” He indicated that the teaching assistantship seemed a good compromise since it allowed him to concentrate on his disciplinary interests while getting good practical experience with teaching. He suggested that he probably would not have come to CSU if not for the TA, since “I don’t know that I would have come to school just to get a degree in literature.”

Mark indicated that he had met John Calderazzo, the creative nonfiction writer on staff, and was interested in talking with him about nature writing and the community of scholars here who write and think about the outdoors. “Like there really is an interesting community here for the overlap of what I’m into,” he said. Mark further described himself as “I’m an adventurer. I like places. I like exploring. I like coming to a sense of place.” At the same time Mark distanced himself from categories like

“environmentalist” and “naturalist,” saying “I hate those terms. . . It just sort of buttonholes it all...I just can’t handle the categories, the terms.”

Mark also indicated that had he wanted, he could already by teaching at a boarding school such as Choate Rosemary Hall in Connecticut, but “it’s just not where I wanted to be.” He applied to several schools where he might have begun teaching immediately. He did not apply to other graduate schools.

When asked if publishing in literature was important to him, he said that was an interesting question since “my thesis is very academic. It’s my bibliophiliac tendencies—that’s what interests me when I read books and watch movies...the way we interact with television and what that says about our culture and fictional culture.” He indicated that yes, he had this academic thesis he was interested in continuing to pursue and publish in, yet professionally over that last three years he had worked with the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in Steamboat Springs, a backcountry service learning program which involves building trail with crews of students 16-21 years old. He described the program as similar to Outward Bound but with a service learning component, and this experience had fed the part of himself that wanted to be outdoors working with kids.

Each side of Mark’s experience seemed to cause a battle to ensue in the other part. Having described the RMYC work he had been doing in the summers, he then quickly transitioned into the other side of his life: “I have all this interest in outdoor education and yet my academic interests are not there. So I have this conflict of interests. While I want to write this really high-falutin’ thesis, of what worth is that...is it just gonna be an academic exercise?” A bit later he added, “Maybe I should be doing something to accommodate where my interests are, but that’s not where I’m at. Like I’ve been into

Wendell Berry—Annie Dillard, wonderful, a beautiful writer, but I just don't want to engage those texts. They don't tap into the bibliophile in me."

Jack

Jack was a 2nd year graduate student, and it seemed that the extra year of experience may help explain why this TA remained so upbeat over the course of his first semester of teaching, despite facing many of the same difficulties as other TAs in the program. Specializing in literature, specifically Marxist applications to American literature, Jack planned to teach at either the college or high school level. If he were to teach high school, he thinks he would prefer an urban setting, and he was struggling with whether to opt for the academic opportunities of higher education or the teaching challenges of the public school setting. In many ways this dilemma suggested the ongoing struggle of most teaching assistant graduate students and their long-term careers—whether to become academics (researchers and writers in higher education) or whether to make their focus teaching or some other professional concern. In any case, Jack said he would like to pursue the Ph.D. someday. For his master's degree, he considered only CSU and CU, although he only applied to CSU because he didn't think he would be admitted to CU. His reason for liking these two schools was simply the appeal of Colorado.

Among his motivations for pursuing the TA was the financial consideration but he also seemed to have been strategic in his decision about this, saying, "It helps me focus on my actual academics, being able to see what I'm going to school for and that would be teaching." When asked if his academic interest in literature and his teaching composition were complimenting each other, Jack noted a practical consideration—that first and

foremost he would always be engaged in reading and commenting on papers, and so this was good training ground for that. He also indicated that it was useful to learn what 18-19 year olds are thinking about since these are the kinds of students he might one day have. When asked if things might work the other way, with his composition teaching informing his study of literature, he indicated that this particular version (curriculum) of composition might do some things for him since it enlarged his view of texts via the cultural studies approach. His answers suggested that in Jack's mind composition would not represent a boost to his academic program. Asked about the future in terms of teaching, Jack indicated that his current experience was important mostly because it helped him learn "to think on my feet as far as leading discussions."

Sadie

Sadie was a first-year graduate student in the Masters of Arts in Teaching program. She planned to teach high school English and coach. The M.A.T. would yield teacher certification, which would add approximately one-half year to her program. Sadie applied to four other schools and narrowed it down to Simmons, Colgate, and CSU, but she selected CSU because of the assistantship. She would have enjoyed the small university atmosphere of the other two institutions, but they could not offer her the level of support and teaching experience that CSU could. Sadie believed that despite her preference for small colleges/universities (she attended a small southern liberal arts college for her undergraduate degree), a large school offers different opportunities and connections. She further believed that the demographic differences would not be great, especially in the arena of student readiness/preparation.

Prior to her current assistantship, Sadie was a teaching assistant at her undergraduate institution where she was selected for a Ford Fellowship assistantship. In this assistantship capacity, Sadie helped with classroom discussions and did a bit of grading. She had also been a camp counselor and a coach for volleyball and softball. She was the oldest of three siblings and felt she had a mentoring/teaching role with her siblings as well. Sadie had been educated through junior high school in Catholic schools, and she had fond memories of the experience, saying she “received straight signals” from home and school. She had been a highly successful student throughout her schooling and she looked forward to a career in secondary teaching and coaching.

Leah

Leah, a first-year graduate student in the literature program, came from a Mid-Atlantic state and said pursuing her masters was definitely the achievement of a goal. She took a year off between her undergraduate and graduate programs and applied to three graduate programs. She felt that CSU “chose her.” She was delighted to receive the offer of the assistantship, not only because of the financial incentive of the assistantship but also because she wanted “to jump right in head first with a community.” Leah indicated that she had known since 7th grade that she wanted to teach, but her interest in teaching had moved from elementary to high school and recently she was thinking about older students. Leah indicated she would like someday to get her Ph.D. and might teach at either the secondary or college level. However, she was clear about her reasons, saying, I want to be teaching in that [either place] environment for altruistic ends.” Leah had attended a mid-sized public university in the East, where she had a professor-advisor who was important to her decision to teach. Also of influence was a high school geometry

teacher. She reported that her prior teaching experience was limited to camp counseling situations and providing training at an urban up-scale restaurant.

Tess

Tess was a first-year grad student in the Composition Development program, and she said she wasn't too convinced about going to grad school, in part because she didn't want more student loans. However, she moved from Ohio and "life circumstances" allowed her to be "available to do this right now." She "wanted to change my location." She had always assumed she would do grad school at some point, and things "kept falling into place" with CSU—first was admitted, then got the assistantship, then thought "Well, maybe I should go." In the long term, she did not see herself staying in academe, or teaching for that matter, but believed she would work as a writer in the business or corporate world. Her dad would like to see her secure a position at a large, secure company like Procter & Gamble, and she previously worked for an architectural and engineering firm writing proposals and marketing pieces.

Prior to arriving at CSU, Tess worked in Columbus, Ohio at a literary center called the Thurber House (as in James Thurber), a nonprofit organization that promoted and supported local, regional and national writing and reading efforts. She enjoyed her job but was not making much money and had little hope for advancement within the center.

Her rationale for the teaching assistantship, she said, was to pay the bills, but she was finding that she couldn't take that casual of an attitude with teaching since it demanded so much of her. She was fairly sure that she didn't want to do this in the future, but she believed she would derive much that was translatable to the outside world as well

as aid her in her graduate studies. “I think of it as a really good learning tool for the future, because I think if I can become comfortable teaching a class and not be so nervous . . . I know that’s gonna help me in anything I want to do later.” She said she thought about her teaching more than she thought about her graduate classes. Teaching was taking a lot of “mental energy,” she said, while in the classes she was taking, she said she was “just going through the motions.” She admitted that she thought of teaching as something to be endured, gotten through, and she said that probably her peers who envision themselves teaching after graduate school were “probably more excited about it than I am.” She thought graduate school might offer significant opportunities for serious thinking—thinking hard about the readings, for instance, but the ongoing demands of teaching seemed to be preventing this from happening.

Summary of the Profiles

A tabulation of the profiles of this 1st-year TA group is provided in Table 1. In general, this group of 1st-year TAs reported expectable variety in their motivations for attending graduate school and accepting a teaching assistantship. Several (Mark, Jack, Sadie, and Leah) indicated an interest in teaching in the schools subsequent to graduate school, although this interest had only become a formal commitment for one of the TAs, Sadie. Three of the TAs—Mark, Jack, and Leah—indicated a possible interest in college teaching, while two of the TAs (Jen and Tess) indicated a high probability that they would not teach at all beyond the period of graduate school and the associated assistantship contract. More than one of the TAs indicated that the decision to attend graduate school had been somewhat less than a conscious decision. Sometimes this

casualness was expressed in terms of the precise school chosen and other times it was reflected more generally in terms of going to graduate school at all. On even shakier

Table 1

TA Profiles

TA	Age	How arrived at Grad School	Goals	Region	Previous Schools	Previous Experience
Jen	≅ 30	"Not an especially conscious goal."	To write and be a mom. No teaching goal.	NW	1. Community college 2. Private 4-year college 3. Public university	Retail 10 years.
Mark	mid 20s	Passing time surfing internet; happened upon CSU website.	To combine "bibliophilic" and outdoor experience passions. Perhaps teach at secondary level – alternative licensure.	MW-NE	Private prestigious college.	Outdoor education – RMYC crew chief.
Jack	late 20s	Ready to make plunge toward terminal degree (Ph.D.) in literature. Applied only to CSU.	Urban high school or university teaching.	MW	2 large public universities; one urban.	Carpentry and apartment maintenance.
Sadie	early 20s	Applied to 3 grad schools and selected CSU for assistantship.	Public school teaching – secondary ed.	S	Small private college.	Camp counselor, coaching, and oldest sibling
Leah	early 20s	Applied to several schools, not accepted to all.	Teaching either at secondary or higher education level.	E	Public university.	Trainer at restaurant and camp counselor.
Tess	mid 20s	One thing followed another – left crumbling relationship.	To work in corporate situation – technical writing or consulting. No teaching goal.	NW	Small private college.	Literary center, architectural and engineering firm – tech writing.

ground was the selection of program specialization. As might be expected of young professionals who are making commitments to lifelong career choices, these TAs seem

less than thoroughly convinced of the wisdom of their choices. It appears that for these TAs, the assistantship captured them at a time of momentous personal transition, and while it might be tempting to reconsider the applicant pool and selection criteria in light of the seeming indirection of these TAs, that would seem to be an imprudent deduction to make from this small sample as well as a counterproductive enterprise given the adult developmental crossroads where most TAs might be expected to be located.

Reflections on Training and Early Feelings about Teaching and Graduate School
At the End of the First Week of Classes

Jen

Reflections on Orientation--Jen indicates a belief that more time in training spent on processing and reflecting upon what was being learned would have helped, although she also shows an understanding of how difficult it would be to make an extended training period work.

Time Balance and Enthusiasm for Dual Roles as Student and Teacher--Jen says she is dividing her time 50-50 between teaching and taking classes, but that mental energy is divided 70-30. Jen indicates that she is torn by her dual roles as student and teacher, especially since "most of her 'brain space' is being taken up by it [teaching]." This limited resource, or brain space, as she repeatedly refers to it, is recognized by her as a central problem. She says she might be able to do well at one task or role but "now both get half." Jen says that 2nd-year TAs have counseled her to prioritize her own classes/studies ahead of teaching, but she can't imagine how she could accomplish that since in the classroom there are "19 people needing her." She indicates that she has had a history of difficulty with prioritizing duties and that both frustration and perfectionism are part of her personality, and that these tendencies are "amplified in this situation." She

says, "I'm one of those people who if they can't do something well immediately, I'm pretty quick to drop it." Still, she expresses some hope that the ratio of teaching energy to learning energy will change as she becomes more organized in her teaching. Repeatedly she states that she believes organization is the key to an improved situation with her teaching.

Anticipated Rewards and Difficulties of Teaching--Among the rewards she anticipates from her teaching assistantship are (1) working with a group of people for an extended period of time, (2) improving her own writing and (3) watching light bulbs go on—that is, students learning.

Current Feelings About Teaching--Jen also states that she had not imagined graduate school as it is turning out, since a time commitment of a quarter to one-third of her time was more like what she expected to spend on her teaching. She acknowledges that she had "a romantic view of graduate school," having pictured it as "the shorts and the thongs and kind of hanging out and drinking coffee and talking." So far, she is finding "it really has not been like that." She describes herself as deeply fatigued now just one full week into classes, and she says about teaching, "The way I feel about it right now is, honestly, I hate it." She indicates she has already visualized her resignation and subsequent life, saying:

I have spent many minutes and hours thinking, imagining myself in the course director's office saying, 'I can't do it. You're gonna have to find someone else to teach my class.' And thinking, if I don't go to grad school, what else could I do? And also falling back into that same thing of I just want to stay home and have a baby, which I know I want to finish school before I do that, but I can always tell when I'm getting really stressed out because that's like my Plan B. You know, I can just stay home and have a baby.

Mark

Reflections on Orientation--Mark describes the orientation training experience as extensive with primary concerns addressed last, much to his aggravation. ("What was I supposed to wear?") He feels he was adequately familiarized with the goals of the course, but he wishes he had had more time "to digest it before going into the classroom." He believes the key is to be a few days ahead . . . and see where we're going . . . to be able to steer well. But from the first day I was sort of scrambling..." Further Mark points out that the training schedule showed little awareness of the TAs "as people with real needs." At the conclusion of training "there wasn't a business day left" which "made it difficult to get a lamp, a desk, notebooks, etc."

Current Feelings About Teaching-- Mark indicates that he is presently worried about his class being boring, and he fears that his students hate it. He doesn't "want it to be a dreaded 50 minutes every other day." He also worries about his clarity, staying on track, and an over-reliance on the provided discussion questions. He says he doesn't have time to author his own lesson plans but "it's hard to present someone else's lesson plans well without it being stilted." He says, "I don't know if it [the current method/program] sets me up for success." He indicates that he just hopes to get through this semester "without too many casualties." He is not nervous about being in front of the class.

Jack

Reflections on Orientation--Jack feels he was adequately prepared, "for the most part." He indicates that it may have been useful to do more practice teaching (microteaching) in front of peers—two or three times instead of just the one. He feels that

he is adequately familiar with the assigned readings since they were made available well ahead of the training. The assigned papers had to be done as well so he feels in control of these, too. He believes that there are some aspects of teaching that training could not prepare TAs for. Like Jen and Mark before him, Jack also indicates that stretching out orientation over a longer period of time—"several shorter days"--would have been helpful, although, like the others, he understands why this would be difficult to accomplish. He found the 7-8 hours of "straight intellectual activity" fairly difficult, an adjustment made more difficult since he had been doing physical labor before arriving on campus. He found himself "losing focus a little bit by the end of the day." He also believes that some of the technical training could have waited, for instance the Syllabase presentation on Friday afternoon. He thinks this computer program may be useful for some of his students, but he thinks that at the very least this topic could have been covered in E684 instead of crowded into the orientation week.

Time Balance and Enthusiasm for Dual Roles as Student and Teacher--Asked to quantify his level of enthusiasm—first for his program and second for his teaching, Jack indicates 8 or so for the program, some tentativeness deriving, he says, from his anxiety about himself. "Am I ready? Am I publishable?" he asks when considering the long road to a Ph.D. in literature. Still he calls his teachers and the content of his courses good. Teaching got a jubilant 10 on the enthusiasm scale because of the great day he had just enjoyed. This teaching day would eventually become the critical event he recorded in narrative form. Of note here is how dependent a TA's enthusiasm and overall perspective appears to be upon the relative success of the most recent teaching moments,

as explicitly addressed later by Sadie. Jack indicates that just a few days earlier he would have given teaching a 6 or 7.

Anticipated Rewards and Difficulties of Teaching--Jack indicates he has already enjoyed several rewards from teaching, specifically getting students to think about things they hadn't thought about; enjoying their enjoyment of him with his long hair and "laid-back attitude." Also, he likes that students seem to look up to him, take value in what he's trying to teach. A special reward seems to be getting students to think in new ways about old things—specifically, getting them to recognize and critique their own culture and its values. On the flip side, Jack expresses some concern about becoming too accessible, so much his students' pal that a low grade would be a complete surprise and difficult to give.

Current Feelings About Teaching --Generally speaking, Jack admits that teaching has been stressful this first week, and he wonders if he "stresses too much" over it. He states a philosophical belief he holds about teaching: "I think that teaching is just one of those things you have to practice over and over and reflect upon it and improve." He acknowledges some level of concern for the actual curriculum he is delivering—how well he understands it. He indicates, however, that when he's up there teaching "and there's that dynamic, it feels really good. So I think some of the preparation's stressful, but it all pans out when I'm doing the actual class." Jack seems to acknowledge and accept the fact that preparation involves stress and time, and that adequate preparation leads to success in the classroom. Responding to a more detailed question regarding this issue, Jack says, "I definitely find myself doing detailed lesson plans and trying to write things in my own words, taking them out of the syllabus I was given to reword them so it feels more a part

of me than something that I've just been told to teach." Here also we see reference to the syllabus and "words not my own" theme, which this TA seems to deal with in a positive way by working with the material long enough to find an angle over which he has ownership/authorship.

As far as struggles, Jack indicates some difficulty with anticipating where dialogues may go in the classroom. Jack indicates some trouble with "taking what they've said and stressing what I think is important and putting it all together." Thus, communicating content and ensuring adequate and accurate coverage of major teaching points seems to be a concern to this TA. He struggles with whether it's appropriate to edit student ideas during discussion or not, as in, "that's nice, but this is what I had in mind." He says, "So you want to allow—you know, you don't want to discourage their thinking but at the same time you want them to walk away knowing these are most of the main points." Jack seems to be asking, what is the corrective role of the instructor over content, and how does one properly provide it in the classroom?

Sadie

Reflections on Orientation--Sadie feels that orientation was considerably more involved (and good) than she expected it to be. She left the training feeling confident and experienced a boost to her self-confidence. Asked if orientation prepared her sufficiently, Sadie said, "Probably as much as it could have." She says the training was extremely exhausting, but she indicates no real criticisms of it. Her one problem right now, she says, is leading discussions, and she believes the training gave her all sorts of strategies for doing these, but she's still working to be able to implement the ideas.

Time Balance and Enthusiasm for Dual Roles as Student and Teacher--On the enthusiasm scale, Sadie ranks her teaching as a 6, but she also indicates that had I asked the previous week, she would probably have given teaching a 3. Her program she would give an 8 or 9 mostly because she is really enjoying a current course, Adolescent Literature. She says she really prefers reading to taking graduate courses. Also, she looks forward to her teaching courses more than the lit theory courses. E684, Supervised College Teaching has been good so far, especially because she likes hearing others' experiences and gaining experience with grading through the grading rehearsals done in class.

Current Feelings About Teaching--Asked about how she is balancing teaching and her course work, Sadie indicates a 70-30 split now, with teaching getting the majority of her time. She believes this will reduce to more like 60-40 once she gets into the swing of things. After the orientation she realized that teaching was going to take more time than she had previously thought. Hearing the lecturers talk about the "17 extra minutes a week that we would have free" was one of her first indications of the workload that would be expected of her.

Sadie's major concern right now is with leading discussions. She says that last week they were going so poorly she considered quitting, saying, "Look, I can't do this. Obviously my class is not talking because it's me." But then she talked to other TAs who indicated they were having the same problem, and so she revised her opinion. Such revelations suggest the value of ongoing and even officially sanctioned and authorized communication on shared concerns.

Asked about whether grading concerns her, she indicates that she knows it will be difficult and that she'll spend inordinate amounts of time on it. She believes that at least half of the students will turn in poor papers, and she says she will feel "like I failed them." Still, she's relieved that the first paper represents only 5% of the grade, and she's quite certain the next paper will be more difficult to grade. She plans to be somewhat tough but also indicates that she's not sure you can be tough grading a personal reaction versus a "real academic" paper. She says she knows she needs to remember this is their first essay too.

Leah

Reflections on Orientation--Leah says she feels good about the orientation. She describes it as a short course in education: "Here's what you could have learned if you'd done your undergraduate degree in education in four years. We're gonna give it to you in five days." She liked the short, intense experience, and the only thing that she thinks might have made the experience better for her is having more time and direction for working with the books and essays that are assigned in CO150. A high point of the orientation was the candor of the presentations and the lecturers themselves. She found the entire training week very well planned although she wondered at first why they chose to deal with large issues first and the more immediate and compelling issues last, such as what to wear. As a result of this arrangement, she says her anxiety regarding the practicalities of teaching were elevated. However, she realizes now that these practical matters are the simpler ones and that the training really needs to deal with the meat of the course first.

Time Balance and Enthusiasm for Dual Roles as Student and Teacher--Leah says she is "totally excited about classes." She is less sure about the teaching, saying, "I think my anxiety is outweighing my excitement although the challenge of becoming more effective in my teaching is exciting. But a lot of time I find myself really scared in front of these kids." Asked about the time she is devoting to each, her own classes and her teaching, Leah indicates that it's a 60-40 split, with teaching getting the majority of her time. However, she also indicates that while she spent three hours planning her second class, "lesson planning has gotten easier within the past week." She says the amount of time depends on "whether I'm creating something," that is, whether she's deviating from the provided syllabus to construct her own lesson plan. Asked if the 60-40 split is about what she expected, she says yes and no. The emotional involvement is greater than she expected, but she's also relieved to have discovered how much support is provided in terms of mapping out the course. Asked how she feels about teaching, after one week she indicates that there has been an improvement in her feeling. She says the students are a bit less intimidating after one week and that she's discovering what works for them. Asked what her current concerns are with teaching, Leah indicates that her own teaching effectiveness is the biggest concern right now. She is really trying to figure out how to break down the big concerns for students so that they are learning.

Anticipated Rewards and Difficulties of Teaching--Leah says it's rewarding to her to overcome fear in the classroom. She says, "What intimidates me most is failure and looking stupid in something I want so badly to do well in." She adds, "When they talk like they did last class I was so excited." Her concerns about teaching include "personal relation problems." Then she adds that at the last class a student asked, "So, you teach

much?" She had anticipated this question and had an answer worked out ("Not here, and not this class.") but she responded instead, "This is my first time teaching—here." Her discussion suggests that her anxiety may have to do with her confidence in the classroom, belief in her own efficacy, and convincing her students of her competence.

Tess

Reflections on Orientation--In terms of the orientation, Tess found it "quite adequate." She notes that even with a longer prep period she could not have avoided the general nervousness that is making teaching difficult for her, and she was struck by the comparison several of the older instructors made regarding their own non-existent orientations, in which they were simply handed a textbook and told to teach the course. Tess then discusses how she would not have taught under these circumstances and describes herself as having a "whole fairness issue." To teach under such circumstances would be to "be thrown to the wolves." Tess points out that the fact TAs actually teach their own classes completely independently is astonishing to those outside the university system, and she mentions specifically her parents who said, "You're kind of team teaching, right?"

Time Balance and Enthusiasm for Dual Roles as Student and Teacher --Tess says she's dividing her time 50-50 between teaching and taking classes, but that her mental energy is divided 70-30.

Asked to rate her level of enthusiasm for her program and her teaching, Tess ranks her program as a 6 or 7, compromised only by her inability to immerse herself in the work because "there's always the teaching nagging at me" while her teaching comes

in at about a 4. She says, “I want to be more excited about it, but the dread of like, ‘Oh God, what am I gonna do in class today?’—distracts me.”

Current Feelings About Teaching--Tess says she’s learning that teaching is difficult work, that it’s exciting but also something she dreads. Her anxiety comes mostly before teaching but once she’s in the classroom, she’s OK. She gets a “charge out of that, feeling like wow, they’re learning things.” She feels that something special has been entrusted to her that she may not be worthy of. Sometimes, she says, she actually feels lucky to find herself in a position to influence young people.

Anticipated Rewards and Difficulties of Teaching--Tess mentions again her nervousness, and a byproduct of that--class going too quickly. She says, “I want to be a good teacher. That’s definitely a goal. I want to be successful.” She sees “teaching them something” as also a problem because she’s not sure how to do that yet, but she says it might become a reward. She tells the story of an activity she assigned her class to do and the power she felt when they actually did it. She says, “I could have them do any number of things and that in a way is a reward because it kind of feels nice but at the same time I know I can have a really big impact on them.” She also hopes that her students will have learned something by the time they turn in their first paper, so she says this, too, would be a reward, to have seen them improve. She says she realizes that her students see her as their teacher and aren’t even aware of her being a TA, so she can use that to her advantage.

Summary of Initial Training and Early Feelings About Teaching

Table 2 provides a tabulation of initial training reflections and early feelings about teaching. In general, the TAs stated categorically that the week-long orientation training

they received prior to the start of classes was quite good. For many of them the extensiveness of the training was surprising and impressive. They described the intensity of the 40-hour orientation as “exhausting but good,” “extensive,” and “quite adequate.” One TA would have liked more actual teaching practice, such as the micro-teaching that was done one day in front of peers and supervisors. A few would have appreciated earlier addressing of practical, first-day matters, such as what to be called by students and what to wear, although all of the TAs understood the logic of the sequencing that was selected for the training. One TA thought that the technical training in the Syllabase classroom management software was unnecessary at this stage of professional development. Three of the six TAs indicated that additional time for reflection before the start of classes would have helped, although, again, they realized the logistical difficulty of arranging such a schedule. Finally, the TAs were generally realistic about those things that training could not prepare them for, such as first-day jitters.

All but two of the TAs described their time commitment for teaching. Three of the four who discussed this issue said that the ratio was approximately 70/30, with teaching receiving the greater part of their energy. The remaining respondent on this point put her time ratio at 60/40. Of the six TAs, four described their levels of enthusiasm for their graduate programs and their teaching. Their enthusiasm for their programs, on a scale of 1 to 10 ranged between a 6 and a 9. Their enthusiasm for their teaching ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 10. Of the two TAs who did not rate their enthusiasm, one reported an overwhelming level of fatigue associated with the energy and stress produced from teaching.

Table 2

Reflections on Orientation and Early Feelings

TA	Orientation	Time Balance: Teaching/ Program	Enthusiasm: Program/ Teaching	Rewards Anticipated	Feelings about Teaching
Jen	More time for reflection.	70/30 "too much mental space."	Fatigued and depressed. (low)	1. work with a group for extended period of time 2. improve own writing 3. watch light bulbs go on	"I hate it."
Mark	Extensive orientation; more time needed for set up of life – seemed indifferent to real needs of real people.	[did not address]	[did not address]	Linking two different interests/passions.	Worried class is boring and that this is the students' most dreaded 50 minutes of week.
Jack	More teaching practice; more time to spread out training; skip technical training of <u>Syllabase</u> .	Thinks he may be spending too much time on teaching.	8/10	Challenging students' assumptions, watching them learn.	Worried about anticipating discussion direction.
Sadie	Exhausting but good; overall a boost to her confidence and clarification of larger time investment than she expected.	70/30	8-9/3-6	[did not address]	Worried about sustaining discussions and upcoming grading of papers.
Leah	Wondered about sequencing- lots of fears not addressed until practical stuff at the end.	60/40	High	To become increasingly effective in classroom; overcoming fear.	Feels things have already improved after one week.
Tess	Quite adequate but nothing could prepare her for the nervousness associated with teaching.	70/30	6-7/4	To be successful.	Dreads class but in abstract way feels honored to be entrusted.

Among the rewards from teaching that these TAs anticipated were highly teacher-oriented goals, such as the desire to become an increasingly effective teacher, the hope of seeing “light bulbs go on,” and the pleasure associated with challenging students’ assumptions about a variety of topics. Among the personal rewards these TAs anticipated were improvement in their own writing, working with groups, linking personal passions/interests, overcoming fear in the leadership of a classroom, and the desire to be successful at a first professional endeavor.

The feelings of these TAs towards teaching, after the first week, ranged from “worry” to “dread,” to use their words, with just one TA indicating some early improvement in her feelings over the course of the first week. TAs at this early stage were worried about anticipating discussion questions and sustaining discussions, the grading of papers, making class interesting and engaging, an abstract and overwhelming sense of responsibility for student achievement, and what one TA described simply as “I hate it,” meaning the teaching task.

Peer and Supervisor Support—Hallway Talk

Jen

Jen indicates that she has little trust in her audit supervisor or others in the composition program and prefers to go to her peers for help and ideas, especially since her needs are “basic” and comp faculty would be more helpful with “higher level concerns.” She feels that her peers still tie their examples to the outside world (which is currently more comprehensible) rather than to pedagogy (which is an obscure abstraction at this point).

Mark

Mark says that he and his office mates spend their office hours venting, sharing their misery regarding their failures in class. He says that this sharing leads to knowing that “Oh good, I’m not alone,” a theme that was oft-repeated by the TAs and one that may be worthy of supervisor response and even structured support mechanisms.

Jack

For Jack, because he was already living and working in town, the development of friendships and peer interaction is something he feels he can and must take the initiative on. Most of his friends reside outside the English department, but he plans to involve himself fully—as a member of the environmental writing group (Ridgelines) and playing in the department Sunday afternoon basketball, where a few of the lecturers play as well. From here Jack notes that in terms of his audit lecturer and observer lecturer that he is already more drawn to the person who observes him than to the person he observes. One of these lecturers is very organized while the other is a dynamic discussion leader, and Jack is more inclined to learn from the dynamic teacher instead of the organized one. He anticipates feeding his programmatic and intellectual needs by getting to know his advisor better. Jack seems quite well “plugged in” socially. He seems to be strategic and naturally inclined toward the social aspects of this experience.

Sadie

Asked about the role of peers and supervisors as support persons, Sadie indicates that she has lots of options. She speaks with her peers nearly every day she teaches, and they share the kind of hallway talk that seems to be so important to new teachers. Sadie puts it this way: “So that gives me an opportunity to say, ‘God, I had a bad day.’ Or

‘What do you think about if did this, would it work?’ or ‘What did you do for this discussion?’ I can get a lot of feedback with that.”

Leah

Asked about relying on her peers or supervisors for help, she says she’s not ready to do that yet, doesn’t know people well enough yet to use them as resources. However, she did indicate that a fair amount of hallway commiseration is going on. She says, “Bouncing off of each other was really good feedback and also it helped the whole group’s self-esteem to hear ‘I suck as a teacher.’” She says she’s not sure who her resources might be among the supervisors and so is not calling upon them yet.

Tess

Some of the time is spent sharing with her peers, those who are going through the same thing, which she describes as “A lot of it is just blowing off steam—Oh, my class went horrible. How’d yours go? My class was better today. We do a lot of that kind of thing.” She says that all the new TAs “sort of check in with each other—how’s it goin’? How you doin’? Are you surviving?”

Supervisors also offer help, and she has sought aid in planning a deviation for an upcoming class. She describes her supervisors as “more than willing to do that.”

Summary of Peer-Supervisor Support—Hallway Talk

Table 3 tabulates the indicators of peer and supervisor support at the time of the first life story interview. At this point, the TAs reported a great deal of peer interaction and relatively little interaction with their supervisors. Initial discussions with peers took the form of “hallway talk,” or the casual sharing of stories that generally were used to console one another after a bad day in class or to offer practical help of an emergency

room sort, as in “Here’s what I did.” The TAs described their interactions with one another as “blowing off steam,” “checking in with one another,” and “venting.”

Table 3

Hallway Talk – Storytelling Among Peers and Supervisory Support Indicators

TA	Peers	Supervisors
Jen	Goes to peers for help. Peers tie examples to outside world instead of pedagogy.	Little trust in audit supervisor or other faculty in composition program by end of term.
Mark	He and office mates vent, sharing stories that let them know, “Oh good, I’m not alone.”	No comment on supervisors.
Jack	Feels he must take initiative with other TAs since he’s a 2 nd year grad student and already “plugged in” socially.	Plays basketball with lecturers; looks forward to deepening his relationship with his advisor. Quickly determines the lecturer whose style he prefers to model himself after.
Sadie	Speaks with peers nearly every day. This provides opportunity for saying, “God, I had a bad day!” or “What did you do for this discussion?”	No comment on supervisors.
Leah	“Bouncing off each other was really good feedback and helped the group’s self-esteem to hear “I suck as a teacher.”	At LSI I does not know people well enough to use them as resources. By LSI II, reports heavy reliance on lecturers for help with grading and appreciation for E684 professor’s experience and knowledge.
Tess	Sharing with peers is a lot of just blowing off steam... “Oh my class went horribly. How did yours go?” All the TAs “sort of check in with each other.”	Over course of term became comfortable going to lecturers for ideas and help. Sought out lecturers and composition director for help with problematic student, “J.”

In contrast, by the time of the second life story interview most of the TAs had developed some degree of relationship with their supervisors, and the hallway storytelling seemed to have subsided. At this later point in the term, TAs reported going to supervisors, especially the lecturers, for help with grading, for modeling of classroom behaviors, and for help with problems in the classroom. One TA reported feeling little trust in her supervisors and felt that if she revealed how she felt in the classroom, she risked “discovery” and judgment. Another TA expressed her appreciation for the knowledge and experience of the E684 professor. No TAs reported important mentoring moments with faculty.

Family, Culture, and Other Non-School Anticipated Influences on Teaching

Jen

Family and Home--When asked about the aspects of her life she expects to significantly influence her teaching, Jen indicates three major factors, specifically 1) a large, close family, 2) a seat-of-your-pants knowledge of writing, and 3) her gender, her femaleness.

Jen indicates a strong relationship to the teaching profession via a husband who is a community college teacher, several aunts who teach in the public schools, and her mother who was a long-time president of the local school board. Discussing the large, close-knit family, Jen indicates that as one of the youngest in her family, she has always been surrounded by “mature mentors” and that she learned to work with large groups of people and to take other people into consideration when making decisions, asking “What’s best for all of us?” She also indicates that she performs a very specific family role in this large group, acting as peacemaker and facilitator—the tuned in or intuitive

and empathetic one from whom it came to be expected would derive fun and resolution of conflict. Jen believes that in her teaching she may be able to sense that things are awry yet not be able to act upon this knowledge because of her inadequate skills base, her beginning teaching repertoire. In general she believes that family discourse is her strong suit, and that her own family recognized that she possesses a gift in this area.

Drawing upon her family dynamics and particularly her role as facilitator in the family, Jen says she believes she may find herself possessing an unspoken expectation of students to behave in a civil manner, to possess good humor, and to participate. It is therefore a disappointment to her that students are closing down in class, forcing her to say more, do more than she thinks she should. When probed about ways she might draw more students into the life of the classroom, she indicates that calling upon them seems to be the only way to accomplish this.

An additional and influential family member in Jen's life is her husband, who, she reports, is trying not to insert himself into her teaching processes but so far has been a bit too quick to provide answers to her teaching questions and problems when all she really wants from him is the opportunity to vent, "to decompress," as she puts it. On the other hand, she indicates that she is happy to have a "live-in mentor" from whom she might "steal ideas" and "share excitement" about teaching.

Background as a Writer--Discussing her background as a writer as an important influence on her teaching, Jen believes she may be able to offer concrete and practical advice to beginning writers since she knows some of the "tricks." She further indicates that her knowledge of writing, as a practitioner of the writing act, leads her to believe that

academic writing can be creative writing and vice versa. She believes that the goals of a “context orientation” such as that in CO150 can also be creative goals.

Gender as an Influence--Jen also finds that her gender informs her identity, and that she has always had an odd awareness of her own capacity for bearing children. Nurturing is a strong suit of hers, and she believes this is deeply tied to her peacemaker/facilitator role within her family of origin.

Influential Life Lessons--Finally, the death of a close friend has been an important event in her life. As this friend lay dying, Jen could not bring herself to call or go visit, a thing she now deeply regrets. The lesson she has taken from this experience is that you must not take people for granted and you can never just say, “Life stinks.” Taking this kind of view is an ungrateful squandering of life’s precious potential.

Mark

Work--Discussing the camp experiences of his youth, he recalls an influential leader who talked about finding balance between the “wild and tame” sides of yourself and the value in venturing out of one’s comfort zone. This advice appears to have made a lasting impression upon Mark. He indicates he is not at all sure how to apply this concept to his current teaching of composition but that it was readily clear how those lessons applied to his backcountry work with crews. One kind of learning he took from the backcountry work was a work ethic, “a 24-7 experience” as well as group dynamics and leadership (“how to best harness the potential of a crew”). He believes he might be able to make a connection to teaching composition but right now “I don’t have time to do anything with it...I don’t have time to actually try and invest myself in this course. I have to teach what you’ve given me...It’s good to go through the motions...to be able to do it

better next time.” He indicates that the 2nd year TAs have given lots of reassurance that things will get better and that there will be opportunities to experiment.

Explaining what he did for his backcountry crews, Mark describes the terms of his role in much the same terms that most teachers might use to describe their best experiences in the classroom: “I feel like I did a good job in opening the doors for them to go through and opening the doors as fully as possible so they could go through.”

Asked how he did this, Mark explains it was done by “investing them in the success of the group...it wasn’t a hierarchical structure of leadership. It was more of a network... investing them with responsibility and leadership and saying, this is yours, what we do with it is our choice. Treating them like adults.” He explains that this evolved, that he took a very centralized authority role in the beginning and gradually pulled back to let them fill the vacuum. He then tells a story that is worth including in its entirety:

The last four weeks we were on the Continental Divide, on the pass. We backpacked in for three weeks straight, and we’d come out and get our food and go back in. I mean doing very extreme work, a lot of our work above 12,000 feet, fighting lightening storms. It was burly... We started at this one side of the basin and worked all the way around to this other side and so the first week we could see across to where we were hoping to be in three weeks. Oh, can we get there? Can we get there? We had a very distinct project that they got invested in and took ownership of.

Later he adds:

Every day our walk to work got longer. I mean we moved camps a couple of times, but in general one of the beauties of building trail is that every day your walk to work gets longer and everyday you walk down everything that you just built. And on Friday when you walk two miles to work and you built two miles of trail and you know every part of that trail, you’re like ‘Oh yeah, I remember moving that rock.’ And you can see it.

He also tells the story of a particular crewmember:

We also had an educational component to our program called “Seed,” like spreading seed. So the first week or so I did seed and then as I started turning it over to them I had this one crew member who the first time he did it in the second

week sort of hemmed and hawed and really didn't take control And I wasn't totally pleased with what the seed was that he was doing but I thought, Well, it's his decision, it's fine. But I told him, if you're gonna do something do it, don't sit back. You don't sit on a horse, you've gotta ride it. And so like the seventh week he did this one on alpine ecology and he just really went all-out on it. It was one of the best pieces done all summer. And to see that growth.

New Work, Old Frustrations. Moving from these descriptions, he indicates the frustration he now feels with teaching in a traditional classroom: "I'd go out with the crews, and I was in my element. And so then to go off from that experience to this and be stumbling. I have to keep it all in perspective because I have to remember my first summer out of school and I started working for the Youth Corps and what a frightening experience that was."

Jack

Family and Home--Both of Jack's parents are highly educated and involved in education. His mother worked her way through various levels of education to eventually serve as director of physical education for the state of Michigan. His father has a Ph.D. in adult education and conducts upper management training in leadership and team building with both private industry and governmental agencies. His father, in particular, appears to encourage critical thinking, having been a "self-proclaimed socialist and atheist" who simultaneously attended church with his family. Jack remembers his father saying, "You don't need to think like people are telling you to think," and this theme is repeated in Jack's later narrative and follow-up interview, perhaps as a central idea in this TA's overarching philosophy of life and teaching. His parents divorced when he was five years old, but maintained strong contact with their children. As a youth, Jack was actively involved in the Congregational Church in Michigan, which had a strong social activism

role in the community, sponsoring refugees. He recalls a particular event during his confirmation when he said. "Well, I don't know if I believe what you're telling me about God, but I believe that there's probably something more out there than what we can see with our eyes." He says he wasn't terribly rebellious, but he also never took information "at face value."

Jack indicates that reading was always valued in his home and that there wasn't much television viewing in either his mother's or father's homes. His parents continue to be readers, his mother enjoying historical fiction and his father able "to discuss literary things to some extent because he tried to be well-rounded as far as art and reading." Jack has several siblings, many of whom are step-siblings and two of whom were adopted from troubled homes. His father and stepmother home schooled the adopted children.

Previous Work--Other relevant influences on his teaching revolve around Jack's work as a carpenter/renovator. His thoughts on this work tap into his belief that "you need to be a well-rounded person." Working his way up from being a gopher for a married couple who were renovating two 100-year old homes to more recently being a supervisor of maintenance for an apartment complex here in Fort Collins, Jack looks at this work as "a life experience" valuable for "when I own my house someday." Then he adds, "Being a supervisor was essentially a training/teaching experience." Then he describes an episode in which he left a new employee alone to do a job and the kid botched it. This kid was "fresh out of high school, from a pretty wealthy family, and had never gotten his hands dirty." Jack asked him to gut a bathroom, which involved knocking out the wooden towel bars that were held in by 80-year old ceramic brackets. The kid misunderstood him and knocked the brackets out of the wall, and Jack says he

realized that the mistake was his own, as a supervisor. He indicates the importance of “trying to not immediately blame him and think about where the communication gap was and whether it was partially my fault.” He concludes this anecdote by saying that he learned patience from his role as supervisor and that this experience “definitely influences how I think about education.”

Sadie

Family and Home--Asked about her parents, Sadie talks about her dad's command of information (in general), how she admired his knowledge as she was growing up. She thinks this ability of her father's to answer questions may have inspired her.

Sports and Coaching--Sadie states the important influence sports and coaching represent to her teaching strategies. Sadie says she believes coaching may be a harder form of teaching than classroom instruction because of the greater role model issue and the around-the-clock commitment of coaching. As a coach, “you have to model correct behavior for 12 or 15 kids... And it's more of a support role too...Just like positive feedback and building a relationship with students or players.” Sadie indicates that while the “tear ‘em down, build ‘em up” method of coaching works, the coaches who subscribe to this philosophy are not the ones she thinks of when she thinks of especially effective role models. She describes a coach she had in high school for four years and three sports and the relationship this coach developed with her players. Sadie says that this coach was “always someone you could talk to about anything.”

Gender as an Influence--Sadie says she thinks girls definitely need strong role models in the schools. She then tells a story about how despite her aggressive play on the

court and field, she was always rather retiring in the classroom. One of her teachers at the conclusion of a course asked for student input on participation grades, and Sadie says she thought she deserved an A because she had done the work and paid attention, but the teacher said, "Well, you're right; I'm gonna give you an A, but reading your homework and your papers and stuff tells me that you know what's going on and you should be not just a person in the classroom but a presence." Sadie indicates her awareness of this reticence as more of a female gender problem. "Someday," Sadie says, "I'd like to tell a girl in one of my classes the same thing."

Leah

Family and Home--Leah begins by explaining the cultural origins of her father, who is from the Netherlands and carries particular views about education: "Education was always really hard-core. But if I didn't get straight A's it was, 'Why didn't you get straight A's?'" She says that learning to accept herself (as somewhat less academically successful than her father might have envisioned) has been part of her growth process. She brings this understanding to her teaching, saying, "An A student is not always the best thing to be if you don't learn anything." When asked if I was reading her thoughts here correctly, Leah agreed that while her dad's influence made her ambitious, he also conveyed a philosophy that she has distanced herself from.

Other home influences in her life that might affect her teaching include her love of reading. She says there were always things to read in her family home and that the summer reading program at the local library was something her family always participated in.

Work--Asked about other learning environments outside the home, Leah indicates that she has taught ballet, been a camp counselor and was a trainer at an upscale restaurant. The most important lessons outside home have been dealing with failure "and not looking at it as failure." She connects this to her search for a graduate school and her experience of not getting into every graduate program. She fought the assessment of herself that "if you don't get in everywhere, you stink." She says she shed many tears over the experience, and asked if this kind of thing will influence her teaching at all, Leah says she is "always about helping other people achieve things." This seems to go back to her altruism philosophy and the nurturer element in her. She indicates that she inflicts perfectionism only upon herself.

Tess

Family and Home--Tess observes that her parents were always there as support to her and actually suffered more when she stopped playing sports than she did. Her parents also encouraged her to figure things out on her own, to look words she couldn't spell up in the dictionary, for instance. Her summer job before arriving at CSU was involved in teaching a writing camp, where she had to prepare lessons as well as talk in front of these middle school children's parents. Also, her work at the literary center surrounded her with literate people, well read people, working writers--a whole community interested in the intellectual life.

Sports--Tess participated in many sports in high school and played soccer in college. What she liked about sports was being in front of people, showing what she could do, the pride and the self-esteem. She says, "I can relate a lot of the nervousness to being in front of the classroom to being in a big game." As the games became more

important as she made her way up the levels of competitive soccer and basketball, the nervousness associated with the size of the game also became larger. She recalls that when she was young she had a part of herself that wanted to quit when the games got tight. This part of herself would be saying, "You can just sit out right now and let someone else take over." She connects the nervousness associated with the need to perform on the athletic field to the nervousness she feels in the classroom. She says,

So part of me when I'm teaching my initial reaction is I can get out of this, I don't have to do it. Maybe I won't have to be a TA for both years, and you know, there's that urge to get out of the situation and not deal with it, but I would always stay in the game. So I'm gonna stick through this even though it's not easy for me right away.

Background as a Writer--Tess's undergraduate degree was in English/Writing and her genre was poetry. She has no interest in continuing with the writing of poetry, however, and feels that her undergraduate time allowed her to explore her interests, but now she needs to get practical, find a way to become more employable. She mentions her parents as a driving force in this movement, as they have asked, "What are you gonna do with this when you're done?" meaning the degree in writing. She felt that pursuing the MFA would simply be a continuation of this impracticality.

Asked if her writing background affects what she does in the classroom, Tess says yes because writing has always been easier for her, something that comes rather naturally, and she wants to impart a love for language to her students who are not inclined to like writing at all and often struggle heartily with it. However, then she says that she doesn't think poetry will have a large effect on what she does in graduate school. She says she doesn't want "to be tied too successfully into a composition class."

Influential Life Lessons--Lessons learned outside of the classroom include the need to figure out her own direction. She indicates she was close to getting married when it didn't work out and she realized she needed to be able to stand on her own two feet. She indicates that she came out here to "figure out what I wanted to do and figure out how I needed to do that for myself." Teaching might help with this because:

If I can feel comfortable with this, I know it's going to help me immensely and make me a more interesting person. If I can be confident in myself, then learning like this self-reliance. . . And just figuring out that no one's gonna give me the answers.

She feels that she can learn more about critiquing ideas as they are presented to her, and this is one goal she has for graduate school, to not just accept everything she's told. She also wants to help her undergraduate students learn a bit of this skill as well. "I try to ask them, "Do you buy that? Do you believe it? How do you feel about it? And I want to remember that I need to question it for myself. I mean all those issues about where I'm going, what I'm learning, and what I'm teaching even."

Summary of Family, Culture, and Other Non-School Anticipated Influences on Teaching

Table 4 provides display of the family, work, and cultural influences discussed by these TAs. In many ways each of these influences was as unique as the individual TA; each TA, after all, possessed a particular combination of life experiences that could potentially affect his or her teaching. Having said that, it was also clear that some themes resonated across subjects. In particular, family and work influences seemed to be gender divided among these TAs.

For instance, Mark and Jack, quite apart from the female participants, referred at length to the importance of the work they had done outside academe—Mark in outdoor

education and service learning and Jack in carpentry. In fact, both Mark and Jack seemed to derive a great deal of their personal identity from their professional or work interests. They made repeated reference to the ways their past work in these areas might influence their teaching, and they seemed to be seeking a unification of their work histories and their current teaching challenge. The most similar influence for the women was Tess and Sadie's deep connection to athletics and the important role their involvement in sports had had on their confidence levels and on their approaches to teaching. Perhaps similar to some degree was Jen's reference to her role as facilitator in her family-of-origin and to her long-term desire to give birth and raise a family.

Tess and Jen alone referred to relationship issues—Jen to issues with her husband and Tess to her former fiancé. For Jen, teaching appeared to offer great promise of shared time with her husband, who was himself enjoying their sharing of the teaching profession. Tess indicated that her move to Colorado was precipitated by the recent breakup of her engagement. She said her move across the country was tied up with her need “to stand on her own two feet.” Finally, while both Jack and Jen indicated that they were married, Jen referred to her husband many more times than Jack referred to his wife, despite the fact that both spouses are involved in education and undoubtedly share thoughts on the current teaching assistantship.

Leah alone indicated that she was distancing herself from a parental point of view, specifically her father's philosophy on education. Jack, on the other hand, indicated his high esteem for his father's approach to critical thinking about culture and the richness of an examined life. Tess discussed her highly supportive parents, who were more upset by the end of her involvement in athletics than she was. Also, Tess indicated that she felt

Table 4
Family, Culture, and Other Non-School Influences

TA	Responses	Influence Type—Family, Work Athletics, Intimate Relationships
Jen	Home-life held high esteem for schooling Large extended family, with school and church closely aligned Role as facilitator in family Writer with lots of “insider knowledge” to share Awareness of self as woman and capacity for bearing children	Family Family
Mark	Camp experiences as youth: working to balance wild and tame sides, venturing out of comfort zone Backcountry work: work ethic and 24-7 responsibility Group dynamics and leadership Opening doors for crews to go through; investing them in success of group Decentralized authority and crew members’ dawning awareness of power and accomplishment	Work Work
Jack	Highly educated family, parents are educators Critical thinking and social activism Little TV viewing Carpentry and apartment maintenance goal to become a well-rounded person	Family Work
Sadie	Father modeled being an authority on many topics Sports and coaching key element of her history Aggressive on court/field; reticent but capable in classroom Coaches as total role models The need for girls to have strong role models in the schools. “Be a presence not just a person.”	Family Athletics
Leah	Father’s approach to education rooted in culture (from Netherlands). Valued A’s above all else Love of reading Ballet teacher, camp counselor, trainer at restaurant Life lesson regarding failure—not getting into all grad schools Goal: to teach for altruistic reasons	Family Work
Tess	Highly supportive and involved parents Sports and learning about self-esteem, mental toughness, and pre-game jitters Poetry no longer a direction/focus; parents are encouraging practical direction Standing on own feet after engagement dissolved	Family Athletics Intimate Relationship

her parents had indulged her in her undergraduate degree in poetry but were now justifiably interested in her finding a practical and well-paying career.

Identity and relationship issues were pervasive features of the TAs' first life story interviews. These issues seemed to be greatly affected by gender-role expectations. Further, the TAs seemed to be positioned at an important threshold in their lives, as they entered into fully adult roles in an early professional context. Finally, they seemed to want to make connections and disconnections from their pasts, and, as they set about becoming teachers, to seek both continuity with and distinction from the persons they had been.

Educational Histories and Schooling Philosophies

Jen

In college, Jen most appreciated one professor who allowed students to determine the assignment structure for the class and another professor who allowed the students to teach each other through class presentations. In both of these higher education examples, what Jen saw and admired were settings where students became invested and responsible for their education. Also, Jen suggests that her own desire for a “nuts and bolts” foundation for learning, along with and a working vocabulary prior to moving into complex abstractions, may be the same kind of learning needed by her students.

Jen grew up in a small town and went to public school, yet her public school was “about as Catholic as a public school can be,” she reports. Time was even allowed mid-morning for the children to march across the street to church and confession. Her mother was very involved in the schools, and in Jen's mind, parents, school, and church were all of a piece. She loved school and her teachers in general, although she singled out her 2nd

grade teacher who created a special tree house bunk for reading, a 5th grade teacher who inserted humor into the classroom, and a 6th grade teacher who singled her out because of her writing.

Among her worst memories from elementary school was being teased by her classmates during a track meet. What she remembers most clearly about this day, however, is that her teachers rallied to her defense and quickly corrected the situation, providing no tolerance for the kind of mean behavior her peers were exhibiting. Jen remembers and is inspired by this event.

Jen's educational philosophy seems to be an interesting mix of beliefs—both in the agency of teachers, the importance of their conduct and efficacious support of students as well as in the decentralized, student-centered classroom, perhaps especially at the post-secondary level. She further believes that students need grounding in a subject before being asked to move on to higher levels of abstraction.

Mark

Mark feels that he came into his own academically at Middlebury. He also understands the limitations of Middlebury, citing its racial homogeneity, its jock orientation, and its East Coast scene. One school-wide theme that was developed for a year was “A Sense of Place,” and this theme has remained important to Mark. For instance, when he studied in Ecuador his junior year, he learned how to gather information about a place in order to know it, and he followed this knowledge for his recent field work (grant-supported ethnographic work in New Mexico).

He describes himself as an increasingly serious student at Middlebury, with an “upward trajectory” while his high school career was a “downward trajectory.” He

became more and more serious at Middlebury, eventually even getting a thesis carrel in the basement his senior year, which was “like my little hideaway.” Students at CSU are significantly different from those at Middlebury, Mark believes. He thinks that being required to live on campus at Middlebury explains part of this difference. In contrast, at CSU there’s little or no discussion of what people are reading. Students here do not seem to be “engaged intellectually,” he says, while at Middlebury most of the people “were motivated and bright and no one struck me as just floating.”

Jack

University Schooling--When asked what provoked Jack to seek one of his goals, specifically to become a more well rounded person, he attributes a large part of it to his move from Central Michigan University to the University of Toledo. Jack comes back to this discussion in a later document, where he also talks about the positive impact of exposure to diverse demographics.

Urban Schooling--Jack was educated in public schools, starting out in suburban schools and in the 5th grade bused to an inner-city school. Jack talks about being bused in the later grades of elementary school, out of his neighborhood and into the city, and he recalls it as “a fairly good experience, and nothing really traumatic comes to mind.” He describes himself as “very privileged” to have gone to urban schools in a diverse setting. Among other things, he was able to take AP courses and study with a teacher educated at Oxford. He believes that “a lot of people don’t have those opportunities any more.” Asked if this connects to his possible desire to teach in an urban school setting, he says he believes it does and then admits that he romanticizes the environment, “thinking I could take these students who don’t have good teachers anymore ...and I can make things

exciting for them for a couple years.” He says he’s been thinking more and more about teaching in Denver and explains that his wife, who currently is a youth treatment counselor, is seeking alternative licensure for inner city elementary teaching in Denver.

The first teacher he recalls vividly was his 6th grade teacher who was a Vietnam vet and favored sports and competition. The theme of the classroom was tigers, and this teacher played “Eye of the Tiger” as the theme song. Jack laughs when he talks about it, but although he goes to some lengths to distance himself from the competitive approach this teacher pursued, he remembers having thoroughly loved this teacher and his approach at the time. He also recalls happily the research time this teacher allowed, where the kids were encouraged to do encyclopedia research on animals and were allowed to follow their interests in un-structured and largely un-supervised free time. Here was a time “where we could start to think about what we wanted to think about. I really enjoyed that.”

In high school Jack was involved in many activities—tennis, band, jazz band, etc., but he started valuing the social aspects of school more than the academics. By the time he was in college, Jack was clearly more of a social animal than an academic. His grades suffered some as a result, as he failed a few. Still he recalls a particular experience when he went to a 400-level English exam having read neither of the books being tested and wrote an essay response that earned him an A- as well as the comment from his teacher that he’d “brought in some valuable insights he hadn’t thought of before.”

After three years of partying, he transferred from Central Michigan to the University of Toledo where he became a much more serious student. Sometimes, he says, he wishes he’d have applied himself earlier “because now that I’m in graduate school I

get the feeling there's some pieces back there that I'm missing." He says he half hopes half fears that his own students will be like him and he says a big indication of whether they're going to be like him will be shown by their attendance. He believes that "some of the smartest kids stop applying themselves, so it will be interesting to see."

Teaching Experience--During Jack's senior year of high school he was thinking about teaching elementary school and did an internship at one, volunteering two or three hours in the afternoons as a recess playmate and a paper grader. He tells the story of the day he brought in his saxophone, guitar, and tuba and played for the kids. His next teaching experience came when he was a teaching assistant for a literature professor at CSU.

Teacher Image-- Jack says he'd like to seem open and accessible to students and their differing ideas yet not be perceived as misleading to them via friendliness "so that a poor grade is somehow a betrayal."

Teacher Models-- He describes the literature professor he worked with as one he learned a great deal from and describes her as "very clever": "She brings in a lot of visual aids and starts at a basic level, has them analyzing children's books, saying, 'Take the reader response method to reading this children's book and then move it to the next level.'" Jack followed this model when he did a solo teaching week and taught myth to the literature students using "The Emperor Who Wears No Clothes" to get started. When asked if grounding things at a basic level before moving to more complex applications is something he might continue to use, he indicated that he'd been thinking about having freshman composition students bring in favorite songs to analyze.

Among current teachers after whom he might model his teaching are the lecture model of Professor Bill Tremblay and the seminar classroom of SueEllen Campbell and Donna LeCourt. He says a combination seems best. "In Tremblay's class sometimes I felt like I sort of understand all this stuff that I've been given, but I don't know how to put it into my own words . . . And then in the other class . . . sometimes I felt like it lacked focus and I needed a little lecture sometimes." Jack also notices while he is describing these differing models that he refers to the lecturing professor as "Dr." and to the seminar professors by their first names. "That's weird," he says.

Role of Schooling--Asked his view of the role of schooling and specifically higher education, Jack says that it should serve to make a person more well rounded. He understands neither the business student who goes to college solely for the career nor the "people who tell me 'I don't want to go to college because I don't know what I want to do.'" An education is justified by development of the ability to think critically, to be "better able to view the world around you and form your opinions instead of taking for granted what people have been telling you your whole life." Here we see definite shades of Jack's father's influence.

Sadie

Early Schooling--Sadie attended Catholic school from K-8 and then moved to a magnet public school for academically gifted students in high school. Asked about the importance of the religious piece to her education, Sadie indicates that she enjoyed Catholic school, excelled there, and feels she received "straight (consistent) signals" from school and home. Sadie especially liked her second grade teacher, describing her as "nice." Less happily remembered is the third grade teacher, who is recalled as overly

strict and anxiety producing. One day her mom forgot to sign a conduct card (all A's) and Sadie received demerits. Subsequently, she says she became "paranoid about stuff, like just about having everything together . . . it just seemed way too strict to be healthy for young children."

Sadie received several awards and commendations for her performance in school. As a seventh grader she was selected to take the SATs, and five years out of nine she won the Christian Living Award. She was also an honor graduate from eighth grade. Her public magnet high school similarly offered her a host of opportunities including several AP courses. She recalls an influential teacher from this period, Mr. Gonzales, who taught AP European History. She describes this course as the hardest course (to date) that she has ever taken. Mr. Gonzales pushed his students, lecturing and then calling randomly on students to check for understanding of a concept. Being able to answer his questions was a major confidence boost.

Athletics and Academics-- Sadie was most influenced by the combination of athletics and academics that defined her life in college. While it was never easy to be a student-athlete, Sadie found that her coaches supported her academic responsibilities and that her professors came to support her athletics because she was a talented and reliable student, absent only when traveling with the team. She feels that she benefited in terms of time management as a result of the need to balance academics and athletics. She also learned about her own leadership potential. She became captain of several teams and did not always seek out the position. She says, "It's something to realize that leadership is hard and it's not something that you always want but you are willing to stand up and take it because you're the person who can get it done or you're the person they're looking to."

Teacher Models--A favorite teacher in college was the professor for whom she eventually became a teaching assistant. An important lesson she learned here was that she had an open mind when many others around her simply didn't. The lesson she took from this was that, "You can entertain an idea even if you don't accept it." The ability to do this came easily for her, but she also began to realize how difficult this notion is for some people.

Sadie's Expectations of Her Students--Asked if she thinks her students will be as seriously committed to their education as she has been, she says she realized as an undergraduate that most people don't approach school with her kind of commitment. She says she has identified two people in her class already who are underachievers: "I know they're smart but I know they're not doing anything." She says that her own approach to good attendance is the only way she can imagine approaching school: "Like what are you paying for if you're not going to class? I don't understand that, just not going to class."

Teaching Image--Sadie says that at first she was preoccupied with looking young, too young. She worried that her students might perceive her as more of a peer than an authority figure, but she says, "That isn't a worry anymore because I don't have any classroom disciplinary problems." Otherwise, Sadie believes that the image issue is different for a college professor than for a high school teacher, and she's thinking of the latter and wondering about that.

Role of Schooling-- Sadie says that school is not important in transferring information of facts but rather in teaching "how you learn to think" and also in how to get along with people—which is why she doesn't understand the concept of home schooling. School, she says, "is a microcosm of life." The purpose of higher education is both to

reach your professional goals and to become a more educated, open-minded person. She says, “I think a lot of it has to do with confidence and the way you project yourself to the world. Being exposed to different things that you can’t get elsewhere.”

Leah

Teacher Models--Historically speaking, Leah went to one of the highest rated public schools in the eastern shoreline state she grew up in. She recalls her teachers as being great teachers and people she could seek out as mentors. In particular, she recalls her high school geometry teacher who taught an object lesson in different pathways toward problem solving. She tells the story this way:

I hated math, was never a math person, but he actually had his Ph.D. and he always was able to tie these random stories into a lesson and I loved that. . . My favorite example was Tiger Stadium, the place where the Orioles played major league baseball. And we were studying proofs. He said, “Go home and ask your parents how to get to Tiger Stadium and bring it in tomorrow.” Well, we brought it back in and of course we each had a different way to get to Tiger Stadium. His point was, when you’re doing proofs, there’s more than one way to get the right answer. Just like there’s more than one way to get to Tiger Stadium.

In college, Leah had a professor, the department head, who became her mentor. She had “an amazing poetry memory” and “was able to make even the most clueless soccer jock find poetry.” She accomplished this by being extremely current, Leah reported. She wanted “to keep poetry active and in everyday life and contemporary so that you’re not just reading passively and not creating and seeing creation all around.”

Leah’s Expectations of Her Students--Asked if she anticipates that her own students will bring the same level of seriousness to their studies that she does, she says she doesn’t think so but that this makes her want to make what she teaches more accessible.

Role of Schooling--Leah believes schooling is one of the top three priorities in life. She has always looked up to her teachers not only to please them but to be more like them, to be a person who knows things. She says, "I wanted to be like them, to be knowledgeable and to make a difference, to be the change I want to see in the world." Leah describes school as "the almost ideal place to do or be all those things." She says, "Knowledge is power because it enables growth and learning" and "the more we learn and grow, the better equipped we are to enjoy life and make it enjoyable for others." Making a connection to current trends, Leah says she believes education is under attack and that this is a problem because:

The less important school is made to appear. . . the less important school starts to look, the less valued it will become, the less effective and influential in shaping and teaching important aspects of life, whether it's social aspects like respect and love for other people, dealing with painful or taboo experiences, or reading poetry, novels and music, keeping up with the world—oh, and did I forget math?

Leah believes that education extends far beyond the classroom, that we learn from our everyday experiences, that schooling influences experiences outside school and vice versa. Values, passions, the shaping of identity are all important pieces of this. Leah indicates that these factors explain why she wants to teach. She tells the story of a young man she tutored. He was an ESL student, and when he graduated from high school, it was a huge event for his family. She was struck by how greatly this young man's family valued education and how different this value system was from the value system of most people she knows.

Tess

Teaching Models--An important event as an undergraduate was Tess's first English class, in which the instructor read a poem, "A Passionate Shepherd Too Is Love"

and she lost herself in the experience and in the class. Tess found the instructor to be “cool” and was impressed that she had made a career out of literature. Hence, Tess thought maybe she would try that direction. This professor eventually became Tess’s advisor.

Teaching Image--Asked if she has an image she’d like to project as a teacher, Tess says she has more images she doesn’t want to project—like being “flighty and nervous.” She would like to be approachable and successful. She feels that image is different in her largely male class than it would be if it were more balanced. The boys are smart-alecs and the girls seem to pity her; she does not want to promote either reaction.

Asked what she’d like students to say about her, Tess says that she wishes they felt the class was more interesting than they’d expected. Many of the students indicated in a questionnaire distributed at the beginning of the semester that they expected to pass. She wishes that they expected to think, to learn, to see how the learning applies to other classes, to maybe one day inspire an English major, and finally to persuade students that writing is not a dreaded thing that is best avoided.

Small College and Large University, Making the Transition--At the conclusion of the interview Tess indicates that one thing she thinks about is the transition from her small undergraduate institution to this large public one, a transition that she has found difficult for many reasons. For one, her own experience was quite different from her students’ experiences. For instance, she knew as an undergraduate that she would do lots of writing in virtually all of her classes, while students here may not have much more writing to look forward to or to dread beyond their experience in CO150. Tess says, “That’s why CO150 needs to be good.”

Role of Schooling-- Tess has strong feelings about “the fairness issue” applied to living a full life. As an undergraduate, she found ways to do the (fun) things she wanted to do as well as get her work done. To her, it seemed unfair to deny herself a full life, in single-minded pursuit of an education, so she became very involved in the Student Activities Committee, which did programming for entertainment and cultural events on campus. She feels she learned as much from these activities as she did from her classes, and she’s glad now that she took the time from her schedule to participate in these activities.

Asked if this experience helps her to understand her undergraduates in some particular way, Tess explains how angered she was as an undergraduate if professors assigned lots of work on weekends or at obvious times of conflict, such as Parents’ Weekend. She reminds herself of this when she starts feeling nervous about the class she is teaching, recalling that she’s “just a blip on their radar.” She wants to remember that her students are taking other classes and doing other things, but she also wants her class to be sufficiently interesting and provocative to engage her students to think about the class. She noticed her first absences from class recently and at first was irritated by these, but then she remembered that she had missed a few classes too in her time.

Summary of Educational Histories and Schooling Philosophies

Table 5 depicts the educational histories and schooling philosophies that resonate with importance for the participating TAs at the outset of this study. The TAs in this study group draw heavily upon their own educational histories in the formation of their attitudes toward schooling in general and higher education in particular. To a person they report highly positive experiences in the early years of their schooling, referring with a

Table 5

Educational Histories and Schooling Philosophies

TA	Philosophy
Jen	Appreciation for schooling in general, especially teachers who advocate for their student's well-being --High student involvement and teacher efficacy are keys to effective education at all levels
Mark	Downward trajectory in high school Upward trajectory in college Students at Middlebury differ from CSU students – CSU students need to be more engaged than they are --Engagement of students is central to higher education
Jack	Transfer from CMU to Univ. of Toledo Influenced Jack's goal of becoming a well-rounded person Urban schooling (bused) as a youngster 6th grade teacher made time for individual reflection and interest discovery Positively affected by assisting E140 Teacher at CSU (role model) --Schooling should build critical thinking.
Sadie	Catholic schools through 8th grade – positive experience 3rd grade authoritarian and punitive teacher - negative role model High school AP history teacher - positive role model Combination of athletics and academics --Be a presence not just a person. --You can entertain an idea without accepting it. --Value of schooling lies in learning how to think and how to get along with people.
Leah	Role model teacher in high school geometry (multiple paths to problem solving) Role model teacher in college literature --School is one of life's top 3 priorities.
Tess	Recalls poetry class and professor who inspired her with reading of poem Desires to be an interesting teacher; wishes students expected to learn and to work instead of to pass Sees qualitative differences between her own small college experience and large university experience of her students Teachers are "blips on students' radar" --Schooling should be about balance of multiple interests, not just academic pursuits.

high degree of consistency to positive role models from their elementary and high school days as well as from their college experiences. In general, they hold their own educational experiences in positive regard, and these experiences ranged from inner city based schooling experiences to private prep school experiences. Their views on higher education are clearly influenced by their own histories as well, with a preference given to the kind of education they each had. Thus, Tess believes that the small college experience is qualitatively different (and better) than the large public university experience, while Mark believes that politically engaged and astute students, such as those at his own undergraduate institution, are more engaged and effective students. Leah believes in the power of the individual teacher and was clearly influenced by high school and college teachers alike, referring to them as mentors. Jack believes that college students must explore a full range of experiences in college, many of these lying outside the academic realm, and Tess would agree with this position, believing that an education that is balanced with extracurricular activities is best. Both of these individuals draw this belief from their own educational histories, which involved considerable involvement with activities outside the academic realm.

All of these TAs' attitudes towards teaching and learning are clearly reflective of their own experiences—and most notably that which was good and powerful.

Dialogic Journal

I established the Dialogic Daily Teaching Log to encourage daily reflection on the day's teaching as well as to aid with planning for the next day and the next semester. The log form that I constructed provided space for reflection on the day's teaching, space for notes regarding changes the TA made to the master syllabus, space for memos regarding

specific events that occurred during the day, and space for reminder notes about the next class day as well as the next time this particular lesson was taught—most likely the next semester. The second part of the log, which was the dialogic portion, allowed me to converse with the participants after every class, which amounted to at least twice weekly replies and thereby to do member checking, to reinforce and help sustain their involvement in the project, as well as to provide the occasional commiseration as the TAs and I dealt with the daily turmoil of teaching this complex course.

Because I, too, was teaching the course, and following the same syllabus and lesson plans as they, I benefited from high degree of familiarity with the daily teaching challenges they were facing. Like them, I was teaching for the first time teaching from this syllabus and these textbooks. I was assigning these particular papers for the first time as well. Also like most of them, I am more or less a novice to the world of cultural criticism, which provides the theoretical basis for the course as well as the specific circumstance for the third, and most important, paper assignment. While limiting my expertise in regards to critiquing the TAs' techniques, I believe that my newness to this curriculum may have placed me, beneficially, on footing that was similar to theirs.

The discussion of the findings that follows is divided into segments corresponding to the units of the course, of which there are three. These units represent chronological progress through the course, and it is possible to see the kinds of questions the TAs asked moving generally from an internal (self-centered) focus to an external (student-centered) focus. A peculiarity of CO150 is that while the syllabus is constructed around three units, there are actually four papers assigned. The first two papers actually fall under the heading of Unit I, and in many ways the first paper is looked at as a warm up for the

second paper. As such, the master syllabus calls for weighting that first paper accordingly, at only 5% of the grade. It should also be noted that different TAs record differing numbers of days for each of the units, and this is a result of some TAs teaching on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedule while others teach Tuesdays and Thursdays. Also, in all cases I have condensed the data of each day's log, recording only what is of particular interest/analysis here. Also, I have occasionally left out days altogether in the interest of condensing the information and presenting it as meaningfully as possible while maintaining enough description to provide thorough understanding of the data.

Following a summary of each of the TAs' logs for the three units, I will also report briefly on my own dialogic journal responses back to the TAs, calling attention to some of my more robust (although not necessarily proud) moments of responding. I will attempt to critique what those responses might mean to the TAs who were receiving them and also what they might say about the story of my own teaching at this point in my career.

Unit I

Jen

Jen recorded her teaching log on Syllabase software, which made it possible to capture not just my dialogic responses but her responses to my responses as well. From virtually the first moment, Jen records her anxieties and unhappiness about teaching. Already on Day 7, she is describing her teaching day as "rotten" and herself cast as disciplinarian as she is "forced by 19-year-olds into 'finger-wagging.'" Jen says, "I don't want to do this anymore" and ends her entry of the day with the words, "Trying hard not

to cry.” Jen seems to be crying out for help, but it does not appear that she can bring herself to go to her supervisors for that help.

On Day 10: Jen reports that she turned around just in time to see one of her students mocking her to the amusement of the rest of the class, she writes:

“Why do people act that way, why it is so necessary to attempt to tear away at someone else? Why isn’t it people’s first instinct to protect the people around them?”

Mark

Mark’s teaching log records the ups and downs of his first semester of teaching. By the end of the first unit we see Mark beginning to articulate his overarching philosophy of teaching as “dialogue.” This teaching discovery seems consistent with Mark’s other interests and successes as a backcountry team leader whose emphasis was on “opening the doors for them to walk through.” Still, it wasn’t all smooth sailing for Mark, as on Day 3 when he described himself and his class as “boring.”

Day 7: “I want to foster critical thinking and active learning, but being ‘trapped’ in the syllabus, I feel unable to accomplish these goals. Keeping things in perspective though, I know that it will take time. As a goal, I want to try to do one activity not on the syllabus per week.”

Day 11: “I think I have trouble articulating the words of someone else. The syllabus isn’t constructed in my language so it is stilted or clumsy to explain it.”

Jack

In general, Jack’s teaching log displays a great deal of optimism as well as increasing confidence in his teaching abilities. By the end of Unit I he has found a classroom management system that works for him, and he has shown evidence that he

can adjust curriculum to meet student needs. From the beginning, Jack meets most classroom obstacles with positive confidence that he is learning through the struggle.

Day 3: "I learned some valuable lessons about keeping focused on the main ideas and about group dynamics."

Day 8: "I'm learning! Most days I feel a little inadequate, but I know that I'll improve as time goes on."

Sadie

From the first entry into her journal/log, Sadie shows a concern related to student participation: "My class is incredibly quiet and seems to abhor any participation."

A pattern begins to develop with alternating classes quiet and then animated—yet for no clear reason that this TA can discern. She wonders if she is jumping in too quickly, doing too much talking in an effort to ensure understanding—a plausible explanation. She begins to implement WTLs to get them activated individually and also initiates small group discussions before starting full-class discussions; these were techniques discussed in the orientation that she tests in her classroom. By Day 9 she is enlarging her repertoire of classroom choices and considers splitting the class in half and doing a debate or "Crossfire" approach to the issues in one of the essays. Again, this was an idea modeled for the TAs by one of their peers in E684. Also of note is Sadie's articulated concern/worry about the papers that will be turned in the first time—their quality and how tough she should be on them.

Day 10: "One of my students, about whom I had been worried because she seemed to care so little about what we did in class, participated quite well today. It was like Christmas in September."

Day 13: “It is amazing to me the flux of effectiveness: one day it feels like I am really getting through and the next that there has been erected some kind of wall between teacher-students.”

Leah

Of the six teaching logs maintained for this study, Leah’s was by far the most extensive. Her educational life story interviews are rather skimpy by comparison, but here in this teaching log we get a sense of how seriously Leah is working to become a more effective teacher, and she is clear that this—effectiveness—is her goal as a teacher. In this first unit we see her coming to terms with her role in her students’ education and theirs as well.

Day 4: “I was psyched to have held a more respectable discussion with my students.”

Day 5: I am TOTALLY AFRAID OF THE SILENCE!” [caps hers] “I answer myself because I’m scared no one will say anything ever!”

Day 13: She consulted with a TA peer who had public school teaching experience. This peer recommended that she come up with her own activities rather than use the ones given in the syllabus if she doesn’t really understand them. Leah writes: “I have been thinking broadly about teaching this course again, and have been caught looking for the panacea for the ineffectiveness I feel with the syllabus. But that is only part of it. There are 19 other people (on a good day) who are involved in making my teaching effective, and if I’m not aware of their specific needs, how can they be expected to overcome their difficulties?”

Tess

Tess kept a teaching log for Days 4-17 only. She recorded lessons 4-6 in long hand and the later days on Syllabase. Although the number of days she kept the log were relatively few, she did engage in extended conversations with me in the dialogic portion of the log. I fear I may have burned her out with my questions, thus leading to her early end to these entries. An unfortunate aspect of her premature end to these journal entries is the fact that she made considerable progress in gaining teacher authority and regaining student respect by the end of the semester, and without the daily logs to show this transformation, we can only surmise this from her critical event narrative and her second educational life story interview. In this first section of her teaching log, Tess notes her discomfort with the control of her classroom, observing that she has several students who behave disrespectfully toward her. She calls them her “problem children,” and she repeatedly refers to her students as “kids.” Again striking a parental tone, she indicates at one point (Day 9) that she hopes her next class “won’t NEED a talking to” [caps hers]. She indicates trouble relating to their attitudes and approach to the college classroom. She describes herself as “fraudulent,” suggesting the “imposter syndrome” that many feel when first in front of a classroom. She also gives some indication that she may not be spending sufficient time in preparation for her class. She also indicates that there are elements of the syllabus that seem to her “unteacherly” and overly simplistic, that seem to weaken the academic rigor of the course. Finally, in this first unit, Tess identifies the events that will become her paired items in her critical event narrative—the classroom meeting, and her troubled start with a particular student, “J.”

Day 4: “My students are so foreign to me sometimes—I’m not that much older but I can’t relate.”

Day 8: “One student is often on my case about what I say, looking for me to contradict myself or something.”

Day 15: “... with my smart-alec class, I got several useless letters—picking on the author, offering only general advice, etc.

Unit II

Jen

Themes of illness and unhappiness still permeate Jen’s teaching log during Unit II. By the middle of the unit she has decided to discontinue her assistantship at the end of the semester. She cancels a full week of classes “to give them time to work on Essay 3.” By the end of this unit, Jen is articulating more confidently her unhappiness with the way the assistantship is set up. She does not want to rule out teaching forever, but she has clearly moved away from any short-term plans for doing it. She wishes she might have “found out the teacher she might be” and one can hear the despair in her narrative voice.

On the other hand, she sometimes seems revolutionary in her convictions, wondering about the CO150 policy that prevents a student from dropping the course. Jen has some good ideas about how to change things, but she seems to be residing more and more in a state of despair instead of action. In my dialogic responses, I increasingly struggle with my position as researcher and, as a result of my dialogic responses, as participant-observer and advocate. How might I be supportive? How might I reassure her that she’s not worthless because she’s struggling? I tell her how frequently I feel ill before and after class, and yet I’ve not only survived 20 years of teaching, I’ve failed to

lose weight. She seems to appreciate my support and my humor although my points don't seem to be convincing her that there may be value in hanging in there another term. I wish I could refer her to someone, but she seems afraid of the ramifications of talking to anyone in the program about her feelings—from peer to audit lecturer, to E684 professor, to composition director. She is stuck—and, I fear, lost to the program. I think she might have become a very effective teacher.

Day 12: Somewhat comically reassuring herself, she writes: “You are a beautiful person and people love you.” Then later, referring to a student who wants to withdraw late from the course, she writes: “The course director is giving him a hard time about it, wants to see me about it. He will fail if he stays in, so I'm not sure what the reasoning could be to force him to stay. I'm not real big on punishing people when they are willing to admit they have made a bad choice. Besides if he starts showing up now, I am being punished along with him.”

Day 13: “I might be more effective if I were less policed, less watched, observed, evaluated, and guided so much ... it makes me feel like I am choking ... I can't be myself. I can't fail. There doesn't seem to be room to find out for myself who I might be as a teacher.”

Day 14: “I told my husband today that if this were any other job, I would have quit.” And later in today's entry, she adds:

It isn't like I want anyone to baby me, but observations and the constant reinforcement of the teaching agendas of the department are not the only thing that I need. In fact, having just those sorts of things without the balance of personal support is like getting hit over the head with a rock on a daily basis. No one asks me, besides you, how I am doing and really wants to hear the answer or even bothers listening. . . I feel like it doesn't matter who I am or what I am experiencing just as long as it doesn't interfere with my ability to do the job.

Day 15: She describes herself as “full on panic” with her audit supervisor present in class. She says she was tempted to tell him right then that she’s not teaching next semester, that she’s “sick of pretending.” She says “the universe is screaming out to me, ‘What the hell do you think you are doing?’”

Mark

Mark’s clipped daily responses exude confidence even when he is dissatisfied with his classroom effectiveness. He is frequently unhappy with his time management in the classroom, noting that he loses track of time and bogs down, not getting to some of the key material. This leads him to express repeatedly that he is concerned he has not adequately prepared his students for Essay 3. Yet by the close of this section of log entries, he seems to be generally pleased with himself, seeing improvements and corrections he has made. His optimism in the face of classroom problems is a startling contrast to Jen’s discouragement, and one suspects that one is no more effective than the other in the classroom.

Day 19: “I get bogged down in the first part of the discussion and don’t have time to move along.”

Day 25: “I felt as if we were so caught up in ‘cultural studies’ that the big issues were being brushed aside.”

Jack

Jack notes his weaknesses in the classroom (anticipating discussion direction and questions) and also blames himself for flat discussions, yet he doesn’t seem to be discouraged. A notable feature of his entries is his belief in the future and in his own

improvement with time. He notes improvements he has already made. Also, his classroom management strategy of having students do presentations is now paying dividends as he now has a classroom of students who are comfortable going to the front of the room. Jack indicates he is having some difficulty understanding the aims of Essay 3, but he also reports that he is making notes for next semester, detailing his plans for improving his own delivery next time around.

Day 13: “Transition days are difficult.” And later: “I am getting better at getting students to think critically and to participate in discussion but I have trouble anticipating student responses and how to reply to them—the thinking on your feet issue, but I’m sure this will improve in time.”

Day 14: Today was a day of “poor facilitation.”

Sadie

Sadie’s entries in this section of the course reflect, among other things, her dry sense of humor, her ability to laugh at the foibles of teaching and at her own lack of experience. This section of Sadie’s journal documents a period of marked highs and lows in her teaching. One day goes well, the next is a complete flop, and she doesn’t understand why these variations occur. Still, when things go well, she describes this as “cause for much rejoicing.” Another notable piece in this section of entries is her questioning whether her students are actually learning to write better. It is notable that other TAs began to wonder the same thing about the same time.

Day 18: “It seems almost impossible to predict their responses and reactions.”

Day 21: “Maybe we should watch a scandalous talk show everyday.”

Day 22: “Miraculously, the vacant look was absent from their faces today, and this is cause for much rejoicing.”

Leah

Some problems with classroom control seem to be occurring during this section of the course, as Leah describes her students’ absenteeism, failure to do assigned readings, and sleeping during class. She indicates doubt about her “right” to grade tough because she’s not sure her teaching merits “top-notch” work by her students. There is considerable self-doubt present in these entries, although she’s not giving up. Her revision policy has produced eight additional papers that she now must grade. On a positive note, she creates a very effective graphic to explain the cultural myth idea. She wants to do a midterm evaluation but says she is afraid of what her students will say.

Day 19: “I try not to let it [the absence of participation] discourage me. But it can wear on you.”

Day 21: “It’s so hard at this point not to think their anger (that’s strong, I know) isn’t reflected [sic] at me personally . . . I have a REAL hard time with grading because I feel like I can’t be too hard because I don’t know for sure if what I do in class warrants top-notch work or not.

Day 22: “It’s a roller coaster. It’s like riding horse and getting bucked off every other day. I’m going to be black and blue by the end of the semester, but I’m still trying to climb back on.”

Tess

Day 17—Today, the last day Tess keeps a teaching log, students turn in Essay 2 and she introduces Essay 3 (and Unit 2). She introduces cultural analysis of media by

supplying a supplemental reading from a TV criticism column written by one of her friends at the Toledo Blade. She then has them work in groups defending a show against an angry group of citizens, feeling that this group work would be a kind of reward for working hard on Essay 2. She notes that Ryan brought Popsicles for the whole class and Elizabeth wrote a note saying class was better since “The Talk,” meaning the classroom meeting.

Unit III

Jen

Far less angst and discomfort are noted in these entries. Jen has moved away from the syllabus and is doing things her own way, asking her students what they feel they need from her to successfully produce Essay 4, and she then constructs her class plan accordingly. She indicates that if she were to teach again, she would approach class this way, seeking feedback from students from the very beginning and sustaining that communication over the term. She discovers that she likes the idea of the zero draft, and she also is developing personal attachments to her students. She experiences a critical event involving a student who was so completely not paying attention that she enacted the very scene the class had just talked about from the assigned reading. She notes that she dislikes the multiple tasks that are implicit yet (in her opinion) not fully developed within the Essay 4 assignment (argument and research), just as she disliked the multiple implicit tasks within Essay 3 for the same reason.

Days 23: “The fact that I’m a GTA doesn’t make me less valuable to my kids, but maybe makes me more so.” She notes that these days she feels more in control and less like “a CO150 robot.”

Mark

While Mark continues to have ups and downs, he seems to be finding his rhythm and his preferences in the classroom. For instance, he has discovered that he really likes group work and students' more direct participation through groups. He also likes the idea of free writing. He also has begun to have confidence in his explanations, finding that one clarification is sufficient rather than needing to say things repeatedly to get them right and to ensure understanding.

Day 31: "More opportunities to work in small groups leads them to participate more directly. Granted I have less control over the work they do, but I think it is effective."

Day 33: "I think I am more confident in my explanations, more willing to allow the initial explanation to stand without further explanation."

Jack

All in all, Jack's teaching log documents the daily experience of a TA who remains optimistic and upbeat about teaching and his own teaching promise/potential even as he faces up to moments of discovery, confusion, and struggle. He demonstrates a high degree of resilience when things do not go well and manages to not be too hard on himself at the conclusion of the term, saying, "I think I did fairly well for my first semester as a teacher. I'm ready to get better and learn from mistakes next semester."

Day 21: "I did a better job of introducing the assignment than I did previously. They were confused somewhat about the earlier essays, so I tried to clarify from the outset what they are being asked to do on Essay 4."

Sadie

Sadie notes similar end-of-term problems as her peers. For instance, students are slacking off and not doing the reading, are performing only grudgingly during the final workshop of the semester, and are arriving late. She begins to look forward to next semester yet is struggling mightily through her own end-of-term requirements in the courses she is taking. On the last day of class she asks students to evaluate their own participation, a technique one of her admired professors once did, following up with her to suggest that she become “a presence and not just a person in her classes.”

Day 30: Sadie first voices her optimism about next semester and the “chance to iron out the difficulties I found this semester.”

Day 36: Sadie indicates that her students seem clear about Essay 4 as well as interested. She says, “They are also more open to taking the initiative to come and discuss their issues. I feel like their learning process has become more of an open dialogue.”

Leah

Perhaps the most important discovery made during this segment of the course came on the first day of the unit when Leah sat down and had a member of the class write on the board. She felt the shift in energy and got some insights into how centralized a class and instructor can be even if when she thinks she’s positioned to not dominate the room. She notes that her students are approaching her for things, meaning that she’s accessible. She wonders what she has been teaching her students—writing or critical thinking—and describes this as a crisis, a moment of serious doubt about what she has

accomplished over the semester. She notes that she will rearrange the class schedule for this last unit next semester, doing research first and argument second.

Day 30: "I could feel the energy shift as soon as I went back to the front of the room after the discussion. . . When I was sitting with them, the room was much more loose and even though I was still calling on students individually they were calling out to each other. As soon as I went back to the board, it got quiet again. So weird."

Day 36: "What will help them most outside of CO150? How can grammar be taught effectively? How can you recover a student who's shutting you out?"

Table 6

Dialogic Journal Questions

Unit	Questions
Unit 1	Do I have a right to be here? Why do we have the no-drop policy after the 1st week? Why are students so disrespectful and juvenile in their behavior? Must I really be a disciplinarian? How can I manage my time better in class? How can I make my class less boring? Do they like me? How much latitude do I have in doing my own lesson planning?
Unit 2	Why do things go well one day and terrible the next? How much time should I spend preparing my class? What is Reading Day? Am I the only TA who doesn't understand cultural criticism? Was my education inadequate? Do I know anything about this kind of writing? Are we trying to do too many things – cultural criticism, TV as text, audience recommendation? Why don't they do the reading and how can I enforce reading assignments? Am I qualified to grade tough? Has my teaching been effective enough to merit high expectations? Will I survive the roller coaster of classroom ups and downs? Am I teaching cultural criticism or writing? Are there ways to teach grammar meaningfully?
Unit 3	Why are research and argument united in one assignment? Why do I feel less like a robot since leaving the provided syllabus yet also see students responding less well? Can I give instructions just once and hold students responsible for them? Can I make peace with having less control if I'm generally happy with group work? How can I do things better next semester? Have I taught my students anything? What will my students need in terms of writing outside CO150?

Summary of Dialogic Journals

Table 6 anthologizes the kinds of questions voiced by the participating TAs over the duration of the study. These questions demonstrate the way that teaching concerns gravitated over the course of the semester from worries about self toward worries about student learning and overall effectiveness of the course. Unit 1 concerns generally were inward-directed, with the TAs doubting the interest and engagement of their classroom and worrying about whether they were liked and/or respected by their students. Unit two concerns probed more of the unanswerable questions, such as why class sometimes goes well and other times goes terribly, while also querying classroom management and methods questions, such as how one might teach grammar responsibly. Unit 3 concerns moved toward more global questions about the course, its relevance, and the TA's overall effectiveness. TAs at this stage also began to look toward the future. (See Table 6 for a summary of this progression.)

The Story of My Dialogic Responses

When I first decided to make the journal "instrument" a dialogic log, I thought that the opportunity for dialogue and layered reflection would be helpful to the TAs. My hope was that I would expose them to the benefits of reflective practice in the novice stages of professional development, and that they might see how reflective practice even for experienced teachers carries tangible benefits. For some, I secretly hoped, reflective practice might even become standard practice, patterned behavior, and an acquired, healthy habit, like exercising daily. I knew that this more ambitious hope was perhaps too much to hope for, but I maintained that hope nonetheless.

My own plan for my dialogic responses was to maintain an air of distance, of calculatedly casual interest, even though I was deeply committed and intensely fascinated by what they might have to say. What I have found in reviewing my responses is that my desire to stay on the periphery was quickly circumvented by my competing desire to express my commitment to these young professionals and to legitimize their experiences. In short, I went from observer to participant-observer virtually overnight. It should be said that I had the luxury of not being their supervisor, of maintaining no official instructional role, of having access to their thoughts and experiences without ultimate responsibility for their teaching decisions and outcomes. My interest was in them and what they experienced, but I recognize the limitations of this approach. As a matter of course, my interest in their experiences both reinforced their thinking and behavior and influenced it.

I know that by dialoguing with them, I began to “co-construct” their experiences with them, to use the language of narrative analysis. My analysis of experience began to rub off on them, and I see evidence of my influence in many of the issues they chose to write about, perhaps particularly in their critical events. However, responding to the TAs’ entries seemed the organic and reflectively prudent thing to do. I favor an approach and a research position that allows for some degree of action and researcher agency. I prefer an involved and constructively helpful researcher approach over a distanced and uninvolved one.

Having said that, I now wish to come clean further by showing some of my reactions. I have selected Jen’s dialogic log for an example since my responses to her (and her rather serious troubles with the assistantship) were more elaborate in terms of

content and overall effect. My responses are given in chronological order. At the end of these examples I will offer some final remarks on my role in this study as a result of my dialogic responses to the TAs, and especially to Jen.

Researcher Log Responses

Day 6: In response to Jen's first entry in which she stated that she didn't think she belonged in the classroom, I offered commiseration, a sense of shared misery. In retrospect I see that Jen's articulation of this discomfort was already much more extreme—more global--than the other TAs', who acknowledged some degree of discomfort but generally concluded with an optimistic plan for the future. I wrote, empathetically:

Lots of feeling here, Jen. I hear you. If it's any consolation I decided today that I don't want to be a teacher when I grow up! After 20 years and now well into this doctoral process I often feel that way. Sometimes I wonder why they even let me in front of students. But let's return to all this, as I'm very interested in how you continue to feel.

Day 7: In response to Jen's trouble with discussions stalling (similar to all the other TAs' difficulty with maintaining discussions), I offered advice, something I may have done too much of throughout the dialogic journals.

Generating discussion is a real art. It is something you'll get better at every time you do it. Take heart. My bet is that some of your own professors do only a marginally good job of it. On the other hand, note what it is that they do when it works well. I think that my best teachers have generally asked really focused questions that probed my understanding of reading/material I was responsible for having examined in some detail. Then the really penetrating question--especially one that I'm prepared for--really makes class time meaningful. It can help to distribute one or two thought-provoking questions at the class meeting before you will discuss the reading. Some of your brighter but quieter students will jump at the opportunity to come prepared and, if nothing else, will be willing to read their responses. You might also try setting up a system on Syllabase in which you post questions the day before class and expect them to have posted a response before class time. That might jumpstart discussion.

Again, Day 7: In response to Jen's trouble with a talking student I again offered advice:

I forgot to say something about the problem with Ericka talking in class. I have a girl who does the same thing; hers is tied up with the cute boy who frequently sits by her, and she's definitely performing for him. Have you talked to Ericka? Sometimes just pointing it out one-on-one will fix the problem, especially if you think she's not intentionally being a problem.

Day 8: In response to Jen's statement that things were going poorly and that students were forcing her into "finger-wagging," that she was not getting much sleep, and that she was "trying hard not to cry," I offered commiseration:

I don't know if this will provide any consolation to you, but I've spent a good portion of the week feeling really ineffective, in part due to similar student symptoms as you've described and in part due to the fact that I'm absolutely exhausted and it's only week four. I watched two people sleep in class this morning at 8 a.m., and I heard a kid talking trash about the class as he left. I felt like a complete imbecile, mostly because I didn't do anything about it. The only thing I can tell you is that I've never really kicked the kinds of feelings you're talking about. I suspect that just about everybody has days and feelings like what you're describing, even if they pretend otherwise.

Day 10 In response to Jen's concern that her bad experiences as a TA were ruining my research study and her bewilderment as to why a student would mock her behind her back, I offered reassurance and explanation.

You absolutely, positively affect my research through your honesty. The only thing you could do to mess me up would be to make up fictitious answers. I am grateful to you for your honesty, and I hope that in small way this log will serve to clarify your feelings about teaching. P.S. I too am sometimes amazed and dismayed by the seeming lack of concern (one human towards another) that can be witnessed in a classroom, but I think that classrooms are small subsets of our world and victim to the same human foibles.

Day 13: In response to Jen's questions about where to direct students for the kinds of evidence needed to demonstrate cultural myth, about balancing discussion and CSOWs (Connect to the Students' Own Writing), I responded to her as follows:

I, too, am wondering where we get the evidence (proof) about the cultural myth. Perhaps the articles we're reading suggest some data to support such powerful messages. Also, like you, while I enjoy those classes where discussion really takes off and the students are genuinely involved, I also struggle sometimes with whether I'm connecting to the larger assignment. I kind of have a deal with myself on this--either at the beginning or at the end of every class I check in with the students about this--ask them how today's class has clarified the assignment or ask them at the beginning of class what questions have emerged since last we met about the current assignment. . .

Then I also responded to her sense that she was being too closely proctored via multiple observation days, grading conferences, Tart meetings, etc.:

Your feelings about teaching in this environment strike me as completely understandable. It is a more "policed" environment than I've ever taught in before. You DO need to find out for yourself who you might be as a teacher. I can't offer much except my understanding of what you're talking about. I think one thing that I see you saying in all of this is that the control of all features of your teaching is negatively affecting your effectiveness. Would that be an accurate portrayal?

Day 14: In response to Jen's observation that she was having a hard time keeping her game face on, I offered my last fully sympathetic response. On this day she reported that "constant reinforcement of the department's teaching agenda is not the only thing I need," and that these, without the balance of personal support, was "like getting hit over the head with a rock on a daily basis." She wrote, "No one asks me, besides you, how I am doing and really wants to hear the answer or even bothers listening."

Your observations about support from the program vs. me are very interesting. Quite aside from the study, I ENJOY talking to people about their teaching--the good and the bad. I firmly believe that collegiality is the best teacher and that what new teachers often need most is encouragement and appreciation. I suspect that veteran teachers need that too. We all need to know that we're valued.

Day 19: In response to Jen's concern for absent students and regarding her perceived need "to anticipate her students' every need, every problem and have ready solutions." I consciously changed the tenor of my responses a bit, striving for balance and for an attitude that empowered her, that reassured her of her own agency:

About those missing students. It was nice of you to ask them if they misunderstood when you cancelled classes, but I've found over the years that they'll often say they did even if that wasn't the case. Most of your students DID get the message right, and they weren't even your most faithful attendees. So this tells me that you were probably perfectly clear but certain people decided to interpret the class reprieve liberally. Also, your student who is working at Mervyn's. . . maybe she just likes to have spending money.

Analysis of My Dialogic Responses

I am struck that as a dialogic partner, I became part of the story and changed it.

Admittedly, I was wrapped up in Jen's drama, but I was mostly concerned about her—as a person first and as a teacher second. I found myself wondering if Jen's supervisors had been responding to her journal as I was, might they have understood better some of Jen's anxieties and been able to address them? Might they have been inclined to share some of their stories by way of antidote for the isolation Jen seemed to find herself suffering from?

In the end, it was together that Jen and I constructed the story of her first--and regrettably perhaps her last--semester of teaching. I might have hoped that my attitude of collegiality and empowerment would have been enough to keep a talented new teacher like Jen in the program, but I found otherwise.

The Critical Events

Jen--Critical Event 1

The first of Jen's two critical events shook Jen into several realizations about her own future in (or out) of teaching. The basic context was that a student asked to do an interview with her for a freshman seminar requirement. Three questions followed: (1) What got you interested in teaching composition? (2) Where do you see yourself in 10 years, what do you want to have accomplished? (3) If you were teaching your last CO150

class ever, what would you say to us, what would you want us to know? The irony for Jen was that she knew she was, in fact, about to give her final lecture, albeit prematurely, since this first semester of college teaching had been enough to convince her that she didn't want to continue teaching and actually planned to terminate her teaching assistantship midyear. Jen wrote in her narrative:

What I wanted to tell her was that I wasn't interested in teaching composition. It was just what was available to me in this situation, and what I 'had' to teach, and that I wasn't enjoying it, that in ten years I would be nowhere near the university, that what I really wanted to do was write and be a mom; and that it wasn't a stretch for me to imagine my last CO150 class because if my instincts were right, she would be there to hear for herself what I would have to say on that day.

Jen realized during this critical event that she would have to lie to the student, since she didn't feel she could possibly tell the truth. This lie seemed to be one more case of lying (perhaps better described as acting) by Jen in a long line of inauthentic behavior throughout the semester as she delivered a syllabus and curriculum that she didn't understand or believe, yet was required to present. The thing that seems to have bothered Jen more than anything else here was this lack of authenticity, a fundamental disbelief in the CO150 curriculum. She wrote: "What I realized after thinking about this encounter is that the type of teaching I am doing and the environment I am doing it in necessitate a denial of self that I am not at all comfortable with AND—this is the most significant part—my students are cheated out of my true and actual talents."

Jen goes some length then to describe how she would prefer to teach CO150. She portrays herself as a creative writer and believes the distinction between creativity and college writing is part of a larger problem with writing instruction throughout schooling. This instruction, she says, serves to increasingly distance the writer from the writing, "producer from product," the end result of which is that writing is ultimately not

understood to be a real or authentic communication situation. Little children are completely unified with their writing, she believes, yet gradually learn to dissociate themselves from their writing. Over time, students become wrapped up in rules and expectations of others rather than in the knowledge of their own agency.

Jen believes that CO150 is only a few steps away from the five-paragraph essay even though it claims not to be, because it fails to make this crucial re-connection between writer and writing. Jen believes that because writing is so much a part of who she is, she cannot remain true to herself and simultaneously play the role of the CO150 instructor. Thus, Jen's ensuing divorce from the assistantship is rooted in issues of authenticity for this writer-teacher and the mismatch between herself and the program. Jen uses the word "voice" to describe connectedness to writing.

Jen also connects to an "essentialist" perspective, enlarging her criticism of CO150 to the selected readings and her belief that they do not engage students in meaningful ways; that students do not learn from them the way they might from more carefully selected readings. Here it seems that what constitutes a suitable "text" for the course is quite different for Jen than for the course director. Jen would prefer to use more classic texts, if not a traditional canon, than the media and popular texts that are currently in use. She wrote: "...the universal thing about teaching [is] that no matter what the subject or topic, you can influence a group of students to leave and be better people. I haven't felt able to do that."

The importance of this non-teaching event was how it crystallized for Jen the issues she was grappling with. Telling the student how she would do her final lecture also clarified for her what she feels is the essential substance of writing instruction—and this

differs so greatly from what she is doing in CO150 that she can no longer ignore it. She feels she must act, must remove herself from her teaching assistantship, since promises of “making the course your own” do not ring true to her. She finds she cannot be herself because she cannot agree with the approach of the course.

Jen also reacts to what she perceives as a prescriptive constraint of her private time and her adult behavior. She takes offense at being warned to be careful about going to the local college pub, Washington’s. She reports also that she had found herself altering her behavior on campus, trying to “act appropriately” for a composition teacher, and she rejects this advice categorically, pronouncing it “crazy.”

Absence of “authenticity,” “falseness,” “pretense,” and “denial of self” are the words Jen uses to describe her discomfort here. If she were giving her final lecture, she said, she would make it essentially about creative writing and the potential importance of writing to a student’s personhood, connecting more fundamentally the student to his/her roles as creator and communicator.

Jen--Critical Event 2

The theme of Jen’s story is that students sometimes do not immediately apply what they’re learning in class. Jen calls this the difference between “teacher-time and student time,” and she describes her realization on this matter as an epiphany. In the event she describes, a struggling student seems to have ignored everything going on in class on a particular day when the readings (“Making the Grade: Many Students Wheedle for a Degree as if it Were a Freebie T shirt”) and the discussion were about student responsibility, about the desperate things students will sometimes do to avoid taking responsibility for their own work or their own final grade. Jen’s class had done a number

of readings on the class topic (related to the educational issue theme of Unit 3 in CO150), had discussed the topic and essays, had done some in-class writing. Yet at the end of class, this student not only failed to turn in the writing assignment that was due but also asked for an exception to the policy for late papers. "I couldn't print out my paper," she said. "If I get it to you before the end of the day, can I lose just 5% instead of 10%? Otherwise I'll turn it in tomorrow." Nor was this to be the end of this student's troubles. She turned in the next essay late and wasn't doing well on the final essay at the time of the writing of this narrative. Initially all of these events dumbfounded Jen, but eventually she rationalized that, as a teacher, she will not always see the fruit of her labors, that sometimes the lessons are lost on students in the immediate, only to be understood later. Jen wrote: "I am suddenly okay with hanging out with them for this time and giving them what I think is my best stuff, even if they don't see or hear me just yet. I am okay with later, a later that doesn't belong to me."

Jen also connected this event to the unexpected learning that often occurs in classes, and she made recognition of the fact that she believes it important to foster this, to push her students (as she has pushed herself as a student) to always gain something from a class, from the learning situation presented—even if that learning has little to do with the content of the class.

In interview, Jen used the example of her own botany teacher from whom she learned much about teaching, though perhaps less about botany. She described this teacher as tough yet remarkably concerned about and interested in students, despite the fact that she was teaching a 300-person lecture. Her technique was to mingle at the end of class with 2-3 new students each class day, asking them how the class was going and also

appearing at labs though she didn't have to be there and had GTAs covering them. Jen felt so strongly about this teacher's effectiveness that she wrote a letter of support when she was nominated for a teaching award.

Jen asks her own composition students at the end of the term: What have you learned—even if it has little to do with writing? She wants to instill a reflective approach about how time is spent, about making the most of one's time and energy. The particular student discussed in this critical event never did have a breakthrough and seemed to the end to be afraid to give more than a half effort to anything—for fear of failure or maybe of success, Jen believes. Jen learned of this student's host of other problems, describing herself as “the therapist teacher” and acknowledges that although she didn't want “to let go” of this student who believed she was not good at anything, ultimately she had to. Jen makes peace with herself, saying sometimes “you have to let go of that” because you're not going to necessarily see the fruits of your labors, “you're not necessarily gonna get to see it.”

Mark

The first of Mark's two narratives is about a grading crisis. The second is about writing lesson plans.

With the grading experience, what Mark seems to have been struggling with was his authority in the classroom and particularly his authority in regards to writing. Also, one of his concerns about grading is what it does to the relationships you've built with students. In this particular situation a rather low-performing student turned in an inadequate Essay 1, which Mark wanted her to revise. He worried about whether he would lose her even further than he already had, but when she came in for her revision

conference, she said she understood his criticisms. From this experience, Mark seems to have learned several things. First what we think is going on in student heads oftentimes isn't; that is, we often impute to students attitudes and convictions they don't subscribe to and shouldn't be assumed to have. Second, as first-year TAs, we really do have some authority with undergraduates, even if it doesn't seem that we deserve it. In his written narrative, Mark marked this moment with "Wow, she bought it!" Third, conferences are a good thing; they provide a different dynamic and a different window on student achievement and attitudes.

From the written version of this critical event we see more evidence of Mark's struggle with the authority issue. He writes, "As a 'teacher,' the assumption is: you know what you're doing." Expanded here is the relationship issue as well, with more detail provided about why the student-teacher relationship was so tenuous when the grading crisis occurred. (The student looked disinterested, even irritated to be there. Mark "caught her" doing other homework during class and called her on it. He adds: "I was certain at that point that she 'hated' me. I must be her most despised teacher, and this class, CO150, her most despised class.") When this student responded favorably during the revision conference, "this interaction allowed me to see that I actually did have some useful things to say about writing." Further, Mark realizes, "I don't have to be an authority . . . I just have to be willing to work with what is given. My willingness to acknowledge them as writers and interact with their writing is the derivation of my teaching authority. . . My ability as a teacher emerges from my capacity to participate in the conversation that is constantly moving and changing."

With the second narrative, involving the creation of a lesson plan, Mark experiences both the great highs of feeling like a powerful creator and the humility of realizing that in the classroom all of that planning can, and most likely will, go right out the window, or at the very least require serious revision. In both cases, Mark discovers that he “enjoys his job.” He enjoyed the moment of lucidity when he created the lesson plan, just as he enjoys those “elusive” and “electric” moments when learning is happening, when the classroom is alive, when students are engaged. In interview he says he also realizes that as a result of this fleeting feeling that he will strive for less of a triangle hierarchy in the classroom and more of a circle, with authority emanating outward, with responsibility shared. He connects some of this to his backcountry work where “when all the components of the program are working in conjunction with each other, where the work during the day builds off the life that they’re living in the back country and off the education program and so on.” He likes it best when in the backcountry “they are developing leadership skills and decision-making skills and confidence and all those things that make me on the periphery and they’re taking control of their learning experience.”

In interview, Mark says that in the last few weeks he has had a few exciting moments like this in the classroom, especially as he started to lean more toward group work. He adds, however, that “I don’t know that I’ve established the precedents for it well enough at the beginning of the semester to have the confidence that it will accomplish what it needs to accomplish.” So although he doesn’t have a perfect sense of it yet, “it’s a little bit more clear how to incorporate the leadership skills and the group skills and the skills as a facilitator that I have from a very different environment. . . I

don't think I implemented them successfully or necessarily had full-scale success this semester. But I think that I'm starting to flesh out the foundation of how to put those two things together and how to – because, you know, teaching down is so against who I've been in my professional life.” Mark discusses how much against the grain his decentralized approach will be, however: “But it's so hard because students want that [the highly centralized classroom] because it takes the responsibility off them, and it's frustrating because . . . it's only three periods a week whereas when I'm with my crew for eight weeks straight. . . you just have that much more time. You have your own community, your own city and you're the mayor.”

In Mark's written document, the words “God,” and “creation” as well as “spontaneity” and “humility” are used to describe this critical event. Learning as a reciprocal process is also addressed. Mark describes the elusive electrical moments as the “willow the wisp” of learning, saying “these fleeting moments make this job interesting and elusive.”

Jack

Jack's one critical event connects to several themes discussed in the educational life story interviews. First, we see the deep influence of this new teacher's first real teaching model/mentor. Second, we see the importance of Jack's audit lecturer and observation lecturer. Third, we see the enhanced confidence of a first-year TA who is a second-year graduate student. Fourth, we see related concern and even surprisingly similar words, nearly a refrain, used to describe the feeling of TAs as they attempt to faithfully teach from a syllabus they've not written. Finally, feelings of insecurity regarding the syllabus seem also to be related to feelings of insecurity regarding

qualifications to be a college teacher. The combined effect of all these factors upon this TA was a resilient and confident response that was not found in such robust form in most of the other TAs' stories. Despite lingering feelings of unease with the content of the course, this TA discovered the kind of hard work it takes to make lessons authentically one's own. It was particularly fortunate for this TA that his discoveries were made early in the semester and hence that his teaching became confidently effective early. The narrative recounts an event that occurred just two weeks into the course.

In this event, Jack was struggling to decide how best to present the first class upon which he would be observed. He had been feeling out of place in the classroom prior to this, "as if I should be seated among the class instead of standing in front of them." He says that as he taught the mandated syllabus, he listened to himself speaking the words yet wondered whose they were. "These words seem foreign, not my own," he wrote in his narrative. In interview he put it this way:

I felt at the beginning that I was teaching this curriculum that somebody else had written, and I'd be talking, and you know, we even had transitions and introductions written out for us and being a first-time teacher I stuck to those pretty well, especially in the first week.

Describing the feeling of imparting these words, he used language and imagery that other TAs used as well, describing it as an almost out-of-body sensation, saying "And sometimes I'd be in front of the class and I'd hear myself speaking and I was sort of listening to myself from the outside and realizing that it wasn't my words and it felt really kind of strange."

With Jack's account we get the sense that an absence of ownership seems to take an additional toll in terms of the TA's already suffering authority in the classroom. Jack wonders, "Am I qualified to impart some knowledge to these freshmen and sophomores,

using a syllabus that I have not created and words that were written for me?" He finds himself fearing the student question because his knowledge of the content, he believes, is only as deep as the words on the page he has just recited.

On the day he was observed he decided he must "put something of himself in." So he decided to use a technique he learned from the professor he assisted in a previous semester. This professor liked to ground difficult lessons in simple object lessons that the students immediately understood—grounding myth in a familiar fairy tale, for instance. He had learned from this professor that a mini-lesson of 3–4 minutes at the beginning of a tough day would lay a foundation of understanding for students. For this lesson, which involved reading a complex text, Jack selected a song by Pink Floyd, "Money," that he believed his students would recognize and which had a theme that was similar to the theme developed in the difficult reading that had been assigned. The students were directed to use reading/marking strategies on copies of the lyrics and to try to figure out what the band was saying. Jack then put the lyrics on the overhead and together they marked and discussed its meaning. Then a connection of these strategies was made to the difficult reading for the day.

Jack noted student enjoyment and engagement with the technique. They were smiling and some of the non-talkative students began to talk. He realized that he would "have to integrate more of myself into the lesson plans and also that sometimes I [might] start on my own terrain, terrain I'm comfortable in . . . and also to start on my students' own terrain." He says, "I think what I learned was that just to be myself." Interestingly, however, he had been less himself perhaps than somewhat derivative of the professor he

recently worked for as a teaching assistant. He had used a method that this teacher, whom he described in another interview as “clever,” might well have used.

Jack acknowledged that he could not write the syllabus that he was presented and that the framework is good. Some days, he admitted, he just used it straight out when he couldn’t afford the considerable amount of time and energy it took to prepare his own version of the material. Asked how this process went, he said, “It takes a lot of thought... obviously I was forced to think about how it’s gonna connect.” Using the standard syllabus, “I would print out my own lesson plan but I really hadn’t thought through some of the ideas so when I was confronted in class with teaching it, sometimes I found myself unable to make it clear because I wasn’t sure myself.”

Jack believed it was made quite clear in the orientation that the course director encouraged and supported such experimentation as he did. Interestingly, while Jack drew heavily upon the example of the professor he worked under, he said he received none of his inspiration from the lecturer he was observing. He described this individual as having taught him how to stay on task and organized, “but for the most part he’s very regimented.”

Asked if this critical event liberated him, Jack said it did so “for about a day.” Other classes did not go so well, he confessed, but he says, “I did learn that the days that went smoother were the days that I more tailored the lesson plan to my own liking.” In the written narrative of this important day, Jack wrote: “As the words leave my mouth, they actually sound like my own words...finally I am teaching. For the first time it is my lesson and not that of the composition faculty that created the syllabus from which I am working.”

Sadie

In this critical event, Sadie begins her written piece with a narrative funnel, which establishes that for some time Sadie's class had been painfully quiet, not participating in discussions around the assigned readings. On this particular day, there was nothing especially noteworthy about the syllabus, no grand changes that she made. She says in the written version of her narrative that "If you asked me now what the class had been about or what we covered that day I would not be able to tell you without consulting the syllabus." On this day, however, they spoke, they participated of their own free will and Sadie observes in her written narrative: "After weeks of listening to my own voice bouncing off the walls and their brains alike, and painful silences broken only by the trite phrases reluctantly spewed forth by students taking pity on me, a light shined on Clark C361." In interview, Sadie says "I remember walking out of the building and just realizing how wonderful that really was and the rest of the day I was walking on a cloud or something." She says she wrote this narrative in order to make record of it and to provide early recognition about a teacher's life: "A class period can affect the rest of your day." Later she observes how differently this is experienced as a student, which is the role Sadie is more familiar with. She says, "It just doesn't happen when you take your regular classes as a student. . . I think it only becomes more important when you become responsible for other people and their learning." As a teacher, Sadie writes:

When I emerged from my windowless classroom on that infamous day, the sun actually shone brighter, the air was sweeter, and my faith was restored . . . it was possible to overcome those semester-long self doubts and to temporarily forget those . . . dreams/nightmares in which I forget everything from the lesson plan to my socks . . . problems with students faded . . . it was feasible to momentarily misplace future fears with the hope that the present offered. Everything could indeed be overcome.

Then Sadie asks, "Where would we all be if we were not so rejuvenated by a good day in class? Perhaps we would agree with Chris Anson when he said that he 'had stumbled into the most distasteful profession on earth.'" She goes on: "But the rules of nostalgia govern us, which enable us to forget, or at least gloss over, the bad memories, leaving us free to enjoy the present, the possibilities of the future, and our own edited version of classroom achievements and failures." Here we see directly stated what is perhaps the best justification for narrative representations of our classroom experiences. Memory heals, Sadie suggests. It heals and rejuvenates. It constructs and re-constructs events. It makes possible the survival of teaching, one good reconstructed event at a time. Asked if there is a way to hold on to those moments. Sadie responds that we should write them down. We might surmise that tape recordings or sharing the stories with others are also ways to accomplish the same thing.

Asked in interview if there are enough of these moments to make teaching worthwhile, Sadie said she thinks so but that really "it doesn't take a lot. That's the amazing thing. . . it's enough to keep you going." Asked if there were other moments she could recall when she felt this way, she indicated that the individual conferences served this purpose for her, since "for the most part a lot of them behaved differently than in class, almost like they were a different person."

When probed if there were low or depressing moments that she would recall, Sadie indicated that she didn't have anything too extended. She then recalled something a volleyball coach had taught her, the 30-minute rule, which basically states that "whether you won or you lost, you had to get over it in thirty minutes. Like past the bus ride, that's it." Something else happens usually, she said, that wipes out the previous experience.

Asked if her involvement with athletics had influenced her ability to bounce back from bad experiences, she responded that yes, definitely. Asked if her religious faith might also account for this resilience, she said she couldn't rule that out although it hadn't occurred to her this way but "it's definitely a part of who I am."

Sadie's final comment was this:

As a graduate teaching assistant, I obviously have several things aside from teaching to occupy my time, thoughts, and worries, but regardless of this unfortunate (or fortunate) fact, the outcome of class often has full reign over the remainder of my day. What is truly amazing about the psychological effect of a good class period is its ability to override everything else. It has the power to erase (if only momentarily) doubts and frustrations.

Sadie, we suspect from reading this account, will become a successful public school teacher, as is her goal.

Leah

Leah combined two critical events into a single narrative because of the inter-relatedness of the themes. These narratives involve two students, both good participants in class but one more confident of her abilities as a student in general and as a writer in particular. What Leah seems to have taken from her experiences with these students is insight into her own role as instructor, and she entitled the narrative, "What a Good Teacher Does." She learned that she can and must take an active role in engaging students and their needs, and that some of them will seek out that extra care while others must be pursued. In the midst of discovering her capacity for going the extra mile for particular students, she also struggled to define the proper boundaries of college teaching, how to establish these boundaries without sacrificing professional accessibility and accountability.

At the conclusion of Leah's narrative, one suspects that she may continue to struggle with boundary issues, especially since the most influential college teachers she had as an undergraduate were also deeply committed to her at a personal level. In Leah's narrative, boundaries between teacher and student were blurred, and it may be some time before Leah can reach a degree of comfort by carving out her own definition of herself in this regard. Also, this TA may need some help distinguishing between taking an active, personal interest in a student and providing preferential treatment. That is to say that TAs in general need to understand that changes in policy, if made, must be made for all students and not for an instructor or professor's chosen few. Socialization into the ethics of college teaching seems to be an area that might be profitably pursued in future TA training.

In her own words, Leah describes her learning in the critical events as "a lesson in how to interact with different students." In the case of the first student, Danielle, Leah met individually with her in conference when she saw that Danielle's draft of Essay 2 (evaluation and recommendation of a text for a sociology professor) failed to accomplish the central task of evaluation and in fact only summarized the text in question. Leah wanted her student to discover this on her own, rather than tell her that was the problem with her draft, and so she engaged her in a series of leading questions, lasting 30 minutes, in the hopes of getting her to come to the discovery herself. Leah writes, "So I started just asking a series of questions and was trying to get her thinking to come around to where it needed to be."

Twenty minutes later, when Danielle had not yet come around, Leah asked her a question about how the author she was evaluating constructed his argument: "Did he

include a clear explanation of how his support tied into the context of his greater purpose? Could we find evidence of that in a specific paragraph of his writing?" Leah writes that Danielle was able to find this evidence and then made the connection to her own writing.

This was a special moment for Leah, but it quickly was followed by another difficult issue. Danielle wanted to call her at home if she got stuck. At this point Leah struggled with whether it was an appropriate line to cross, but she said OK and indeed Danielle did call her, mostly for reassurance that she was on the right track.

The second narrative involves a student named Autum. Autum was the less talented of the two students in terms of writing and general promise as a college student. However, Autum had exhibited good class participation skills and was the one student who had identified herself as looking forward to class discussions because this was the only class where she had that opportunity. Leah found that Autum's writing on Essays 1 and 2 had struggled at the level of focus, and this problem reached a peak in Essay 3. During the preliminary conference for this paper, Leah suspected Autum would have trouble accomplishing the complex set of goals she had identified for herself, but she was still surprised at the level of problems exhibited in the actual paper when it was turned in a few weeks later.

Leah took this paper with her for her grading conference because she knew she needed help grading it, and her grading supervisor suggested a lower grade for the paper than Leah had awarded it. When Leah turned back papers several days later, she did indeed award Autum the lower grade and Autum promptly showed her disappointment and then failed to go to the next class meeting. In her marginal comments, Leah had

encouraged Autum to revise, but it wasn't until Leah confronted her at the following class meeting that Autum agreed to do so. Autum grew teary-eyed and Leah touched her arm and assured her that she would help. Leah describes this moment as deeply satisfying, as she and Autum connected and Autum returned to the fold of the class. Subsequently, Autum revised her paper after announcing one day at the end of class, "I know what you're saying about my essay," and then Leah reported, "she pointed to me specific places and she said, 'You know, I can do this.'"

What we see in these two events then is reciprocal caring enacted between teacher and student. A student reaches out to her teacher and her teacher learns that she can be touched. Then the new teacher takes the next step and reaches out to a different student. In both cases, the means led directly to the ends—that is, caring and concern led to improved student achievement as both students made demonstrable improvements to their writing. Interestingly, it seems that the first event of being reached out to, student to teacher, may have precipitated the second event, teacher reaching out to student. In both cases, the students were the instigators of the learning--the reason for it, the explanation and the impetus for it--and learning occurred that might not otherwise have happened.

Later, reflectively, Leah asks, "Where do other aspects of being a teacher become involved? Should I have reached out on a more personal level earlier with Autum? Do her confidence issues go beyond her writing ability to other aspects of being a student? Is it up to me to determine something like that?" Reading these words, I am struck by the depth of the commitment and feeling that Leah brings to her position of teaching assistant, and I find myself wondering if there is a place in the composition curriculum and in the preparation of TAs for such caring.

I think here of the work of the Nel Noddings in caring pedagogy. In the preparation of TAs, who frequently must learn to create barriers in order to establish authority and to resist undue influence by particular students, how might we help TAs to show the sort of caring we see here while cautioning TAs of the pitfalls of care, of the manipulating behavior of some undergraduates, and of the corrupting temptations inherent to their newfound positions of power and authority? And what are the symptoms as well as the ethics of getting too close—physically and sexually? Leah, like her fellow TAs, might be expected to struggle with these issues in the future, and as such, these matters, which again have to do with socialization into the ethical norms of the teaching community, should be discussed directly, addressed outright.

Tess

Tess describes two different yet related subjects in her critical event narrative. The first is a description of a classroom meeting she conducted to “clear the air” with her students a few weeks into the course. She writes: “It was about three weeks into the semester when I realized that I was playing a role and unconvincingly so.” Describing herself in her written narrative, Tess says, “But one thing I didn’t expect is this tendency I have to give this weird little smile every time I walk into class. I smile because I still am not used to the fact that I am in charge of the classroom.” The second event involves the extended (and difficult) relationship she had with a particular male student who challenged her throughout the semester. Both of these “events” seem to “helped me come to terms with my concerns about being an authority in the classroom.”

Tess conducted the classroom meeting, which she refers to as “The Talk” during the third week of classes. She was motivated to do so by her own increasing discomfort

with lecturing “about things I didn’t really even know much about yet, but I didn’t really understand yet or have a good idea of how to talk about or present it to a class and they were just staring at me, not doing their reading, never answering questions.” She wrote:

Every time that I stood in front of the class, face slightly red and mouth dry, and tried to talk about academic summary or thesis statements or some issue I was still unsure of, I felt like a fool, a liar, and a fraud, and I was sure my students noticed and agreed. I was sure that they were wondering how old I was, how I got to be in the position I was in, and how they were duped into thinking that they would be learning something in their composition class. . . I was afraid of being discovered as the fake, the actor—the same way a person who fudged their resume might feel.

She says she figured out quickly that she didn’t wish to be an authoritative teacher. At the classroom meeting, she asked students about their expectations for her and for the class, then presented the findings the following class meeting. At that class meeting, she had the class meet in a circle. She shared that the one thing they themselves indicated they should be expected to do was “participate.” She thought this would give her some leverage to expect this of her students, but as it turns out, they never really did this to her satisfaction. However, at that meeting, Tess says, “I felt a lot better about it. I tried to put myself on their level. . . One student wrote me a note that class had gotten a lot better since our talk...” Tess describes in the written narrative that she came to realize that she was “putting everything on myself,” and that after the meeting “I felt that they knew my secret. . . They weren’t just empty vessels, waiting for me to fill them with knowledge I wasn’t sure I had . . . What a relief!”

The second issue (event) was “J,” a problematic student, who first voiced his concerns the day of “The Talk.” He indicated then that he didn’t like the circle approach in class and would prefer to be lectured to. Later, again after some circle work, he indicated that he couldn’t see the board and therefore didn’t know what the assignment

was. Tess told him that she would be using the circle throughout the course, and that he should figure out where to sit so that he could see adequately. These events were then followed by a series of inadequate essays written by J, whom Tess describes as “by far the most struggling writer in the class” with “many problems with both grammar and organization of his ideas.” His papers were filled with generalization that Tess challenged and encouraged him to revise. Tess’s criticisms made J angry and he accused her of simply disagreeing with his point of view. A pattern developed with Tess asking J to revise each of his first three essays and he challenging her evaluation of them. When Tess suggested that his points needed further explanation, J responded by saying that if she understood his points that should be good enough and when she told him that he needed more explanation, he said, “So you want me to write down to my audience and treat them as if they are idiots?” Tess shared J’s papers with several of her supervisors, and they agreed with her assessment of them. Tess also pointed out to J that while it would be easier for her to give him a higher grade, just to be rid of his constant complaints, she felt there were still some things he might learn and so she was staying the course. By the end of the course J wanted an appointment with the course director since he didn’t understand why he was doing so poorly (C’s as it turns out) and so Tess prepared the course director for J’s appointment, which he never showed up for.

Tess feels that her criticism was interpreted by J as “a personal attack on his abilities, intelligence, and even his manhood.” He threatened her by saying that his sources (peers he had shared his papers with) agreed with his assessment. She also notes that he is an ROTC cadet who would never speak to his superiors in uniform the way he spoke to her. She feels that her gender and her age were serious obstacles to James’

ability to accept her as an authority figure generally and a teacher more specifically. He thought that CO150 would be a course in grammar, which is the course he claims he keeps waiting for, yet never has gotten all the way through school.

In conclusion, Tess characterizes the experience with J as “invaluable” because it forced her “to confront one of my biggest fears about teaching, and that was how I would enact a proper measure of authority in class. She writes, “For me, I need to let my students know that I am human, that I need their help. I need to be somehow on their level but not so much that they are unwilling to respect me or accept my criticism.”

Summary of the Critical Events

TA lessons from these critical events ranged from reconsideration of professional goals to clarification of the kind of classrooms the TAs desire to teach in. The events were “critical” in that they provided new insights for these TAs, going beyond the teaching canon they had developed so far. The events also led the TAs to epiphanies regarding their teaching, either changing their plans for future practice or their way of thinking about that practice. Two of the TAs discussed their discovery of the occasional and exquisite pleasure of a good day of teaching, while others learned of their ability to lead and to enact authority in a classroom setting. Two TAs focused on particular classroom methods that proved effective, and another focused on a semester-long conflict with a problematic student. One TA’s event clarified that the TA needed to make a career change. Table 7 displays a summation of the critical events, along with the lessons taken from the events and representative excerpts of quoted data taken directly from the event descriptions.

Table 4.7
Critical Events

TA	Event	Lesson	Quote
Jen	1. Interview by student about the "last lecture." 2. Student who did exactly what reading assignment warned against.	1. Jen saw her own future reflected in her student's interview question but she could not tell the truth, which clarified larger authority issues for her. 2. Student time versus teacher time. Students may not learn the semester you teach them.	"What I wanted to tell her was that I wasn't interested in teaching composition. In 10 years I would be nowhere near the university. What I really wanted to do was write and be a mom."
Mark	1. Grade conference. 2. Syllabus/ lesson plan writing.	1. Student believed Mark's advice about revising paper and found his authority. He said, "Wow! She bought it!" 2. Created syllabus and enjoyed God-like power (briefly) before chaos of classroom.	1. "It's a little bit more clear how to incorporate my leadership skills and group skills and facilitatory skills that I have from a very different environment." 2. These fleeting moments make this job interesting and elusive"
Jack	Designed his own class to convey lesson objectives. Used 3-4 minute mini lesson idea from mentors.	This TA learned he likes to bring in ideas and materials that put students in their own territory before learning complex, new lessons.	"As the words leave my mouth they actually sound like my own words. Finally I am teaching. For the first time it is my lesson and not that of the composition faculty who created the syllabus from which I am working."
Sadie	The class discussion went well and her whole day was made happy.	A good event or a bad event in the classroom can affect a teacher's whole day.	"But the rules of nostalgia govern us, which enable us to forget, or at least gloss over, the bad memories, leaving us free to enjoy the present, the possibility of the future and our own edited version of classroom achievements and failures."
Leah	Two students needed different kinds of intervention to progress to the next level.	Instruction can and should be adapted to meet the differing needs different students. She also learned about teacher-student boundaries and the possibilities for extending the caring touch in order to enhance student achievement.	"I do think it's in part up to a good teacher to determine what's going on with her students... As a good teacher, I need to provide both the tangible and the in-tangible tools with which a student can become a more confident and ultimately more effective writer."
Tess	1. Classroom meeting in which power was re-negotiated. 2. Semester-long problem with "J" as problematic and confrontational student who challenged her authority.	This TA needed a negotiated authority in the classroom. She could not lecture or pretend to be the lecturing kind of authority. However, she did expect respect and to be taken seriously.	"I was forced to confront one of my biggest fears about teaching and that was how I would exact a proper measure of authority."

Life Story Interview II
A Return to Profiles, Training, and Feelings About Teaching

New Programs and Revised Career Goals

By the end of the first term, Jen, Mark, Jack, and Leah had changed their programmatic and career goals, although to varying degrees. Sadie remained committed to her secondary teaching/coaching goal and associated master's program. Tess remained committed to a career outside academe and said she "was not open to change" on this position. Still, she was not much clearer about what her new direction might be, although she said she might be interested in corporate training with small groups. Jen had decided to leave not only the teaching assistantship but to redirect her academic efforts toward a creative thesis and possibly, after taking a few creative writing workshops, would reapply for admission to the MFA program. The only way she could imagine herself teaching again was in a community college setting, teaching creative writing with her own syllabus.

Mark described himself as having had a rather clear intention of writing an academic thesis when he arrived at the university, and while his remarks to me in the first life story interview did not seem that certain, it was clear that now he had revised his plan. He had decided to pursue more coursework and less of an academic program and hoped to build a creative nonfiction portfolio. In the hope of merging his competing academic and outdoor experience interests, he had signed up for a creative writing course in the spring, hoping that this new direction might provide linkage of his two worlds. In keeping with his high tolerance for ambivalence, he explained that the "clouding of his academic goals" was "disconcerting but good."

Jack had clarified his direction by having decided to apply for a lectureship for the following year at this university. This move would appear to commit him to a teaching career in a university setting and to distance him from the idea of teaching in an urban public school setting.

Leah had decided that her deepest goals for teaching, “that whole personal relationship with students and my own philosophy of what a good teacher does” might be better met in a public school setting. She described the role she saw teachers prepared for as:

Besides like medicine and social workers, there are very few professions where a single person interacts with the sheer amount of people per day, per year, as a teacher does. And even now, in the generation of family values, sometimes teachers are the ones who are providing the discipline and the influence and the encouragement that they’re not getting at home. So that opportunity is not available on a college level.

New Biographical Information

A new revelation from Leah in the Life Story Interview II was that she has a younger brother who is a freshman at the University of Arizona and took freshman composition his first semester. She told the story of her brother’s bewilderment with his young composition teacher’s decision to take the class to an ESL speech lab without providing explanation. The class was then required to carry on a conversation with an ESL student. No further directions. No other explanation given. “What could it mean?” her brother asked. Leah hazarded a guess that the young teacher wanted the class to see how difficult it is to communicate when you don’t have mastery of the language. Her brother responded, “Oh, yeah. Maybe so.” Leah took her brother’s experience as a lesson

for herself, that she wants her students to still be thinking and mulling over class when they leave rather than to have everything tied up with a nice bow.

Orientation and Training

Several of the TAs returned to discussions of orientation. Jack said he wished that some ideas regarding responsible coverage of grammar were covered since he often felt that grammatical issues were at the center of his students' troubles. Leah also indicated an interest in learning how to teach some grammatical/mechanical principles in an effective way. Sadie said she wished more time had been spent on conducting teacher-student conferences since she felt that conducting conferences involves skills she does not possess. She said she needed to know how "to lead them with questions without telling them an answer . . . I didn't want to be overbearing and so I don't think I was overbearing enough."

Leah was unsure how her problems with grading might be dealt with in orientation, but she felt that something more was needed. She said the problem wasn't with diagnosis of the problem but with the teaching that followed to make sure that progress was being made by students. She said, "It's the next step, not an isolated paper in an isolated context. It's the context of the whole course and all the papers in relation to each other and to what you specifically have done in the classroom." On the other hand, Leah also talked about E684 being helpful "the way group therapy is beneficial. TAs learn from each other and then learn from this professor who has all this experience."

Time Balance and Role Division

Returning to the balance of time divided between their graduate programs and their teaching, Jen said teaching had never fallen below an 80% commitment of her time. She feels “selfish about time” right now and continues to speak of her personal resources (in terms of energy) as being limited (“I only have a certain amount of creative energy”) and she finds herself spending most of that resource on other people’s writing. Asked about her dual roles as both student and teacher, Jen described herself as “unsuccessful at both.” She said she “made decisions week to week about what could be neglected.”

Sadie’s experience was different from Jen’s. Sadie said that the balance between her graduate program and teaching evened out as the semester went on: “I got into the groove of right after class looking at the next day’s class and typing out a lesson plan, typing up overhead [transparencies], printing them out and having them done.” On the other hand, a difficulty Sadie had this semester was defining her own identity, whether to think of herself as a student or as a teacher. She said that her tendency to be retiring in the classroom led her to also be retiring at the front of the room. She said, “I didn’t feel that I should be at the head of this learning environment because that’s not where I ever was ... But I think I’m developing a little bit more. I think I’m slowly coming to identify myself at the front of the classroom instead of in the front row.”

Leah said that the imbalance of time had remained about the same for her—60% of her time spent on teaching and 40% on her own studies—but that the focus of the teaching time commitment had changed from being consumed by logistics to contemplating instructional methods, or how to make a teaching point more effectively. She said, “It’s still taking up a lot of time, but it’s shifting to trying to make that time

better, and the other thing that's interesting is that I really don't use my lesson plan anymore."

Tess was finding that she was spending less time on her teaching. She said she feared she was "slacking off" when it came to her teaching "because it's almost as though I felt my class was a lost cause "because they didn't want to learn." She said she continued the routine she started early in the semester with preparing right before class and not spending the additional time on preparing that she feels was expected of her. "I've been in this bad habit . . . and I don't like that, but that's sort of what happened." Further, her mental energy commitment had become less than the 70% she indicated at the end of the first week of classes. She said, "I have not allowed them to bother me as much as the semester went on, and sort of said, 'Well, if you don't care, then I can't make you care.'"

Enthusiasm

Discussing levels of enthusiasm for teaching and for their studies, Jen was generally disappointed with teaching freshman composition, although she felt stronger at the end of the course, after she had resigned and once she was writing her own lesson plans. Jen also seemed more enthused by her graduate program, especially with her decision to take classes slowly and move toward writing a creative portfolio. Mark said his enthusiasm for his program was significantly higher, 8.5, because of his excitement about the creative nonfiction portfolio possibility. His teaching, on the other hand, merited a lower score, although he did not want to quantify it. He said he believes he'll "be able to move with more efficiency and be more creative and dynamic next semester," and he indicated that the composition supervision class he would take in the spring was

something he “dreads in some ways” though it might help with the “big picture of instruction.”

Jack indicated somewhat higher enthusiasm for his program, in part because he had made significant progress on his thesis conceptualization after some close work with his advisor this semester. As for teaching, he said, “Sometimes I’m not overly enthusiastic about teaching comp,” but he said he’s really looking forward to teaching his first literature course.

Sadie reported that her enthusiasm for teaching was higher than it was in the earlier interview, about a 7 or 8, while her enthusiasm for her program was somewhat lower (down a bit from the 8 she gave it at the beginning of the term). She explained this lower number by saying that she thinks she has now completed the best course in her program (Adolescent Literature) and dreads her future classes, which she feared would be “a lot of rote educational stuff.”

Leah did not want to attach numbers to her level of enthusiasm, but she said she’s highly satisfied with her program. She said, “I was talking to a fellow grad student the other day and we were just saying how . . . we get all stressed out and everyone’s like ‘Oh, I just want this to end,’ but really what we’re doing . . . our punishment for being a grad student is that we have to sit home and read books. And oh gosh, that’s so horrible.” In terms of her teaching, Leah said her satisfaction/enthusiasm has evolved to where she can look forward to next semester. She said she has learned from her mistakes, and “instead of beating myself up over it, like I was doing at the beginning of the semester, I really just want to take what I’ve learned and make it more effective.” She describes herself as “I’m just excited to get there,” meaning excited to become more effective.

Tess said she still has “the dread feeling every time I walk into class.” She reported that she still actively recruits (somewhat in jest) people to take her place in the five minutes that precede her teaching, and she still finds class itself to be less traumatic than the anxiety leading up to it. Still, Tess reported that her enthusiasm for teaching is low, generally a 4 like before but sometimes as low as a 1 or 2. Nevertheless, she said she wanted to help her students become better writers, to the point where they can crank out a paper without huge amounts of difficulty. This goal “bumps up her enthusiasm level” but at the same time she is ready to be done with the semester and this class of students. Tess did not say how she feels about her classes and program.

Peers and Supervisors

In terms of supervisors, only one of the TAs, Leah, talked about her audit lecturer. She characterized him as self-assured, competent in the classroom, yet easy-going. She went to him even after the official audit period was over for continued advice. She felt no degree of difficulty in revealing her concerns to him. Besides this reference to an audit supervisor, only a few TAs mentioned other composition administrators and these talked about the value of the E684 class and its professor.

In terms of peer support, both Sadie and Leah addressed this issue. Sadie indicated that having audit, Tart, and E684 together really solidified the bonds of the TAs. She especially appreciated the first 20 minutes or so of E684, in which TAs would just share what was happening as well as when the TAs would see each other in the computer lab or hall and they would share what did and didn’t work. She noted that she tended to talk to people in E684 because otherwise she didn’t see the other TAs. Also, because the M.A.T. program didn’t have many TAs to share with, that group never really

materialized. Sadie then reported that one of the TAs who started out with Sadie in the M.A.T. had moved to a different specialization during the semester. She clearly felt some loss here.

Leah revealed that she had come to depend heavily on one teaching assistant who had teaching experience in the public schools. Also, she tended also to talk to another fellow TA (this one without experience) since they seemed to have mutual goals for making class accessible and exciting. She describes these two peers as her “concrete commiserator” and her “esoteric commiserator.”

Rewards/Problems

Returning to the issue of rewards and problems, the TAs were no longer anticipating these, of course, but were reporting on them. Jen reported feeling “cast into the role of bad guy by her students. On the other hand, she found dealing with students’ larger contexts (their “personal issues”) rewarding. She feels she was better at this than most and was not frightened or upset by crying or self-revelatory students. Mark described several problems with teaching, discussing the handicap of having so small a repertoire of teaching skills that he often couldn’t respond effectively, especially when it came to another problem, the lack of engagement of students. Still, Mark turned this into a plus as well, saying that teaching the course had been a good test, saying, “If you can teach to people who don’t want to learn, then that means you’re—if you can catch the electricity in that kind of environment, then you’re doing your job very well.” Jack’s initial concerns about the authority versus buddy issue did not end up being a problem at all, he reported. He said that students stated that they didn’t always understand his grading, but he did not receive any grade challenges or protests.

Tess's interview reveals problems with authority (that I believe she largely resolved by the end of the term) that also merged with gender difficulties. Specifically, Tess had a difficult distribution of students, 15 males and 4 females, and she believed that this classroom makeup directly contributed to her difficulties. The young men tended to challenge her statements in the classroom, and the young women tended to remain nearly silent. Her most difficult student was a young man who challenged her every decision; from the way she seated the class in a semi-circle, to her non-lecture method of delivery, to her way of grading papers. A reward, although she does not state it as such, was surely her final triumph over the authority challenges she experienced. It is clear from Tess's narrative and interviews that she never buckled under the continuous strain of the difficult student, never collapsed in defeat or resignation to his insistent demands, and by the end discovered that she could spar with the best of the boys in her class, while also maintaining her decentralized posture in the room.

Surprises

Among the surprises from the term was Jack's realization of his students' naivete in regards to "reading" the world around them critically. Sadie found herself surprised by the relevancy of a philosophy she discussed in the first educational life story interview, specifically the idea that "You can entertain an idea without accepting it." Growing up in the South, she said, surrounded by creationists, she was nonetheless surprised to learn that many people "had no desire to even hear about it [evolution]." She was struck by the fact that although she grew up in a Catholic home and school, she still was able to entertain ideas, to expose herself to new, potentially problematic concepts. She found this to be a relevant issue for CO150 too since many of her students refused to entertain other

people's ideas or opinions. She said, "And I wonder where that comes from, cause is it too late for them? Is 18—you know, what they say—that experience is the set of prejudices you have by age 18. So that's disturbing to me. I don't know how to fix that or even if that's my job. But I think it is."

Feelings About Teaching

Generally speaking, and not excepting Jen, all of the TAs reported feeling pretty good about teaching as the semester closed out. Even Jen discovered that she enjoyed Essay 4 and developing her own lesson plans. Despite frustrations, Mark reported a better sense of how his past experience might be translated into future classrooms. Jack, while not particularly enthusiastic about teaching freshman composition, was looking forward to teaching literature and to paving the way toward the Ph.D. by taking on a lectureship next year. Sadie seemed to have rediscovered her enthusiasm and to have recommitted to her long-term goal to be a high school English teacher. Leah's desire to teach had been deepened as she made initial commitments to move from a higher education emphasis to a secondary education focus. Tess had discovered that she can succeed in the classroom, can maintain authority even in the face of considerable challenge, and although she had no intentions of pursuing teaching as a career, she had made good on her promise to be successful at this endeavor and learn from it what she could. At the close of the semester, these TAs seemed rather uniformly pleased with their progress in the classroom.

Beliefs About Teaching

Two interesting developments since the first interview were visible in Sadie's and Jack's new beliefs about teaching. Sadie had learned "... that teaching is hard –I mean I always thought it was hard. I never thought it would be easy, but maybe composition is a

lot harder than other subjects to a certain degree.” Jack had learned that his own experience in college, in which he was socially active and never narrowly academic, now informs his beliefs about the education his students are receiving. He said, “education is part of the experience they need to get this year, but it’s not the entire experience they need to get.” In keeping with this, he emphasized college skills such as visiting the instructor’s office and communicating with the instructor, rather than composition alone. Perhaps drawing on his own reflections of those special times in sixth grade when his teacher allowed them “research time” to spend on their own and see what interested them, he accepted that “students getting off task during group work is inevitable and not necessarily a bad thing.” He said he wants to “let them be in their own territory part of the time.

A Return to Family, Culture and Other Non-School Influences

Family and Home

In three of the TAs’ second educational life story interviews, they made reference to family members. Jen referred repeatedly to her husband and once to that extended family of teachers back in her home of origin. Jack indicated he had relied on the wisdom of both his mother and father. Leah indicated the distance she had created between her own philosophy of education and that of her father. Jen said she wished she could be more like her husband who does not take personally the poor performance of students. She mentioned him again later, saying he helped her compute grades. Jen seemed to want to “fix” relationships with students, a possible carryover from her self-described family role as peacemaker and facilitator, and she referred to this role again when referring to dealing with students’ personal issues. She directly related her strengths in

this arena to her role in her family and development of facilitator/peacemaker skills in that context. Finally, Jen indicated her concern about telling her family (mom, aunts, etc.) about resigning from the assistantships. She said she “dreads” telling them. Among those she dreaded telling was her mother, whom she described as being “very proud of her doormat status. Like she’s a martyr and just kills herself for other people, and she’s very proud of that and has no patience for people who are interested in living their own happy lives.”

Jack mentioned his mother and his father again in his second educational life story interview. It was his mother who reminded him that he, like his own students, was more inclined to socialize and party than be a 100% conscientious student as an undergraduate. He discussed with his father his discomfort with whether he had spent a semester teaching critical thinking or teaching writing, and his father reassured him, saying, “Well, you know, as scary as it is, most of these students won’t need to write these kinds of papers once they’re out of college, but think about what’s wrong if they can’t think critically by the time they get out of college.” In both cases, Jack seemed to have taken the words of his parents to heart.

In contrast, Leah’s journey seemed to be away from parental influence. Leah returned to discussion of her “perfectionist” tendency, discussing a theme from Life Story Interview 1, in which she discussed the difference between her deep feelings about grades (from the influence of her dad) and her knowledge that straight A’s are not always the best way to learn. She said, “To make it [the learning experience] the most effective experience and beneficial experience is a much healthier way to look at things.” Similarly, she said that she let herself off the hook a bit with teaching this term, realizing

finally that she wasn't going to get it all right the first semester of teaching. Plus she acknowledged that it was not entirely up to her, that the classroom is a dialogue not a monologue and that students must bear part of the responsibility too.

Work

Jen acknowledged that at least twice she had been good at a line of work she wound up not liking and leaving—first retail and now the assistantship. Jack felt more strongly than ever, by the close of the semester, that his blue-collar jobs had been the most important non-school influences on his teaching and have helped shape him into what he believes every undergraduate should strive to be—a well-rounded person. He believed that his move in the classroom to get students doing hands-on group work and producing something to show for it was rooted in his work background. He described his classroom method this way: “A couple of weeks before each essay was due, I'd have them get into a group and get out an overhead and write possible claims or even a whole introduction. You know, crafting those sentences, and then having them go up in front of the class and present those and me saying, ‘OK what's wrong with that? Because of this statement what do you expect to come after?’”

Perhaps most influenced by his work was Mark, whose backcountry service learning experience continued to inform his outlook on everything, even helping him to distinguish his own definition of “service learning” from more conventional definitions, describing his version as “a viable program for teaching necessary skills, skills students need to become critical thinkers.” Mark's trajectory, one suspected, would continue to include the building of his outdoor adventure resume while seeking links between the concrete, visceral experience of “building trail” to the more abstract notion of “building

writers.” He seemed by the close of Life Story Interview 2 to understand that in both cases he was “building” stronger, more clear-thinking people.

Gender Issues

Gender issues were discussed at length by only one TA, Tess, whose struggle in her 15/4 classroom (men/women), along with a directly adversarial experience with “J” seemed to have forced her to squarely confront some of the more resonant gender difficulties of classroom teaching. One can only wonder if a male TA, faced with the same classroom Tess had, would have been as constantly challenged as she was. Mark reported some degree of trouble from a few male students, but his problems did not reach the magnitude of Tess’s.

In an associated gender revelation, Jen indicated in previous documents that her “fallback position” was to have a baby, and by the end of her second life story interview she indicated again that her goal was to write and to be a mom to her future children. On a more subtle level, I believe we might see Jen’s self-described facilitator role as a gender-influenced family role as well. Also, Leah seemed throughout her first semester to be struggling to define herself apart from the expectations of her father, and Sadie went on record as saying that girls need strong role models in the classroom, which, by virtue of her successful execution of both athletics and academics, combined with her intention to both teach and coach, she seemed well situated to personify.

A Return to Educational Histories and Schooling Philosophies

Teacher Models

In her final educational life story interview, Leah twice referred to teacher models that she thought of during the semester. She mentioned her geometry teacher again, the

one who taught the lesson about different ways to get to the ball field (and by extension different ways to solve a problem). For some reason, she recalled that on the first day of every month, he would write “Rabbit, rabbit, rabbit” on the board for good luck. She also said that she recently passed on the advice of her college mentor—to always have one more trick up your sleeve. Leah told her peer that this mentor had also assured her that the classroom jitters never really go away.

Sadie wanted to talk about negative role models among teachers in her final life story interview. She recalled the third grade teacher she mentioned in the first interview. She described her as very strict and requiring massive amounts of memorization—states and capitols, the presidents in order—all of which had to be recalled on the spot in class and for no apparent reason. She described some of these moments as “tragic” and she feels the public humiliation of this situation has had lasting impacts. She distinguished the “on-the-spot” testing this teacher did from the kind of similar testing Mr. Gonzales did in AP European History. Mr. Gonzales did not make it a matter of great importance if you did not get the answer right; he just moved on to someone else. Plus, Sadie said, “to us he was a great man, that if you knew the answer it was like this huge feat for you.”

On the other hand, the third grade teacher made this a negative, punitive experience with rather dire (for a third grader) consequences for incorrect answers. Asked what she has taken from this experience, Sadie said, “It think it’s complex because there can be positive effects from putting kids on the spot because if they succeed, then they have this newfound confidence and ability that they will be able to do this when someone else puts them on the spot. But it so depends on the kid that you can’t do that with a classroom full of third graders I don’t think.”

I asked her if you can put on the spot a classroom full of freshmen in college and she said no, she doesn't think so: "Because if you pick on Julie in the corner and she doesn't get it right, then she might not ever venture out again."

Early Schooling

Jack returned to the good fortune he had as a youngster in attending an urban school. He believes that his acceptance of differences came into play since he had some very conservative students with whom he disagreed, but he worked to keep his views under the lid in order to be accepting. I asked about acceptance and tolerance in another way then, asking if his urban education and exposure to diverse students had been important at all, and he acknowledged the limited applicability to the fairly non-diverse CSU campus. Yet he clearly had thought about this point since he then talked about how he encouraged a Spanish-speaking girl to do some writing on multicultural issues, how he especially queried students from states other than Colorado, and how one student from Croatia he worked to draw out so that the classroom could appreciate someone new in their midst. Jack addressed this student even on the first day during the introductions, making a teaching lesson about how the introductions and greetings would differ if done in Croatia. Jack also recalled his diverse classmates at the University of Toledo, where he sat near an ex-cocaine dealer and a welfare mother and learned more about diversity than he "ever would have" at Central Michigan, where there were "good professors trying to teach you about sociology."

Final Thoughts on Expectations of Students and Attribution Theory, Comparing Their Students to Themselves, Hopes for a Teacher-Mentor, The Future

Attribution—Student and Teacher

Several of the study's TAs were still having trouble at the end of the term with the work habits of their students. Sadie said that she had a hard time relating to her students, the majority of whom were more than happy to take the C and run. She said, "I can't identify with that attitude at all . . . That these people exist, that they are just willing to coast through." She also said, "I have discovered that I have a classroom full of slackers." Leah also used the word, "slackers" to describe some of her students, but added that she had "both disappointing 'slackers' as well as students who worried unnecessarily that she would find them uncommitted if they missed due to overwhelming personal circumstances." Similarly Tess said:

I don't understand why they don't take a more active interest in their own education, and I wish sometimes I had lectured them a little more about the fact that they're paying for this and why don't they care? I nagged them about their complaints that it's Monday . . . oh, it's Wednesday, oh, it's Friday. And I kept getting on them about that. Like, 'What do you want? You have to be here three days a week and if it were a Tuesday-Thursday, you'd say the same thing.

Yet by the end Tess also seemed to start to question her own role in the disappointing performance of her students, saying, "so I cancelled class and met with them in individual conferences. . . I feel as if . . . I'm doing them a disservice because they think that's OK somehow. . . I mean I'm still unsure of my role in their actions as far as not doing homework, not doing reading, turning in things late, not turning in assignments." Tess, I believe, might do things differently the next time around.

Comparing Their Students to Themselves

Asked about the schism between Mark's own educational experience as an undergraduate and that experienced by CSU students, he found that engagement here is abysmally low, quite different from Middlebury, a trend that he described as "sad" and

“scary” but typical of most university and high school students. He attributed the isolation of the students’ upbringing and compared the similar backgrounds of Middlebury students, saying that at least at Middlebury, students were “aware of the tensions” while here students fail to see the irony of their interest in hip-hop and other urban music while living 40 miles from Wyoming. He described himself as engaged in ways that most of his students were not. In particular he told the story of a class when he was talking and half the class not only wasn’t taking notes but didn’t have anything on their desks. “It’s just disrespectful, it’s obnoxious,” he said. Mark also pointed out the low level of discourse that takes place in the school newspaper, saying the arguments are weak, that they don’t even demonstrate a level one might expect them to have from CO150. At Middlebury newspapers are right at the front of the library and here “they wouldn’t know there’s a conflict going on between Eritrea and Ethiopia.”

Similarly, when asked how Tess’s own undergraduate experience compared to the experience of her students, Tess said that her professors were very open to talk with students about problems or conflicts that came up. Also, while the classes were much harder (more reading, more difficult writing) in general than CO150, she also always felt that her teachers cared (“There was a different level of caring. . . They cared about us.”) She speculated that “these students don’t seem to know how or want to take advantage of the small classroom.” She wanted to be the kind of teacher she had in college, but her students did not seem to be interested in that sort of response, in spite of the fact that “a lot of them will not have that opportunity again at this university.”

Hopes for a Teacher-Mentor

The need for a mentor seemed to be very real to Jen. She said, “I didn’t feel I could approach—there seems to be and maybe it’s the same thing that happened in my class, where you feel like ‘I am the teacher. You are the student.’ And I really felt like ‘You are the supervisor. I am the GTA.’” When asked what might have made this better, she said that she wished there were “some forum where the department’s agenda wasn’t always first . . . No one’s allowed to have a nervous breakdown.” She went on to say:

I think that every group that I had. . . TART, 684, grading conferences...and the person who was watching you ...seemed to have such a strict role that it didn’t feel like—I don’t know. . . because I know I’ve talked to other people who’ve been GTAs and they really felt like they were a colleague, that they were another teacher there. . . and it wasn’t such a power [division] where they’re here and you’re down here . . . I feel very guarded in every one of those circumstances. One of the supervisors goes out with us drinking sometimes, and I don’t even feel comfortable in that situation talking honestly...if I say I don’t like it, then where does that go, who else hears about that, and what actually gets said about me in that, and how does that reflect on what I’m doing?

When asked if someone with a special role of advocacy could do this, she said,

Yeah, but I know in a lot of schools, I know that the instructors are the advocates. But I didn’t feel that here at all. And honestly that had a lot to do with—I think if I was in a department where I felt supported I might feel better about staying. But I felt like I was doing an awful lot of work for people who just needed a warm body to teach a class and beyond that I just didn’t feel very supported.

Asked if she shared any of this during an exit interview when she announced she would not return in the spring as a TA, Jen responded, “Oh, see, I didn’t even feel safe enough even to talk about it in terms like that. Besides it wasn’t much of an interview. I had a whole explanation prepared, but it wasn’t asked for.”

The Future

Jack talked about teaching a lecturer’s 4-4 load, wondering if he was up to the challenge and indicating both his anxiety and his assumptions. One such assumption was

that “I think it’s ultimately gotta be the students who lose out.” He says he spent ½ hour on each paper and says “you just wouldn’t have that much time,” but then I told him that I spend at least that much time on papers with my 4-4 load, and he seemed surprised, then collected himself and said, “Well then I guess you just enjoy those Christmas breaks and summer breaks and when papers are due you have 10 or 12 hour days.” I didn’t have the heart to tell him that 14-16 hour days might be closer to the truth.

Summary of Life Story Interview II

Returning to the subject of orientation, the TAs recognized areas where they wished they had received more instruction. Specifically, the TAs would have liked help with responsible teaching of grammar principles, with conferencing techniques, and with follow-up to grading—that is, how to help students improve after the graded event.

Over the course of the semester, the reliance on fellow-TA hallway storytelling seemed to subside. The TAs relied somewhat more upon supervisors. Meanwhile, the TAs discovered that their educational histories had relevance to their current teaching. For instance Sadie discovered that certain ideas she learned in school were as relevant now as they were when she was in school.

Four TAs responded to the restatement of LSI I’s question about the balance of time between teaching and coursework, and two of these TAs were dividing their time the same as they had at the beginning of the term, while two others had successfully reduced the amount of time they were spending on teaching. One of these latter two admitted that she “slacked off” on her teaching when she concluded that her students were not making a commitment to the course. When queried about their levels of enthusiasm regarding their graduate programs and their teaching, all the TAs in this study

indicated greater enthusiasm for teaching at the end of the term, while their programs received mixed reviews, with one TA concluding that she had already experienced the best that her program had to offer.

Among the rewards these TAs experienced with their teaching were the personal satisfaction of helping students, the “intoxicating pleasure” of an occasional great moment in the classroom, and the hard-won clarification of professional authority. Among the problems that emerged over the course of the term were the challenges of functioning without a teaching repertoire, including especially classroom management skills.

Non-school influences that became important over the semester included family/home issues, work experience, and gender issues. Jen and Jack showed particular influence from home factors, Jack’s influence deriving from his parents and Jen’s from her husband and large, extended family back at home. Jen, Mark, and Jack all showed some influence from their work experiences. Jen had left her retail position although she considered herself successful at retail; similarly, she pronounced herself as capable of being an effective teacher, even as she decided to resign her assistantship. Jack pointed to his “blue collar” jobs as informing his approach in the classroom, and Mark was starting to see how he could use his group dynamic skills in the classroom. Several of the TAs experienced gender-related problems in the classroom and within their own psyches. Jen clarified in her own mind that having a baby was a priority, while Sadie wanted to become a strong role model for young women.

Table 8

Life Story Interview II Discoveries

Background and Goals

Orientation—Wish List at End of Term

More on grammar – Jack and Leah

More on conferencing techniques – Sadie

More on follow-ups to grading to ensure learning – Leah

Supervisor Support

Only Leah singled out her audit lecturer as helpful. Lukewarm response across the rest of the board towards composition faculty.

Peer Support

Beyond “hallway talk,” multiple training sites (E684, TART, etc.) very helpful

Reliance on peers with background in teaching, especially early on

Seeking out of peers who share philosophy

Surprises TAs found

Relevance of personal histories/philosophies to teaching – as in Sadie’s “entertain an idea.”

Time Balance, Satisfaction, Role Division, Enthusiasm, and Rewards

TA Name	% Time Teaching	Satisfaction with this time commitment	Roles and I.D. as perceived by TAs
Jen	same	Dissatisfied	Wants to be a writer, not a teacher
Sadie	50%	Increasing satisfaction	Developing comfort with new role as teacher
Leah	60% (same)	Increasing satisfaction	Becoming more effective as a teacher
Tess	< original ↓	Dissatisfied- slacking off because class was a “lost cause”	To her students, “Well, if you don’t care, then I can’t make you care.”

Enthusiasm

TA Name	Teaching	Program	Rewards of Teaching	Problems with Teaching
Jen	↑	↑	Personal help to student	Cast into role of bad guy
Mark	↑	↑	Electricity in classroom	Small repertoire of skills
Jack	↑	↑	In control of curriculum	Anticipating discussion direction
Sadie	↑	↓	Good days	Inexplicable bad days
Leah	↑	Same	Met individual student needs	Student/teacher boundaries
Tess	↑	No response	Clarification of professional authority	Gender split
				Low student engagement
				Classroom management and discipline

(table continued)

Table 8 (Continued)

Life Story Interview II Discoveries

Family, Culture, Non-school Experiences

Family and Home

- Jen – husband was a help; family members who are teachers are a worry as she must tell them she is resigning.
- Jack – mother and father provided helpful advice during semester
- Leah – distanced herself from father's attitudes toward grades

Work History/Experience

- Jen – left retail though successful at it
- Jack – utilized blue collar, hands-on work in class
- Mark – began to find ways to merge backcountry and academic work worlds

Gender Issues

- Tess – related classroom composition and “J” to gender discomfort/imbalance
- Jen – maintained and strengthened fallback position to have a baby
- Mark – indicated some trouble with a few male students
- Sadie – intended to be a strong female role model for high school students

Educational History and Scholarly Philosophies

Teaching Models

- Leah – high school geometry teacher; college mentor who advised that teaching jitters never end and trick up sleeve needed
- Sadie – negative role models of 3rd grade teacher; positive one of high school history teacher

Early Schooling

- Jack – urban schooling seen as important facet of a tolerant perspective

Attribution

- Sadie - discouraged by student satisfaction with minimal grades and efforts
- Sadie, Leah, & Tess – disappointed with “slackers”
- Tess- beginning to see connection between her behavior in the classroom and student behavior

Themselves as Students vs. CSU Students

- Mark and Tess – Noted differences. Mark saw student engagement levels as the main difference. Tess saw the reciprocal (student-teacher) absence of caring at the large university as a main difference.
-

Educational history and school influences included a number of role models whom these TAs remembered fondly and at least one whose example a TA wanted to carefully avoid. Also, Jack indicated a preference for teaching in an urban setting, an interest derived from his early education in an inner-city school, to which he was bused from the suburbs.

Philosophically, Sadie, Leah, and Tess were all disappointed by the “slackers” or unmotivated students they had in class. By the end Tess was beginning to wonder about her own behavior as an agent for the kinds of reactions she was getting from students. Several of the TAs indicated an awareness of themselves as quite different (more motivated as a student and especially as a writer) from their students. Table 8 summarizes the discoveries of Life Story Interview II.

The Individual TAs—Within-Case Analysis

Introduction

In addition to perceived themes among the TA data sets, each TA can be seen to represent a certain set of themes as well, as such themes are developed and replicated through the multiple data collection points. These data may produce a constellation of evidence that, taken together, yields a unified interpretation, a coherent story in and of itself. An analysis of the individual’s stories may help us to understand not only the continuity of one person’s experience but concerns consistent with and recognizable to others. Such themes also may offer interesting potential for follow-on study of the applicability of developmental stage theories (of adult development), workplace discourse, sex-class differences, and other windows of analysis.

Jen—A Quest for Authenticity

In Jen’s teaching log we get a full sense of her vulnerabilities and doubts as she makes her way through the semester. Most obvious is the fact that already on Day 7 Jen is forecasting the outcome that eventually occurs, that she will stop teaching. She says on that day, “I don’t want to do this anymore.” Later in the log we see her struggling with the cruelty of her students—not towards one another but toward her, wondering why

Travis mocks her in class and why many of her angry and unhappy students attribute their failures to their teacher. It is also here that we see her resentment of the ongoing evaluative measures she is subjected to in the department. When observed, she describes herself as “full on panic,” and she records that she believes she would be more effective if less “policed.” By Day 15 she says “the universe is screaming out to me, ‘What the hell do you think you are doing?’” Evident from the teaching log entries is the physical dimension of her discomfort. On several days she reports diarrhea, upset stomach, sleeplessness, and eventually, a defeating level of fatigue.

On the other hand, Jen continues to teach, and her journal is not just about her unhappiness. She also reports techniques that she tries, as well as questions about teaching that she struggles with over the course of the term. She works with pacing the class time, wonders whether to address the whole class when some of the students are sleeping and talking, attempts different methods such as the debate or town meeting, and recognizes that she tends to finish early on days when she does most of the talking. Along the way, she reports that students visit her to discuss their papers, that one interviews her for another class, that she worries about whether she is adequately preparing them for the assigned papers, and that particular students (such as the one who works long hours at Mervyn’s) worry her. She finds that she likes the zero draft concept and resolves that if she were to teach again she would use this idea early in each assignment unit. Thus, even though Jen resolves to resign from her teaching position, she also continues to teach and to teach reflectively, thinking about her approaches and planning for improvement in the future.

Among additional themes developed in the multiple data collection events is the idea of her energy as a limited resource. Jen alludes to this in her first life story interview and returns to it in her second, saying by the end that she wants to reserve her energy for her own teaching, rather than expend it on the work of others. Also, Jen states her commitment to a kind of class where responsibility is shared, and she draws upon models from her own educational history, developing this philosophy—and language to connect with it (e.g. “reciprocity”) as she works her way through the semester.

In her first life story interview, Jen indicates that her number one anticipated reward for teaching is the opportunity to work with a group of people for an extended period of time, and at the conclusion of her teaching log, she indicates that what she liked best about teaching was developing relationships with students. This relationship idea is a highly consistent feature of Jen’s various documents—supported in the life story interviews, the teaching log, the critical event narrative, and even the story swap. Jen’s family history becomes an important part of her analysis as well, and she describes a family that is large and close, with herself cast in the important role of family facilitator, helping the family through various crises and conflicts. Repeatedly she discusses her skill as a caring helper in her family, a good niece as well as aunt, and a happily married woman—with the added bonus of being married to a man who is himself a college teacher (“a live-in mentor”, she says). Finally, in her first life story interview she discusses her long-time recognition of herself as a potential mother, and by the end of life story interview two, states that what she really wants to do is “be a mom and write,” in that order.

Finally, Jen’s documents suggest that subsequent to the orientation training, she

possessed a keener sense of what was expected of her as a teacher (“training bumped up my expectations for myself”) and in the early days she states her awareness of the distance between what she knows she should do in class and her ability to do it. Her expectations seem to outpace her ability to apply her knowledge.

Had Jen not been exposed to the orientation and follow-on training, she might have enjoyed herself more in the classroom, yet one also suspects that her comfort would have masked her teaching naivete. As with most highly skilled, learned abilities, comprehension of the skill—in this case, knowledge of better teaching practices--appears to precede the ability to implement such skills, and Jen’s case of discomfort further suggests that the transition from the cognitive theorists’ declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge is both gradual and uncomfortable, at least in the domain of teaching. The physical dimension of Jen’s discomfort may have been symptomatic of deep learning, suggestive that procedural knowledge-making is downright painful.

Mark—In Pursuit of a Unifying Perspective

If there were a single term to characterize Mark’s central issues as a 1st-year TA, I believe that the operative phrase might be Keats’ notion of “negative capability,” that poetic capacity for being able (and perhaps obliged by sensibility) to hold two competing, perhaps even contradictory, notions in one’s mind at once. Keats also seems an appropriate choice of correlative here because Mark is of a sophisticated and literary turn of mind, educated in the classical sense yet also very interested in contemporary social issues. Listening to him, I was struck by his differing language abilities as well, for he seems to possess equal parts artful ability to create/describe scene and to analyze or even

parse complex political situation. Finally, it should come as no surprise that Mark is also fluent in a few foreign languages.

Mark's language use is peppered with seeming contradiction and duality, a cognitive dissonance that seems his natural inclination. For instance, he talks about teaching as both creation and chaos, as both intoxicating and humbling, as opportunity to develop his authority as a writer and group leader as well as a challenge to make a setting that is decentralized and student-centered. Furthermore, he believes teaching involves reciprocal responsibility between student and teacher even as he struggles to define his own skills in classroom leadership, especially in leading discussion and delivering lecture. By the end of his first semester, he has discovered his preference for group work, speaks convincingly of writing as "dialogue," but he has also come to value the individual composing act known as "free writing."

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of Mark's negative capability is his depiction of his educational past, a past for which he describes (giving each equal time and passion) the two central educational experiences of his life—his undergraduate degree in literature from Middlebury College and his backcountry work over the past several years building trail on the Continental Divide. At Middlebury, Mark did a thesis that combined analysis of Latin American writers and American literature. During the summers he worked for a backcountry service learning organization located in the Rocky Mountains, the purpose of which was to develop leadership skills in the participants (youth ages 16-21). Also important to Mark was an influential leader, a camp counselor, from Mark's past. This individual talked about finding balance between "the wild and tame sides" as well as the value of "venturing out of one's comfort zone."

Throughout Mark's life story interviews, we see him not just representing these competing visions of his life but simultaneously struggling with them—compelled at every turn to equally and fairly represent both passions, both worlds—and relishing them. His fascination with juggling both pieces and keeping them in the air seems at first like torment but on closer inspection appears to hold real promise and pleasure for Mark. The current challenge of Mark's life seems to be reconciling these divisions, linking his academic life with his work life, carving out a niche that brings together his disparate experiences, his differing outlooks on his life. In Life Story Interview I he seems unsure whether or not to pursue an academic thesis, pointing out that he had a good start from his undergraduate days. By the time Life Story Interview II rolls around, he decides to avoid an academic thesis, to seek wider variety, to find a combination of courses that would help him know how to think about a curriculum. He has found the creative nonfiction workshop and has begun to plan a creative portfolio, which he believes will link his classroom and backcountry experiences.

From the beginning, Mark distinguished his own undergraduate education from the education being sought by the students he sees in CO150. He doesn't remember anyone "just coasting" through Middlebury. Also, consistent in both life story interviews is Mark's view that CSU students are weakly engaged, not only in the classroom but in life more generally—politics, current events, even deep and serious conversation with peers. At Middlebury there were newspapers—lots of them—at the front of the library, whereas Mark pointed out that it's difficult to find a newspaper at the CSU library, and where it exists, the discourse in the newspaper is of a very low level, "embarrassing." He distinguishes the ethnic homogeneity of CSU from that of Middlebury, saying that at

least at Middlebury people were conscious of the (predominately) privileged white demographic while at CSU students enjoy urban music 40 miles from Wyoming, “without any sense of irony.” Describing CSU as “such an ag school,” Mark reconciles himself with this view of the place by saying that it will provide a “good test.” Mark continues: “If you can teach to people who don’t want to learn . . . if you can catch the electricity in that kind of environment, then you’re doing your job very well.”

Mark explained that he first applied to the Masters in Teaching program at CSU, then changed his mind, deciding that if he later elected to teach he would seek alternative licensure. Throughout his documents, Mark indicates a keen interest in teaching, particularly at the secondary level, but he also seems to hold traditional teaching programs in disdain. Educated at Eastern prep schools and in specialized programs within prep schools, he says that he could be teaching at Choate Rosemary Hall in Connecticut right now if he so desired. Yet Mark seems also to recognize that there are things left for him to learn, especially if he decides to teach. He said in the second life story interview that his new approach to his graduate studies—taking lots of coursework and learning what he can that way, instead of following his undergraduate path into further work in American literature—should help “yield a good place to stand on how to think about a curriculum.”

Over the course of Mark’s first semester of teaching, his log suggests that his concerns moved at least from self to task, and perhaps to some degree toward a learner orientation. On Days 3, 4, 5, and 6 he indicates concern with his degree of success leading discussions. In these early days he worries about being boring and teaching a boring class. He records that discussion “stalled,” or was “flat.” By Day 6 he indicates

greater success at “facilitation.” It is not again until Day 13 that we see Mark struggling with classroom discussions, saying that today old problems (presumably from Days 3-6) are “resurfacing.” But it is also here on Day 13 that he makes a statement of an emerging philosophy on this subject, describing teaching as “dialogue,” not monologue and beginning to place some of the responsibility for quiet days on the students. On Day 21 he makes his last reference to discussion, saying that it’s improving.

Associated with this early preoccupation with discussion successes and misfortunes is a concern for time management and pacing of class time. On Days 8 and 11 he indicates greater satisfaction with his pacing of class time, and Day 14 he says he felt in control of the “rhythms of the class” and that he “shifted gears” comfortably, easily. On Day 23 he mentions his pleasure in developing his lesson “on the fly.” Not unrelated to this remark on Day 23 is Mark’s evolving sense of liberation in the classroom, of increasing confidence in providing students with meaningful activities during class time. On Day 17 Mark states his new emphasis, which he says will be less “nuts and bolts.” We begin to see him reflecting on his preferences for classroom methods, finding himself at home with group work, especially but also finding free writing to be useful. On Day 23 when he developed the class on the fly, he brought in an article from the student newspaper, and he seems pleased to have achieved meaning, a real lesson from his own materials. He also indicates in his log that he is thinking about the individual conferences he held with students, wondering how to make them more productive. He indicates a similar concern for workshops.

On several days, Mark indicates that he has some classroom management or control problems with a few of the males in his classroom, and it is a seeming authority

issue that becomes Mark's first critical event as well, when he gives a low grade to a student and then is surprised to find that "she bought it," meaning his authority to make this judgment. On Days 10 and 26 Mark takes the courageous step of seeking feedback from his students, doing a mid-term evaluation on Day 10 and then polling their concerns about Essay 4 on Day 26. I believe that we see Mark becoming more confident over the course of these events.

In general then, I believe we can see a great deal of consistency among Mark's data. Mark is fairly clear about his interests, even if he is not completely clear about his direction. For example, in the second life story interview Mark makes a stunningly articulate distinction of his own brand of service learning from the more generic kinds he has become familiar with. He states that through his backcountry work and academic work he has become interested in a kind of service learning that develops the critical thinking abilities of the student, as opposed to "serving" a cultural function or community need. Mark is resolute in his desire to combine the two seemingly competing directions/interests of his life—academe and backcountry experience. One feels fairly certain by the end of Mark's semester that, in time, he will find a way to carve out this place for himself.

At the same time, Mark struggles with the same kinds of issues that his peers do when he walks into a standard college classroom. Here he must struggle to find the applicability of his many academic and backcountry experiences. Efforts to define his own authority, to manage classroom time, to lead meaningful discussions, to engage students in worthwhile activities remain foremost in his mind through the end of his first semester of teaching.

Jack—A Hearty Personality Empowered By a Teaching Repertoire

The consistent themes of Jack's teaching documents are his rising self-confidence, his mature level of personal responsibility to his students, and his positive response to teaching experiences, both good and bad. He also seems to have enjoyed the challenge of the first semester of teaching, attributing the hardships to his own errors, toward which he takes a forgiving stance, believing each experience a chance for positive growth. As a second-year graduate student, Jack possessed a quiet assurance, clearly stating his aspiration to teach, either at the secondary or post-secondary level. Positively influenced by his two highly educated parents, Jack looked forward to obtaining his Ph.D. By the close of the semester of this study he had decided to apply for a lectureship in the department, a two-year appointment involving a 4-4 teaching load. His high degree of success in the classroom places him in a competitive position for this position.

Having said this, Jack's feelings about the first semester of teaching were not without conflict and contradiction. In Life Story Interview I Jack rated his enthusiasm for teaching somewhat higher than his enthusiasm for his graduate program. He explained his hesitation about his program as uncertainty about his readiness for publication and taking the next step into academe. Teaching, on the other hand, he rated very high because of a breakthrough class in which he gained ownership of the content by designing a lesson that fit his personality as well as the class objectives. (This event is described in his critical event narrative.) By Life Story Interview II, Jack's point of view had changed somewhat in these matters, with teaching enthusiasm ranking a bit lower while program enthusiasm was clearly on the rise. Jack explained this reversal by saying that he didn't particularly enjoy teaching composition (although he believed he would

enjoy teaching literature) while his program had enjoyed a new uplift because of his developing relationship with his advisor. On the other hand, Jack indicated a rising level of enthusiasm about applying in the second term of his assistantship the lessons from the first term of teaching. In general, one supposes that Jack is using his experiences in CO150 as a springboard for the kinds of teaching he might do in the future.

These future teaching goals connect in important ways to his educational life story and to his teaching philosophy as he enacted it in his first semester of teaching. If Jack were to teach in the public schools, he has indicated a distinct preference for an urban setting. His own elementary school days were spent largely in an urban setting, where he was bused from his home in suburbia. He describes this urban education as a very good one, but he suspects that there are fewer positive urban educational settings today. His wife is preparing to teach special education in inner-city Denver, and he thinks he might like to do something similar.

He also indicates a strong interest in teaching at the college level, and we learn in his life story interviews that his second college experience (at the University of Toledo) was a particularly strong one because of its urban setting. He contrasts the experience of taking a sociology course at Central Michigan State to the sociological experience of taking classes in Toledo alongside single mothers, ex-convicts, drug addicts, etc.

When asked how these experiences influenced his thinking and methods, he talks about tolerance and a multicultural perspective. In his daily teaching log, he reports singling out a Croatian student on the first day of class to talk about how greetings differ in a Croatian setting. He also talks about trying to draw out his students from states outside Colorado as a way of encouraging his Colorado students to understand that there

are other worlds and perspectives out there. He also talks about taking care to allow his Colorado students to express their seemingly isolated views without editing them to support his own broader perspective.

Jack's family background plays as great a role in his thinking as his urban education. Jack describes his parents as well educated. Church affiliation was an additional component to his family life, as the family attended the Michigan Church of Christ even as his father professed to be an atheist and encouraged his children to be critical of the thinking that surrounds them, to "not believe things just because someone tells you to." Yet the church was central in this family's life, particularly as it involved itself in social activism, particularly in sponsorship of refugee families who immigrated to the U.S. Jack mentions his father's emphasis on critical thinking in both life story interviews and makes passing reference to his father's perspective in the Story Swap. He quoted his father in the second life story interview, pointing out that his dad had said students wouldn't find themselves writing papers in the future but would need to be able to think critically. Jack used this idea to help him come to terms with a division he eventually made in his teaching-thinking—where he taught critical thinking during class time and taught writing during conferences. He also mentions his mother in both life story interviews, as it was she who pointed out to Jack that many of the criticisms he was making against his students he had himself been guilty of as an undergraduate.

This background as a somewhat less than completely successful undergraduate seems to have influenced Jack's approach to teaching as well. His life story interviews reveal that he was a serious student until some time in high school when his social life became a bigger factor in his life. Jack's highly social approach to life apparently got him

into some academic trouble in college, but he doesn't seem to regret this, pointing out that he knows for his own students that "only some of what they're learning has to do with their courses." This perspective on students seems also to be reflected in his daily approach to class, for which he allows late homework and off-task conversations during workshops. Jack seems to recall at these times his own learning history, to recall for instance that some of his best times in sixth grade involved the time he and his classmates were allowed to simply follow their interests and see where their ideas took them in the library. For his own students, Jack says in Life Story Interview II that he wants "to let them be in their own territory part of the time," meaning that he doesn't censor friendly conversations that are unrelated to the course.

Another major influence appears to have been Jack's "blue-collar work" [his words], which he seems to have consciously sought out to compliment the highly educated household in which he was raised. He has worked in carpentry and maintenance for many years, doing renovations of old houses and serving as the building custodian for an apartment complex until quite recently. He tells the story of a young man he was supervising and gave incomplete instructions to, which resulted in a rather disastrous misunderstanding. Here he says he learned about "patience," but it also seems that he learned how important it is to understand that weak student performance is usually explained by poor teaching. He also points to blue-collar work as having influenced his "hands-on" approach to classroom time. We see evidence of this by Day 6 when he settled into a pattern of lecturing for the first 15 minutes of class time and then turning class over to hands-on writing work for the rest of the hour. By Day 10 of his teaching log, we see that this approach has evolved further so that the hands-on work now involves

groups giving presentations to the class. Jack also points to the routine classroom activity he used of “crafting sentences” as a blue-collar influence.

In the first life story interview Jack stated his belief that one of the rewards of teaching might be challenging students to new thinking, and he worried about becoming too accessible, about not fully understanding the curriculum, about his role in classroom discussions, and about whether he was working too hard, “stressing too much.” By the second life story interview, Jack seems still to enjoy the challenge of students and seems to have resolved most of the problems he anticipated. Accessibility did not turn out to be a problem as not a single student challenged him on grades. The curriculum became something he more or less mastered, and he seems to censor his editing role in classroom discussions, despite his early fear that students might end up with somewhat weaker understanding of the issues. Perhaps most clearly, the issue of work and stress seems to have clarified itself as Jack discovered there was a direct relationship between his preparation and his performance. Thus, the class meeting that he discussed in his critical event seems to have been a breakthrough moment, as he discovered that it’s very time consuming to make lessons that are connected to the curriculum and also connected to the students’ own territory as well as the teacher’s interests and abilities.

Perhaps most notable (and consistently demonstrated) in Jack’s documents is his positive approach and his willingness to learn from his own mistakes in the classroom. Thus, on Day 3, he says he feels good about being a teacher and that he is learning valuable lessons on focus and group dynamics even when discussions fall flat. He says that he’ll “work on thinking on his feet,” and on Day 8 says, “I’m learning!” When discussion doesn’t go well, he comes up with a plan to make more specific questions for

future discussions. On Day 6 he “resolves to personalize instruction,” saying that it’s just not acceptable to be speaking “words that are not my own.” On both Days 7 and 19 he indicates realization that his students need help with workshop effectiveness. He recognizes that his transition days (from one unit to another) need work; later, on Day 21, he indicates better success with his transition into Essay 4. Finally, except for the recurrence of the workshop difficulties, it seems that when Jack saw a problem in his classroom, he resolved to work on it. So when discussion stalled, he developed specific questions to guide students; when he didn’t feel that he was teaching writing so much as critical thinking, he started doing in-class writing work, having students generate thesis statements that they then presented to the class; when transition days were less than completely successful, he resolved to work extra hard to prepare for these class sessions; finally, when essay one produced work that needed stronger organization and evidence, he began to work more on this in class, seeing the deficit and responding to it.

Like most of the TAs, Jack indicates struggling early on with the provided syllabus. Yet he seems to realize what he must do about it earlier than the other TAs. He describes his early experience as an “out-of-body” experience, saying: “And sometimes I’d be in front of the class, and I’d hear myself speaking and I was sort of listening to myself from the outside and realizing that it wasn’t my words and it felt really kind of strange.” This experience seems to have negatively impacted Jack’s confidence in the classroom, as he then said, “Am I qualified to impart some knowledge to freshmen and sophomores using a syllabus that I have not created and words that were written for me?” He goes on to say that he fears the student question because he knows that his knowledge of the content “is only as deep as the words on the page I just recited.” We see here a

familiar theme, yet Jack seems also to have a distinct advantage over the other TAs in this study. He served as a teaching assistant to a professor in the department and documents that he used many of her ideas for his own teaching, especially the approach of using a short lesson at the beginning to ground the day's work in the students' experience. As a second-year graduate student with a semester of observing a highly skilled instructor, he thus has a repertoire to draw upon that the others do not. This difference may go some distance toward explaining the significant difference between Jack's first semester and most of the other TAs'. However, it must also be said that Jack himself seems to possess a hearty personality, a natural, or perhaps learned, resilience that helps him to recover from challenging experiences and integrate the learning from them into his knowledge base.

Sadie—Developing Teacher Presence and Perspective

Sadie, a multi-sport athlete with a career objective to become a high school English teacher and coach, entered graduate school and the assistantship with clear direction and enviable credentials. She had been accepted into the graduate teaching programs at two highly competitive Eastern universities but chose CSU because of the assistantship and the opportunities offered by a large, research university, which were especially important, she felt, subsequent to her small liberal arts undergraduate experience. Throughout my conversations with Sadie, I found her to be a quiet yet clear contributor, to require gentle prompting and probing, to be conversationally reticent by nature. Yet this too became an important facet of Sadie's evolving self-awareness during her first semester of teaching as the connections between herself as a student and herself as teacher became clearer to her. Describing herself as "not outspoken," she further

characterized herself as “retiring in my own classroom,” a pattern she indicated had been something of a problem for her throughout her life as a student, even as a highly talented and academically rewarded one. Not surprising then, the stalling of discussions in her classroom became a matter of some considerable (semester-long) concern for Sadie, while a moment of excellent student participation became the happiest and most important event of the semester, worthy of recording as her critical event narrative.

Increasingly conscious of the overlap of her teaching effectiveness and her natural inclinations, she recalled (in her first life story interview) a vivid moment from her own undergraduate experience when a much admired professor asked her class at the end of the semester to evaluate their own participation. This professor then called each student in for an individual conference. At this conference, Sadie’s teacher told her that while she believed Sadie had earned an A in the class, she also felt that she needed to step up to her potential as a participant, or even as a leader, to become “a presence, not just a person” in the classroom. This point stayed with Sadie and at the end of the first term of her teaching she assigned her own students the same assignment. Indicative of Sadie’s newness to teaching, however, is the fact that she didn’t follow up with her students to give them the kind of individual feedback her professor had given. One suspects that she will see the necessity for this feedback in later semesters, as she grows in confidence and shifts focus from herself to her students, developing deeper learner awareness.

Athletics were always important to Sadie, and we see the influence of sports upon her educational philosophies. In athletics, Sadie learned that she had leadership responsibilities, and here she seems to have been better able to respond than she was in the classroom. In fact, on more than one occasion, and sometimes, despite her wishes, she

was forced to step up and assume leadership on various teams, even when she was an underclassman. Also, she learned to be aggressive on the athletic court and field. Sadie learned that if she took care of her academic requirements and proved to her teachers that she could do both successfully, there was little conflict when she needed to be away on road trips.

In deeper ways, Sadie also learned other lessons from athletics. For instance, in her critical event follow-up interview with me, she indicated that athletics had definitely influenced her ability to bounce back, to be resilient. Specifically, when I asked her how many “good” days of teaching it takes to make the job worthwhile, she indicated “not many.” And when I asked her if there were any bad experiences from the semester that had stuck with her, she said, “no, nothing too extended,” and then she explained that her volleyball coach had taught her the “30-minute rule” which stated that “whether you won or lost, you had to get over it in 30 minutes.” It became a life lesson.

Interestingly, it is here that we find Sadie at her most philosophic, observing that “memory heals” with teaching as with all other things, and that “the rules of nostalgia govern us, which enable us to forget, or at least gloss over, the bad memories, leaving us free to enjoy the present, the possibilities of the future, and our own edited version of classroom achievements and failures.” She wrote in her critical event narrative that “memory constructs and reconstructs events. . . making it possible for teaching to survive, one good reconstructed event at a time.”

Apparent in Sadie’s teaching documents is the lag between Sadie’s understanding of what she might do in class to ensure effectiveness and what she’s able to do, or what might be looked at as the difference between her declarative and procedural types of

knowledge. As an athlete, one suspects that she would grasp the difference between these two kinds of knowledge immediately, as when any softball player knows the fundamental aspects of how to deliver a fast pitch and yet must practice for years to master it. In teaching, as a result of her orientation training, Sadie possesses many ideas for engaging participation in her classroom. Indeed, following the orientation, she reported feeling a boost to her confidence. For example, she learned the basics about how to conduct a classroom discussion and understands the goals and basic procedures of individual conferencing as well as writing workshops, but her ability to successfully enact these ideas in the classroom is not yet fully present.

Also, her daily log reveals a pattern of ups and downs, a veritable roller coaster of good days and bad days, and she herself comments (in her Day 13 log) that “It is amazing to me the flux of effectiveness.” Without (as yet) a teaching repertoire, she can only scratch her head at the unpredictability of her classroom experience, saying as she did on Day 18, “It seems almost impossible to predict their responses and reactions.” Later on Day 22, she says, “Miraculously, the vacant look was absent from their faces today, and this is cause for much rejoicing.” One notes here the emphasis on the “miraculous,” as if, as yet, there is no explicable connection between what she does in class and the resulting experience.

Another thread in Sadie’s teaching log that is also present in other TA logs is her students’ dwindling attentiveness to assigned readings and to classroom assignments in the final unit of the class. It is worth noting that although this slippage might be explained by the natural erosion of student energy and focus over the course of the semester, it may also be that, left to their own devices (and free from a provided syllabus), the TAs are

becoming less effective and, as a result, their students less accountable for their work.

On Day 31, Sadie notes that many of her students are failing to do the reading, and on the last workshop day, Day 43, she records that many students arrived late, which presented a large problem for her classroom management that day. On Day 42 she observes that her students seem to be suffering from end-of-term apathy. Perhaps related is a first-time error on her own part, when on Day 34 she notes that her nightmare occurred—she forgot her classroom materials, left them behind in her office.

On Day 37 she indicates feeling overwhelmed by her role division (student and teacher), since so many of her own course requirements are coming due. Like her students, Sadie's focus has shifted, and on Day 32 she expresses optimism about next semester. Still, Sadie is starting to be aware of the differences between the roles of teacher and student, and role realizations are addressed in her critical event narrative as well, when she notes how differently she perceives the classroom now that's she's a teacher. She never would have guessed that her teachers were agonizing about the effectiveness of their classes until she herself was in charge of such things. Still, she indicates in her second life story interview, conducted the last week of classes, that her number one issue over the semester was defining her own identity. She struggled with whether she was a teacher or a student, and her propensity to be a quiet student came back to haunt her. She says, "I didn't feel that I should be at the head of this learning environment because that's not where I was ever . . . But I think I'm developing a little bit more. I think I'm slowly coming to identify myself at the front of the classroom instead of in the front row."

Sadie seems to have derived great benefit from extensive exposure to her peers. She indicates in the first life story interview as well as the second one that the opportunity to discuss classroom triumphs and failures was invaluable for her. She also liked the multiples sites for this sharing—E684, TART, the computer room, the hallway. All of these things, when taken together, helped the group cohere, she reported in the second life story interview. Also at the second life story interview she reported that there weren't many peers in the teaching program and one individual that she had enjoyed had decided to change his program.

No less important by the second life story interview was the impact of teacher role models from years gone by and from more recent experience as well. Still important to her by the end of the term was the negative role model of her third grade teacher who demanded rote memorization and then frightening recitations followed by public humiliation for those who performed unsatisfactorily. In contrast was her AP World History teacher, Mr. Gonzales, who also called upon students but did it in such a way as to reward those who knew the answers rather than to punish those who did not. When asked if a teacher might call upon CO150 students who were disinclined to respond, she felt that no, it wasn't a good idea, since a teacher might alienate that student for the rest of the term. Here I believe we see Sadie's own natural reticence in the classroom projected upon her students. Yet we also see Sadie carving out her classroom persona and distinguishing herself from the less effective teachers of her past, to which she also added the examples of "the freshman English teacher for whom the class did absolutely nothing and the junior history teacher who read straight from the textbook."

Philosophically, in addition to her sports analogies (the 30-minute rule) and her role model experience with the teacher who wanted to see her become “a presence and not just a person” in the classroom, Sadie also believes that her early lesson regarding “you can entertain an idea even if you can’t accept it” is an important facet of her teaching. She says that her own youth in the South is not unlike the isolated perspective of many CSU students who share the South’s distrust of evolutionary theory and generally grasp tightly to their beliefs rather than open themselves to evaluating other ways of viewing the world. Finally, Sadie indicates that a significant realization over the term has been just how hard teaching is, which, as she says, “I always knew would be hard . . . but maybe composition is a lot harder than other subjects.”

Despite Sadie’s general satisfaction with the training she received throughout the semester, she wishes more time had been spent on preparing TAs for conducting individual conferences. She says she didn’t feel she possessed the “special skills” needed to “lead them with questions without telling them an answer.” Sadie’s enthusiasm scales shifted over the course of the term, too. At the beginning, she indicated that her teaching enthusiasm ranged somewhere from a 3 to a 6 over the first week while her program enthusiasm was higher, an 8 or 9, mostly because of the adolescent literature class she was taking. During the first week, she says, she actually thought about quitting her teaching position, but by the end, things seem to have reversed somewhat. Sadie expresses concern about her program since she believes she may have taken her best course with the adolescent literature class and fears that the rest will be “rote educational stuff.” Meanwhile she seems to have found a balanced way of dealing with her teaching responsibilities and instead of the 30-70 split of time (with teaching getting more)

reported in her first life story interview, she indicates near equilibrium since developing a method for going straight from class to plan the next day's lesson—overhead transparencies and all.

Interestingly, Sadie's participation in the Story Swap is nearly exactly what we might expect from her interviews and documents over the course of the term. At the Story Swap, she spoke the least of all the TAs when telling her critical event and was especially quiet during the open-forum discussion that followed the storytelling. Yet when Sadie speaks, she offers great insight and astonishing candor that, were it offered more spontaneously and confidently, might provide support and clarification to her peers. One can't help but think again of Sadie's college professor and wonder with her if Sadie will one day step up and become "more of a presence rather than just a person" in her teaching role as well. Her recognized ability to provide leadership on the athletic field suggests that she is constitutionally capable of such a leap. I certainly hope she begins to make her voice heard, as her ability to clarify issues—and when pressed, to articulate them—was unequaled among this group of TAs. Sadie will need time—and a mentor who will simply (and without reservation) encourage her to express her important perspectives. She does not need another third grade authoritarian figure in her life. Yet with both of these factors—time and mentoring—Sadie will become the teacher she plans to be, and possibly even one who is more like the coaches she most admires—that is, a complete role model.

Leah—The Origins of Teacher Efficacy

Like Sadie, Leah wants to be a teacher, and has wanted to be one since 7th grade, but Leah is less sure about whether she would prefer to teach high school or college

students. In her first life story interview she indicates that she would like to earn the Ph.D. and probably teach college literature, but by the conclusion of her second life story interview, she seems to be moving toward public school teaching instead, explaining that she isn't sure she could derive the same satisfactions from teaching at the college level as she might from secondary teaching. In either case, Leah remains committed to what she calls "teaching for altruistic ends," and she indicates strong and consistent beliefs about the valuable role of schooling in a person's life. She believes that "values, passions, and the shaping of identity are important pieces of schooling." She believes that education extends far beyond the traditional classroom into everyday experiences, yet she also believes that school is "the almost ideal place to do or be," and she herself always looked up to her teachers, "not to please them but to be more like them, to be a person who knows things." She believes that education is currently under attack and that this is a problem because the trend becomes self-reinforcing, with the attack generating suspicion of schools, which in turn generates more attacks. She contrasts this negative trend in the U.S. with the way formal schooling is elevated in other cultures. She tells the story of a Mexican student she tutored to graduation from high school. The pride and celebration of this young man's family upon his completion of a secondary education gave her pause when she considered the skepticism surrounding schooling in the U.S.

Yet her view of education's importance is not the same as her father's either, a non-school influence she wanted to discuss in her first life story interview and again in her second. Her father, she explained, was born in the Netherlands and had burdensomely high expectations for Leah in terms of grades. "Education," she said, "was always really hard-core. If I didn't get straight A's it was 'Why didn't you get straight A's?'" Over

time, she says she came to distance herself from this attitude and stated firmly by the second life story interview that “straight A’s are not always the best way to learn.” Leah seems in some ways to have taken much of the perfectionism of her father with her, however, and describes her expectations of herself as always too high. In fact, she indicated that her most important lesson in life had been dealing with failure “and not looking at it as failure,” and she connected this observation to her recent challenge of not being accepted to all the graduate schools she applied to. She said she cried many tears over this experience yet had emerged very happy to be where she was and in fact felt that “CSU chose me.”

Highly reflective in her processing of experience, Leah set out to systematically make herself an increasingly effective teacher—and, in fact, effectiveness was Leah’s number one goal and concern about her first semester of teaching. She defined effectiveness by saying “breaking down the learning objectives so that students could get them.” By the end of the semester she continued to indicate that her excitement about teaching in the future was linked to the pleasure she would take in seeing her own gains in effectiveness. This concern for her own effectiveness was also linked to her concerns about grading, which she showed an unresolved difficulty with in the second life story interview and indicated she’d have liked more help with during orientation. She clarified this concern by saying that her problem with the training she’d received on grading had less to do with diagnosing the problems than with follow-up work that would help students improve subsequent to their graded assignments. Like the most efficacious teachers throughout the profession, Leah, even as a beginner, believed that student improvement and achievement would be the clearest measure of her effectiveness.

Leah's reflective practitioner tendencies were suggested by all of her teaching documents and interviews but were most clearly demonstrated in her extensive daily teaching log, which was two to three times longer than the next most prolific journal writer in this study group. In this teaching log, we see her responding to an unresponsive classroom by throwing around a Koosh ball; recalling on more than one occasion the example of her beloved college mentor, who advised her that the jitters of teaching never really go away and recommended that she always have one more trick up her sleeve; struggling with logistical issues such as making the overhead projector work and observing her own hand trembling as she held her lesson plan in front of the class. We also see Leah seeking student feedback, the first time immediately after students turned in their initial essay and the next time as a full midterm evaluation about which she says she was terrified.

A very important day in Leah's journal was Day 13, for which she attached her entire lesson plan to her log, in order to demonstrate how far "outside the box" she journeyed to develop the lesson. On this day she also sought out the help of a peer who was a former public school teacher. This peer, along with another with whom she shared a desire to make class "accessible and exciting," became her most reliable confidantes ("her concrete and esoteric commiserators"). On Day 13, her peer who was once a public school teacher advised her that students can tell when you attempt to teach material you don't quite understand or have ownership of. Therefore, this peer suggested, she would be better off writing her own plan that sought the same objectives as the original syllabus. This peer's advice became essential for Leah's movement away from the standard syllabus and toward her own lesson plan development as well as a clarification of her

own responsibility in the classroom. As a result of this day's planning, Leah realized that she has been blaming the syllabus for problems she must take responsibility for, and so she decided to do just that. Taking leave of the syllabus on this day, she singled out students to explain the process of academic summary writing and asked a few students to express their concerns about the current assignment. Here, among other things, we see Leah's growing reliance on her peers whom she realized were valuable resources beyond the hallway talk they shared in the first days when they could do little more than console one another through stories of mutual suffering.

In this teaching log we also see Leah's concerns shifting. Early on, she was trying to just get through the lessons, it seemed, while later on, she began to focus on her transitions in the middle of the lessons, and later still just referred in class to those transitions, rather than looking again and again at the whole lesson plan as she taught the class. She noted in her second life story interview that her change in concerns took on a physical dimension as well, since at first she stayed behind the lectern and later she found herself sitting on the table at the front of the room. We also see her consciously developing a repertoire of skills, learning how to do the backward outline, seeking more information about the concept of "free writing," engaging students in whole-class group presentations, struggling with how to make workshops more effective, conducting conferences, having students take over the board work instead of doing it all herself, giving a pop quiz as a method for holding students accountable for assigned reading that she had begun to suspect they weren't doing.

As part of Leah's reflective nature, we see shades of Joseph Conrad's dictum to writers to "be someone on whom nothing is lost," and indeed Leah looks to many people

to help herself become a better teacher, to become a teacher on whom no lesson is lost. She noted that Danielle and Autum, the two students who spurred her critical event narratives, taught her about appropriate interactions between teacher and student and about the differing needs of differing students. The common thread between these two stories is the need to reach out to students, often in very different ways, but to reach out nonetheless. Danielle didn't need much help and so Leah's approach was appropriately more moderate, more like encouragement, while Autum needed a full frontal assault to get the message that Leah was there to help. In both cases, Leah's role as a teacher was connected to touch and to caring. She reached Danielle through an extensive office conference and a student-generated telephone call. Autum, on the other hand, had to be tracked down, directly addressed, and then, literally touched on the arm to get the message that Leah would help her to write better. We see Leah's dawning awareness of not only the differing needs of her students but her own capacity for gauging her responses to make them appropriate for each student and situation.

Also not lost on Leah were her historic teaching models, the two most important teachers of her educational past. These models provided her with a beginning repertoire, indeed the only one she had. One of these models was the college mentor mentioned earlier who advised her to always have another trick up her sleeve. The other was the high school geometry teacher who provided the object lesson in multiple paths to problem solving. This was the teacher who assigned her class to ask their parents how to get to the professional baseball field in their city, a project that yielded many different responses. Leah mentioned both of these teacher-mentors several times in her multiple documents and interviews. Leah even mentioned a frivolous memory of her geometry

teacher writing, “Rabbit, rabbit, rabbit” on the board the first day of each month—for good luck. She laughed when she told this story, clearly bemused by this memorable yet puzzling anecdote.

Leah was also alert and ready for lessons from her supervisor-teachers. Despite her first life story interview’s admission that she didn’t feel ready to seek help from supervisors because she didn’t know them well enough yet, soon she was accepting and appreciative of the advice her audit supervisor provided, sought out additional help on grading during a grading conference, and found herself aware of her E684 professor’s teaching expertise and availability as a resource. Indeed, Leah implemented that professor’s method of writing the day’s classroom agenda on the marker board.

In the second life story interview, it became apparent that Leah could learn from even the remotest of examples. It turns out that her baby brother was a freshman at an Arizona university and was taking freshman composition. His teacher engaged his class in an obscure activity involving a field trip to the ESL laboratory, where the teacher simply had the class talk to non-English speakers for the class hour. Leah’s brother was still puzzling over this experience a few days later, and Leah not only posited an explanation but derived from this vicarious experience a goal for her own teaching—to make her lessons worthy of her students’ time and continued thinking.

At the first life story interview, Leah had pronounced orientation a remarkable weeklong event that accomplished what four years of teaching might. She had liked the candor of the lecturers, although she wondered about the organization of the training, from large whole-course concerns to small, practical ones. Like several other TAs in this study, this sequencing was frustrating to Leah even though it made sense in terms of

priorities. Leah, like the others, however, needed and wanted to know what to wear, what to be called—that sort of thing—and it weighed on them throughout the training week.

Also, as mentioned earlier, one addition she would have made to the orientation was incorporating more about helping students respond to the criticism they receive on graded assignments, more instruction on how to help them progress and proceed to the next level. She also indicated in her teaching log that she had teaching questions at the end of the course that remained for her unresolved. Specifically, she wondered, “What that we’re teaching will help them [students] most outside of CO150? How can grammar be taught effectively? How can you recover a student who is shutting you out?” Elsewhere in her documents and again in the story swap, Leah indicated concern about whether she had taught any writing or whether she had only been teaching critical thinking. Like other TAs, she made her peace with this by dividing her efforts into class time—where she dealt with critical thinking—and conference time—where she could help the individual student with his or her writing.

Leah’s enthusiasm about her graduate program and her teaching remained relatively high from the beginning to the end of her first semester. She remained excited about the courses she was taking and stayed interested in seeing how she might improve in her effectiveness over time and experience. Her balance of time investment also stayed about the same over the course of the term, with teaching receiving about 60% of her time and energy and her program receiving about 40%.

Overall Leah described her first term as the “hardest thing she had done in her first 23.5 years of life.” She explained to friends back home that “you go from getting your head shrunk in your grad classes” to being in the classroom where I don’t have basic

classroom management skills.” Overall, however, she described it as “a great learning experience,” and one suspects that with her naturally reflective inclinations and her desire to become more effective that she will make a great teacher—whether at the university level or in the public schools.

Tess—Becoming a Teacher in Spite of Herself—Attribution and Agency

While Tess clearly and consistently stated throughout her reflective documents that she had no long-term interest in teaching, the telling of her story, I believe, shows strong evidence that she engaged herself in the effort of teaching and made significant strides toward improved efficacy, perhaps in order to achieve her goal of personal success. Poised at the intersection between her own desires and the desires of her parents, Tess strove throughout her first semester of graduate school to define her adult identity, an identity recently stripped of a partner she thought would last a lifetime. Leaving that potential marriage partner, she put considerable distance (a few thousand miles) between herself and that relationship, in an effort to “stand on her own two feet,” as she put it. As part of this struggle, she showed determination to do well in all her endeavors, and teaching CO150 just happened to be the site of this drama. Tess indicated early on—and reconfirmed this statement at the final interview—that she had no plans to be a teacher after graduate school. Partly this was linked to beliefs she carried about teaching, especially in the college setting, that it’s not “real work in a real job,” as she put it. Partly it had to do with the influence of her parents, who, she believed, indulged her the undergraduate degree in creative writing (poetry) but now would like to see her work for a big company with good benefits—Proctor and Gamble, they suggested.

At the beginning of the semester, recorded in the first life story interview, Tess seemed less in control of her own future and her teaching than I could comfortably observe. She indicated that she had more or less “fallen” [her word] into the graduate program at CSU, that as each piece of paperwork came back confirming her admission and then her assistantship, she grew more committed to the idea of going to graduate school. In the first interview she also indicated that she was “going through the motions” in her coursework because teaching was demanding so much of her. She described teaching as something “to be endured,” and she recognized that her perspective on this was quite different from that of most of her peers. She said that at the beginning she was dividing her time 50-50 but that her mental energy was 70-30 in favor of teaching, and she rated her enthusiasm at the end of her first week as a 6 or 7 for her program and a 4 for teaching. She described her predominant feeling about teaching as “dread.” She said she had hoped graduate school would provide some opportunities for serious thinking, but so far that didn’t seem possible, or likely.

Yet even here, in the first interview, I began to see signs that Tess’s ambitious nature might prevail to make her a decent, if reluctant, teacher after all. She indicated that while the assistantship was mainly useful in order to pay the bills, it was also impossible to adequately approach her teaching with such a dismissive attitude. She would have to work hard, she acknowledged, and she stated a belief that teaching would provide transferable skills she might take into the business world. She also linked the graduate school environment’s highly literate community to the literary center where she had recently worked, recognizing—at least to some extent—her need to be surrounded by educated and literate people. Also, when anticipating the rewards and problems of

teaching in her first term, Tess focused on the possible rewards, saying that her primary motivation was “to be successful,” and she admitted that despite the initial difficulties in her class (ones that would remain consistent throughout the semester) she enjoyed the power of teaching, the knowledge that there were “any number of things” she might do in her own classroom and the heady experience of knowing “something special has been entrusted” to her. She felt it was too much to hope that she might actually teach her students something, but in the second life story interview she acknowledged that she got “a charge” out of seeing her students’ writing improve. The dread she felt so pointedly at the first interview now had its place, as a pre-class anxiety. Five to ten minutes before class began, she would experience maximum anxiety, but once in the classroom, she found it “less traumatic” than she’d expected. She reported, and on more than one occasion I witnessed, that she would stroll the halls right before class recruiting volunteers to go teach her class, and one sensed that she was only half joking.

During the semester things got worse before they got better. She admitted that she started slacking off in her class preparations and never got out of the habit of preparing the hour before class was to begin. On more than one occasion she cancelled classes, justifying her disengagement by saying that she began to perceive the semester and her students “a lost cause.” She found that her students were not doing the reading, and, when asked, could think of no way to enforce the assignments, to hold her students accountable. Then, just when it began to seem that there was not much hope for this new TA to be successful, she herself began to make connections and to generate growth in herself.

First, she began to think about her existing skills. In the first interview, she had indicated that her background in athletics might help her deal with her pre-class jitters, the primary problem she was striving to overcome. At the time it struck me as I listened to Tess that she was just beginning to understand the many ways her athletic background might serve her in this new challenge of teaching. A life-long soccer player who competed at the collegiate level, Tess said that pre-game jitters were familiar to her and that as she'd made her way up the ranks of competitive soccer, the nervousness had just gotten worse and she had learned to deal with it. The bigger the game, she said, the worse the jitters, and she connected this feeling to the anxiety she was feeling before class. She tentatively stated that she had often felt inclined in the middle of soccer games to just pull out, to let someone else step up and do the work, especially when the chips were down, but she had never done that. She thought this applied to her teaching; she would not pull out even though the impulse to do so was there. On the other hand, what Tess did not yet see was the connection between what she loved about sports and what she might conceivably come to love about teaching. I did not push her to make this connection, but she said that the best part of sports was performing, being in front of people and showing off her skills. I was struck that this is one of the many pleasures that teachers (myself included) often report about their daily experience in the classroom.

Reporting her relationships with her peers, Tess said much the same thing that her fellow study participants had said. She said in her first life story interview that the first-year TAs would often talk in the hallways "just to blow off steam" about their common misadventures in the classroom. She indicated that orientation training had been "more than adequate," and that she was finding it possible to discuss teaching ideas and

problems with her supervisors. She was alarmed to learn during the orientation that many of the lecturers had not been provided with much training when they first started their assistantships and she said she simply would not have taught under those circumstances, connecting this feeling to a theme she developed in several of her reflective documents—the theme of fairness.

For Tess, fairness seemed to be wrapped up in reasonable expectations and maintaining balance in one's life. Just as Tess believed she would not have taught under the kind of circumstances her supervisors taught, so too she recalled from her own undergraduate days that she prioritized fun and activities alongside academic work. She stated that she learned just as much from her involvement in student activities as she did in the classroom, and at the time of her interviews she was glad that she had prioritized this balance in her life. To do otherwise, she suggested, would be to cheat herself—and hence the fairness issue. When probed, Tess stated her belief that she would remember this theme when she was dealing with her students as well, since she recognized that any one instructor is “just a blip on their radar.” When she was an undergraduate, she thought it lacking in thoughtfulness when teachers assigned a great deal of homework over Parents' Weekend; similarly, she indicated now that she wants to be aligned with the student calendar herself, to be mindful of it. This is how she set out to enact fairness in her classroom.

In many ways, though, Tess's experience in her first classroom was anything but fair. The particular demographic of her class was 15 males to 4 females, and she described the males as problematic “smart-alecks.” The females, on the other hand, would look at her with pity, and she didn't appreciate that reaction either, although she

suspected that she would enjoy having more females. Tess referred to the young men and women in her class as “boys and girls,” and I believe she showed consistency if not consciousness of these word choices since she also described her students as “problem children.” Over the term, she resorted to “nagging” her students, which is the way that she described her own behavior, and I believe that she set herself up for becoming a pseudo-parent for her students. They responded in kind. They would come to class unenthusiased and unprepared. They would then complain about the day of the week. Tess would respond by reminding them that it was still early in the week and there was work yet to be done. From Tess’s journal we learn that a pattern of student disengagement followed by teacher nagging began to develop.

She made some progress in managing this problem when she conducted a classroom meeting, which she intended to use for re-establishing her version of authority in the classroom and for clearing the air and finding out what her students expected of her and of themselves. This classroom meeting was to become one of Tess’s two critical events, and she would explain that she simply did not feel comfortable with the posture of authority she had assumed by being a “lecturing teacher at the front of the room.” At the classroom meeting, she configured the room in a circle, decentralizing power and authority via the physical dimension. She sat, joining the circle, and debriefed the results of her classroom survey.

Later, however, in her second life story interview, Tess reported the mixed results of this change in approach when she reported, with dismay and surprise, that students seemed to like a traditional classroom with traditional roles. She was familiar with Friere’s condemnation of the banking approach to education, and she suspected that her

students had been lulled into expecting this approach, that CO150 represented an uncomfortable variation from this, and that she had paid a high price for being her students' one experience with a different kind of education. She noted the difficulty some students had participating even in small groups.

Drawing upon her own educational history, having attended a small liberal arts college, she contrasted the experience of her students to her own experience as an undergraduate. Throughout her documents this theme recurs, a sense that she can't connect or identify with her students. By the end of the first semester, she did not appear to feel differently and even seemed to convey a sense of loss for her students, especially in regards to their disengagement from their own learning. She contrasted their experience to her own, recalling how her professors cared about her and took an interest in her. She says that her students don't know how to ask for help, and she ended the term feeling a deep sense of loss for them.

Importantly, Tess connected this theme to the differences between large universities and small colleges, and she indicated an interest in continuing to contemplate these differences. She seemed also to feel her own sense of loss in finding herself at a large university. She recalled being inspired by her first literature class, where the professor read, "A Passionate Shepherd Too Is Love." She wondered aloud (and wistfully) if she might ever inspire an English major among her students.

As further evidence of Tess's adult identity clarification processes, she indicated that a personal goal of hers as a first-semester graduate student was to become a more critical consumer—especially of ideas. She stated a desire to challenge ideas as she was exposed to them in her graduate studies, rather than to accept them categorically, as she

had done in the past. She hoped that in passing along critical consumer skills to her undergraduates, that they, too, might be better equipped for the world.

Yet it was her difficult experience with “J” that pressed her toward her most important identity clarifications this first semester of teaching. J was the student who challenged her de-centralized classroom, who protested his every essay grade, who routinely and rudely challenged Tess’s authority in the composition classroom, questioning her judgments on matters both large and small. In her critical event narratives, she eventually merged her classroom meeting and decentralized classroom with her emerging strength in the face of J. She closed her semester by saying that her time with J had been “invaluable” because it forced her to “confront one of my biggest fears about teaching and that was how to enact a proper measure of authority.” Combining these two events, the classroom meeting and her strong stand with J, Tess concluded: “For me, I need to let my students know that I am human, that I need their help. I need to be somehow on their level but not so much that they are unwilling to respect me or accept my criticism.” This complex declaration of independence on the part of Tess signaled that she had indeed “succeeded,” at least in the articulation of her philosophical goals for teaching and in the reconciliation of two seemingly contradictory positions about her teaching authority.

Further, from studying Tess’s documents, I believe we can see that Tess emerged a more efficacious teacher by the end of the semester. She wondered at that point, when referring to her students’ pattern of absences, of arriving late, of coming to workshops without drafts, of attending class generally unprepared, “if I’m doing them a disservice because . . . I mean I’m still unsure of my role in their actions as far as not doing [their

work.]” By the conclusion, then, I believe we indeed see Tess beginning “to stand on her own two feet,” realizing her own responsibility in her students’ failures as well as successes and carving out a decentralized yet authoritative classroom space for herself—one that she can live comfortably with as a novice teacher.

The Story Swap

The stories conveyed in the Story Swap were (more or less) the same stories already discussed in the critical event portion of this study and thus will not be repeated here. Of interest in the swap, however, are several additional items—1) how the act of oral storytelling in a group performance setting changed the narratives and 2) how the social act of sharing stories reveals new information about the TAs and their teaching concerns and academic personalities, 3) how the group “storied” its own knowledge construction through discussion subsequent to the sharing itself.

First, however, it may be useful to describe how the Story Swap was begun and how it proceeded, providing some quantification of the amount of storytelling of each TA as well as some information about transitions between storytellers before proceeding to an analysis of that storytelling, particularly related to new insights into the stories when delivered orally as well as changes the TAs made to their narratives when transforming them for public performance.

The Story Swap was begun with the request that the TAs hold their initial storytelling to roughly five minutes so that there would be time for discussion. I asked who would like to go first and suggested that each person just tell the story of what happened and save interpretation until all the stories had been told. However, narrative framing being what it is, this plan did not proceed as I suggested. Instead, each TA rather

naturally moved from telling the story of “what happened” to explaining the meaning of the event for his or her teaching. In a few cases the meaning or explanation was actually given before the story. I believe that this framing of explanation is simply inevitable, and it was unrealistic of me to think they could tell their stories without simultaneously interpreting them.

Of particular interest is the way the storytelling was at least somewhat altered with the oral accounts, particularly with (1) a greater consciousness of personal contextualization (this substituted for the narrative funnels in the written accounts) before “spilling the beans” of what happened, (2) of then creating more rhetorical suspense at the climax of the stories, and finally (3) of connecting the stories at the beginning of each participant’s narrative. Of interest, also, is how the stories, when conveyed in a group setting seemed to fulfill different rhetorical purposes, related but not limited to the way they were transitioned into from one to another. Also of interest here is the way that certain new characterizations of the stories follow from the order in which they were given and the rhetorical purpose served by that order. I believe it might also be surmised that certain characterizations of the speakers were created simply by the order and frequency of their participation in the event. Some discussion of these rhetorical features will follow a brief description of the event and the individual participants’ contributions. I will not elaborate on the stories themselves, except for where they differed in this telling from the way they were presented in the (earlier) critical event portion of the analysis.

Of the six TAs, Jen, Mark, Leah, and Tess recorded two over the course of the study. All but Jen shared both of theirs for the public occasion of the story swap. Specifically, Jen elected not to tell the first of her two stories, the one about intending to

resign from her assistantship. Jack and Sadie shared the single event they recorded during the semester.

Once the Story Swap began, Jack wasted no time getting the group started and telling about how he enjoyed his semester of teaching subsequent especially to doing his Pink Floyd class, the critical event he then described. The result of this experience, Jack reported, was his realization of the degree of control he could take over the course and individual lesson plans. His narrative spans 70 lines of transcript or approximately 1,000 words and exudes his confidence in the classroom. Overall, I believe he characterizes his first teaching experience as triumphant victory over initially difficult circumstances.

Next came Jen whose overall first-term teaching experience was, of course, quite different from Jack's. Jen, after all, had decided by 1/4 of the way through the term that she would discontinue her assistantship. Interestingly, however, she did not reveal this decision to her peers during the Story Swap and instead told only the second of her narratives, attaching to it two rather different overall themes which suggests she may have been thinking of both her written narratives while only "going public" with one of them. Specifically, she first talks about authenticity issues; of wishing she could just be herself in class ("I was not giving them my best") and struggling with a syllabus that was anything but her own. She moves from this point to the idea she settles on for the Story Swap, the idea gleaned from her second narrative, the difference between "student time" and "teacher time," and her learning to accept that students will learn on their own schedule rather than the schedule imposed by semesters and teachers. Her narrative spans 87 lines of transcript or 1,200 words, and it is at first difficult to see her censorship of the larger story as something other than a fictionalization of Jen's overall experience,

perhaps intended to help her save face with her peers. However, another way of looking at her decision is to theorize that Jen was trying salvage the term, to pass along something ennobling and potentially transferable from her experience—a teaching experience that, in her mind at least, she had summed up as “failure.” (Recall that in her second life story interview she described herself as unsuccessful in both teaching and her classes.)

Next up was Mark, perhaps the most philosophical of the TAs. Mark separately summarized both narratives that he contributed to the study, one involving realization of his authority in the classroom and the other involving the occasionally heady excitement of classroom teaching—those moments of “electricity” when teacher and students are “synchronized.” Mark’s oral account spans 165 lines of transcript or 2,300 words, roughly twice the length of the first two, and conveys that his teaching of CO150 was not only a positive experience but occasionally “intoxicatingly pleasurable.” Mark’s performance of his narration stood, of course, in stark contrast to Jen’s, although this recognition probably belonged only to Jen and to me. He conveys his unexpected triumph with a student whom he expected to challenge him on a grade and his pleasure in the “momentary ecstasy” of moments when the teacher becomes creator and the classroom becomes “synchronized.”

Fourth in line was Sadie who made a connection to Mark’s optimal experience narrative, describing the first successful day of discussion in her class, a time when things went well and her entire day was positively transformed as a result. At 66 lines of transcript or roughly 900 words, Sadie’s narrative was one of the shortest. Of interest in Sadie’s account is both her brevity and her contextualization of “her story of triumph.” Her brevity in the oral narrative was followed by similar brevity (low level of

involvement) in the follow-on discussion. Her reticence in the discussion was consistent, however, with other disclosures she made about herself during the course of the study related to being quiet in the classroom. Also, her contextualization of her triumphant day of discussion tempered her story, making it less victorious than one might expect. She accomplished this by framing her day of good discussion within a larger pattern of failed discussions and generally disappointed expectations. This larger framing served to humble her story, to make it both more realistic and more comforting to her peer-listeners, rather than a boast or brag.

Leah went next, and she described two events that she brought together under the heading of meeting the needs of individual learners. Here she left out certain other aspects of her written narrative, specifically the phone call she received from one of her students that challenged her to consider how accessible she should make herself to her students. Her oral account of these events spanned 140 lines of transcript material or approximately 2,000 words and was the third longest of the orally narrated accounts. Listening to Leah's account, one gets the sense that she may have been the TA who most consciously sought a pedagogically illuminating first semester of teaching; she seems, after all, to have purposely set out to learn how to make herself a more effective teacher, and she found clarification in the experiences she had with two students.

The final pair of stories was provided by Tess who again described two major events under a single heading of "redefining classroom authority." Tess's narrative spanned 190 lines of transcript or approximately 2,700 words and was the longest of the six. Her initial discussion of her event seems to focus on issues of authenticity—related to the syllabus and to her role in the classroom. She describes herself as an actor, playing

a role, an imposter. Later she connects back to lessons from the two experiences in the classroom. Her oral account seems to bring together—and cast light on—her two critical events in ways that the written account did not. Perhaps with each iteration of story telling the reasons for bringing the two stories together become clearer to both narrator and listener.

Having summarized the nature and content of the story swap, there may be some merit in examining the transitions these TAs made between their stories. Jack made his initial overtures into his story by distancing his story from mine, clarifying his intention to attribute his teacher-story and lessons derived to himself rather than to any particular behavior of a student. Here we see Jack taking responsibility for his teaching and carefully separating a “student problem” story (mine) from a “teaching discovery” story (his). He pointed out in this transition that he had a “good class” with “no real problems.”

Jen followed Jack by connecting to Jack’s initial comments about discomfort with the syllabus. However, while Jack’s narrative quickly distances itself from this discomfort and focuses on how he dealt with making the provided lessons original and workable for himself, Jen seems to selectively have heard only the first part of Jack’s story, a misunderstanding that begins to compound over the course of the swap, leading both Jen and Tess to connect to Jack’s initial syllabus discomfort rather than the way he decided to deal with this discomfort, which was the larger point of his narrative.

The movement from Jen to Mark is without concrete connection—that is, Mark does not draw a parallel to another TA’s story to make his transition. He begins instead by suggesting that there may be parallels or similarities between his own two narratives.

Nevertheless, one gets the feeling that Mark, like Jack before him, is offering his narrative as antidote to the previous one (Jen's), just as Jack did that in response to mine.

Sadie, on the other hand, says, "I think mine relates to Mark's in the sense that it was an 'I can do this' moment." As such, Sadie draws hers and Mark's stories together, looking for connecting threads as a way of launching her own story and indeed one can see similarities in the discoveries of Mark and Sadie that they were both allowed to momentarily see/feel success in the classroom and that the surprise was not only in the success but in the good feelings those successes generated in each of them. However, Sadie's story ultimately seems more bittersweet, as her point is that it doesn't take much to keep a teacher going, just a good moment here and there, while Mark's story seems to make more of the visceral pleasure, the performance "high" of classroom teaching.

Leah uses no transition device and draws no parallel between her experience and any of the previous ones, and her focus is thus characterized as quite different from the preceding narratives. Indeed, one realizes in listening to all these stories juxtaposed that Leah's interest in individual student needs (and how these differed for the two students in question) differs substantially from the previous narratives, which have focused more on whole-class and teacher preoccupations.

Tess then makes her transition with a direct reference to Jack's opening moments, drawing again upon a problem that Jack characterized himself as having overcome, the "someone else's words" problem associated with the provided syllabus, which Jack solved by "working hard" to find original ways to convey the course content. In reality Tess might have better connected to Jen on the syllabus issue or might have connected to Leah in light of the individual student Tess struggled to help. Or different still, she might

have connected with Sadie on the ability of a class day to shape one's outlook long after class. Instead she chose to connect to the syllabus discomfort. Three separate times during this story swap we hear TAs saying they struggled with “using someone else’s words,” a phrase that by this point has become a refrain or, perhaps, TA folklore.

Storytelling Features—Contextualization (the Narrative Funnel) and Rhetorical Suspense

To provide context for his story, Jack gave background on himself and the fact that he’s a 2nd-year graduate student, unlike the other TAs in the study, and that he got comfortable with being a student again before he tried the assistantship. Also initially, he says, he was uncomfortable with speaking the words provided for him in the syllabus (“I could hear myself talking, felt like they weren’t my words. I was telling my students someone else’s words and this felt awkward”) and so it was only the third class day, on the first occasion of being observed, that Jack felt compelled to somehow take hold of the syllabus and make it his own (“how I could incorporate something of myself”), and he connects this to performance stress, saying “I didn’t want [my audit supervisor] sitting, watching while this discussion went flat on a complicated essay.” He then provides a brief distillation of “what happened,” explaining how he connected the popular song lyrics to reading/text marking strategies and how the themes of the assigned reading and the song connected on the topic of materialism and consumerism. Then he moves quickly to the lesson he took from this event, saying, “What I realized from that is not only that I need to put more of myself into my lesson plans, make things so they seem to me more down to earth, but also make students feel like it’s something they can relate to by starting on their own territory, popular culture, songs . . . so I learned to get out of academic territory every now and then and start it on something more simple my students

could relate to.” This, he concludes, also made him feel “more comfortable being in front of the classroom.” One notes here that Jack makes reference to “the front of the classroom” rather than just presence in the classroom, so even here we see reference made to the authority role or teacher posture.

Another notable feature of Jack’s storytelling is the relative brevity of it, perhaps explained by his order in the storytelling and his awareness that his audience also needs to hear the stories of five others in the space of one hour. So Jack moves rather directly from a brief narrative funnel in which he characterizes the whole semester (“all class went fairly smoothly”) to the immediate situation (“So the third day of class, the second week, I was on a slow upswing, I was being observed...”) and he establishes the classroom context of discussing the Fiske essay very briefly before “spilling the beans” to explain what he did with the Pink Floyd song and what he learned from it. This is a distillation of the story, a compact version, and one that seems especially conscious of time and audience constraints.

Subsequent to Jen’s transition into her story, she tells the second of her two written narratives; the one about the student who did not pay attention to the essay that was read for class and then discussed in class, the one about students failing to take responsibility for their actions. She precedes her summation of this story with more contextualization of this student’s actions, explaining that Jen had been working with her, trying to encourage her, when this event occurred and caught Jen by surprise. It is interesting and somewhat puzzling that she connects this event (which might be used for any number of teaching/learning lessons) to her analysis that “what I realized through working with her more after that, but specifically from that situation, was that it was OK

that they weren't getting what I was teaching them because honestly a lot of things I teach them they aren't gonna get until two months from now, a month from now." Later in the narrative this interpretation is reinforced by Jen's saying, "From that day on, I realized it doesn't matter if they're not getting it right now. If I'm giving them as much as I can, then eventually it will sink in, whatever's relevant to them, whatever's important to them, they will get, and it doesn't matter if they get it right now." One senses something of an abdication of her teaching responsibility here that may reflect the larger (unstated) context of Jen's imminent resignation.

In terms of the storytelling itself, one notes that Jen is a natural storyteller, who takes time spinning her tale, building suspense around her climactic moment. She says, "And right after we read that, right after we talked about it, right after they wrote about it, she comes up and says, as if she hadn't been there as we were writing about it and reading it and discussing it..." Then, after she finally spills her student's "punch line" ("I don't have my essay ready...." Jen reiterates her point, driving it home through a repetitive construction: "So here she was right after we had just talked about it, and you know extensively wrote about it, read about, talked about it with each other, and she was doing the exact thing"

Mark's narrative uses an attention-grabbing opener in which he bridges his two stories, saying, "One involved a student and one was just me at my computer." His contextualization or narrative funnel begins with a history of the student in question, explaining that this story involves grading and Mark's concerns about giving a bad grade to a student who already seemed "standoffish." He then provides detail about her behavior prior to the event, clarifying her pattern of absences and the fact that he caught

her doing other homework during class time. He builds narrative suspense through the storytelling technique of time expansion, adding that he was nervous about telling this student to redo her paper, was afraid he would “totally lose her.” Mark then signals the turn in the story when he announces that he was surprised when the student actually came to a scheduled conference (“Oh wow, they’ll actually do this. They say they’ll do it and they did it!”) Now we know we’re approaching the climax, and indeed this moment of surprise or revelation is then followed (and topped) by Mark’s additional surprise that his student understood and agreed with his comments about her paper. (“I was like oh my gosh...she bought it!”) This climactic moment is then followed by the classic reduction of narrative energy that signals denouement and here takes the form of “the teaching lesson.” Mark explains that despite his lack of confidence regarding his right to be in the classroom, he learned “that authority doesn’t derive from your professional experience or six Ph.D.’s hanging from the wall but more from your willingness to help students as they need it.”

Mark’s second narrative is given in summary, with far less narrative suspense created. He sums it up quite simply, perhaps aware of the clock ticking and saying, “. . . whenever you make these lesson plans you have this sort of blank slate of time that you sort of put this imprint onto and you create out of nothing in some sense.” This momentary ecstasy is then followed by the real experience of class, in which, “you bring it to class and that’s all wonderful and great but it’s not worth anything because you could walk into class and things can just totally go awry.” And finally Mark connects these two events with a larger teaching point regarding “reciprocity of effort,” saying, “There’s this element of reciprocity that goes on,” and “and so there’s this give and take

between you and your class. And so the lesson plan you create is just another medium that gets manipulated by the interplay between you and your class by this reciprocity.” Mark then makes an additional point about those special moments when things come together, when you are “synchronized with your class, when you’re both on the same page... it’s almost adrenaline of sorts, but it’s sort of fleeting and it’s so difficult to capture that I described it as a ‘will-o-the-wisp.’” He says the creation act and those fleeting moments of synchronicity are what make this job interesting, dynamic.”

Here we see that Mark doesn’t so much tell his story as spin it, as he demonstrates his ability to take a few simple events and make much of them, weaving meaning to make several analyses. We see Mark’s capacity for abstract thinking demonstrated here as well, perhaps more than his storytelling ability, as his narrative seems to go on longer than it needs to.

Sadie tells her story in a classically endearing way, from sympathetic character cast in difficult circumstances, to triumph, to humble (understated) interpretation. She establishes the sympathetic nature of her principal character (herself) by explaining first her disillusionment and her failure to get discussions going in class (“Like I’d remember thinking back to orientation and all these ‘Get your class to discuss and learn’ and ‘It’s not really a lecture format.’ And I was like that’s a phenomenon that doesn’t happen. That’s not real. They’re lying to me.”) Then she quickly takes us to the climax, the one day of class when discussion did happen and how she didn’t even realize what an occasion it was until she left class and found herself floating happily (metaphorically speaking, of course) out of the Clark Building.

Now she rhetorically prolongs the moment, giving us that time expansion so common to the climactic point in a story, and she does it by interjecting a literary allusion, as reference to a teaching story all in attendance at this story swap had read. She says she realized that “this is not the most terrible profession on earth, as Chris Anson described [it] in the narrative we read.” Sadie quotes from this essay from memory, reminding all present that Anson felt that in composition “he stumbled into the most distasteful profession on earth.” So we see Sadie drawing on the teaching canon these TAs share, finding familiar and fertile ground. I believe we see a teaching canon in the making here, a new story added to an old story.

Sadie further enlarges this shared moment with her self-deprecating revelation about the way she’d been thinking about teaching: “This is horrible, and this is what I’ve chosen as a career, not just for the next three years.” She somewhat dissipates this moment, however, with her subsequently pat (and concluding) point: “And I guess what I kind of learned from that is that what keeps you teaching is those few and far between moments when you catch the light.”

Looked at this way it is possible to see Sadie’s brief narrative not as “too little” but as the most generous of all the critical events shared in the swap, the kind of narrative that shares misery, that heals, the kind they all referred to as important in first days of teaching when they walked through the hallways of Eddy and shared how they’d “messed up” in class. One wonders how the tenor of the entire story swap might have been affected if Sadie had begun the series of stories, whether all of them might have been more revelatory of their own doubts and frailties.

Leah's oral narrative provides a great deal of detail in the profiling of the two students she discusses in her narrative—categorizing them, distancing them and their writing issues from one another. These are thorough descriptions, providing ample detail for a listener to understand these students and Leah's rather thorough understanding of their differences. Leah's stories about these two students go on at some length and carry less of the narrative interest of most of the other ones. Rather, her point seems to be clarification of the distinguishing features of these two students and her differing responses to them. For purposes of clarity and brevity, then, perhaps it is not surprising that Leah leaves out the facet of this story that involves the student phone call and Leah's struggle to establish appropriate lines of familiarity with her students. One supposes that she sensed her story was going on too long so she skips this point and moves to her conclusion, or denouement, saying that she would cross the personal line sooner with her students next time. She tells the group she wants to work on intuiting student needs and trying to meet them sooner and better.

Tess's narrative is ultimately less "event description" than exploration of the connecting thread between two seeming unrelated events, a classroom meeting that she conducted a few weeks into class and a semester-long trial she endured with a particular student. Both items, we eventually learn, provided insight into Tess's enactment of authority in the classroom. In Tess's oral narration, she describes her context, the narrative funnel out of which she was working when she decided to do the classroom meeting, saying, "I felt I was just playing a role, I was just acting. I was getting up there trying to do the syllabus, and it wasn't working very well." She then summarizes (in quick order) the classroom meeting she conducted with her students, the compilation of

their responses, the delivery of the findings to the class, and a description of the renewed enthusiasm she felt subsequent to this event.

However, she then complicates the story through the exploration of one unexpected outcome of the classroom meeting, the prolonged defiance and challenge then posed by a particular student, “J,” who started complaining the day of the classroom meeting and never stopped for the rest of the semester. Tess then develops this part of her narrative, explaining the serious writing problems and social unease of this student. The narrative, like the continuing nature of the unhappy relationship she shared with this student, then takes us through a series of miserable moments, prolonging them so that we live them vicariously. We gain an appreciation for what Tess was going through, the lasting nature of it and when we learn that she never surrendered to his constant challenges, that she stood her ground, we begin to see the triumph in this story of teaching difficulty.

By the end, we realize that the moderated authority position she carved out for herself through the classroom meeting was only part of the larger story of her discovered strength in the face of a personal challenge to her authority. Hearing her tell it, we gain an appreciation for the complexity of the story, the complexity of the authority issues she confronted, and the rather stunning personal growth of this TA as reflected in her story’s conclusion. Having told the whole story, she then summarizes with the kind of complex denouement this story requires. Specifically, she tells us that just when she was figuring out the kind of shared authority she wished to create in the classroom, along came “J,” who articulated the polar opposite approach and tried to demand it of her. She stood her ground, however, and J eventually sought the assistance of the writing center and

grudgingly accepted the idea that while it would be easier for Tess to just give him good grades than to continue to work with him, she stayed the course. In conclusion, Tess says she recognizes that her first semester provided her with important opportunities to define herself as a teacher, to carve out the space she wishes to inhabit in the classroom. It would seem that Tess accomplished her goal of becoming “successful” in that she resolved this difficult situation on her own terms.

The Discussion That Followed

Perhaps as important as the stories themselves was the discussion that followed in which the TAs analyzed the stories, suggesting the common themes they heard in the stories. Then to put some closure on their first semester of teaching I asked them to have some fun by graphing their waves of enthusiasm over the course of the semester. For this latter event, I asked the TAs to plot their teaching enthusiasm (y-axis) over time (x-axis marking off weeklong units of a 16-week semester).

During this discussion, the common themes/issues that the TAs identified from the story swap included: 1) personal authenticity—being, finding, and trusting ourselves as teachers and as deliverers of a curriculum/syllabus, 2) the student responsibility or what might be called the “reciprocity of effort” dictum that states it is simply obligatory for students in a course like freshman composition to participate, 3) authority in the classroom, both in terms of control and content, 4) drawing boundaries between student and teacher 5) the “intoxicating pleasure” and debilitating misery of days spent in the classroom 6) attentiveness and responsiveness to the differing learning styles of students and the proper exercise of varied approaches for teaching effectiveness.

During the course of this follow-on discussion, there were 31 dialogue exchanges.

(See Table 9 for a graphic representation of this discussion.)

Table 9

Recurring Themes Discussion—Sequence and Content

J →	JK →	J →	L →	S →
TAs want ownership & control of material. They have a human need to feel connected.	Participation is the key element and deficiency. Writing and class are both dialogue.	Student lives and the work they do in class are connected.	Goal: To be a teacher who is not a friend but is accessible.	Joke re: student absenteeism
L →	M →	L →	JK →	M →
Describes tricks she developed to help her wait for student participation.	Connects to JK and the intoxicating pleasure one derives from classroom experience.	Different students have different learning styles. Hopes to be responsive to these.	Yet some students likely hate every approach so variety is needed.	Agrees and says this is an argument for casting a wide net.
S →	J →	T →	JK →	ALL →
Yet the egocentrism of students leads them to an inability to see that their peers' needs may differ from their own.	Egocentrism also leads to blaming teachers instead of taking personal responsibility for successes and failures.	Believes, however, that the biggest problem with CO150 is student engagement.	Argues that some students will never be engaged, no matter the subject; teachers must still try; not an excuse for failing to try. Gives example of changes he'll make to Essay 2	The entire group participates in an explanation of why they dislike Essay 2
R →	R →	J →	R →	L & M →
Asks group to discuss small classroom adjustments made on the fly. J & L reply.	Asks group if they would like to discuss reciprocity issue more? M replies.	Joke: "What assignment sheet"	Introduces posited self-task-learner development and enthusiasm scale. Asks TAs to respond	Both of these TAs note that they experienced the S-T-L process during each unit
JK →	T →	JK →	T →	J & M →
Addresses Essay 3 and concern he had about whether he taught critical thinking or writing.	Believes the course is more about critical thinking than writing.	Still, in Week 10 student writing improvement was noted.	Conferences revealed writing improvement to this TA.	TAs discuss the importance of conferences, in meeting individual student writing issues.
JK →	J →			
Looking at the enthusiasm graphs of his fellow TAs, he says, "You guys didn't have much fun, did you?"	Announces within the context of the enthusiasm graph that she can't do this, meaning teach this course. Other TAs don't hear the full message.			

Key: J = Jen JK = Jack L = Leah M = Mark S = Sadie T = Tess

Jen and Jack contributed six times each, Mark offered comment five times, Tess spoke up four times, Leah three times, and Sadie twice. On one point, about 2/3 of the way through the discussion, Jack indicated that, despite problems with student engagement, he would strive to improve the syllabus and take responsibility for doing his best to improve it, beginning with a revision to the Essay 2 assignment for next term. This clear statement of Jack's belief in himself, what might be described as a strong sense of teacher efficacy, was followed by a "group dump" on Essay 2, in which all of the participating TAs expressed their displeasure with that particular assignment.

It took my intervention to end this part of the discussion, and I redirected the conversation toward three additional items at that point—1) what they thought about classroom improvisation, those minute-by-minute adjustments in the classroom, 2) what they wanted to say additionally about the "reciprocity of effort" expected of their students and 3) what they thought about their advancement along a path from self to task to learner, drawing their attention to the items on the board, and finally, 4) a request on my part that they graph their changing levels of enthusiasm for teaching over the course of the semester.

The first two questions yielded little in the way of additional discussion, but the last request led to an extended conversation in which four of the TAs analyzed their own progress, declaring Essay 3, or approximately Week 10, along with conferencing to have been the keys to their movement away from extreme egocentrism toward a beginning recognition of their students' needs and growth. An unexpected revelation was that both Leah and Mark described their preoccupations as moving from self to task to learner

during each of the three units, so that by the end of each unit they were really looking to see what their students were learning while at the beginning they were simply overwhelmed by their own issues of logistics, content comprehension, and credibility in the classroom.

Finally, the TAs graphed their enthusiasm levels over the term and these graphs provided some moments of comic relief as they observed one another's depictions. (See Appendix H for these TAs enthusiasm graphs). Jack started the laughter when he commented, "Hey, you guys didn't have much fun, did you?" They then admired one another's graphs and commented on the shapes, noticing that several looked like a U-curve while a few of the others looked like "McDonald's arches," with repeat undulations.

The final comment was made by Jen, who said, "My graph shows that I started out feeling good but nervous. Then it shows me realizing, 'I can't do this.'" Although her graph showed an upsurge in enthusiasm (consistent with her remarks in Life Story Interview II), her comment, of course, did not. She did not say, "And here I am feeling excited again, looking forward to the next semester." Thus, what Jen didn't say marked this as quite a momentous conclusion for the Story Swap event, although none of us realized it at the time. Nevertheless, here was Jen, revealing her true feelings after all, suggesting in a public way what she wasn't able to say when she told her story earlier in the meeting. In short, she would not be coming back.

Summary of the Story Swap

I believe that the Story Swap provides us with a new window on the events these TAs had previously described. It also made possible TA sharing of these stories with one

another. Additional positive outcomes for the TAs from sharing these stories include enhanced appreciation for the value of reflective processing of events, vicarious teaching experience and lessons learned, healing and mutual caring enacted through sharing and consolation, mutual admiration for the skills of one's peers, and enhanced appreciation for the complexity of the act of teaching.

The stories themselves reveal moments of breakthrough, triumph, pleasure, leveling, and clarification. They also fail to reveal, in some cases, the more important features of what is going on for these new teachers and we are reminded that such events are performances rather than pure reflections of inner truths. As such, while story-swapping offers another avenue toward meaning-making and holds the potential for adding yet another layer to the accumulated knowledge base of these young professionals, the Story Swap should also be understood to only offer yet another, quite limited reflection, of the inner (and complex) workings of peoples' minds.

Additional Findings—Focus Groups

2nd-Year Focus Group

The second-year TA focus group consisted of five TAs. However, two were absent on the day of the focus group meeting and added their comments after the fact, having read the transcript of the meeting and made arrangements to add their comments to the transcript. The focus group members were given the following pseudonyms: Kathy, Scott, Hannah, Lola, and P.B. The focus group meeting lasted one hour, and the follow-up discussion with the two absentees lasted just under 45 minutes. I asked the 2nd-year TAs to review the Story Swap transcript from the 1st-year TAs and to discuss whether their experiences seemed similar to their own. I also asked them to consider the

relationship of their own life stories to their current teaching practices. Third, I asked these TAs to tell about both historical (1st-year) and more recent (2nd-year) critical events from their own teaching. The information these 2nd-year TAs shared can be divided into the following categories: (1) reactions to the stories (recorded and read from transcript) of the 1st-year TAs, (2) past and present teaching concerns of their own (3) past and present critical events of their own, (4) life story connections that they see between their own educational life stories and the teaching that they enact, (5) beliefs and convictions they subscribe to, (6) concerns about the training provided TAs in this department and (7) teaching discoveries they have made in just under two full years of teaching.

Reactions to the 1st-year Story Swap were consistently initiated by Kathy, who identified at least three major themes in the 1st-year TA data. Specifically, Kathy saw issues of control/discipline, problems with students that seem to occur around graded events, and the tendency of new teachers to fail to make connections and expectations explicit. Kathy's first entry into the focus group discussion revolved around her sense that the 1st-year TAs were inadequately connecting classroom activities to course goals, as suggested by their complaint that students found write-to-learns to be busywork. She indicated that the busywork complaint had not been a problem for her since she made connecting these pieces (and making those connections explicit) a central goal of her teaching. She also observed that a difficulty 2nd-year TA Scott had with discussion seemed to be connected to issues of control in the classroom, a theme that she again saw emerging from the 1st-year story swap. In this case, Scott had indicated that he found discussion was aided by providing specific instructions and then holding the students accountable via classroom presentations. Third, Kathy pointed out that problems with

specific students (including the story that I told) seemed to be tied up with grading and graded events. She wondered, she said, if we adequately explained grading before we awarded grades, suggesting that the failure to do so would explain the angry reactions of the student I encountered (in 1992) and a similar encounter that Hannah had shared with the focus group.

Other members of the focus group, particularly Scott, seemed to identify more with the problems articulated by the 1st-years. He indicated that he too had trouble investing in the curriculum, did indeed have trouble with grading, and had struggled with the inherent values of the syllabus. He also conveyed problems with time management and general discomfort in the classroom, both of which were similar to the discomforts experienced by the 1st-year TAs.

Identifying their own past and present teaching concerns, Scott and Hannah were more forthcoming with both personal stories and past issues than was Kathy. However, it does seem that Kathy recognized the frustrating “irresponsibility of many undergraduates” as one she recognized, commenting, however, that “there’s no bag of tricks” for responding to such issues, that they are too varied to lend themselves to a single or stock set of responses. More recently, Kathy indicated that she is concerned with grade inflation and the need to tow the line with freshman composition. She reported that she talks about grade inflation a great deal in class in order to clarify that in her class, and hopefully throughout freshman composition, “average is a C.” Kathy also indicated that she had developed a new discomfort with the syllabus and its “assumptions of homogeneity,” despite the fact that she was totally satisfied and comfortable with the syllabus prior to this semester. She said, “I can’t recapture the feeling.” Scott, identifying

past teaching concerns, said getting the big picture of the units/course as well as investing in the mandated curriculum was what eluded him initially in his teaching. More recently, grading, especially among upper classmen taking creative writing, had been a concern, as had communication between himself and his students, and the risk of offending religious students. Hannah suggested that feeling disappointed with students was something she had to deal with early in her teaching. Also, her experience with the troublesome student (similar to my own) suggests that individual students and management of problematic behaviors had been a concern for her. More recently, Hannah said, she had been concerned about the secular, liberal values eschewed by the standard CO150 syllabus. She wondered why the university presents itself as a value-free place and asked, in relationship to the cultural criticism approach of CO150 and its intolerance of religious affiliation and reference, “Can’t people of faith think critically?”

All but one of the 2nd-year TAs, P.B., indicated that their number one concern today revolves around the “assumptions of homogeneity” implicit to the current cultural criticism approach of the course. Kathy began this discussion, saying that she was awakened to the assumptions of the curriculum when she taught a key academic community section of the course, which is geared toward high-risk students. These students, she found, simply didn’t fit the mold suggested by the course’s cultural premises. Scott followed Kathy’s lead by saying that he believed the problems begin with the master syllabus, which discusses cultural norms as if everyone concerned shares them. Hannah indicated that given the secular assumptions, she found herself representing a point of view she couldn’t defend. She believes that assumptions of homogeneity are made about not only the undergraduates who take the course but about

the graduate students who teach them. She felt it was often assumed that all graduate students subscribe to a secular, liberal philosophy and she does not. In training, she says, they learned how to deal with “the problem” of students citing religious texts, while “non-religious citations are never questioned.”

On this issue, Scott clarified that while he does not have particular religious leanings, he nonetheless believes that the assumption of a universal liberal secularism is dangerous for academics to make. In a related revelation, Lola indicated that in her honors course, a student asked her how to make a religious citation, given the fact that the head instructor had articulated his disdain for “Biblical literalism.” Lola then found herself thinking back over warnings given in TA training that they should “be careful for fundamentalist Christians.” She says the implication was that fundamentalist Christians are the only students who might be expected to struggle with critical thinking. She describes herself as a person of faith who has found her graduate studies to bring both “miserable and enlightening tension” to the philosophical underpinnings she was taught as an undergraduate at a Christian university.

Among their experiences conveyed by these 2nd-year TAs were several critical events. Kathy conveyed a critical event that she had recorded in E684 the year earlier. In this story, she told of a time when she taught junior high school and had a student about whom she made certain negative and incorrect assumptions. She used this story to caution the group about relying on intuitive judgments about students, a goal that Leah, of the 1st-year group, had settled on by the end of the term. Scott told two stories, one about communicating with students and the trouble he had with a particular one who called him a “good cop,” meaning that this student supposed he was forced by his

position to enforce a flawed system. Through sustained efforts at communicating with this student, Scott felt he avoided any serious conflicts with the student. Scott also told a story that conveyed his discomfort with “assumptions of homogeneity.” In one student group in his CO150 class he had an affluent suburban girl, who boasted that her dad had bet her \$50,000 that she wouldn’t finish her degree, while next to her sat a Mexican immigrant whose father’s cab driver job was paying her way through the university. Scott was struck by the differences in these two women’s life experiences and the odd fact of their partnership in a cultural criticism exercise. This experience forced Scott to reexamine the course content and his own assumptions.

Hannah first told the story of her troubled student and the departmental support she received in responding to him. She told a second story of a student who used writing for action in the university community and a third regarding an incorrect intuitive response she made about a student who was in a fraternity yet made important contributions to the course.

Lola told about her first teaching experience with an honors class of junior high school students who were unable to handle the freedom of her classroom; Lola’s next teaching experience was CO150 where she tried to control the class too much. She said she has learned to moderate both tendencies. Lola also had a story to tell about a student who emailed her to convey her confusion and desperation as a student, and Lola used this experience to learn about student agency and self-advocacy.

P.B. told about a student “who would spend a lot time trying to shock me, trying to get me on edge.” This student asked P.B., “How can you do this? Don’t you hate it” referring to the teaching of composition. P.B. responded honestly, that she felt it “a

privilege to be paid to teach something she's talented in and loves." Ironically, P.B. reported, her most problematic student forced her to articulate the deep feelings she had for the course and for teaching. This point echoes the similar experience of Tess, whose growth as a teacher was triggered by a problematic student.

Each of the five 2nd-year TAs also conveyed life story connections that they make to their teaching. Kathy's desire to connect course activities to the course itself is rooted, she says, in her own frustration with courses she has taken that failed to do this. Scott indicated that the absence of models for CO150 and active classrooms contributed to his discomfort with teaching. Hannah drew upon her own high level of responsibility as a student to comment on her frustration with the absence of such commitment among her students. Lola's story of the out-of-control junior high honors class makes a direct connection between an early teaching experience and a later moderation and clarification of her teaching approach/philosophy. Lola also drew upon the experience of her parents (one a first grade teacher and the other a college professor) to determine that teaching will not be her life's work, because "she doesn't want to work that hard for her whole career." P.B. also drew upon her experience as the daughter of teachers, learning especially that she does not aspire to become the kind of teacher her mother is, "a sea of knowledge at the front of the classroom" who is respected and admired as an expert in her field. P.B. said she deals with the struggle daily between her models and her aspirations: "It's sort of going against the models of education that I got." P.B.'s point here reminds us of Leah's (1st-year TA) distancing herself from her father's views of educational achievement.

Beliefs and convictions that the 2nd-year TAs subscribe to include Kathy's belief that teachers are the primary agents for their success or failure in the classroom. Through her reactions to various experiences conveyed in the focus group and recorded from the Story Swap transcription, we see a highly consistent pattern of conviction, which holds that most teaching problems can be solved or avoided through better practice. Kathy is a teacher who solidly believes in teacher agency and efficacy. As such, Kathy maintains that student dissatisfaction/misunderstandings, grade disputes, and classroom control are all factors that can be managed and controlled by an effective teacher, elements that can be improved via a teacher's expanded repertoire. It is perhaps not surprising to recall that Kathy has public school teaching experience and brings with her not only more experience in the classroom but also far more methods and classroom management than her peers. Ranking the stated goals of composition—writing as choice, writing as process, and writing as a function of culture—Kathy said that she would invert the order, believing that writing as a function of culture must come first in order to assure engagement of students, to maximize their motivation to participation in writing and classroom discourse.

Scott, a creative writer, believes in fostering a positive climate in his classroom, where “all can have a voice.” Yet he also acknowledged that he is highly opinionated and his teaching models were philosophers “who never explained much, who just walked in and started talking.” Further, Scott expressed his disgust for the gender-specific bullying that he has witnessed and heard about, where female teachers experience a higher level of authority challenges than do males. On a different note, Scott articulated the disappointed feelings he had experienced around teaching, the sense of betrayal he felt

when his deep caring about students and their work was greeted by weak and half-motivated performance. He admitted that particularly at the beginning of his teaching of freshman composition he substituted investment in students for investment in the curriculum. Rank ordering the goals of the course, he said he believes that revision is of paramount importance, which may reflect his work as a practicing writer.

Hannah's beliefs/convictions, as articulated here, revolve around her discomfort with the cultural criticism approach of freshman composition, where there seems, at least to Hannah, little opportunity to verify and validate values once they have been critically questioned and challenged. Hannah correlated the assumptions made about her with the assumptions made about students, suggesting that the same erroneous conviction about their homogeneity are held regarding both graduate and undergraduates students. Lola was loathe to repudiate the central value system she grew up with (Christianity), and she stated her belief that there is hypocrisy in an approach that is critical of every ideology except the dominant one of the local culture—which is to say that the secular liberalism of the American university functions transparently to those who are part of it while seeming recklessly prejudicial to those outside of it. One cannot help but see here the similarities of Hannah's feelings on this issue to those expressed by minority groups within majority communities, an observation made doubly poignant by the fact that the course presumably questions mainstream cultural values.

Lola's beliefs were quite similar to Hannah's, as it turns out, and there was reference made that the two TAs have discussed these issues privately. Lola seemed a bit less conflicted on the issue only because she does not envision herself teaching in the long run. Another belief/conviction that Lola communicated was her sense of higher

authority once having become a married woman. She felt that she gained rather instantaneously greater authority from her changed marital status, saying that she had always struggled with appearing young—presumably, too young to teach: “It made me feel like they were less likely to think of me as someone who was only a few years older than they were.” Of interest here is the importance of marriage to these young women. Both P.B. and Lola of the 2nd-year focus group and Jen and Tess of the 1st-years spoke of their marital or near-marital status.

P.B.’s beliefs seem to cohere around her investment in an active, decentralized classroom—and the departure this represents from her major teaching model, her mother. P.B., like Lola, believes that her marital status also gives her greater authority in the classroom, her ring serving as “a sort of signal that you’ve entered into an adult world and that there is this mark of distinction.” P.B. admits routine frustration with the half-hearted efforts of her students, suggesting her belief in the role she believes she plays as a student—“super-conscientious,” she says. P.B. also stated her belief that it is important to be liked by your students and to be accessible to them.

Like the 1st-year TAs, these 2nd-year TAs were generally very satisfied with the pre-service training provided by the department. However, they also expressed some concerns. First, Kathy recommended that during the orientation process the syllabus might be better represented as “a work-in-progress,” which she believes might liberate the new TAs to see it as a flexible and imperfect document, constantly and appropriately under revision. Second, P.B. indicated early in the transcript that orientation trainers seemed to recommend an exceedingly stern and firm approach by the 1st-year TAs in their classrooms, and she struggled to maintain this guise of formality and authority. Both

Kathy and P.B. indicated that they became more effective when they let go of that approach.

Most consistently discussed as a concern of these 2nd-year TAs, however, was what they described as “the assumption of homogeneity,” not just in the syllabus but also in the approach to the graduate students themselves. Two of the five 2nd-year TAs described themselves as “persons of faith,” who found the cultural norms/myths portion of the course to be personally offensive. One of the graduate students who did not describe himself as a person of faith articulated his concerns about the effect of the course on undergraduates, saying that statements made in training that “all of your students are going to be the same” are simply not accurate and reduce the complexity of the students’ varied backgrounds. He said that he “had fallen into the assumption that they were all going to be the same,” and finding otherwise, he “had to start to think about the way I was saying certain things and the assumptions I made about the values people have and that the class had and that we shared.”

Articulated in the focus group meeting were numerous teaching discoveries these 2nd-year TAs had made in just under two full years of teaching. The first enthusiastically discussed common discovery was that every class is different and that two sections of one class taught on the same day can require and produce quite different classroom experiences for teacher and student alike. Scott also discovered that classroom discussions are best guided and supported through rather specific questions and accountability measures, such as requiring the groups to prepare a presentation of their findings. This discovery was reminiscent of Jack’s similar finding after several classes. Scott also learned that he relies on verbal and visual cues from his students, despite the

fact that he himself did not participate or provide eye contact with his professors when he was an undergraduate. He has also gone some distance toward articulating his own prioritization of skills related to composition, saying that the revision process is the key element for him.

Similarly Kathy appeared to reach a philosophical conclusion about her priorities in the classroom, believing that students must first be invested in the material before they can engage in writing as a process and writing as a series of choices. Kathy, an experienced public school teacher before starting her graduate studies, also had discovered her distrust of her intuition about students, recognizing that student contexts are nearly always more complex than they at first appear. Kathy had also passed through the comfort stage of her teaching freshman composition, having enjoyed one “Zen-like” semester and subsequently returned to a place of discomfort, where she was questioning the assumptions and approaches of the course. She said “You just have to have a weird experience to see that the cracks in the syllabus exist . . . and then you start to lose a little faith in your teaching because you’re not standing up there with the kind of conviction [you had], weaving your liberal little mass of people to their critical thinking tower.”

Hannah had discovered the concept of variance, finding differences among classes and among her students—and she connected this discovery to her feelings about the cultural studies approach, which she felt she could no longer defend. She also stated her discovery that the division of critical thinking from writing is an artificial one—that to write meaningful inherently involves critical thinking.

P.B. had discovered that she is comfortable with a decentralized classroom, a position that moves her away from not only her prior teaching models but her own

mother, as a career teacher with a decidedly centralized-classroom approach. Lola had had reinforced through her teaching experience her early belief that she would not become a teacher but would seek another vocation.

I asked these 2nd-year TAs a final question about how they imagined they might adapt to a new course director and a different approach to composition, if they were to teach elsewhere, and it seemed from their answers that they had not really imagined this possibility. It seemed from their responses that they could imagine themselves working for a different course director, but it did not seem that they had imagined a different approach (other than a cultural studies direction) for CO150. They said they didn't think that teaching in a new circumstance would ever be as difficult as the first time teaching as TAs, which may be a reasonable assumption. However, they also consistently felt that they had discovered the most important aspects of teaching writing and that these would remain constant regardless of the course director and his or her direction. It would be interesting to follow these TAs as they go off to teach in other locations. A direction for future research would involve observing how TAs respond to the varied approaches of composition instruction they encounter once they leave the fold of their mother-departments' arms.

Faculty Focus Group

The faculty focus group was comprised of five individuals, since the sixth member had to drop out at the last minute because of illness. The faculty participating assigned pseudonyms to themselves, going by "Dudley," "Spock," "Angie," "Cat Woman" (or "CW" for short), and "Maximus." These individuals, who represented a range of experience levels, met for a period of 60 minutes. The meeting was divided into

three 20-minute parts, the first a self-selected question by the faculty from a list of questions I had posed to them in writing. Spock selected the first question, which was “Were there any surprises in the transcript from the 1st-year TA Story Swap or did you see familiar themes, and if so what were they?” The follow-on question was, “Did you identify with the transcribed TAs as you recalled your own experience as a 1st-year teacher?”

The second portion of the faculty focus group meeting began with the following prompts: Discuss memories of your own early teaching experience and/or more recent critical events that have influenced your teaching. What concerns do these memories and recent events suggest about your teaching concerns and have these changed over time? The third and final portion of the faculty focus group meeting was launched by my request that this faculty connect their own personal educational life stories to their current teaching practice or concerns.

The faculty focus group indicated a high degree of familiarity with stated 1st-year TA concerns, past and present teaching concerns of their own (with discussion of the overlap between their experiences and the experiences of the 1st-year TAs studied), critical events from their own teaching experience, and connections among their own life stories, critical events and current teaching practices. Throughout the focus group meeting, these faculty told stories from their own experiences and from the experiences of TAs they have supervised. It seemed a natural, conversational approach to the construction of individual and shared meanings for this group of faculty. Moreover, I believe the patterns of storytelling demonstrated here support Jerome Bruner’s thesis that our central knowledge-making method is narrative. As such, I believe it is possible to

categorize the narrative forms used (particularly in the latter 2/3 of the discussion) into the narrative subsets of: life stories, memories, folklore, and teaching stories. Arguably one might also argue that the narrative element known as “denouement” in this oral storytelling context reflects Bruner’s division of the story from the interpretation, with denouement capturing the interpretive necessity of the story telling act when situated within an interpretive context such as a focus group. Interestingly, denouement in this setting sometimes occurs at the end, as would be expected, and other times occurs as preface to the event recounted.

I believe we can also see Bruner’s thesis that part of the knowledge construction or knowledge-building capacity of story is found in distinguishing the unusual, unexpected or divergent from the expected and routine. Storytelling, in short, builds knowledge through the storyteller’s intent or desire to make sense of the new and the surprising. Yet important to the storytelling function of a veteran group such as this group of TA faculty-supervisors is, on the other hand, recognition of familiar stories (and the teaching concerns expressed within them), which fall into categories of expected or patterned response and thereby reinforce the expectations of the supervisors. Such categories are seen as conventional or expected and thus fit the supervisors’ conceptual frameworks rather than depart from them. Such reinforcement might be expected to further solidify the traditions, folklore, beliefs, and (more practically speaking) training plans/agendas of these supervisors. A key question is whether the supervisors hear anything that surprises them, anything from the stories of the TAs or from their own experience that would provoke reconsideration of their own outlooks and their plans for the future training of TAs. Future research might profitably examine whether narrative

that is embedded within the context of a group discussion influences the reflective and recursive processing of the teaching life. If so, what additional reflective processing of narrative might prove additionally valuable to faculty-supervisors of TAs?

The first portion of the focus group meeting established the familiarity of the themes represented by the TAs in their story swap. Faculty recognized the syllabus complaints, the teacher-student boundary problems, the classroom management/disciplinary problems, and the gender issues. These themes were clearly part of the existing knowledge base of the veteran faculty, and they indicated their familiarity with the themes through generalizations about TAs, examples/illustrations from TA history, articulation of the “tendencies” of TAs, and recognition of familiar patterns. In one case, however, which (significantly) came at the conclusion of this portion of the focus group discussion, a faculty member seemed surprised and pleased by the observation of one TA, about whom he said, “I’ve never heard it put this way, but I believe what she says is absolutely true.” It is notable that the faculty group began their discussion with a grounding in the familiar before heading into more original meaning-construction. Some of this direction was provided by the order of questions that I supplied, but the opening of this discussion group was nearly spontaneous, with Spock initiating discussion by selecting one of the several written questions I had posed to them when I gave them the transcription to read, specifically, “Were there any surprises in the transcription of the TA Story Swap?”

Generalizations about TAs were indicated through nonqualifiers such as, “always” and through declarations of “what happens.” Thus, Spock in opening statements described the “syllabus puppet” complaint of Jen as a “familiar refrain since

for TAs blame is always better to give than to receive.” He followed with the claim that TAs who are struggling will blame the “devilish students,” and he said that “the syllabus standing on their shoulders and eliminating their creative potential as a teacher” is a very familiar theme. He also pointed out that TAs frequently get themselves backed into a corner by articulating to their students this discomfort with the syllabus and thus ally themselves with the students and make the syllabus the adversary, “which creates quite a conflict between the teacher and the syllabus she or he is representing.”

Angie pointed out that the syllabus is designed to be overly full since “TAs talk so fast that they finish early,” and she also declared that by the end of the semester the TAs are usually grateful for the syllabus. Dudley added that there has been significant thought given to the question of when to withdraw the provided syllabus, that they had found that at about eight weeks into classes TAs started to “get cranky” about the provided syllabus, and so that’s when they [the composition faculty] have decided to wean TAs from the syllabus. Then, Dudley observed, “They see this big blank page coming toward them” and “that quiets some of them.” CW observed that when TAs have the power to choose in the second semester of teaching, they will often go 180 degrees from the provided syllabus, only to reintegrate portions of it in a later semester. Maximus stated his belief that most TAs don’t have a problem with the goals of the syllabus but misunderstand the provided lessons plans, which are intended to suggest just “one interpretation of how to reach those goals.” Maximus may have been showing recognition of his own experience here, recalling that “because of nervousness TAs tend to go play by play instead of translating the ideas into a workable approach for themselves.”

In areas other than the syllabus, Angie pointed out that “there’s always the temptation for TAs to go out drinking with their students,” connecting to CW’s observation that drawing the line between student and pal is a familiar one that, she said, can’t be taught but must be learned “by drawing it in the wrong place a couple of times.” Disciplinary problems, such as those described by Tess, rang familiar to these faculty as well, and Spock reported having to intervene on more than one occasion when a TA was having disciplinary problems. Dudley saw this more as a familiar gender issue and his analysis then led to his story about male and female hallway story swapping (and the analyses that spring forth because of them). Often, he said, such conversations lead to the female TAs drawing premature negative (and inaccurate) conclusions about their classroom effectiveness.

It was at the end of this first portion of the discussion that Spock shared his surprise and admiration for Sadie’s story about the lasting impact of a good or a bad day in the classroom. He appreciated the originality of Sadie’s observation, especially given the predictable themes he saw in some of the other TA accounts.

Interestingly, in this portion of the discussion most of the rhetorical patterns were explanatory or expository in construction, while later portions of the discussion drew more heavily upon narrative patterns. This difference would be consistent with Bruner’s analysis that new, surprising or exceptional events are dealt with via narrative, which is to say that we tend to be drawn toward storytelling as a pattern for constructing and reconstructing our understanding of new information, which then is incorporated into our knowledge base.

Moving to the second portion of the faculty focus group discussion, among the life stories that the faculty drew upon were Spock's college teaching role models, Angie's experience as a nontraditional student, Dudley's awareness of the potential that teaching held for him to become more than he might have been otherwise, Maximus' awareness of the role of his large family and subsequent avoidance of large groups (necessarily overcome in the act of teaching), and Cat Woman's deep desire to be a lifelong learner and an instructor whose teaching distinguishes itself from high school teaching and, perhaps as well, the teaching of her parents who were themselves both public school teachers.

Among the memories these faculty recalled were Maximus' recollection of himself as a 1st-term TA when he desired to put himself into each lesson, wanted to see himself reflected there rather than to faithfully represent the syllabus that had been provided for him. He stated, however, that most of his memories of his first year of teaching were—he realized now—"romanticized" in retrospect. CW recalled that she was not provided a syllabus when she first taught as a TA. CW also recalled that negotiating the complicated bonds and necessary boundaries between student and instructor were her biggest challenge as a beginning college teacher. Dudley's memories were often organizational memories, calling forth typical or traditional behaviors of TAs, specifically—for instance, that a small number of TAs each year have trouble with the provided syllabus and categorically state that they cannot use it. Spock remembered his own powerful experiences in the undergraduate classrooms of two senior professors who still teach at Colorado State University. Angie's memories seemed to crystallize around

her experience as a nontraditional student, around gender issues, and around status issues related to gender and to academic credentials.

Among the narratives shared by these faculty members were several pieces of knowledge or story that I have heard repeated by TAs or by other faculty members in different settings. Where there was this kind of “given knowledge” or seemingly passed down and passed around knowledge I have categorized it as folklore. It is not my intention to imply the falsity of such stories, but rather to suggest the importance of this kind of narrative, its power to create a sense of both norm and deviation, the allowable and disallowable, the discussible and the taboo. It is further to suggest that these stories begin to take on a different quality, to become part of the teaching canon of the community in question, to signal—claims to the contrary notwithstanding--the limits of behaviors and explanations, and as such to function as cultural norms or mores.

The most prominent example of this included that “in the old days when I first started teaching a syllabus was not provided” and “I was just handed the text book and told to go forth and teach.” Such comments, repeated by lecturers, senior faculty, and this researcher alike, serve to set the bounds of allowable discourse. Several, if not all, of the 1st-year TAs made reference to “how much better they had it” than those of us from the old days who were provided so little help. Such an understanding works to delegitimize or even negate TA discomfort with the provided syllabus, and thus to silence what might be valuable insights into syllabus weakness or at least into the predictable TA difficulty a mandated syllabus presents some TAs, regardless of content. This problem was experienced by one of the six 1st-year TAs who concluded that she could not openly discuss her feelings of misfit with the syllabus (and by extension with the philosophy and

direction of the course) while another confidently concluded that had she found herself in the situation all of us more senior faculty indicated, she simply would not have taught in such an “unjust” and “unfair” setting.

A second such piece of folklore revolves around the belief that the small classroom of CO150 provides students with their only “real” teachers who can be approached and subsequently confided in. Such confidences, the folklore holds, can be justified on the grounds that students need at least one instructor who will listen (presumably without comment, critique, or action) and that CO150 instructors with their small classrooms (and generous office hours) are perfectly suited for such work. A final, and seemingly contradictory story (contradictory, that is, to the small class-eager ear lore) is the common statement that our course and ourselves as teachers are “just blips on the radar” of our students and that our tendency is to care more about the course than our students do. During the course of this study, I heard a 1st-year TA, a 2nd-year TA, and a senior faculty member state this folkloric point.

Among the teaching stories was the one that I shared regarding my experience with a provided syllabus. I gave this story as a way of suggesting my empathy for the TAs’ repeatedly stated discomfort with “speaking someone else’s words.” CW then followed with a story regarding her similar experience (of struggle) involving a provided syllabus. In her case, she was a first-time lecturer attempting to model a provided syllabus for 1st-year lecturers. She found herself attempting to stay so loyal to the syllabus that her observing supervisor finally told her that she didn’t need to follow every step in the precise sequence provided. Being given this advice outright liberated her from her imagined bondage, CW reported.

Spock related the story of his function as a supervising lecturer when he, apparently on more than one occasion, was called upon to observe a TA's class and particularly a problematic student within it. He told of "burning a hole in the back of the student's head." On at least one occasion this yielded a quite successful outcome, at least for the period he was present; on another occasion, however, the disruptive student in question simply kept up his troublemaking and queried aloud, "So what's he [meaning Spock] gonna do to me?"

Somewhat later in the focus group meeting, Spock told of a similar problem with disruptive students in one of his own classes. Here, a group of fraternity men decided to tease him by calling him "Bobby." Over the course of days, and even weeks, Spock struggled with how to appropriately respond to this irksome behavior, feeling that if he corrected the boys, they would get worse and also feeling that he needed to do something to re-establish his authority in the classroom. He said on the one hand that he would pull these boys aside immediately today and set them straight; while on the other hand he also said he would probably still have trouble with a situation like this today. I believe that here we see a merging or overlap of the concerns Spock has experienced throughout his career with the concerns or stories of the concerns of the TAs he has supervised and observed. There also seems to be some recognition that despite longer and broader experience, classroom management, control, and disciplinary problems are often still a concern for veteran college teachers, despite claims to the contrary.

Angie and CW both offered a gender story, and Spock, CW and Dudley made interpretive remarks related to their experiences with gender-specific (female) issues. Dudley treated Spock's story of the disruptive student (the one whose head Spock burned

a hole in) as a gender story, drawing upon his organizational memory. He said that a female TA will talk to a male TA and report her disruptive student problems. The male TA will report that this sort of thing never happens to him, and the female TA will conclude that “she is really screwing up.” Spock followed this analysis by commenting that one of the senior female faculty members has pointed out that female teachers are perceived as nurturers, causing students to behave more emotionally around them.

At this point Angie then told a vivid story about a time when she was housed in Aylesworth Hall with 20 or so other adjuncts, many of them women—“strong women,” Angie said. She said that students would come by the offices of these women and plead their cases. They would “hound” those women, she reported, while male adjuncts (some of them “quiet poets”) would simply say, “No, I can’t do that” and the students would politely leave.

Later in the focus group meeting CW also made a comment related to her gender, saying that “young men have stopped flirting with me,” connecting this observation with her point that many teaching concerns are resolved simply by growing older. Earlier in the meeting, CW observed that she had received a student’s journal entry, which contained a description of her recent date rape. Making a rather startling leap from this journal account, CW revealed that the hardest thing for her to deal with in her first years of teaching was that she was “a young woman with a young woman’s body.” She said her solution was “to totally become the mommy in the classroom,” worrying far more than her students about the course and, particularly, their grades.

The only faculty member to convey a story told by a student was Spock, who described his increasing ability to “steal the students’ opportunities to complain.” He has

learned, he said, to anticipate the most common complaints and to counter them on the offensive, heading them off before they are even fully articulated by the students. Yet he also then noted that there are always surprises, always exceptions, as in this past term when one student's excuse for poor or missing work was that he was having LSD flashbacks "in which he was confronting the devil on a fairly regular basis." Another student's excuse was that she had awakened that morning to find her boyfriend had hanged himself at the foot of their bed, a story that was later confirmed by an article in the local newspaper.

These stories were dealt with by the faculty group via two responses—1, Angie pointed out that there are places to refer such students and that walking to the Clark Building upon hearing such a story was probably the best way of handling it and 2, Dudley and CW, communicating the organizational memory via what might be described as folklore, stated that students sometimes just want us to listen and don't really need us to act upon what they're telling us. This point was then further extended by Dudley who continued the advisory role and organizational memory/folklorist role that he assumed by virtue of his seniority, and he reminded the group that bizarre behaviors of students often have little to do with us or our course and are certainly not consequences of our teaching.

Finally, two of the most vivid stories conveyed during this session were provided by Dudley—one a historic one that connected to an early concern/discovery he made as a beginning teacher a few decades earlier, and two, an event that occurred the same day as the focus group meeting, albeit an experience that did not directly involve the classroom. The first experience had to do with Dudley's realization a week or two into his first teaching assignment that he was lying to his students. They had asked him a question

about the Greek myths they were studying, and he responded with, “Well, the last time I taught this course . . .” buying himself time to prepare a response by fabricating a teaching experience he never had. He ended the story by saying that he realized that lying to his students was probably not something he should be doing.

Dudley’s second story involved a lunch appointment with his lawyer that he had earlier on the day of the focus group meeting. He said that he was aware of the rhetorical patterns and games that the lawyer was playing and thus, because of his awareness, was able to toy with the lawyer, to play the game equally with him rather than to be overwhelmed by the attorney or intimidated by him. For Dudley, this story, which came late in the meeting, had coherence because of an earlier revelation he had made regarding his reasons for going into teaching. He said that he was interested in finding out “what I might become” through teaching, revealing that his backup career path was “pumping gas.”

Angie subsequently observed that “teaching shapes personality,” explaining that she has become more assertive through her teaching. A similar point was made by Maximus who observed that teaching had forced him to work outside his comfort zone, in what some observers might call “the shadow” and learning, for instance, to give presentations (classes) to somewhat larger groups than he might prefer.

Concerns voiced within these varied faculty stories included both past teaching issues and current ones, both spontaneously told concerns and ones that were articulated after my prompting. Among the early, spontaneously recollected teaching concerns of this group were Spock’s realization that he needed to understand the whole unit, or “big picture” of the classes he was teaching and his increasing understanding that until he had

that overall picture he was wandering, unsure of himself, and unclear. More recently Spock's concerns had been revolving around maintaining interest, passion, and humor in his teaching, and this perhaps explains why he recalls with such fondness those two professors he had as an undergraduate. Angie's early teaching concerns revolved around being asked a question she couldn't answer. More recently she said she had become more concerned about developing her teaching to respond to differing learning styles, perhaps particularly related to gender differences. Dudley said that his early teaching concerns were self-oriented, specifically that he worried about his authority and presence as a classroom lecturer. More recently, he had moved toward a student-directed, decentralized classroom, but now his concern has moved, too, toward wondering which approach is better or whether there are only specific teachers with specific talents that are best utilized accordingly.

Maximus indicated that his early concerns revolved around himself—that is, his teaching presence. Somewhat later his focus shifted to having complete mastery of the syllabus, and he believes this may have been a misguided period since he became preoccupied with coverage of material instead of student needs. More recently he is concerned with the motivation of his students and the relevance of his course. CW identified her biggest early teaching concerns as (1) establishing the boundaries between herself and her students, (2) dealing with the fact that “she was a young woman in a young woman's body” and (3) grades. More recently, CW has been concerned with “where her students were just a year ago.” She attempts to distinguish herself and her classroom from her students' earlier experiences while maintaining awareness of the enormous leap we require of students as they move into college.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

Twenty-two years ago I began my lifelong project of becoming a college teacher. It proceedeth still. Every time I go into the classroom, I am presented with a new challenge or a new dilemma. This semester I was surprised to discover that my freshmen, when urged to write about their first week of college as a critical moment in their educational histories, wrote (consistently) about their general state of drunkenness, a condition so prevalent among the three classes of freshmen as to be the norm. One student told me that after one week he was already tired of it and realized that he needed to separate himself from the crowd. I struggled with how to respond—and settled on a story. I told them that my reaction was influenced by the experience of my dad, who, in 1930 went off to college and promptly flunked out after spending too much time in the pool halls. He went home to help support his large family through the Great Depression. In the nursing home where he now lives, a college classmate of his, Judge Bill Richardson, visits his wife everyday. My dad tells me that all his college friends turned out well—judges, doctors, businessmen. I believe my dad turned out well, too, but he doesn't and that's all that matters, of course. He believes he squandered the best opportunity ever given him, and he counseled me when I went off to college, "This may be the last thing you ever do completely for yourself, so don't foul it up."

I told my hung-over freshmen this story and then wondered if they would remember anything other than the fact that freshmen went to pool halls and got drunk in

1930. That's the problem—and the beauty—of stories. We can't control the lesson that listeners take from them. I wonder now about the TAs in my study. They have completed their first year of teaching; have gone through a model training program. So now, what will they remember? What will stick?

The purpose of this research study was to gain new understanding of the lived experiences and teacher development of first-year graduate teaching assistants in a college setting. The study was situated within today's context of the rising expectation for public universities to provide increasingly effective teaching for undergraduates who represent an ever-broadening cross-section of the American public. In a 1993 national survey of teaching assistants, commissioned by American Association for Higher Education, 71% of universities offering the Master's Degree or beyond indicated that they offer training to TAs. Such a fact is made doubly important by the fact that a 1998 survey showed that over 70% of graduate students went to graduate school because they want to teach in higher education. The TAs in this study represent the college teachers of tomorrow, the so-called "future professoriate." They will need to be more efficacious in the classroom, more socially conscious in the classroom and outside of it, and more inclined toward community stewardship than any generation of college professors before them. Quite simply, working in tomorrow's universities they will not function in an ivory tower.

The site for this study was Colorado State University's English Department, which supports approximately 20 new teaching assistants each year. These teaching assistants are Master's of Arts level students admitted to a variety of English programs of study, including literature, teaching, teaching of English as a foreign or second language

(TEFL/TESL), communication development, and the Master of Fine Arts program in creative writing. All graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in CSU's English Department are required to participate in a one-week, intensive orientation, which introduces them to teaching practices, the specific assignments their students will be expected to complete, and the goals of the CSU freshman composition program. I recruited from the year 2000 incoming class at the end of this full week of orientation, and selected six subjects to participate in this study. Those who participated wanted to gain additional exposure to reflective practices, to engage in on-going dialogue on teaching, and to aid in the development of knowledge on the teaching assistant experience. The participating TAs maintained a daily teaching journal (log), provided two educational life story interviews (one at the beginning of the study and the other at the end), wrote at least one critical event narrative that they subsequently reflected upon in interview, and participated in a whole-group Story Swap at the end of the first semester of teaching. Subsequent to this initial data collection period, I sought out two focus groups to further clarify and explore the issues that emerged from the first-year TA data. These focus groups were comprised of (1) a 2nd-year TA group and (2) a faculty-supervisor group.

First-year teaching assistants were asked to reflect on their daily practices in their teaching journals, and I provided feedback via the dialogic portion of these teaching logs. First-year TAs were also asked to reflect upon the relationship of their educational histories to their teaching via the two life story interviews. Further, the subjects were asked to remain alert throughout the semester for important classroom events, large or small, which influenced their thinking, plans, and/or actions related to teaching. Participants first wrote down these events as stories or critical event narratives and then

followed up these written narratives in reflective interviews with me. At the end of the first term of teaching, after all the subjects had written at least one critical event narrative, we gathered together to share these teaching stories and to discuss the themes that emerged from their telling. This event became known as the Story Swap.

The focus groups were asked to read the transcript of the Story Swap before a one-hour meeting and then were asked to consider the familiarity of the themes addressed in the Swap as well as the focus group members' own recollection of their early teaching experiences. Additionally, I asked them to make connections between their own educational histories, critical events that occurred along the way, and their evolving teaching philosophies/teaching practices.

Research Methods

This qualitative research study used a case study design and employed constant comparative analysis for data synthesis and reduction. Purposeful sampling yielded six subjects whose backgrounds, homes of origin, and goals were significantly varied. The TA participants were interviewed at my office in the Eddy Building at Colorado State University, and these interviews were audio taped. The TAs maintained teaching logs either in hard copy form or on Syllabase software, and I responded to these logs on a daily basis. Critical event narratives were first written by the teaching assistants and then discussed in audio taped interviews. The Story Swap was conducted in a conference room at the English Department and was audio taped. After the first-year TA data had been collected and initially analyzed, two focus groups were formed to explore the familiarity of the themes of the first-year teaching assistants and to probe the relevance of educational histories and critical events to the pedagogical thought processing of these

more experienced faculty members. These focus group meetings were audio taped. Subsequent to each audio taped event (the interviews, the Story Swap, the focus groups), the tapes were transcribed verbatim and, along with the written documents (critical events and teaching logs), were coded manually, using grounded theory technique.

Review of Findings

Life Story Interviews

The teaching assistants who participated in this study reported a wide range of motivations for pursuing a graduate degree and a teaching assistantship—from escape of a crumbling relationship to linkage of academic and backcountry interests. At the beginning of the semester, four of the TAs indicated an interest in teaching, either at the high school or college level, while two of the TAs indicated little long-term interest in teaching. By the end of this first semester of graduate school, these early inclinations (both to teach and not to teach) were simply more solidified in the TAs' thinking. Only a few of the TAs saw graduate school as part of a larger goal they had for themselves; in fact, most of them seemed to have “fallen into” graduate school rather than to have consciously chosen it. One TA, for example, found CSU's graduate program while he was “surfing the Net” out of boredom on the job. Having arrived at CSU, their enthusiasm levels for teaching were fairly consistently linked to their aspirations to teach, while their enthusiasm for their programs seemed to vary based upon their current coursework, their relationships with their advisors and professors, and their camaraderie with their peers.

At the beginning of the term, all of the TAs indicated that they were spending more time on their teaching than on their graduate studies, with the ratio generally falling

between 60/40 and 70/30. Only two of the TAs indicated that this time commitment balanced out over the course of the semester, and one of those two admitted that she had “given up” on teaching that semester because her students seemed to have done the same. The TAs’ feelings about teaching after one week of experience ranged from dread and disdain for the work of teaching to optimism that things were already improving. By the end of the term, one TA still reported dread but acknowledged that the reality of class was never as bad as the anticipation of it. Further, TAs who were at first worried about leading discussions seemed to have quelled these fears and to have enlarged their repertoire so that discussion did not seem the only option for class time.

Also, at the beginning, the TAs generally seemed to worry about whether they were making their classes sufficiently interesting, while at the end TAs worried about whether they were making class effective. For the first life story interview, at least one TA had already begun to worry about grading papers and by the end, nearly all of the TAs had experienced at least some difficulty with grading and several, particularly the females, had been challenged by students on the grades they awarded. All six of the TAs struggled to some degree with the cultural criticism component of the course, wondering if they were in control of the content.

Reflecting on the orientation training that all TAs were required to participate in, the TAs were generally quite satisfied and even impressed by the level of effort expended in its preparation. On the other hand, several of the TAs wished the orientation had lasted more than a week. They would have liked more time to reflect on their learning, to plan the implementation of their learning, and to conduct personal business, such as buying school supplies. However, all participants recognized that making the orientation period

longer would be difficult for TAs and faculty alike, and they also understood that no amount of time could prepare them for every challenge they were about to face, much less for the sheer panic they would feel when they faced their first classroom of students.

The rewards the TAs anticipated fell into two basic categories—rewarding impacts on students and rewarding impacts on themselves. Among the anticipated impacts on students was the hope of seeing positive change in student achievement as a result of working with a group for an extended period of time. An anticipated impact on the teaching self was deriving pleasure from watching students learn and having their assumptions challenged. Among other anticipated positive impacts on the TAs themselves were improvements to their own writing, connections of disparate professional and academic interests, improvements to their own teaching effectiveness, and quantifiable success in a professional endeavor.

Among the difficulties anticipated by the TAs were worries about engaging in unprofessional familiarity with students (or crossing the personal-professional boundary), worries about authority and control over the provided syllabus, worries about discussions falling flat and/or students asking questions that the TAs couldn't answer, grading difficulty, "looking stupid," and appearing nervous or otherwise not in control of the classroom. Of these many anticipated concerns, the only one that didn't seem to bother the TAs upon completion of the course was the teacher-student boundary issue, despite the fact that this issue might be expected to remain a pertinent one throughout the initial portion of their teaching lives. However, several of the TAs reported a level of comfort with a degree of intimacy they had negotiated with their students, a comfort that will no doubt be challenged in upcoming years.

Reflecting on their relationships with peers and supervisors, a few of the TAs had developed professionally meaningful relationships with their audit lecturers by the end of the semester, although no one used the word “mentor” to describe a relationship with a faculty member or supervisor. The TAs had found that they could go to the lecturers for advice and consolation, and at least one of the TAs recognized in the professor for E684 a person with vast stores of teaching experience. Perhaps in time, some of these relationships will blossom into fuller mentor-mentee bonds. However, mentorship represents an area worthy of further consideration by highly effective TA training programs such as the one reflected in this study.

All of the TAs in this study rather quickly came to depend upon their peers in rather significant ways, and hallway commiseration was very common, especially at the beginning of the semester. At this early point in the term, it was common for the TAs to tell classroom disaster stories and share ideas about “what worked and what didn’t work.” I believe we might argue that the TAs were building relationships at this early point in their careers based upon shared misery. One variation on this theme involved the TA who was in his second year of graduate school and believed he should take a leadership role among those who were brand new. Another involved a TA who was enrolled in the teaching program and described her sense of loss when a TA not in the study elected to dis-enroll from that program. In both cases, these TAs’ sphere of peers exceeded the bounds of this study, but we gained a sense of their important contributions to these individuals’ development as teachers. Another TA described two of her peers as very helpful and one became known as her “concrete commiserator” while the other was known as her “esoteric commiserator.” She depended on the first for practical advice in

the classroom because this TA had previous teaching experience in the public schools, while she went to the second peer to share common goals, attitudes and values about classroom teaching.

Jen was one TA who did not seem to rely as much on peers, perhaps because her husband was also a college teacher, whom she thought of as a “live-in mentor.” For Jen, seeking peer or supervisor support was generally out of the question. Perhaps also because she was married and caring for a household, she may not have had the time or inclination to fully develop her peer relationships. Perhaps also the fact that she was a bit older than many of the TAs played a role here, too. Her issues seemed quite different from the issues of most of the TAs, and much of this difference seems connected to differences in the early adult development issues she was dealing with.

Most important to Jen, however, was the fact that she did not feel comfortable going to the lecturers or other supervisors of the program with concerns but instead felt that an us-against-them environment existed. She felt she was being “watched,” and “policed” for the sake of the “department’s agenda,” and she resented this approach, which she considered patronizing and undermining. We might also look at this disconnect of TA and supervisors as a classic worker-management rift/tension, and this might especially fit Jen’s view of the world, given her political leanings and working class background. On more than once occasion, Jen articulated her wish that her TA experience would be different than it was turning out, and she reported that she had TA friends at other institutions who enjoyed much richer relationships with their supervisors. Also, a few weeks into the course, Jen had a disagreement with the composition director, because she did not wish to drop a student who waited too long to participate in the early

drop period. Jen's argument was a good one—that she did not understand the logic of punishing a student who admitted he had made a mistake and that in punishing him, she as teacher ultimately would be punished alongside her student—but she did not understand the long tradition (and important reasons) for freshman composition's limited drop period.

Not long after this confrontation with the composition director, Jen returned to the administrator's office, this time to deliver her letter of resignation, effective spring term. Jen indicated that the conversation was brief although she had been prepared to discuss her reasons quite completely. When asked if she explained her displeasure with the current situation to the composition director, Jen said that she didn't feel comfortable doing this so she conveyed a true story that was only a partial reason for her departure. Plus, Jen said she didn't really get an opportunity to explain herself anyway. She said that very few questions were posed to her, and this fueled her overall sense that “any warm body” would have sufficed for her teaching position.

In Jen, I believe we see signs of great vulnerability, the kind that might have responded very well to fuller supervisor mentoring. Throughout her teaching documents, she described the tears, the pre-class nausea, and the hurt she felt when students acted up in class. Jen needed help, and she did not feel she could turn to any of the resources available to her. A combination of factors seemed finally to crush Jen and leave her little option but to resign her assistantship. At the time of writing of this document, Jen is still struggling to redirect her energies in her graduate program and has moved to a part-time status.

Family and other non-school influences played an important role in many of these new TAs' first-time approaches to college teaching. Jen drew heavily upon her role in the home—as daughter, wife, and even future mother—to define herself. She described herself from the beginning as the “facilitator,” in her mother’s home, and drawing upon this skill, she also found that she did not become upset when students grew emotional around her or revealed difficult circumstances in their lives. Further, she indicated early on that when stressed she tended to think of herself as a potential mother since pregnancy and parenting was an option she certainly planned one day to exercise. Mark, on the other hand, drew mostly upon his double identity as serious academic and equally serious backcountry adventurer. His backcountry experience, however, seemed to resonate more powerfully as he explored his potential as a teacher-leader. Drawing upon the multitude of experiences he had over the years in outdoor leadership, his central task in his first semester of teaching seemed to be harnessing those skills for a new environment. In the backcountry, he was used to running the show (being “mayor,” he called it), but in the composition classroom his confidence and authority were severely tested. He seemed to be emerging from this self-doubt by the end of his first semester, perhaps especially after he discovered that his students would “buy” his grading and comments on their papers.

Jack’s non-school influences were mainly his mother and father. Jack quoted his father early on regarding the need to not take someone else’s words on faith but rather to critically examine all ideas. Jack came back to this point later when he again quoted his dad after consulting him about thinking vs. writing concerns of the semester—that is, had his students learned to write or had they only learned to think, he wondered? His dad reassured him, saying that students would not find themselves (in life) writing the kinds

of papers they were assigned in CO150, but they would be responsible for their own thinking, for their ability to sort through better and lesser ideas. Also, Jack was clearly influenced as well by the strong belief in education exhibited by both of his parents, his father a Ph.D. in adult education and his mother, the former director of physical education curriculum for the state of Michigan. Jack also pointed to his work in carpentry and home maintenance as important to his teaching. His blue-collar work, he reported, made him a more "well-rounded person," someone who could think in terms of hands-on skills, and so he encouraged his students "to get their hands dirty" by writing in class. Furthermore, he wanted his students to become well-rounded college students as well, so he emphasized college skills, such as finding faculty offices and learning how to self-advocate.

Sadie drew heavily upon her athletic background. She described herself as aggressive on the fields of athletic competition but retiring, although successful, in the classroom. She found that her tendency to be quiet in the classroom presented her with certain difficulties in her teaching since here too she found herself reticent to vocalize her leadership in the classroom. However, she also had the philosophical basis for improving this posture since a teacher of hers had once (and memorably) encouraged her "to become a presence not just a person," and she really wanted to take this advice to heart. Also, during her undergraduate days, her coaches and teammates had thrust upon her several leadership roles, often when she was not prepared to take them on. Thus, it would seem that Sadie was well positioned for assuming the leadership she would need for her future teaching role in the public schools.

Leah's main family or non-school influence seemed to be her father, who functioned as a negative role model with his rigid attitude toward grades. Leah believed, unlike her father, that it is more important to learn than to get good grades, and yet Leah was also still struggling to distinguish herself from some of the more destructive aspects of her father's legacy. In particular, a tendency to bring perfectionist expectations upon herself was still haunting her, and she made particular reference to her near devastation at failing to gain admission to every graduate school she applied to. The more reasonable part of herself was encouraging her to throw herself into her present community instead of beating herself up over the communities she might have joined.

Like Sadie, Tess also drew upon her athletic background, where she had learned about mental toughness and dealing with pre-game jitters, a set of skills of particular importance to Tess because she was finding teaching to be extremely nerve-wracking. Tess's pre-teaching anxiety was so profound that she would often roam the halls five minutes before her class was scheduled to begin, looking for volunteers to take her place. Tess also made a connection to her mid-game (soccer) impulse to quit, an impulse she prided herself in never having acted upon; by the same token, she knew she would not quit teaching because of the same pride that kept her in the game. An additional non-school influence upon Tess was her broken engagement, which had spurred her to go to graduate school in the first place, in order that she might learn to "stand on her own two feet."

These TAs were also influenced by their educational histories and schooling philosophies. Jen's public school experience convinced her of the need for teachers to advocate on behalf of their students, while her university experience led her to feel that

high student involvement, even with the formation of course goals, is an essential feature. Jen's main goal in teaching was to help her students become agents of their own learning and their own lives. She encouraged them to think about what they gained from courses, even if the answer was not content-related, for she believed that frequently an important aspect of education is the unexpected learning that occurs there. Mark discussed his upward trajectory in college, where he was always engaged in his learning, as were other students at the prestigious private university he attended. For Mark, then, the legacy of student engagement became a sore point (and disappointment) for him in relationship to his students at CSU, and his main goal for his students was to help them become engaged and responsible for their own learning.

Jack, meanwhile, had a quite different undergraduate experience, one more in line with the experience of CSU students, since he enjoyed the social scene of college at least as much as he enjoyed the academics. And while he admitted some degree of regret for having squandered some educational opportunities by taking this approach, he also brought a degree of reasonableness to his expectations of the students he would face at CSU. Jack's main goal for schooling was to enable students to become critical thinkers.

Sadie's success in Catholic and magnet schools as a youngster and then in a competitive private college had led her to be a proponent of traditional schooling. Her interest in teaching and coaching at the secondary level was further inspired by past coaches and teachers from whom she had learned a great deal. She believed that the value of schooling lies in learning how to think and how to get along with people. Leah enjoyed similar success in school and drew heavily upon teacher role models, as Sadie did. Just as Sadie fondly recalled her AP World History teacher, so too Leah recalled her

high school geometry teacher. Teachers they had in college also positively influenced both of these young women; Sadie seemed especially influenced by one coach and Leah seemed particularly influenced by one literature professor. Like Sadie, Leah also held strong belief in traditional schooling and believed that school-place learning is one of life's top three priorities. She expressed her deep concern about public schools being currently under unprecedented attack.

Tess's thoughts on school were perhaps more like Jack's than anyone else's in the study group. She believed, like Jack, that there is a lot more to learning than school alone, and she believed that most students feel their teachers are just "blips on the radar," mere footnotes to students' more compelling, everyday experience. As such, Tess believed that it was important to keep the course she was teaching in perspective, since she believed that for most students school is about balancing multiple interests, rather than just a focus on academics. At the same time, Tess demonstrated some discomfort with her students' lack of engagement; a theme we see reflected in Jen's, Mark's, and Sadie's documents as well. Tess seemed relieved that she had attended a different kind of college than CSU, and there is a bit of this message in Sadie's documents as well.

Teaching Logs

From the teaching logs, or journals, we gain additional appreciation for the ups and downs of teaching, especially for beginning teachers, and we get a different (less edited) window into the TAs' everyday experience than we do from the more highly rehearsed documents such as the critical event narratives. From Jen's journal, for instance, we see an extreme of performance anxiety and the resultant upheaval to the physical well being of the TA who suffers nausea, diarrhea, sleeplessness and depression.

In Mark's we see that student challenges to authority do indeed occur to male teachers, but that they are resolved more easily. Also, we watch Mark gain increasing confidence in engaging students in small group processes. In contrast, in Jack's teaching log we see evidence of the highs and lows of teaching as well as the planning that enables this teacher to escape the despair of small failures through a focus on future teaching moments when he might use today's hard-earned lessons.

Tess's journal, truncated at Lesson 17, reveals a great deal of insightful beginning practice even in the journal's brevity. Because Tess engaged deeply in the dialogic capabilities of the Syllabase software during those first 17 days, I was able to get clarification on comments she made regarding such things as her displeasure with the "unteacherly" aspects of the syllabus. When asked, Tess explained that having students engage in activities such as pulling out information from the textbook seemed "low level" to her when what she was hoping to get from her students was evidence of higher level thinking. Thus, what might at first have seemed like empty complaint, upon clarification seemed like healthy, if not essential, insight. Tess may have needed further grounding in the reasons for her students' need for basic help with textbook reading.

Leah's journal, the most extensive of all the journals, captured this beginning teacher in great detail as she struggled with serious teaching issues and recorded her daily decision-making processes in hopes of teaching more effectively next semester. In contrast, Sadie's journal, a classically understated teaching log, provided a bare minimum of detail, and this paucity of information suggested a potential limitation of the dialogic journal when taken alone as an indicator of reflection. The danger here is that an observer with access only to teaching logs might wrongly assume that a TA like Sadie is

only going through the motions when, in fact, many of her other documents suggest a very deep level of commitment. The dialogic journal then, like the other documents studied, offers a certain kind of window, albeit a limited one, into the lives of TAs. When taken together, I believe that the entries into these journals show there is a progression through early teaching experience, as TAs' questions become increasingly learner and future-oriented.

Critical Events--Why Narratives Are Different

The critical event narratives (combined with follow-up interview data) reveal a more edited, polished, and public view of teaching than do the logs or the interviews. Jen used the critical event narrative to announce her intention to resign her assistantship and to simultaneously establish her carefully constructed self as a competent professional. Mark used his narrative as display of his intellect and inclination to draw deep, abstract lessons from simple moments, perhaps even to prove that he was graduate school material. Jack's narrative pronounced his rite of passage from mere "syllabus puppet" to engineer of his own lesson plans, while nonetheless accepting the ground rules of the existing syllabus. Jack's careful position here seemed to perfectly pave the way for his short-term career goal of becoming a lecturer in this department before beginning a doctoral program.

Sadie's narrative captures the vulnerability and naivete of the beginning teacher while demonstrating the intelligence and insight of the experienced writer and student. Thus, Sadie's posture as self-revelatory and humble beginner is balanced by her writing, the sophistication of which suggests she is anything but an ingenue. Rather, Sadie is a young adult in the midst of a first challenging professional endeavor. Leah's narrative

carves out a space for this new teacher as a thoughtful, insightful, and committed teacher who strives for caring connection between herself and her students. She explores the boundaries of the student-teacher relationship while also defining the needs of differing students. Tess's narrative, more than any other document she produced during the study, shows Tess's successful navigation of the unfamiliar waters of teaching; as such, the narrative displays Tess as a "success" in the classroom, which was, after all, her major goal for her teaching, as stated in her first life story interview.

In all of these narratives, then, we get a sense of the continuity of the personalities as described by these many documents. We also get a sense of each narrative's protagonist/narrator as a performance entity, and these crafted characterizations are not always consistent with the more ragged picture recorded in the personal and less edited documents, such as the life story interviews and the teaching logs. I believe that a combination of data collection points, such as interviews, logs, and narratives, offers a much fuller view than any one event alone. As such, I would argue that the rough-hewn personal documents combined with the polished performance documents when taken together offer not only the most complete picture of the budding teacher, but the richest form of reflective practice. Among these disparate reflective approaches, the novice practitioner has ample means for recording events and constructing meaning.

Within-Case Analysis

Within-case analysis revealed that Jen's difficult first semester of teaching involved an unrecoverable case of self-doubt that was complicated by her quest for absolute authenticity. Feeling that she was being untrue to herself and her talents, Jen was unable to ally herself to the provided syllabus, and at the same time she was sorely

tested by her first experience in the classroom, suffering from almost daily attacks of panic, nausea, diarrhea, and sleeplessness. Asking which came first, her quest for authenticity or her self-doubt is like asking which came first, the chicken or the egg, but when it came time to craft a narrative, Jen's critical event narrative focused on the authenticity issue rather than the self-doubt issue. This decision was taken one step further in the Story Swap, that most public of performances in this study, when Jen chose to completely omit the critical event that revealed her intentions of resigning. It might be argued that Jen's natural (and healthy) ego defenses rallied around her for purposes of the performance document—the critical event narrative. The narrative made it possible for her to reconstruct her unhappy semester and frame it with meaning.

Similarly, Mark's interview and teaching log documents reveal great vulnerability as he attempts to define a professional life for himself that combines his two great passions—academe and backcountry experience. In those personal documents we see an adult identity taking shape, but only with the greatest of difficulty, and we are reminded not only of Keats and the impressive “negative capability” of this young professional's thought processes but also of Andre Gide and his representation of the modern existentialist dilemma in which each choice rules out several others. With negative capability and the existentialist dilemma, pain is a necessary component of the examined life, and this pain is evident in Mark's personal documents in ways it is not in his written critical event narratives. There, in one of the narratives, Mark observes himself playing “God” as he writes his lesson plan while in the other, he makes note of those fleeting moments when all is right in the teaching world—when the stars and the planets, the students and teachers are aligned. Hence, we see again that the written narrative involves

considerable reconstruction of reality, a version of reality that puts a different spin on lived events, a version that situates Mark squarely at the center of his teaching universe. At the time of the Story Swap, this version of himself and his increasing confidence was simply amplified by the opportunity to orally perform his story and cast himself as humble, his plight as recognizable (“Wow, she bought it!”) before revealing the post-semester revision of his teaching experience, which he describes as “intoxically pleasurable.” a term one might be disinclined to apply, for the most part, to the mid-term outlooks of these TAs.

Jack’s presentation of himself in his written narrative is decidedly upbeat, which is consistent with his world view, but it is a more refined and distilled optimism than we see in his personal documents. In the teaching log, for instance, daily teaching offers Jack plenty of moments of difficulty and ample room for improvement and growth. In the critical event narrative, on the other hand, Jack is able to present himself as fully grown—a teacher who has discovered what he must do to claim ownership of course content. In the life story interviews, we get a sense of Jack locating himself among many influences, most notably his parents, while in the critical event narrative he is the subject, the protagonist, the sole agent of his own development and discovery. Again in the Story Swap, this presentation of self is further amplified as Jack clearly positions himself as a controlling force in the group meeting, perhaps because he sees himself as elder and leader, in the same way that he believed he would need to take the initiative in contacting his fellow 1st-year teaching assistants because he was already established as a 2nd-year graduate student.

Of all the TAs in this study, Sadie presents a written narrative that is perhaps the most different from her personal documents. In her brief and tentative entries in her teaching log, she seems reluctant to reveal the full scope of the challenges she faces in the classroom, and in her life story interviews she is careful to only answer what is asked of her. Yet in the written critical event narrative, she is able not only to articulate a re-fashioned version of a single, simple event, but is able to draw an interpretation of this event that resonates well beyond the scope of the event itself to speak to teachers everywhere. It is notable that her critical event was the one narrative selected by a faculty member as an “original observation” and “undoubtedly true.” Portions of her narrative are also the most quotable material I have for this study, and I have used her words to introduce this study at the conclusion of Chapter One. It is in Sadie’s story especially that I believe we get a sense of the rich possibility of narrative to the reconstruction of a teaching life, to meaning-making and to healing. In the Story Swap, Sadie was predictably quiet, as was consistently her pattern, but she cast her story via a narrative funnel that was true to her nature, representing her as the humble, naïve, and oft-disappointed first-time teacher before telling the story of her reinvigoration and re-inspiration through a small teaching event.

Leah’s personal documents, especially the teaching log, are extensive and revealing accounts of a committed teacher in the making, of a person who badly wants to become a good teacher, of a young professional actively engaged in the reflective processes that, she trusts, might make her more effective—or at least accelerate the growth process. Her written critical event is a further distillation of this process, a concrete demonstration of her emerging abilities and perspectives on those abilities. She

seems to be illustrating in that written narrative how very far she has come in a dozen weeks or so and how very much more she knows about teaching and even about individual student needs than she did at the beginning of the term. Her performance in the Story Swap cast her as a seriously committed teacher-in-the-making, and her stories of the two students, along with her contextualization of these stories within her discussion of learning styles and individual student needs, altered the focus somewhat from her written narrative, in which she seemed to struggle more with the teacher-student boundary issue.

Tess, like Sadie, shows us something in her narrative that we simply don't see in her personal documents. This attenuated teaching log and the life story interviews show a young woman who is groping to find herself and her place in a challenging professional environment. She seems very vulnerable in these documents, and we worry about her as she struggles to define herself apart from her past—no longer the poet, no longer the fiancé, no longer her parents' soccer star, no longer the technical writer in the architectural firm nor the underpaid, if much loved, coordinator in the regional literary center. Instead, she has bravely thrown herself into a whole new world and finds herself in the midst of a very tough situation with her gender-split classroom and an especially difficult student who presents her with problems on nearly a daily basis.

Tess's narrative, on the other hand, is her opportunity to bring this spiraling chaos under control. She is able to mend the tears in the fabric of her experience by explaining her decision to conduct the classroom meeting, which changed the power relations in her classroom. She then connects this renegotiated power equation with the troubles she had with her difficult student. She is able to reconstruct the misery of the semester and make

sense of it, to even find value in it, despite the nearly complete destruction depicted in her personal documents. In her narrative she is able to congratulate herself for her very significant victory, a triumph that she reasons no one else can fully appreciate. This triumph lies in the fact that she stood her ground with her problem student “J” even after surrendering traditional classroom power with her decision to reinvent her classroom with the classroom meeting. We are reminded of Tess’s successes on the athletic field, where she learned that she could see through the most difficult of circumstances simply by not taking herself out of the game. Tess’s triumph in the classroom, we learn through her narrative, is that she did not take herself out of the classroom, despite the impulse to do so. Additionally, Tess’s triumph is particularly a female triumph as well, for she demonstrated her ability to assert herself when challenged, to incorporate her needs and her values into her relations with others.

We can see from this description that the critical event narrative and the Story Swap motivated a number of executive editorial decisions on the part of the TAs. The written narratives provide opportunity for TAs to reinvent their experience, to give meaning to what might have seemed in the daily log to be the “noise of existence,” the chaos of beginning teacher experience. Also, as a data point in and of itself, the Story Swap allows us to take this even one step further and to see the difference between written narrative, which is one kind of performance, oral narrative, which is an even more public kind of performance, and personal documents, which are private documents, more often revelatory of internal struggle.

Focus Group Insights

The final set of findings, obtained from the two focus groups, suggested a number of additional insights about the 1st-year TAs, veteran teachers, and teacher development in general. The 2nd-year TAs were interested in the ways in which the educational life stories of the 1st-year TAs influenced their teaching practice, and they wanted to explore the same connections between their own lives and their teaching practices. Kathy, of the 2nd-year TA group, was consistently the leader in her focus group meeting, moving the discussion from point to point. She also was the first to express her concerns (and minor disapproval) of the complaints of some of the 1st-year TAs as well as those of her peers in the 2nd-year group and to some extent mine as well. Kathy was a former secondary public school teacher whom her supervisors described as a “natural teacher.” Her comments suggested that most of the problems the TAs (1st- and 2nd-year alike) described could have been avoided, as she had avoided them, with proper preparation and clarity. In general, it could be said that Kathy maintained high belief in teacher agency and efficacy and showed little sympathy for the problems of the 1st-year TAs, or for that matter, her peers. Kathy offered the fewest number of stories from her own teaching experience, and the one story she did offer was meant to challenge an interpretation I had made.

Kathy’s strength and weakness resided in her confidence and clarity. Later in the focus group she admitted some breakdown of her confidence and some erosion of her clarity, and here she seemed both more authentic and more sympathetic toward others. She had experienced, as had others in the focus group, some loss of faith in elements of the cultural studies curriculum, particularly in its “assumptions of homogeneity,” which this group of 2nd-year TAs indicated was their number one issue with teaching during their second year. These TAs were beginning to question some of the suppositions of the

fundamental course they were teaching. However, when I asked them how they thought they would handle a new course director with a different curriculum focus, they didn't seem to understand the extent to which composition courses can vary. They indicated that they had learned the essential pieces that they would use in all future writing courses that they taught, and they did not seem to realize that with evolving philosophical change in composition curriculum, or even with just a simple change in course directors they might be compelled to reexamine those fundamentals in the same way that they were beginning to doubt some of the suppositions of the course they had been weaned on.

Among the more interesting revelations among this 2nd-year TA group—besides their blossoming distrust of some of the assumptions of the CO150 course—were the relationships they saw between their own educational histories and their teaching practices. Most notable perhaps were the two Christian TAs, Hannah and Lola, whose backgrounds had caused them to struggle with the implicit “secular liberalism” of freshman composition in the large, public university. Also of interest was the degree to which at least two of the 2nd-year TAs were distancing themselves from the examples of their parents, who were teachers. P.B. and Lola, in particular, seemed to derive much of their teaching identities from who they were not, and the distinction was from their parents. P.B.'s mother was the kind of teacher whose knowledge was vast and whose students sat at her feet and received instruction; P.B., in contrast, wanted to fashion a teaching identity that was quite different from her mother's, one that was student-centered and non-authoritarian. The legacy of Lola's parents, who were both teachers, was one that Lola was striving to distance herself from as well, having observed them working much too hard their entire professional careers. As a result of this observation,

Lola had decided to not pursue teaching for a career and hoped to make her living in publishing or technical writing.

An unexpected additional insight from two of the 2nd-year TAs was their reference to their marital status. Both Lola and P.B. indicated that getting married during the course of their assistantships had granted them a degree of enhanced authority in the classroom. I tried to suppress my shock at this revelation, but upon listening to them, I began to understand a bit more about how authority issues reign in the hearts of TAs. Lola talked about the discomfort of always being thought to be an undergraduate and of how difficult she had found it to maintain some modicum of authority in her CO150 classroom without going completely overboard and becoming a stern disciplinarian. Since getting married, she had found that her ring signaled something significant to her students. P.B. called it a “rite of passage,” and said that somehow the wedding band denoted maturity to undergraduates.

It occurred to me that my version of this discomfort, at their age, had to do with not possessing the doctorate, which for many years I believed would grant me instantaneous credibility among my students. In both cases, I think, our assumptions were wrong; after all, I doubt that most undergraduates, especially freshmen, notice wedding bands or recognize advanced degrees. However, what these rites of passage do accomplish is an enhanced self-confidence. For at least some of the TAs, the credential of maturity appears to be marriage, and this measure of maturity may be connected to identity-establishment issues relevant at the young adult life stage. We might also look at this issue through the adult development focus of Erikson and Gilligan who would argue that intimacy or relation to another is a crucial phase of adulthood at approximately this

point or stage of life. Finally, the wedding band issue might also suggest the importance of emblems or the rich power and symbolism of artifacts. TA trainers might consider how to integrate symbolic emblems into the training-support equation.

The faculty focus group was interesting for different reasons than the 2nd-year TA focus group, although an initial similarity is worth noting. Like the leader of the 2nd-year focus group, Kathy, the self-appointed leader of the faculty focus group, Spock, moved the conversation along, forcing transitions and establishing the direction for the entire meeting. However, it is doubtful that his apparent lack of sympathy for the 1st-year TAs was as universally shared by members of the faculty focus group as it at first seemed. The impatience Spock showed—and others chimed in on—in regards to the 1st-years' concerns was the most notable feature of the first third of the meeting, and all those present went some distance to discount the concerns of the 1st-year TAs. In some cases they did this, I believe, because they were either hurt or offended (understandably) by the implicit criticism of the curriculum many of them had worked to co-author. Spock summed it up in his opening comments this way: "For TAs, it is always better to give criticism than to receive." By the end of the focus group meeting, however, at least one of the faculty members seemed to want to revise the view that had been taken earlier, and he said that he considered it an honor and a privilege to have worked for a whole career with new teachers who were just starting out.

Also of interest from this focus group was the degree to which they engaged in storytelling to flesh out their own teaching experiences and the relationship of their educational histories to their teaching practice. It became clear that these veteran teachers draw heavily upon their rich and deep experience, and their storytelling was

layered and deep. They not only possessed a teaching repertoire, they possessed a rather vast storehouse of stories. They had one, two, or sometimes three examples for each point that they made, and their narratives were vivid. The stories that they told seemed to fall into four categories—life stories, memories, teaching stories, and folklore. Their life stories drew upon their rich educational histories while their memories were filtered versions of things that happened somewhere in their schooling or non-school education. Their teaching stories made clear that critical events continue to be experienced throughout the teaching career.

Folklore included that set of stories that were repeated by separate persons or for which there seemed to be organizational memory, an understood or familiar quality to the message of the story. For instance, the story of the old days when TAs were given a book and a classroom and told to “go forth and teach” was one narrative that was repeated not only by several of these faculty but also (in impressed horror) by the 1st-year TAs. Similarly, during orientation the 1st-year TAs heard the faculty stories of having “17 free minutes a week” and knew for the first time just how much work was going to be expected of them.

The resonance of this kind of folklore, especially among the TAs, suggests the power of story as a mechanism for inter-generational knowledge construction, one that requires little more than the time it takes for experienced teachers to speak. I believe that some conscious use of storytelling among generations of college teachers might help neophytes enjoy the benefits of vicarious experience as well as the possibility of heeding its warnings. Senior faculty might well consider how they could offer such stories informally to new teachers with whom they come in contact. Stories might be expected to

enlarge the dimensions of instruction that senior faculty can give, offering consolation and empathy in addition to the more familiar and established instruction, correction, and modeling. Stories offer an easy and natural way of mentoring TAs, and such mentoring might best be accomplished through contact with several senior faculty rather than simply through assignment of a single new teacher to a single veteran. In general, however, and in one way or another, I believe that senior faculty should seek out opportunities for storytelling in their training programs.

The experienced faculty members in this focus group also seemed ready to acknowledge the relationship of their educational histories to their teaching. Dudley admitted that he was bound from an early age to become either a teacher or gas station attendant. C.W. wanted nothing more than to be a life-long learner, and being a college teacher assured her of accomplishing this goal. Angie's history as a nontraditional student was important to her current view of students. Maximus' large family background had prepared him for small-group presentations but had challenged him to deal with large groups as well. Spock's teaching models from his undergraduate days continued to fuel his aspirations for the future as he strove to make his teaching inspired and fun, like the classes of his two most admired teachers.

Veteran faculty members might be encouraged to think in similar ways about the multiple influences upon their teaching, influences which have little to do with the formal training they received in teaching practice or in content. Such insights might again encourage senior faculty members to consider new ways of delivering instruction to beginning college teachers. By the same token, TAs might be wisely required to contemplate their own educational histories both in and out of school and to examine and

reflect upon the disparate (and often least expected) influences upon their teaching attitudes and approaches.

Finally, the faculty focus group discussed their current teaching discoveries and concerns, and several of the faculty expressed concern about remaining fresh and relevant to their students. One faculty member wondered aloud if his recent assumptions about better teaching methods were really accurate. Another indicated concern over student failure. These concerns suggested themes that are not hugely different from many of the concerns voiced by the 1st-year TAs. It might be highly instructive for the senior faculty, therefore, to share with the new teachers the kinds of things that they are currently struggling with and worrying about. Similarly, when Dudley told the story of his lunchtime rendezvous with the attorney and how he grasped and toyed with the lawyer's rhetorical devices, we saw evidence of the power and pleasure associated with expertise in a field. Senior faculty might well share some of this enthusiasm with TAs as well, providing disclosure of the pleasures of their chosen profession in equal measure to the difficulties and discomforts. In such a way, a new generation of TAs might be inspired to the teaching career path.

Implications for Teaching Assistant Inquiry, Training, and Development

Many of the assumptions of Schon's (1983) reflective practitioner theory underlie this study's approach and methodology. Personal, reflective documents were used in the hope of inducting new, efficacious reflective practitioners into the profession of college teaching, inspiring them to make a commitment to meaningful growth through action research and personal reflection, generating dynamic classrooms that are sites for ongoing change and continuous improvement. From this researcher's point of view,

personal reflective documents, along with the more highly polished performance documents have been shown to provide useful evidence of teacher experience, if not to themselves produce development in those teachers. Related, and yet at some distance from Schon, is the work of Clandinin (1992), whose reflective work looks less at problems and problem-solving by highly effective practitioners and more at the typical nature of things in the classroom, specifically at the patterns, repetitions, and rituals. In particular, Clandinin is interested in the ways that history, current events, and future applications of learning fuse in the life and thinking of the teacher. Clearly Clandinin's point of view is reflected in the approach of this study as well. One recommendation that follows from this study's merging of these two outlooks is that TAs should be encouraged to engage in multiple forms of reflection, from spontaneous logs to historical reconstructions to performed narratives. Through multiplication of such reflective opportunities may come more thoroughly conscious teaching behaviors, based on the past and cognizant of the future.

The review of literature in preparation for this study examined previous research on novice/expert practice and teacher development theories. A discussion of the findings from this study in relation to these matters will be presented. Additionally, adult development theory and its implications for data analysis and TA training will follow, particularly in view of the promise held by self-directed learning innovations. Finally, some suggestions for TA research and training will follow, including some discussion of workplace discourse theory, self/identity exploration, and caring pedagogy.

TA Training Issues of Relevance

Several themes, some familiar and others not, emerged from the data collected in this study. It should first be noted that the participants in this study (and this researcher as well) were overwhelmingly inspired and positively impressed by the professional development opportunities provided TAs in Colorado State University's English GTA program. Indeed it would be difficult (and lies outside the scope of this study) to critique such a model program. However, most notable about the training in CSU's English Department is its multi-dimensionality. TAs in the English Department at CSU are exposed to a varied and rich range of professional development opportunities. Beginning with the weeklong, intensive orientation and extending to the semester-long course, E684, as well as PIE, Tart, auditing sections, multiple observations, and grading conferences, the training regimen is both extensive and intensive. Trainers are knowledgeable of the familiar themes of college teacher development in this setting—among them, classroom management issues, discomfort with a provided syllabus (and issues of authenticity and authority over content), absence of teaching repertoire among TAs and associated difficulties with engaging student discussions, the importance of both peer and supervisory support, and expectations of student accountability and reciprocity of effort. All of these issues and others are well understood and addressed by the composition faculty and the programmatic content.

Less well articulated, at least as suggested by TA feedback, are conferencing techniques, writer's workshop administration skills, ability in meeting the individual learning needs of specific learners, and student/GTA diversity awareness (recall 2nd-year TAs' concerns about "assumptions of homogeneity" inherent to the syllabus). On this latter issue, it is essential that we note the high order of multicultural consciousness

among the administrative and supervisory staff; I believe that the "homogeneity" issues are restricted to certain assumptions that are made about the "typical" CSU student and the "typical" CSU teaching assistant.

Concerns indirectly derived from the data include a need for attention to the socialization of graduate teaching assistants into the ethics of college teaching, especially as this has to do with fairness and equitable treatment (offering consistent levels of help to all students). Also, more grounding in the reading-writing connection might be particularly pursued. Finally, some additional attention might profitably be paid to attribution theory as it applies to the overlaps of student and teacher responsibility in the classroom.

The data collected from this small sample suggests the complex nature of the lived experiences of teacher formation among 1st-year graduate teaching assistants. TA teacher formation can be understood to be a constellation of complex forces, including an evolution from novice to expert practice, adult development issues, psycho-social influences from individual educational and life histories, sex-class linked discourse practices and gender influences more generally, the individual's narrative reconstruction of teaching experience and identity, and the natural rhythms of the teaching semester and year.

Given the complexity of the forces shaping TAs, I believe that TAs and their trainers would benefit from exposure to theoretical notions such as the difference between declarative and procedural knowledge as theorized by various cognitive psychologists in the early 1980s and as applied especially to the English educational environment by Hillocks (1986); issues of identity and gender relevant to adult

development stage theory, especially that posited by Erikson, Gilligan, and Caffarella; the relationship of educational history (personal) to educational practice; the possibilities for narrative review and reconstruction of teaching experiences; the common rhythms of a teaching life, both short-term (semester) and long-term (teacher development); reflective practitioner methods and logic; and self-regulation skills such as stress reduction techniques and goal development/implementation abilities.

I further believe that TA program supervisors would benefit specifically from application of reflective practitioner theory (Schon, 1983), self-directed learning theory (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Clark & Caffarella, 1999), as well as learning community and systems thinking (Senge, 1994). Enhanced application of such theories and processes might encourage heightened collegiality in the department—reaching across the entire learning community from supervisor to TA to undergraduate student.

Novice/Expert Practice in Teaching and Teacher Development Theories

Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming composing models and Hillocks' (1987) appropriation of declarative and procedural knowledge distinctions derived from cognitive psychology may have relevance to the interpretation of TA developing expertise. Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) description of two models of composing suggests that "easy" or "expert" practice is characterized by the ability to engage in knowledge-telling, while more "difficult" or "novice" efforts are characterized by knowledge-transforming processes. TAs might be expected to eventually move from the difficult translations of their varying life experiences to the teaching realm toward a veteran or more expert and eventually natural teaching discourse. We see such differences in the greater expertise of Jack, who enjoyed

the benefit of a true assistantship before beginning his fully independent teaching. So, too, we hear indirectly the translations made by the TAs' peers who have public school teaching experience; these individuals offered peer support by translating their teaching expertise into domains that their inexperienced peers understood. Similarly, the focus groups also reflected an increasing discourse maturity, representing a continuum of discourse, from early-stage teacher (2-5 years experience) to late-stage teacher (25 years experience).

At the same time, drawing upon the notion of declarative vs. procedural knowledge, we might surmise that desirable and discernable directionality to growth occurs in teachers, as in other complex performance abilities, and that this movement is from the novice ability to articulate better methods and toward the expert's ability to enact those methods. Jen, for instance, described training as having "bumped up" her expectations for herself, to a level where she could not meet her own performance or procedural expectations. In time, she found that her ability to enact the tasks defined for her by the syllabus lagged in immensely frustrating ways, which may have contributed to her eventual resignation from the assistantship. Similarly, Sadie observed that her ability to lead discussion in her class lagged well behind her knowledge of how discussions were supposed to proceed. Also, Leah's inability to follow the syllabus adequately finally led her to discuss methodology with her peer who was an experienced teacher, and this peer advised her to go back to the drawing board and start authoring classroom activities that were meaningful for her. Ultimately, I believe it could be argued that many of the TAs' problems with the provided syllabus revolve around the discrepancy between the TAs' knowledge of what they were supposed to do (declarative knowledge gleaned from

training) and their novice inability to enact the behaviors and methods they had seen modeled (procedural knowledge.)

Timpson and Bendel-Simso's (1996) methodological fluidity model may have greatest relevance to teachers who already possess a repertoire of teaching practices. However, it certainly does not hurt for new teachers to be exposed to the range of methods available to them. Indeed, one conversation during the Story Swap found the 1st-year TAs discussing the differing learning styles and methodological needs of their students. Leah had devoted her critical event narrative to her rather sophisticated development of differing responses to two students whose needs were different in subtle ways. Jack pointed out that her narrative argued for differing teaching methods and classroom activities, and Mark responded that as teachers they needed to remember to "cast a wide net," so that they might reach as many students as possible.

Karge's (1993) development model, which posits that teacher concerns optimally move from self to task to learner, has some relevance here as well. I asked the TAs to think about this developmental model throughout their first term of teaching, and in fact the template of the dialogic teaching log that they kept contained a daily reminder of this model. Several of the TAs provided testimony that they could see this movement occurring in themselves throughout the semester, but they added an incongruent feature to this theme. They suggested that, in addition to their overall semester-long growth, their concerns during each unit of the course followed this progression as well.

One TA, Mark, stated directly that he believed there was a micro and a macro element to this developmental schema. First, he posited, he had definitely found himself growing less self-conscious over the course of the term, but second, he had also found

that his worries moved inward at the beginning of each unit, when he needed to clarify the next assignment and lay out the expectations for students. At this stage of each unit, he suggested, his focus was on himself and his control of the course content. Later in each unit, he would be concerned with how well his students were grasping the assignment's concept and, later still, how well they were writing their essays.

These findings, then, are consistent with Karge (1993) as well as O'Dell (1986), who suggested that novice teachers worry first about basic classroom management issues, later about instructional competence, and later still about student progress. Virtually all of the TAs saw themselves as growing away from complete egocentrism and toward learner concern. Sadie addressed the tendency toward egocentrism as a quality shared by TAs and their students alike. She suggested that just as her students were not able to recognize the differing needs of their peers, so too TAs were struggling to recognize problems that lay outside of themselves. The fact that she saw this similarity suggests that she was indeed moving outside of herself and grasping larger patterns of concern, even matters of teacher education itself.

In addition to being consistent with Karge's and O'Dell's theorized developmental model, these observations are consistent with Boehrer and Sarkisian's (1985) thesis that TAs move from concerns about "personal display" or performance anxiety to concerns about students. They are also consistent as well with the movement McBroom posited, suggesting that first-year teacher concerns proceed from high levels of anxiety to more realistic expectations for themselves.

They are further consistent with Moir (1990) who noted that a pattern of teacher enthusiasm seems to occur over the course of each school year (or arguably semester) as

well, and this pattern seems to transect experience levels. I asked the TAs to graph their enthusiasm levels for the 16-week semester, and their versions of the classic U-curve were classically similar to Moir's theorized progression. For these teachers, the enthusiasm for teaching was strong at the beginning, fell off rather dramatically after 2-3 weeks of teaching, hit a low around week 10 and began a steady rise around weeks 11 or 12 as they began to look forward to the next semester. Sadie and Jack both directly addressed their rising enthusiasm for the next semester in their teaching logs, and even Jen, who decided to resign her assistantship, showed on her graph that she enjoyed renewed enthusiasm subsequent to the start of Unit 3.

One member of the faculty focus group, Spock, discussed the rhythms of the semester as he continues to experience them, and he said that he sees a parallel wave-like rise and fall of enthusiasm in his students as well. When he said this, others in the faculty group nodded recognition, suggesting that waves of enthusiasm occur to teacher and student alike and regardless of a teacher's years of experience. Spock said that he had learned to launch a counter-offensive in anticipation of these waves of energy and enthusiasm, warning students about the low energy or "let-down" that often occurs at about week 10, and that ruins many an otherwise successful semester. It therefore appears that experienced teachers may bring to their greater experience and ability an associated ability to trouble-shoot problems and familiar patterns of rising and waning energy/enthusiasm. Systems thinking and planning such as that suggested by Senge (1994) which work to predict and respond to such systemic forces might help here, enabling the program to foresee and offset anticipated lows in energy and performance.

By extension, systems approaches would argue for appropriately timed and conducted stress reduction efforts for all teachers and especially for new ones.

Bereiter and Scardamalia's knowledge-telling/knowledge-transforming models, Hillocks' application of declarative/procedural knowledge differences to English education, Timpson and Bendel-Simso's (1996) methodological fluidity, and Karge's (1993), Moir's (1990), O'Dell's (1998) and Boehrer and Sarkisian's (1985) models of teacher concern development have been demonstrated to have significant relevance to this study. Among the findings is the validation that teaching concerns—at least among the members of this small sample--did seem to show movement from knowledge-transforming to knowledge-telling as well as from declarative to procedural knowledge types, did seem move from self to task to learner, did appear to move from an internal to an external focus, and did seem to be determined to some extent by rhythmical waves of optimism and enthusiasm that correspond to the semester calendar. On the other hand, the data also bears out Thornbury's (1991) conviction that beginning teachers show in their reflective documents more evidence of awareness of student needs than we generally give them credit for.

Expert teaching, researchers tell us, may have to do with additional factors beyond methodological repertoire and procedural expertise. Some of these factors, such as development of a caring pedagogy, will be dealt with at the conclusion of this discussion.

Adult Development Theory and Self-Directed Learning

In addition to teacher development and expert practice theories, adult development theories may offer windows into the training and development of college

teachers and particularly TAs. The sequential theory of Erikson (1980), the relational models posited by Gilligan (1993), and the integrative model proposed by Clark and Caffarella (1999) may all have some relevance here. Each of these schools of theory offer differing and helpful interpretations of the central tasks of early adulthood, the stage at which most of the TAs find themselves as they begin their graduate studies and professional careers.

Erikson's theory (1980) is the only adult development theory to posit identity resolution as the central task of the transition from childhood to adulthood. The Erikson model holds that the developmental succession is from identity to intimacy to generativity to integrity, in that obligatory order. TAs might be expected to reside either in the identity or the intimacy stages, according to Erikson's model. According to Erikson, a young adult must first have nearly completely resolved identity issues, where the self establishes a commitment to the self, in order to successfully move on to intimacy issues, where the self commits to another. Still later in the adult's development comes generativity or the capacity to commit to future generations.

I believe that we can see the applicability of Erikson to not only the 1st-year TAs but also to the 2nd-year TAs and the faculty, as revealed through their comments in the focus groups. Thus, TAs might be expected to struggle with authenticity issues and the "fit" of the curriculum to their views of themselves and their writing, as well as doubts about their authority in the classroom ("Do I have a right to be at the front of the room?") when their entire previous educational history has been spent in the student role. TAs might also be expected to struggle with the overlap of identity and intimacy issues as suggested by at least two of the 2nd-year TAs' comments on their marriages, their

newfound confidence as a result of their marital status, and the relationship of this confidence to their teaching.

Senior faculty, on the other hand, might be expected to show concern for generativity issues, such as the organizational memory of the department, teaching folklore, and the next generation's teaching effectiveness. I believe we see evidence of this kind of concern in the words of Dudley who, on the one hand, spoke to the predictable pattern of crabbiness among TAs who have been mandated a syllabus for ten weeks or so as well as his more generous observation that he felt a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that he had spent his career helping the next generation of teachers.

Gilligan's relational model of adult development offers a different window on the perspectives of the TAs, particularly the females. Of course, it should also be said that Erikson was not without a relational focus as well, particularly in his later years when he took a new view of Gandhi. Nonetheless it is Gilligan who gives name to the kind of relational moral development that is gender-differentiated. For Erikson, Levinson, and other stage theorists whose work is based on male stage data, the central idea of separation is what distinguishes the adult from the child. Hence females, with their disinclination to undertake this central task of separation are portrayed as paralyzed in a childlike state.

Gilligan has pointed out that for men, an ethic of rights is based on assumptions of equality and that a central task of adulthood is the realization that playing fields are generally not equal and that justice must be sought and defended. Gilligan also revised our understanding of women, clarifying females' evolving fusion of identity and intimacy

as not childlike but culture-bound. She posited that women's developing ethic of relational responsibility places survival of self at the early stages of development with a later turn first toward devaluation of self and later toward a reintegration of the self's importance to relationships. Throughout this developmental schema, women are said to make decisions based on the consequences of actions. As such, consequences are seen as concrete manifestations of responsibility.

For men, then, maturity traditionally has been measured by degree of separation, but Gilligan suggests that males' initial protection of rights must give way to a deepening sense of responsibility, a responsibility that reaches out to others, to a broader public. Female maturity, on the other hand, which is initially defined by degrees of intimacy and the blossoming of compassion and care, is marked in full maturation by a compassion that extends care and consequence to the self.

Based on Gilligan's work, we might expect male and female TAs, at the cusp of their development into early adulthood, to articulate differing issues. Indeed, it is worth noting that the males in this study seemed less troubled by relationship conflicts than were the female TAs. Although Mark worried about the impact of his grading upon the developing relationship he had with a particular student, the young woman in question did not challenge Mark's authority despite Mark's surprise at having been taken seriously. Indeed, the unexpectedly easy resolution of the relationship problem Mark experienced might be explained by gender. The young woman in Mark's class rather easily deferred to Mark's authority.

Similarly, although Jack worried that his students might try to take advantage of his friendly and accessible demeanor, he reported in his second life story interview that

such challenges never occurred, and he described his class in the Story Swap as a “good class” with “no real problems.” Jack seemed not to understand why others might have had problems that he did not, which is a rather clear signal of his belonging to the dominant gender.

Contrast then Mark’s and Jack’s experiences to Tess’s experience with the troublesome young man “J,” who never gave up his litany of complaints, who never ceased to challenge her authority despite the fact that she stood her ground with him. Admittedly, Tess may have abdicated her authority when she “nagged” her students (as she put it) and when she stopped working hard on class preparation in the belief that she couldn’t teach students who did not want to be taught. Yet we also see signs of an emerging awareness of her power and responsibility. Specifically, at the beginning of the term she is conscious of the opportunities for influencing students; indeed she is humbled by this power.

Later she wonders aloud about her own role in her students’ misbehavior and weak performance, giving examples of her cancellation of class and her failure to hold the class accountable for the reading. Yet it is Tess’s primary challenge of the semester, which compels her to take the next step with her teaching, a step that signals as well her evolving adult development. In spite of all the difficulties and her natural inclination to surrender, she held her ground with “J,” a task she accomplished despite huge difficulty. It is this central fact, that she stood her ground with a bullying student, that suggests Tess has developed as an adult this semester and, by extension, as an efficacious teacher. In time, Tess may gain still greater confidence in her ability to be effective. Yet it should also be pointed out that the level of resistance Tess’s male students presented her with

was qualitatively different and quantitatively greater than that experienced by her male peers.

This point was brought home by the focus groups' comments as well. Here, I believe, gender and relational differences were abundantly confirmed. For instance, the 2nd-year male TA, Scott, recognized that he never has to deal with harassment issues such as the one I conveyed through my story and the one that Hannah told as well. Scott seemed already to recognize the absence of equality. Further, a similar issue was discussed by the faculty group when C.T. talked about her difficulties with teacher-student boundaries and Angie talked about the differences between "soft-spoken male poets" who get respect from their students versus "strong women" who are pestered endlessly by students wanting them to change their grades. I believe that there are nearly endless possibilities for analyzing the data of this study from the point of view of adult development theory, and particularly the gender-differentiated lens of Gilligan.

Clark and Caffarella (1999) have posited an integrative adult developmental model that combines the biological, psychological and sociological life course literature for purposes of reconsidering the corpus on adult learning. We may find our best help here. As career-long adult educators and researchers into adult education, Clark and Caffarella have seen the limitations of developmental models—at least in terms of educative purposes—which often fail to take into account the whole person. Their work in self-directed learning as the best option for ongoing adult learning draws upon this work and is also improved by it.

Clark and Caffarella have found that biological changes of aging inevitably affect learning as do various life events, which generate motivations for adults to enact learning.

The biological and the psychological cohere around change and development in adults. Further, Clark and Caffarella have found that it is impossible to discuss adult learning apart from the social circumstances of people's lives; thus the differing experiences of "gender, race and ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religious commitment, social status" etc., must be taken seriously, must be integrated into the whole view. Therefore, even though Caffarella, in particular, authored the notion of self-directed learning, she no longer believes that a simple statement that adults prefer to be self-directed in their learning is adequate because such a statement fails to consider the whole picture of diverse people and changing needs. Thus, in some situations adults may respond better to direct instruction not only because of cultural contexts, but also because of content background and time constraints.

On the other hand, Merriam and Caffarella (1991) point out that self-directed learning should not be confused with learning in isolation. They say "assistance is often sought from friends, experts, acquaintances in both the planning and execution of the learning activity" (p. 55). What does distinguish self-directed learning from teacher-directed learning, however, is mindfulness of the nature of adult learning, which is, for the most part, undertaken on one's own and for a variety of reasons. Thus, the adult cancer patient undertakes a self-directed course in oncology and the nearly-retired couple undertakes self-directed learning in estate planning.

These examples differ from the kind of study undertaken by graduate students enrolled in a formal program of study, but they are strikingly similar to the kind of lifelong learning these graduate students might be expected to engage in over the course of a career if they become college professors or public school teachers. In particular,

college professors who wish to learn more about teaching usually do so on their own; higher education, as we know, does not offer a program of study in college teaching to most of its young faculty. Indeed, the closest we may come to providing formal study in college teaching is the rare kind of intense orientation and year-long apprenticeship offered occasionally to TAs in programs such as the one described in this study. If we assume that a significant percentage of teaching assistants (some subset of that 70% who state a desire to be college teachers) will enter a career in college teaching, then we would do well to make their assistantship a period of exposure to both the theory and concrete manifestations of self-directed learning. Such early intervention may be our best hope for sustained improvement in college teaching. Further, the multitude of issues that come to bear upon adult learning—the biological, sociological, and psychological—must be recalled when dealing with TAs and their varied backgrounds. In particular, gender, marital status, religious affiliation, ethnicity, and schooling backgrounds may be of particular importance.

One other thing is clear about adult learning from Clark and Caffarella's work, specifically that the adults who are learning must be brought into decisions about the form, if not the content, of the teaching and learning. Not only their needs but their talents should be assessed, their unique contributions welcomed. Thus, introductory information should be obtained and treated seriously and with interest; the talents of the participants should be acknowledged and even drawn upon during training. Also, trainees should be asked throughout the learning process and again at the end for feedback about how adequate the instruction has been for their needs, and trainers should be prepared to alter their methods if feedback data suggests any degree of deficiency.

Thus, with adult learning, learners should be encouraged to declare the deficiencies and direct the focus of the instruction, rather than the other way around.

Also, as befits any learning situation, the learners should be treated as real people with real needs and feelings, the substance of which becomes not only feedback data for future training plans but information that elicits from the trainer an appropriate response to the vulnerability of being “the one who is learning.” Trainers should ask, “How’s it going? How can I help you? What are you concerned about? What are the pleasures you are deriving from your teaching?” Perhaps most importantly, a trainer might ask, “How are you?” and “What do you need from me?” Training should not assume (or appear to assume from its implementation) that the trainee is an empty vessel, in need of filling, and the instructor the banker of wisdom.

Further, trainers, taking their own teaching responsibility seriously, will want to know how their students, the TAs, are doing. One might hope, particularly in educational environments, that Dewey and Friere are kept in mind here, particularly since the power of teaching models is apparent throughout the TAs’ data in this study and throughout teaching literature in general. In other words, as teachers we tend to reenact that which we have been taught, not only in terms of content but in terms of delivery as well, the so-called “apprenticeship of observation” suggested by Lortie (1975). Thus, when we train the trainer, our own methods and attitudes come back to haunt us—or to honor us, as the case may be. This is an enormous privilege and responsibility, one that begins with the trainer, passes down through the trainee (in this case the TA) and on to the next generation of student—in this case, the undergraduates who fill our classes. Furthermore, doing our training jobs not only effectively but with concern, we may well become not

only models but mentors through an attitude of care and of service. Such mentorship requires no programmatic assignment of novice to veteran; rather, it is a pervasive attitude, and the TA chooses the mentors and the degree of involvement she or he seeks from that person or persons.

Workplace Discourse Theory

Deborah Tannen's (1996) work in workplace discourse (and particularly sex-class linked discourse practices) offers another window into the teaching lives of TAs and veteran teachers as well, especially as they interact. Drawing on the work of Goffman (1979), who posited differences in gender "display" behaviors in conversational interaction, Tannen proposed that linguistic strategies are sex-class linked, which is to say that it is not only gender but status, which frames the display rituals of conversational interaction. Every conversation, Tannen argues, places higher status individuals alongside lower status individuals, and conversations take shape around the accommodations made to maintain or challenge this ordering of power and position. We see evidence of such status display in the group interactions of the Story Swap and the focus groups. Using this framework to examine interactions might help TA trainers to understand the complex relationships at work in various learning sites.

For example, in the Story Swap, Jack positioned himself as leader by telling his story first. [See Table 4.9] This decision was consistent with his role as "elder" of the group, as the only 2nd-year graduate student. His story of classroom success "fit" his assumed role as quasi-leader and his projected role as lecturer for the following academic year. Jen went second in the Story Swap, perhaps because she was aware of herself as being the oldest member of the TA study group, the person with the most life experience

and as advocate for those who might have experienced a less inspirational time than Jack's. Jen and Jack continued to alternate comments throughout the Swap and contributed the most times during the open discussion period—each of them speaking six times. Leah and Mark were the TAs to speak the next most often during the discussion period, contributing four times each, with Leah doing most of her talking up front and Mark doing more of his later and in tandem with other participants. Tess commented only three times, offering tentative postulations about the course each time—that the biggest problem with it was an absence of student engagement, that the course was more about critical thinking than writing, that conferences were the key to seeing writing improvement in students.

Sadie commented only twice, and one time was a joke, an aside, that may have been meant to break the ice for her, since she was admittedly reluctant to be a vocal contributor to classroom groups. Sadie's one contribution of a substantial kind, an insightful comment having to do with the effect of egocentrism on students' ability to understand their peers' differing needs and learning styles, was derailed by the higher status Jen, who took the idea of egocentrism another direction, to talk about how student egocentrism leads to blame of teachers, a continuation of her overall theme of teacher difficulty. Interestingly, it was also Jen who began and ended the Story Swap follow-on discussion. Her initial comment established that her agenda for this discussion was the syllabus and TAs' need of ownership of their teaching material. The strategy did not altogether work, however, and her ending comment that she couldn't "do this anymore," meaning teach, may have signaled her surrender to an opposing view of the semester and its problems.

However, one might argue from Jen's status display in this discussion, that it was a surrender given only after a fight, that her high profile participation in the Swap signaled that she refused to go down easily—without, at least on one occasion, being heard. Much more could be made of this analysis, and it is the promise of this kind of interpretation I would like to make a case for. Careful analysis of the sex-class linked display behaviors of TAs might help TA trainers understand the struggles and aspirations, strengths and vulnerabilities of TAs, as they participate in professional dialogue with one another and with their superiors.

Of additional interest here is the way status worked in the focus groups, where Kathy took control and guided the 2nd-years and Spock positioned himself to lead the faculty group despite the fact that he was not its real leader. Kathy, the 2nd-year TA with the most teaching experience behind her, clearly positioned herself as leader of the 2nd-years, and her comments routinely corrected the others in the group. The rest of the group offered only minor resistance to her assumed leadership, and even I revised an interpretation subsequent to Kathy's correction of my analysis. The faculty focus group functioned a bit differently with the elder composition leader, Dudley, initially and deliberately "playing second fiddle" to Spock, at least in terms of conversational sequence. I think that we might argue that Dudley allowed Spock to control the pace and direction of the conversation but that Dudley did so wittingly, consciously positioning himself to offer simple (but irrefutable) testimony at the ends of the conversational waves. It was Dudley, after all, who offered the stories that seemed most like organization memory, and it was Dudley who also made the public statement regarding the privilege and honor of working with new college teachers. I do not doubt the

authenticity of his feeling on this point, but it may be worth pointing out that the group seemed to be heading in quite a different direction until Dudley assumed control, via his understated but carefully modulated rhetoric of support and appreciation. Dudley's comment, consistent with his quiet and unassuming role as recognized leader, served to remind the assembled faculty that their words were being recorded, that by virtue of my study and my tape recorder, they were going on record and needed to remember themselves.

Narrative Reality, Construction of The Teaching Self, Teaching Identity and Frames

Jerome Bruner in Acts of Meaning (1990) and "The Narrative Construction of Reality" (1991) has argued that "we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on" ("Construction," p. 4). Bruner also reminds us that psychologists have posited for at least two decades now that narrative is a form of "constituting reality" rather than just a form of "representing it." In characterizing narrative, Bruner points out eight features, one of which is "canonicity and breach," the former of which represents the "kinds" of narrative common to the context and the latter of which represents the "breaches of conventional expectation." Hence, narratives both lie within a larger genre pattern of normative experience and outside of it. As Bruner says, "For it to be worth telling, a tale must be about how an implicit canonical script has been breached, violated, or deviated from in a manner to do violence to...the 'legitimacy' of the canonical script" ("Construction," p. 11). When teachers tell stories, they generally do so only if the story both lies within the canon of relevance and also lies outside of it, offering a new view on a familiar theme.

Additionally, Newkirk (1997) in The Performance of Self in Student Writing has suggested that “all forms of ‘self-expression’ ...are forms of performance” and that “The key feature of these presentations is their selectivity; every act of self-presentation involves the withholding of information that might undermine the idealized impression the performer wants to convey.” We might do well to remember the performative aspects of storytelling, both in the written and oral traditions, and recall that the teaching stories TAs and veteran teachers choose to share with us are constructed events, less indicative of the reality of the event, perhaps, than of the teacher-storyteller’s version of the event,

Trimmer (1997) has suggested that our direction in English teaching, in particular, has been to repudiate that which we love—to have discovered English because of our love for storytelling, then to have watched the same process of falling in love with stories in our students, only to have distanced ourselves and our students from storytelling, in favor of the empirical school, which would have us doubt the veracity of stories because they lack “generalizability.”

In an effort to rehabilitate story in the lives of English teachers, Trimmer collected English teachers’ stories in his book, Narration as Knowledge: Tales of the Teaching Life. Here Trimmer points out that the narrators of the stories he collected “avoid presenting themselves as heroes” and “also avoid presenting their students as ‘them’” (p. xii). He also points out that all the teachers whose stories he collected are veterans, “experts on literature and literacy” (p. xii).

The current study collected some of the stories of beginners, and here as well the narrators’ showed a startling capacity to elevate the student while refusing to present themselves as teaching heroes. English TAs, of course, have considerable experience

with writing and with story, but it is nonetheless remarkable to see the way they positioned themselves in their teaching stories, the way their presentations of themselves suggest their dedication to their students, often at some expense to themselves, as least as depicted. Further study of TAs' early teaching stories might go some distance toward identifying the key components of teaching stories of both expert and novice teachers, while also helping novice teachers maintain focus on their students and on their own development. Stories say, "I was here," but they also require of the teller a degree of distance on the lived experience. As such, they offer opportunity for reconstruction of events, of healing, of perspective, and of improving the delivery of instruction.

Brody, Witherell, Donald, & Lundbald (1991) have argued that story and voice in the education of professionals involves a constant reorganization, reassessment and realignment of life experience to enrich and enlarge "the present personal schema" (p. 263). Although devalued by Western tradition, narrative ways of knowing, the authors argue, allow the developing professional to "continually locate and relocate his or her own voice within a social and cultural context" (p. 263) and as such to "find one's voice" through modes of expression, most especially, narrative and dialogue. Such methods may help the developing teacher to recognize that teaching is anything but "an ethically neutral activity" (p. 84), as Carol Witherell (1991) has described it. These methods may also aid in the development of "the self in relation," which is to say that "the individual achieves personhood through caring relation with the other, yet the story of a life is always, in every moment, distinctive from the stories of other lives" (p. 89) Witherell says "The coherence of the self is grounded in its narrative structure" (p. 92), which

makes possible, according to Cynthia Ozick, the “leap into the other” (1986, p. 65) or the educational encounter that demonstrates empathetic concern.

Additionally, we know now that experienced teachers develop teacher lore, which Schubert (1991) defines as “the study of the knowledge, ideas, perspectives, and understandings of teachers” or “what teachers learn from their experience” (p. 207). Study of teacher lore has generally focused on the best teachers, but it should be acknowledged that teacher lore, or what one learns “by the seat of one’s pants” is not always valid or true for all cases, even though as lore, it can seem to be so. Critical, ongoing reflection on teaching practice then would seem to offer an antidote to dangerous teacher lore as well as agency for effective teacher lore. The first years of teaching may be the best time to establish such critical capacities, or the ability to be a “self-appraiser.” Les Tickle (1999) has described the desirable direction of such ability as appraisal directed toward the self *as a professional* instead of toward the relative successes of the teaching practices engaged in. Tickle argues that teachers who are able to self-appraise develop a sense of the self as the determining factor in both their own and their students’ development. Among the features of such a beginning teacher self-appraisal system would be training that “takes personal qualities, values, attitudes, and the emotions associated with being a teacher into account” and “identifying dimensions of the ideals, beliefs and perspectives that underlie their practice” (p. 129). Such a method responds responsibly, I believe, to Lortie’s (1975) notion of the “apprenticeship of observation,” or patterning ourselves after the teachers we remember, whether well nor ill. It is an influence that, according to Schempp, Sparkes, and Templin (1999) cannot be denied or taken lightly. This apprenticeship is something all prospective teachers engage in during

their educational histories—that is, we all take on the apprenticeship of observation which we in turn tend to re-enact, and which becomes, I believe we might argue, the framework for all our subsequent teaching—for better and for worse. This analysis is in keeping with Darling-Hammond and Cobb's (1996) position that "prospective teachers must be taught in the same ways they will be expected to teach" (p. 46).

The Lived Experiences of TAs, Personal Knowledge, and An Argument for Caring Pedagogy

Rossiter (1999) has suggested that adult development can be understood as narrative, to the extent that it is a "contextual interpretive, retrospective, and temporal" way of understanding human experience. As such, Rossiter argues four points—that "learners are experts on their own development," that "narratives mediate change," that "the telling of life narrative leads development," and that "adults re-story their lives in the process of transformative learning." (p. 83-84). Rossiter's point is that story makes possible the transformation of perspective as storytellers reflect on their experiences and act based upon their changed view of the world. The relevance of such an idea to a teaching life seems clear. Teachers who engage in narrative reflection are engaged in transformational model based upon their own experience, and if the stories are shared, based vicariously upon the experiences of others as well. Unlike rational discourse, the only requirement for a teaching story's value as a learning or research tool is the same criteria as the assessment of the story itself—"Is it coherent? Can we follow it? Does it possess verisimilitude?" (Rossiter, p. 84).

By extension, groups of stories which reflect teacher knowledge, ideas, beliefs, images, or "teacher lore," demonstrate that "teachers are continuously in the midst of a

blend of theory...and practice" (p. 207). Schubert says that "To assume that scholarship can focus productively on what teachers learn, recognizes teachers as important partners in the creation of knowledge about education" and he describes teacher lore as a "valuable and neglected area of study for understanding praxis in education" (p. 223). Grumet (1999) argues for such research but also cautions us about such work, and specifically reminds us of "The Politics of Personal Knowledge." Her point is worth quoting in its entirety:

If my work permits the teachers I work with to examine their own work with a seeing that is more inclusive, that surveys an ever widening surround, that is a search I would gladly join. But if my work certifies me as an agent of the state to peer into what is hidden from public view, if it is my look that discovers and appraises, then I might as well approach the classroom with bloodhound as well as briefcase, and they ought to demand to see my warrant before they let me in' (p. 71).

Conclusion

I wish to argue that the potential positive uses of narratives and other personal documents as windows into the development of beginning college teachers is nearly limitless, yet Grumet's caution reminds us of the attendant dangers of such inquiry when undertaken for the wrong purposes. For instance, one might argue, with Taggart and Wilson (1998) for the responsible use of case studies, but one would wish to see serious precautions taken to protect identities and to extend the cases to include hypothetical veteran as well as new teachers. Other directions for continued research in analyzing the TA lived experience include more examination of key indicators of novice-expert practice as well as applicable adult development issues, especially among young professionals both male and female. A particularly ripe area for research, following on the heels of Tannen's workplace discourse efforts, is in examination of sex-class linked

discourse in the university setting, particularly among new teachers. Gender discussions, perhaps especially following the work of Gilligan and Tannen, seem much needed in the TA literature as well. Finally, further examination of the enthusiasm rhythms of the semester might be profitably followed, so that we might learn better how to anticipate the highs and lows of teaching, especially among beginning teachers.

The intent of this study was to describe the lived experiences of TAs, to ground their development as teachers and as young professionals in the content of their living and working over the course of their first semester of teaching. The study's contribution to the body of literature on college teaching is undoubtedly small and unmistakably descriptive. Yet, what I hope might come of it, and of the generous participation of these TAs in a study that could not help but reveal their vulnerabilities, is an appreciation for the complicated nature of college teaching, especially when this teaching intersects with adult development issues such as those experienced by the young professionals who do our bidding in the teaching of introductory compulsory college courses.

Nel Noddings and Carol Witherell (1999) have argued for the power of narrative as revelatory of the mythic and spiritual dimensions of human life, perhaps especially among teachers. They have undertaken systematic study of narrative in the development of the teaching life as an ethical response to the thorny difficulties of studying educational practice. They suggest that when teachers tell stories in an attempt to understand the meaning of life and their teaching experiences, they engage in a trusting dialogue regarding education practice. They risk the "caring relation," which assumes a connective perspective of self, "one that holds that the self is formed and given meaning in the context of its relation with others," (p. 5) a notion that is consistent with the highest

levels of adult development as described by Gilligan. It seems apparent to me that by engaging in such inquiry, the TAs in this study—as well as all teachers, but particularly those who are beginners—engage in a remarkable act of trust, an act which assumes that we who read their stories and analyze their circumstances do so in the most fair-minded, just, and caring way possible. In short, we owe it to the TAs to make sure that their lives improve, that they derive benefit and not penalty from having engaged in our intrusive inquiry and for having served the university through their diligent teaching. As such, I offer the following recommendations for TA trainers:

1. Ask TAs about themselves. Do not treat them as blank slates. Find out their talents, and ask them to share their knowledge with their peer group and with their supervisors. Treat TAs as colleagues. Be their coaches, not just their administrators. Ask students how things are going—and mean it when you ask. If they have bad news about their classes, take it in stride and help them figure a way out of their circumstances.
2. Remember that we are all learners in the classroom. Do not ask of TAs what you yourself would not submit to. This means that senior faculty should submit to peer and supervisor observation, grading oversight, and multiple forms of student evaluation.
3. Share your teaching stories, good and bad. In every training site, provide stories of tragedy, redemption, success, and failure. Emphasize moments of frailty and bumbling misstep. Don't make these occasions just times for them to share; doing so makes the event seem like a performance on which they are being evaluated. Expose yourself.
4. Keep a sense of humor about everything, especially your own classroom disappointments and those of your TAs. In so doing, TAs might also develop a sense of self-deprecation and self-forgiveness.
5. Remember that you are not only modeling teaching behavior, you have the potential to become a mentor of teaching behavior. The former is more fun when you are also the latter.
6. Provide opportunities for cross-generational interaction. TAs will bond with their peers no matter where they are; hallway commiseration is commonplace. What TAs don't get routinely is bonding interaction with their supervisors. Integrate

the office space, and spend time in the lounge, computer lab, and other locations where TAs spend their “between time.”

7. Remember that when it comes to leaders’ responsibilities to their constituents, perception is reality. If your observations and evaluations seem like the work of a police state, then they are to those involved. Balance the obligatory with the celebratory. Balance the critical with the laudatory. Show TAs that they are valued outside of their teaching. Ask them about their programs of study, their families, their lives. They are at a critical moment of adult development and, as such, are fragile and highly sensitive to criticism.
8. If a TA resigns, get absolutely as much information as possible from that TA as to why the resignation is occurring. Not only does the TA need to be heard, there are probably changes you need to make. Assume that the problem is yours, not his or hers.
9. Take some risks with caring. Show through your daily actions that you value the TA and the important work he or she is doing for the university. He or she will give two-fold the effort if doing so reminds him or her of your relationship.
10. Anticipate enthusiasm highs and lows and capitalize on the learning opportunities presented by both. Challenge them when they’re up; support them when they’re down.

As I write this, I have recently learned that one of the study’s TAs, Sadie, has left the program. I have spoken to a few of her friends, one of whom was in my study and others who were not. They tell me that Sadie never quite fit into the social scene, didn’t like to party with the other TAs, and generally kept to herself. Tess shared the most information with me, telling me that Sadie went to movies alone last year, and when urged to give Tess a call the next time she wanted to go, quietly agreed to do so but did not. This past summer, when all the other TAs stayed in town to earn in-state residency status, Sadie went home and taught at sports camps all over the country. While most of the TA group was firmly cementing their bonds with one another and with the university, Sadie was doing other things. Tess suspects that Sadie did not earn in-state residency and

that this may have factored into her decision to leave since the English department can only fund out-of-state TAs for the first year.

Tess then talked about how she and Sadie played basketball on the department team last year, and how they were the only women who played. I thought about Sadie, about her goal to teach and to coach in the public schools, about how fully she understood the need for strong female role models for our adolescent girls, about how she felt coaching was an even more challenging and complete role than teaching. I thought about her teacher's admonishment to "become a presence, not just a person in the classroom" and about her philosophical clarity regarding her capability "to entertain an idea without accepting it," and how this helped her merge her upbringing as both a devout Catholic and a believer in Darwinism.

At the end of our conversation Tess said to me, "I feel terrible about Sadie leaving. I feel guilty," and I said, "Me, too."

And now I wonder, what will become of Sadie. How might we have helped her—or in the terms of the university—have "retained" her? Fifteen of the original class of 20 TAs remain with their assistantships, and two of those who dropped out were in my study. I think of Jen and how different her issues were than Sadie's and yet how, in the space of one year and within the constraints of a mere six-person research study, we managed to lose two TAs—and both of these young women. Capable women. Women of substance and conviction. One with serious aspirations and potential for becoming a professional writer. The other a young woman who knew at an early age that she wanted to teach and to coach in our public schools. What efforts were made to prevent these young women from making their premature and radical departure from our ranks? Has

anyone paid attention to the fact that these TAs are gone? Did anyone ask them exit interview questions from which we might learn? Should we not feel their loss as an amputee might feel the loss of a leg—or in this case, two legs? For me that means that I do some digging and locate Sadie. She tells me she is fine, that she's happy to be closer to home, that she still plans to teach. I breathe a huge sigh of relief.

Always the question is this: How might we do a better job for the next class of TAs? CSU's President, Albert C. Yates, in the Fall 2001 issue of the Colorado State University Alumni magazine, has said that the absence of teaching expertise is "one of the great idiosyncrasies of academia" where "Faculty are hired largely for their expertise as scholars and are charged to educate others in their disciplines, but they may have little actual experience or knowledge of how to teach, or even more important, how to teach well" (p. 32). He believes that teaching portfolios might be required of faculty seeking tenure, that our schools of education might become actively involved in professional development of college teachers, and that "We can do more to assist our graduate students in preparing to enter the teaching profession, perhaps requiring departments to support each graduate teaching assistantship with a detailed mentoring plan." That's a start—not just the mentoring idea itself, but the fact that the university's president is awakening his Carnegie I research institution to the necessity for improved mindfulness of, caring toward, and responsibility to TAs, those who are just beginning to enact that most difficult work of the university—the teaching.

Also, though, I believe that until and unless we understand the experiences of these TAs much more fully than we currently do, we won't do better by them. Clandinin (1992) says we must avoid in this examination of experience the temptation to focus on

the single stage or aspect of life. We must avoid dissecting TA lives into, for instance, before training, during training, and after training. Instead, we must view their lives holistically, seeing the connection between educational histories and current practice, between current critical events and future plans. Clandinin calls this narrative structure of teachers' lives the "personal practical knowledge" which serves as antidote for institutional narratives, which are, after all, only part of the story of teaching. Further, as teacher educators we need to examine those embedded institutional stories for their assumptions and limitations. Our TAs can help us, becoming, as Clandinin calls them, co-curriculum makers, who work with us to reshape and retell the age-old stories of teaching.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Recruitment Letter of 1st Yrs

Recruitment Letter of 1st Yrs.

To: Fellow Graduate Students and GTAs:
From: Sue Doe, Doctoral Candidate (School of Education) and Lecturer in English
(Teaching CO192, CO150, and E311-Nonfiction this fall):
sdoe@lamar.colostate.edu
Date: August 14, 2000
Subject: Recruiting You for TA Research Study

I would like to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study, which I'm pursuing through the School of Education here at CSU. I have developed my research plan in coordination with our mutual bosses, English Department Chair, Pattie Cowell, and Director of Composition, Donna LeCourt, in consultation with Steve Reid and by virtue of ongoing support from dissertation committee member, Mike Palmquist. This study has received approval from the university's ethics (human subjects) review board.

The goal of my study is to chronicle the experiences of 1st-year TAs as they engage in their first semester of college teaching. This chronicle may illuminate some of the tough issues, intriguing discoveries, and teacher development issues that TAs inevitably face as they first teach at the university. I have learned that while a substantial body of research has examined training programs, role ambiguities, and expected competencies of TAs, little has been done to systematically query TAs on their lived experiences, about what it's like to begin to teach at the college level. It is always dismaying to discover that those closest to the action have not been asked—directly and simply—about their experiences. But such deficiency in the literature represents opportunity, too; the time has come to document—indeed to value—your experience as a beginning college teacher.

I selected English Department TAs as my study group because the storied experiences of English TAs may be especially illuminating, even colorful; after all, one might hope that an English department gathers together articulate storytellers. I also selected English TAs because English departments generally do more in the way of TA training than do other university departments. Third, I chose English because I went through a GTA program like the one you are in, and it changed my life. In 1979 I was a fiction writer enrolled in the creative writing program at the University of New Hampshire. I took the assistantship to pay the bills. Little did I know that my training in the TA program would lead me to a career in college teaching. This year, as a matter of fact, marks the beginning of my 21st year in the college classroom.

Obviously, I have been sitting in on your training sessions this week, but I also hope to identify several of you who might be interested in discussing more fully your experiences as college teachers over the course of the semester. I have endeavored to make my research “interventions” minimally time-consuming and maximally helpful to you as a teacher. The next sheet in this packet explains these research interventions in detail.

Thank you for allowing me to observe your training this week. I wish you every success in your first semester as a TA here at CSU and in your graduate studies. I'll be just down the hall in Room 311, so visit me anytime—whether or not you participate in this study.

Best wishes to you in all that you do!

Appendix B – 2nd Yr. Recruitment Letter and 2nd Yr. Focus Group Agenda

2nd-Yr. Recruitment Letter

Thank you for your interest in being part of my 2nd-year TA research focus group. I am currently hoping to schedule this focus group for around February 1, 2001, which would be roughly two weeks into the spring term--time enough for you to be settled but not so far into things that you're swamped, I hope. I'm not sure where we will meet yet, and we will need to work out many details, but I have been offered facility support from the university's Center for Teaching and Learning so they may be able to provide us with a comfortable location.

My plan is this: I will first brief the focus group on my thematic findings from the 1st year TAs from this semester. These TAs have been providing me with daily teaching logs, two educational life story interviews (one at the beginning and one at the end of the semester), and one or two critical event narratives from experiences they had during their first semester of teaching. The plan for the focus group would be for me to brief you on my findings so far and then ask for your insights--both where your own experiences confirm and where they disconfirm some of themes I see among the current 1st-year TAs.

The idea here is to begin to build data around the lived experiences of beginning college teachers and to develop an explanation for how the individual backgrounds/expectations of TAs influence their early experiences with college teaching.

What I can offer you by way of compensation is slight, but I hope it may be of some use to you. First, I will provide FOOD for our get together. Second, I will make sure that you are kept abreast of my findings and I will consult back with you (this is called "member checking") once I begin interpreting my findings. This will keep you informed. An additional, possible benefit of the study is that you may become more aware of your own teaching processes and the processes of those you might one day supervise if you continue in higher education.

You should note that all of your responses are kept strictly confidential although for purposes of transcription I will audio-tape the focus group meeting. This audio-tape will not identify you by your real name (we will use pseudonyms), and it will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you are still interested, I will need to have you read and sign an "Informed Consent" form, which is a requirement at all federally funded research institutions. Basically informed consent means that you understand what I'm asking you to do and you agree to participate, releasing the university of liability--sort of like what you do when you sign a waiver to run a 5 kilometer run. Informed consent is required in ALL university research involving humans if that research will be read by persons outside the university (and all dissertations become a matter of public record so there's no getting around this). In any case, it is a formality that I must adhere to, and so, if you are still interested, please let me know by reply to this email, and I'll slip an informed consent form in your mailbox for you to sign and initial. The form will also explain in more detail the various aspects of the research study I have undertaken.

Finally, if you know of anyone else who qualifies as a 2nd-year TA for this focus group and might be interested, please encourage them to participate or let me know about them so that I might try recruiting them directly. I would like to have six participants. Also, Sara, I'm looking into ways that we might do a conference call or something to accommodate your not being physically present. I have to talk to my committee members to see if this is kosher.

2nd Yr Focus Group Agenda

If possible, please read the transcription of the Story Swap from the 1st-year TAs before we meet. You might also be interested in reading the story a complete stranger sent me over the e-grad listserv.

Themes I'm seeing so far:

classroom authority concerns, composition content concerns, classroom management concerns, teaching effectiveness concerns, concerns about meeting individual learner needs, classroom engagement concerns, "ownership" of syllabus concerns

not obvious from the data you have here is another theme, the interplay between the TA's own educational life story (history) and the stories, themes, and classroom issues s/he ends up dealing with

Individual Themes You May See in the Story Swap Transcription

Subject 1—syllabus puppet vs. going with personal strengths, developing student rapport and personal interest, trusting that learning proceeds in time, though not necessarily on our time schedule, seeking student feedback in active ways to inform curricular planning

Subject 2—grading worries and happy surprise at student acceptance of TA authority in classroom, Creation myth in lesson planning vs. letting go in class—discovery of the reciprocity principle (that teacher-student interplay is necessary) and that when it happens that this is learning, but it's fleeting. Feeling good, zone, rush, feeding of the ego in those moments.

Subject 3—taking control of lesson plans. As control goes up, both teacher and student satisfaction seem to follow. Aimed for finding student turf and engaging students there as way of launching course material

Subject 4—a good day in the classroom positively affects one's outlook on the entire day—and implicitly the opposite is also true. Perhaps this is not, as Chris Anson suggested, "the most distasteful profession on earth" that we've "stumbled into." This keeps you going, even if only 1 in 10 days is good.

Subject 5—2 different students, each with specific needs that TA attempted to discern and meet. Making self available vs. making self a doormat or a pal. The value of intervention and the necessity for making those interventions individually appropriate.

Subject 6— This TA's class presented the TA with much resistance to the TA's authority; TA responded by taking control at the level the TA deemed possible. Engaged students in a feedback session in which this TA obtained useful information about class expectations for themselves and the teacher. As a result, TA used this input for discussing roles in class, pointing out that they themselves felt they should be held accountable for participating. An individual student also tested this TA's authority, voicing severe displeasure over course of semester, but TA did not back down and thus claimed/achieved a degree of authority and enhanced self-confidence.

Questions For You

--What story (or stories) do you best remember from your first term/year of teaching?

--Do you see any parallels between your remembered stories and the stories of these TAs?

--What stories are emerging this year as you teach—what has happened that's new?

--Do you see any relationship between your own educational life story or life history and the issues that are important to you or concern you in the classroom? For instance, does the fact that you think of yourself as a creative writer or an ESL teacher or a literature buff or something else influence your teaching? Might the fact, for example, that your most important experience to date was teaching backcountry survival techniques influence the kind of teaching goals and concerns you have? Have some of your natural or acquired beliefs or propensities been either dampened or fueled by virtue of the experience you've had teaching and the supervision you've received? (In other words, as a result of your teaching have you amended any visions you once had of yourself or of others, amended any interpretations of human dynamics or, more specifically, student behavior?)

--Do you see mostly difference or mostly similarity as you compare the things you're concerned about now in your teaching and the things you were concerned about 1-1.5 years ago? Are you more or less confident among your students now? Which of your teaching concerns have changed over the last year?

--Using a line chart, with enthusiasm on the y axis and time on the x axis, how would your chart your levels of enthusiasm over the course of a term?

Appendix C – Faculty Focus Group Agenda

Faculty Focus Group Agenda

Individual Themes You May See in the Story Swap Transcription

Subject 1—syllabus puppet vs. going with personal strengths, developing student rapport and personal interest, trusting that learning proceeds in time, though not necessarily on our time schedule, seeking student feedback in active ways to inform curricular planning

Subject 2—grading worries and happy surprise at student acceptance of TA authority in classroom, Creation myth in lesson planning vs. letting go in class—discovery of the reciprocity principle (that teacher-student interplay is necessary) and that when it happens that this is learning, but it's fleeting. Feeling good, zone, rush, feeding of the ego in those moments.

Subject 3—taking control of lesson plans. As control goes up, both teacher and student satisfaction seem to follow. Aimed for finding student turf and engaging students there as way of launching course material

Subject 4—a good day in the classroom positively affects one's outlook on the entire day—and implicitly the opposite is also true. Perhaps this is not, as Chris Anson suggested, "the most distasteful profession on earth" that we've "stumbled into." This keeps you going, even if only 1 in 10 days is good.

Subject 5—2 different students, each with specific needs that TA attempted to discern and meet. Making self available vs. making self a doormat or a pal. The value of intervention and the necessity for making those interventions individually appropriate.

Subject 6— This TA's class presented the TA with much resistance to the TA's authority; TA responded by taking control at the level the TA deemed possible. Engaged students in a feedback session in which this TA obtained useful information about class expectations for themselves and the teacher. As a result, TA used this input for discussing roles in class, pointing out that they themselves felt they should be held accountable for participating. An individual student also tested this TA's authority, voicing severe displeasure over course of semester, but TA did not back down and thus claimed/achieved a degree of authority and enhanced self-confidence.

Other themes you see?

Critical Event Questions/Issues

--How typical do these stories and concerns seem among those you've observed among TAs you have worked with through the years? Any surprises here? Or--any new thoughts you have about old patterns?

--What story (or stories) do you best remember from your first term/year of teaching?

--Do you see any parallels between your remembered stories and the stories of these TAs?

--What stories are emerging this year as you teach—what has happened that's new or that represents a new teaching lesson?

Educational Life Story

--What relationships do you see between your own educational life story or life history and the issues that are important to you or concern you in the classroom? For instance, does the fact that you think of yourself as a creative writer or an ESL teacher or something else influence your teaching? Might the fact, for example, that your most important experience to date was teaching backcountry survival techniques influence the kind of teaching goals and concerns you have? How about your family story—how has that influenced your teaching? Have some of your natural or acquired beliefs or propensities been either dampened or fueled by virtue of the experience you've had teaching and the supervision you've received? (In other words, as a result of your teaching have you amended any visions you once had of yourself or of others, amended any interpretations of human dynamics or, more specifically, student behavior?)

--Do you see mostly difference or mostly similarity as you compare the things you're concerned about now in your teaching and the things you were concerned about some time ago? How would you characterize the essential differences between your old concerns and your new ones?

--Using the line chart that plot enthusiasm on the y axis and time on the x axis, would your typical levels of enthusiasm for teaching mirror the traditional model, as shown on the TA transcript?

--Does the teacher concern conceptual model make sense to you, the one which suggests that teaching concerns evolve from a concern (even a preoccupation) with self toward a concern with task and eventually toward learner? How would you describe your current teaching concerns? Another way of asking this might be: When it comes to teaching, what currently keeps you up at night?

Appendix D – LSI I and LSI II Questionnaire

Educational “Life Story” Interview 1

[Some portion of these questions will be asked, but not all. Overall sense of perspectives on schooling and education as TA has experienced them and as TA anticipates them in his/her current and future roles. Biography begins to tell “the story” of the TA’s teaching development.]

Current Educational Situation and Future Plans

1. What degree/specialization are you working on at CSU? First-year grad student? Is this the achievement of a goal or did your ambitions change?
2. How did you arrive at your current assignment as a TA?
 - Do your TA assignment and your educational/professional goals fit together?
 - For you, what is the role of teaching in your graduate studies—i.e., pays the bills? more important than learning in my discipline? somewhat behind research/publication? somewhat ahead of research/publication?
 - On a scale of 1-10, what is your level of excitement about your graduate studies? What is your level of excitement about your TA assignment?
3. What kinds of rewards and/or problems do you anticipate in your TA role?
 - What portion of your time do you anticipate that your TA duties will require—less than 10%, 10-33%, 33-50%, 50-75%, more than 75%?
 - How would you describe your feelings about teaching at this moment?
4. Do you feel prepared for your teaching?
 - What did you think of the training week? What would have made it better?
 - What concerns about teaching do you currently have?
 - What questions regarding teaching remain in your mind?
 - Do you feel that you have peers to call upon for help? Mentors?
5. How do you see yourself in the future? Do you suspect that you will continue to teach?

Informal (Nonschool) Education—Cultural/Familial Context

1. What aspects of your life do you suspect will significantly influence your teaching—your professional interests, your recreational interests, your family or cultural background, your gender, your belief system, other?
2. Can you describe particular family or cultural attitudes regarding learning that were passed on to you? (For instance, was questioning rewarded or discouraged?)
 - Were there places where family/culture and formal schooling (public or private) were in conflict with one another?
 - Are there ways you will consciously integrate your family/cultural background into your teaching?
3. Have you had significant occasions *for learning* outside of family, home culture, and school—for instance, military service, Peace Corps experience, work?
4. Do you have previous experience *in a teaching role* in some other environment—as a coach, camp counselor, day care provider, Sunday School teacher, parent, etc.?
5. What have been some of the most important lessons of your life, outside of the classroom, and what did they teach you?
6. What is your sense of the connection between cultural context and education?

Historical/Philosophical View of Education

1. What do you remember most about your early schooling?
 - What was it like—Open Classroom? Drill and kill? Progressive? Traditional?
 - Did you have a favorite teacher in elementary or high school? How did s/he influence you?
 - Do you have a best memory of elementary or secondary school? A worst one?
 - What accomplishments in school are you most proud of?
2. What do you remember most about college?
 - What did you learn about yourself during those years?
 - Did you have a favorite teacher or course? If so, how has that person/course influenced your plans for teaching? Did you have a least favorite teacher or course? If so, how has that person/course influenced your plans for the classroom?
 - Did you commit yourself fully to learning as an undergrad? If so, do you expect the same of your students? Do you think that their experience of college will be pretty much the same as yours?
 - Do you have a specific image you hope to project as a college teacher?
 - What would you like your undergrads to learn from you?
 - If you could imagine the perfect outcome, what would your students say about you in the future?
3. What is your view of *the role of schooling* in a person's life? The role of higher ed?

Closure Questions

1. Is there anything you would like to add to your educational life story or biography?
2. Do you feel that you have had opportunity to give a fair picture of yourself?
3. Would you like an opportunity to follow up on any issues/questions?
4. How do you feel about the questions we've covered in this interview?

Educational “Life Story” Interview 2

[As in the initial educational life story interview, some portion of these questions will be asked, but not all.] Changes in perspectives will be focused upon here, looking at re-interpretations of past schooling/education, current experiences and future practice as a college teacher. Follow-up biography continues the “story” of the TA’s teaching development and identifies changes in perspectives that occur subsequent to beginning the college teaching experience.

Current Educational Situation and Future Plans

1. Has anything changed regarding your program/specialization in your graduate studies?
2. Have your professional ambitions changed since our first conversation?
3. Will you continue your assignment as a TA?
 - Has your perspective on the fit between your teaching assignment and your educational/professional goals changed?
 - For you, has the importance of teaching in your graduate studies changed? (On a continuum with “my teaching pays the bills and little more” at one end and “it is more important than the content I’m learning in my program” at the other, where are you today?)
 - On a scale of 1-10, what is your level of excitement about your graduate studies? What is your level of excitement about your TA assignment?
4. What kinds of rewards and/or problems have you experienced in your TA role?
 - What portion of your time have you found that your TA duties have required—less than 10%, 10-33%, 33-50%, 50-75%, more than 75%?
 - How would you describe your feelings about teaching at this moment?
5. Did you find that you were adequately prepared for your teaching?
 - What do you think of the intensive training week you had in August now? What would have made it better?
 - What concerns about teaching do you currently have?
 - What questions regarding teaching remain in your mind? What new questions do you have?
 - Have you called upon peers for help? Have you called upon mentors?
6. How do you see yourself in the future? Do you think that you will continue to teach at the college level?

Informal (Nonschool) Education—Cultural/Familial Context

1. What aspects of your life did you find significantly influenced your teaching this first semester—your professional interests, your recreational interests, your family or cultural background, your gender, your belief system, other?
2. Did you find that any particular family or cultural attitudes regarding learning were important to your practice or expectations this semester?
 - Can you think of some ways that you consciously or unconsciously integrated family or cultural background into your teaching this semester?

3. If you have had significant occasions *for learning* outside of family, home culture, and school—for instance, military service, Peace Corps experience, work—which of these were most influential to your teaching this semester?
4. If you had previous experience *in a teaching role* prior to your TA assignment, in what ways did this experience influence, assist, or handicap you?
5. Has your sense of the connection between cultural context and education changed this semester? If so, in what ways?

Philosophical View of Education

1. What have you learned about yourself in relationship to education and schooling during this first semester of college teaching?
2. Earlier I asked you about your favorite and least favorite teachers or courses in college? Have your perspectives on those teachers or courses changed at all and, if so, how?
3. Did you find that the level of commitment of your students was about what you expected?
4. What image do you believe you projected as a college teacher this semester?
5. What would you like your undergraduates to have learned from you and how successful do you think you were in this?
6. What do you think, hope, or fear your students would say about you a year or five years from now?
7. Can you identify any changes in your perspectives on college teaching or learning from the beginning of the semester?
8. Today, what is your view of *the role of schooling* in a person's life? The role of higher ed?

Closure Questions

1. Is there anything you would like to add to your follow-up educational life story or biography interview?
2. Do you feel that you have had opportunity to give a fair picture of yourself?
3. Would you like an opportunity to follow up on any issues/questions?
4. How do you feel about the questions we've covered in this interview?

Appendix E – Critical Event Prompt

Critical Event Narrative

A critical event yields an **insight**. Some might use the term “epiphany,” but that suggests more gravity than such an event necessarily deserves. Holly (1989) calls a critical event a “touchstone” from which you learn. Progoff (1975) calls a critical event a “stepping stone.” A critical event usually takes on importance only upon reflection.

That’s the kind of thing I’m looking for here—only one caveat: it needs to come from your experience *as a teacher*. Remember that often insight evolves from difficulty or challenge so don’t feel that your critical event must report a teaching “triumph.” It might be bittersweet, infuriating, or even humorous. Tell your story here in a few paragraphs (not more than 250 words).

Appendix F – Daily Teaching Log

Daily Teaching Log

Research Questions: 1) *What things do you try, what risks do you take in the classroom?*
2) *How do you adapt instruction and for what purposes?*
3) *What concerns develop over the semester?*

Date: _____ Lesson # _____

Actual Class—Followed the Standard Syllabus? Adjustments made? Describe here:

If you made changes, how did these changes better meet the needs of your students while also satisfying the goals of the lesson?

Future Changes--Things you may do differently the next time you teach this class:

Memo to Self About Next Class Meeting:

Any Important Event(s), or Memorable Vignettes? If so, make a brief note here that you might return to later.

Dialogic Journal Portion

Your reflection on the day's teaching--your "pulse" especially as it relates to your concerns about teaching.

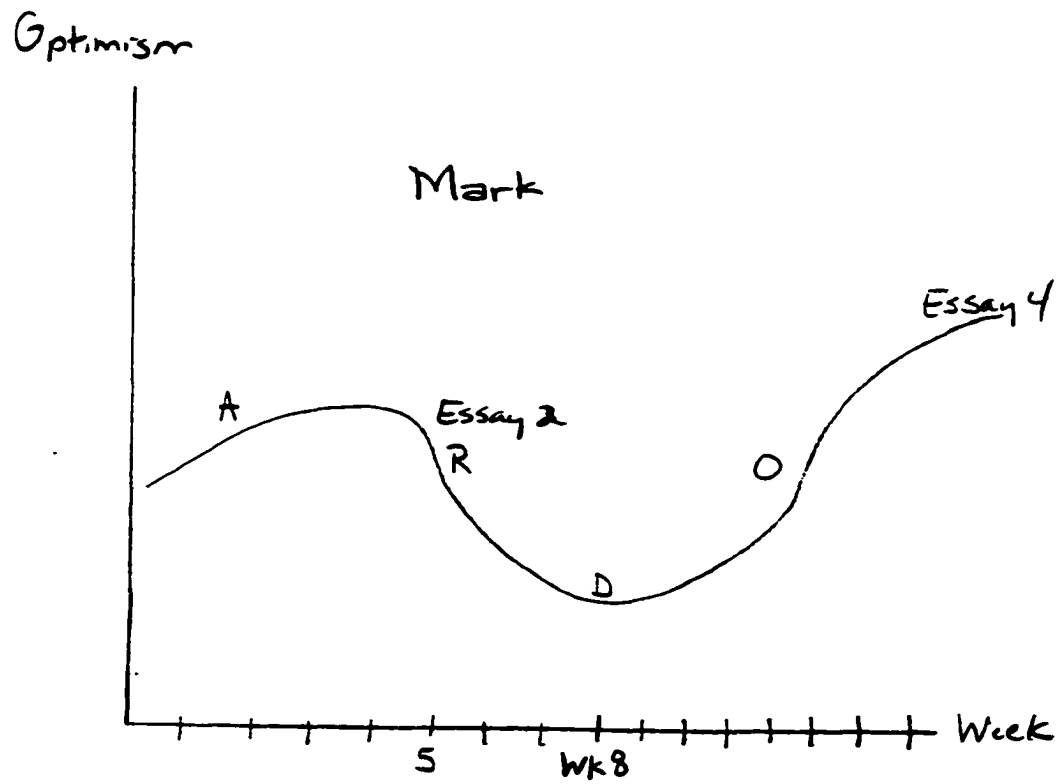
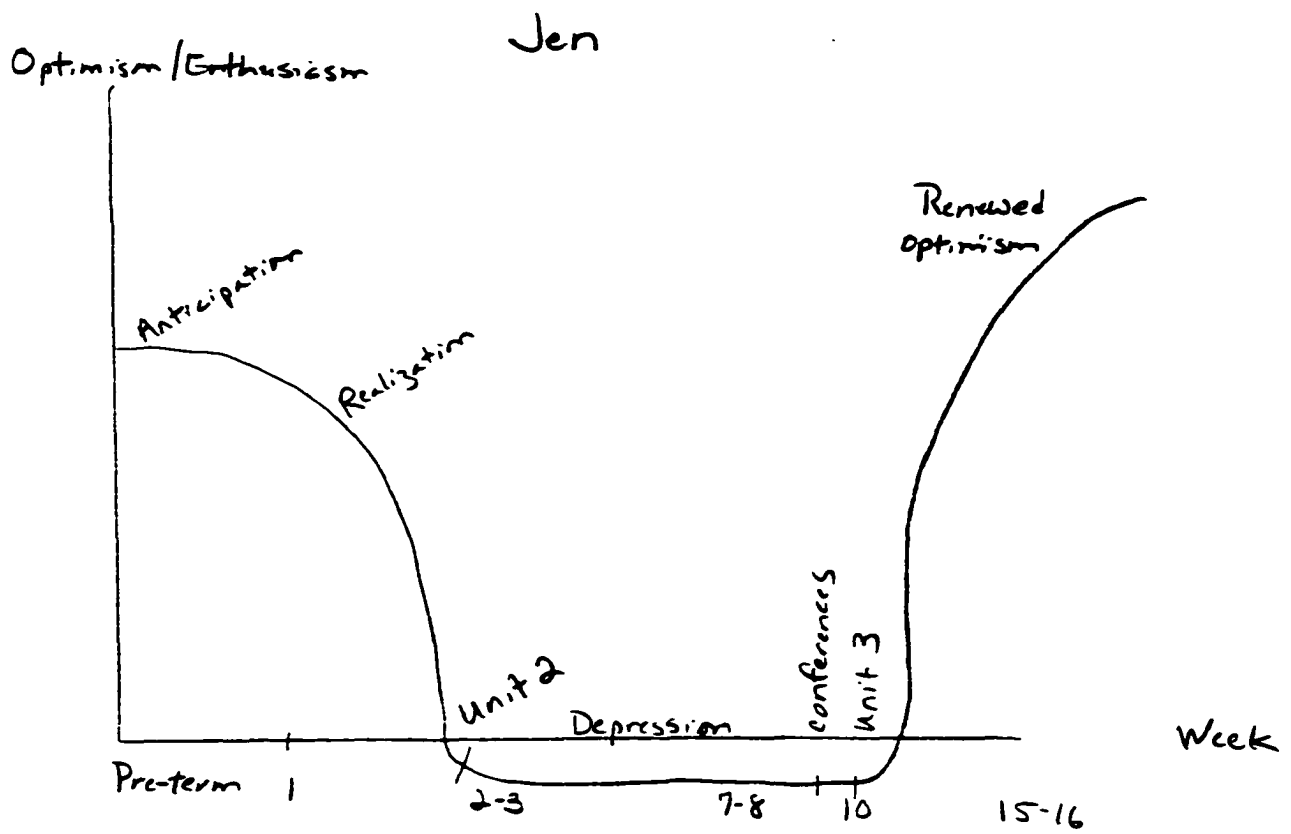
Sue's Response

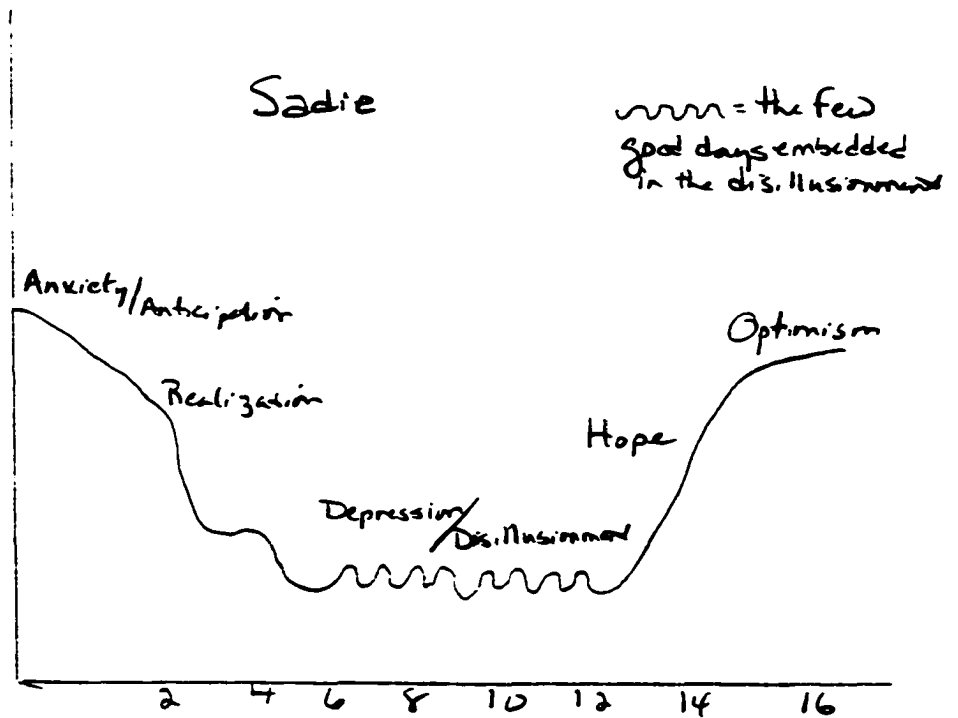
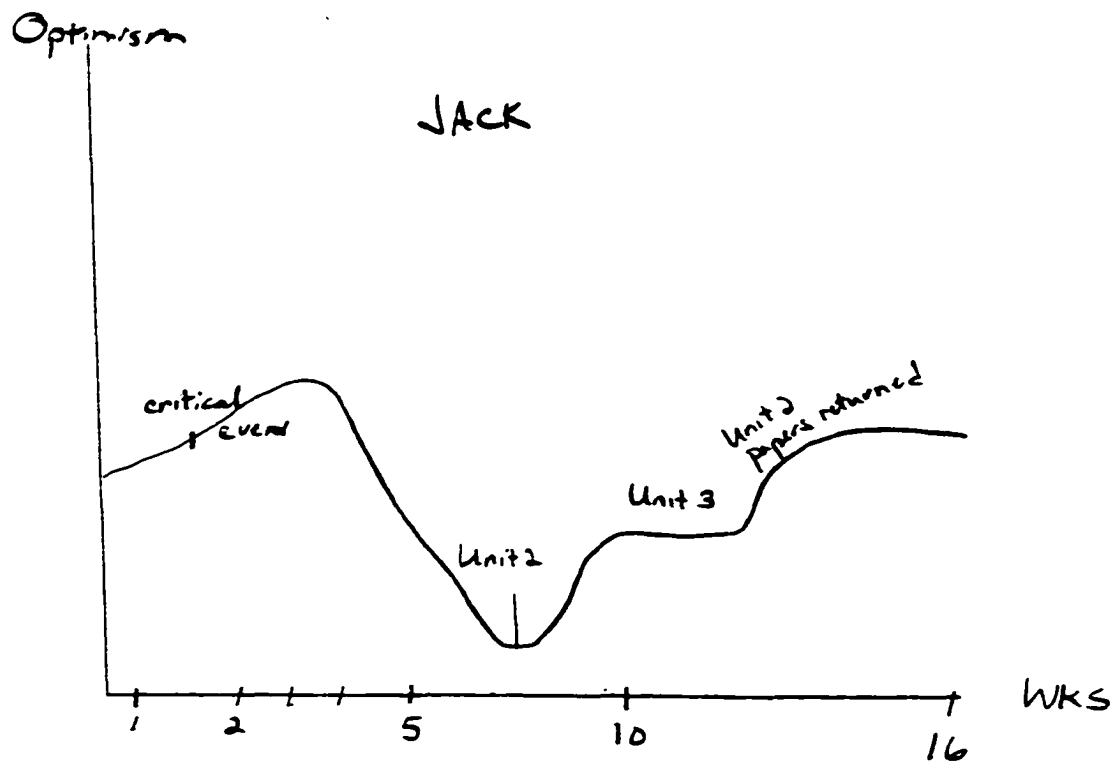
Appendix G – Story Swap Prompt

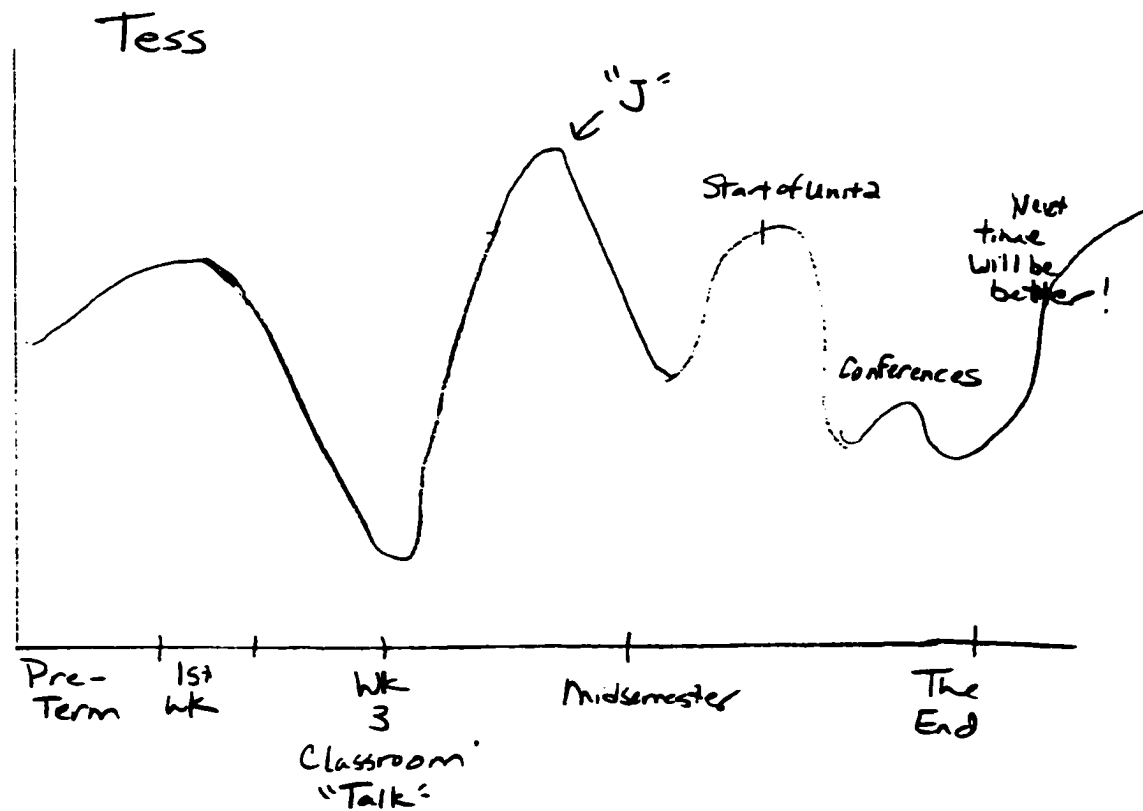
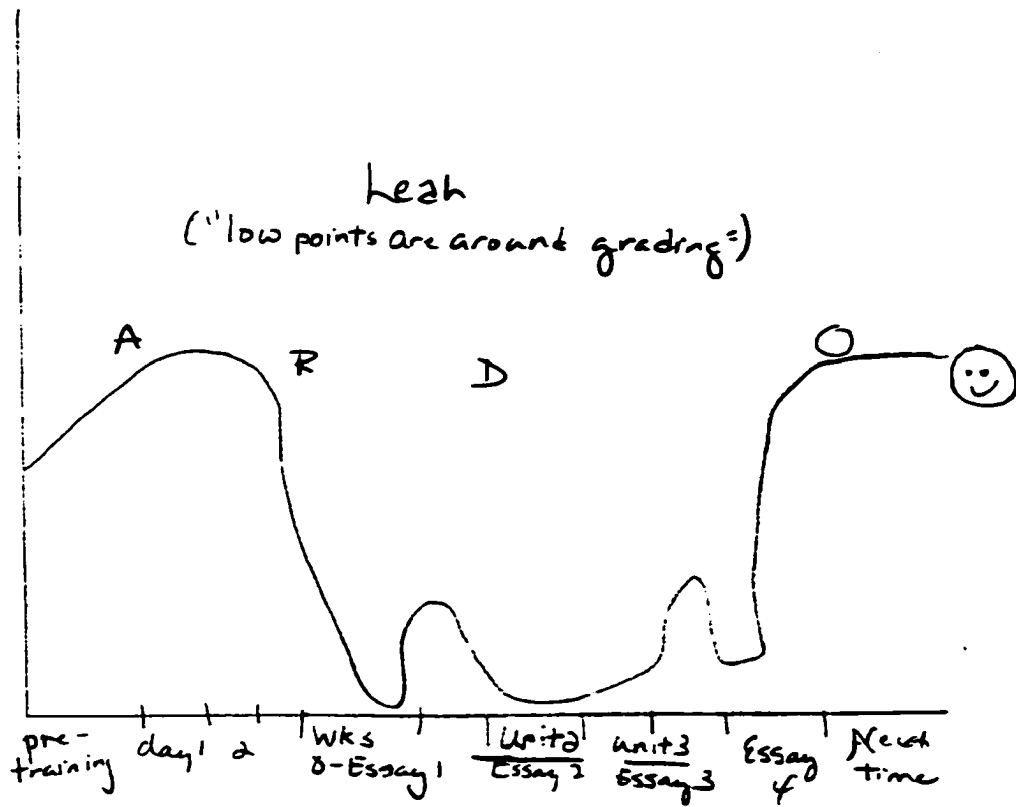
Story Swap Prompt

Throughout the term you have kept your eyes open for those important moments of teaching insight called critical events. You have shared one or more of these critical events with this study's researcher. Now, please take this opportunity to allow us all to benefit from your story and insight by sharing it. Please tell us your story and its meaning to you in an oral narrative lasting approximately 10 minutes. Listeners are asked to think about themes and connections among stories/experiences/analyses, so that we might provide some group insights/lessons at the conclusion of our meeting.

Appendix H – TA Enthusiasm







Appendix I – Sample Spreadsheet Coding Using Jack’s LSI I Data

Sample Spreadsheet Coding Using Jack's LSI I Data

What about the future in terms of teaching? You mentioned that you know you'll be marking people's papers. Probably seeking a PhD. If you did do that PhD, how important a piece do you think the teaching would be?	future & teaching	tchg plans
I think it's very important.	very important	skills desired
I mean getting used to thinking on my feet,	thinking on my feet	thkg on feet
as far as leading discussions,	leading discussions	ldg discussions
I think that's going to be the most useful thing	most useful thing to learn	CO150's utility
that I'm gonna gain out of these teaching skills.	from tchg skills for CO150	
Cause you're gonna have a lot of discussions with your literature.	discussions with literature in future?	You'll lead discussions in future?
Most likely, that what—	most likely	yes
I mean I'm not gonna stand up and lecture.	will not lecture in future	will not lecture
It would be in a group,	will work with groups	group work with books
hopefully discussing the books that we're reading.	discussing books	
And I'd like to teach all the way through my PhD, too.	would like to tch thru Ph.D.	& tch through Ph.D.
I think that teaching is just one of those things	teaching is one of those things	Belief: tchg gets better with practice and
you have to practice over and over	you practice	reflection
and reflect upon it and improve.	and reflect upon	
	to improve	
Good. OK. Let's move to talk about informal or non-school education. Your cultural and familial context. So let's start with a broad question. What aspects of your life do you suspect will significantly influence your teaching. Some possibilities are your professional interests, your recreational interests, your family or cultural background, your gender, your belief system.	Talk about nonschool influences	Non-school influences
I think my family for one	#1 influence: family	family
because they were highly educated	high educated family	highly educated
and they always encouraged critical thinking,	encouraged critical thkg	critical thkg valued
especially my father.	esp dad	Dad most important
He had professed to be a socialist and an atheist.	professed socialist & atheist	challenged convention and encouraged

And he's always made it clear	made it clear	JK to do the same
that you don't need to think like people are telling you to think.	don't thk like people tell you to	
And you need to think for yourself.	think for yourself	think for yourself
And I think that also the church that I went to—	church was influence too	Church
and that may sound contradictory	may sound contradictory	
since my dad was an atheist,	since dad was an atheist	
but my parents were divorced when I was five.	parents divorced when JK was 5	
And we continued going to a church,	continued going to church	
and my dad also went to it.	dad too	
It was very liberal,	liberal church	
more of a forum for people with the same belief systems,	forum for people with same beliefs	social activism through church and youth
the same morals and values.	same morals and values	group
And I didn't go to that beyond 9th grade,	didn't go beyond 9th grade	
but I think as far as my early childhood	early childhood	
that really was a forum for meeting people with the same belief system.	important influence	
Was it associated with a particular denomination or was is independent?	A particular denomination?	Denomination
It was called a Congregational Church,	Congretational	
and it was a Church of Christ	Church of Christ	Church of Christ
but back in the Midwest it's very different.	In Midwest it's different	but with a liberal twist
I know that in California the Church of Christ	from CA Church of Christ	
is a very sort of conservative church.	which is very conservative	
This was in Lansing, Michigan.	Lansing, MI	
A lot of emphasis was made on –	emphasis	
like our youth group	youth group	
would go around and feed the homeless.	fed homeless	Fed homeless, sponsored refugees
The church would sponsor refugees	sponsored refugees	
from third world countries and so on.	third world held	
So it was more about that, to me anyway.	activism was what it was about	activism

Appendix J – Third-level Coding or “Story” Example Using Jack’s LSI I Data

Third-level Coding or “Story” Example Using Jack’s LSI I Data

S3 is a 2nd year graduate student, and it seems that the extra year of experience may help explain why this TA remains so upbeat over the course of his first semester of teaching, even when faced with much the same difficulty that other TAs experienced. Specializing in literature, specifically Marxist applications to American literature, S3 plans to teach at either the college or high school level. If he were to teaching high school it would be in an urban setting, and he is currently struggling with whether to opt for the academic opportunities of higher education or the teaching challenges of the public school setting. In many ways this dilemma suggests the ongoing struggle of most teaching assistant graduate students and their long-term careers—whether to become academics (researchers and writers in higher ed) or whether to make their focus be teaching (which could happen in the higher ed setting but which seems to reside more concretely today in the public school environment. In any case S3 would like to pursue the PhD someday. For his masters work, he considered only CSU and CU, although he only applied to CSU because he didn’t think he would be admitted to CU. His reason for liking these two schools was simply the appeal of Colorado.

Among his motivations for pursuing the TA was the financial consideration but he also seems to have been strategic in his decision about this, saying “It helps me focus on my actual academics, being able to see what I’m going to school for and that would be teaching.” When asked if his academic interest in literature and his teaching composition are merging or complimenting each other, S3 notes a practical consideration—that first and foremost he will always be engaged in reading and commenting on papers, and so this is good training ground for that. He also indicates that it’s good to learn what 18-19 year olds are thinking about, the kinds of students he might one day have. When asked if things might work the other way, with his composition teaching informing his study of literature, he indicated that this particular version (curriculum) of composition may do some things for him since it enlarges his view of texts via the cultural studies approach. His answers suggest that composition in general would not provide this boost to his academic program. Asked about the future in terms of teaching S3 indicates that his current experience is important mostly because it helps him learn “to think on my feet as far as leading discussions.”

Asked about his level of enthusiasm—first for his program and second for his teaching, S3 indicated 8 or so for the program, some tentativeness deriving from his anxiety about himself. “Am I ready? Am I publishable?” he asks when considering the long road to a PhD in literature. Still he calls his teachers and the content of his courses good. Teaching got a jubilant 10 on the enthusiasm scale because of the great day he had just enjoyed. This teaching day would eventually become the one critical event he recorded in narrative form. Of note here is how dependent a TA’s enthusiasm and overall perspective appears to be upon the relative success of the teaching moment—the most recent day, usually. (Last week, S3 reported, he would have given teaching a 6 or 7 because of the daily frustrations.)

S3 indicated he had already enjoyed several rewards from teaching, specifically getting students to think about things they hadn’t thought about; enjoying their enjoyment of him with his long hair and “laid-back attitude.” Also, that students seem to look up to him, take value in what he’s trying to teach. A special reward seems to be getting students to think in new ways about old things—specifically, getting them to recognize and critique their own cultural environment. On the flip side, S3 expressed some concern about becoming too accessible, so much their friend that a low grade would be a complete surprise. Being an authority figure versus being a buddy seems to be a tension.

Generally speaking, teaching has been somewhat stressful for S3 and he wonders if he “stresses too much” over it. He states a philosophical belief he holds about teaching as well: “I think that teaching is just one of those things you have to practice over and over and reflect upon it and improve.” He acknowledges some level of concern for the actual curriculum he is delivering—how well he understands it. He indicates, however, that when he’s up there teaching “and there’s that dynamic, it feels really good. So I think some of the preparation’s stressful, but it all pans out when I’m doing the actual class.” S3 seems to acknowledge and accept the fact that adequate preparation involves stress and time, and that adequate preparation leads to success in the classroom. Responding to a more detailed question regarding this issue, S3 says, “I definitely find myself doing detailed lesson plans and trying to write things in my own words, taking them out of the syllabus I was given and to reword them so it feels more a part of me than something that I’ve just been told to teach.” *Memo: Of the several TAs, S3 indicates as much or more actual preparation as the others. One wonders if this TA’s relative success may be linked to the work ethic he describes.* Here also we see reference to the syllabus and “words not my own” theme, which this TA seems to deal with in a positive way by working with the material long enough to find an angle over which he has ownership/authorship.

As far as struggles, S3 indicates some difficulty with anticipating where conversation may go in the classroom. S3 indicates some trouble with “taking what they’ve said and stressing what I think is important and putting it all together.” Thus communicating content and ensuring adequate and accurate coverage of major teaching points seems to be a concern to this TA. He struggles with whether it’s appropriate to edit their ideas or not, as in, “that’s nice, but this is what I had in mind. So you want to allow—you know, you don’t want to discourage their thinking but at the same time you want them to walk away knowing these are most of the main points.” S3 seems to be asking, What is the corrective role of the instructor over content, and how does one provide it in the classroom?

Asked about orientation (intensive teacher training before the semester began), S3 felt prepared, “for the most part.” He indicates that it may have been useful to do more practice teaching (microteaching) in front of peers—2 or 3 times instead of just the one time. He feels that he knows the assigned reading fairly well since they had to be read ahead of the training and the assigned papers had to be read as well. He believes that there are some things the training could not prepare TAs for, for instance just being in front the real student group for the first time. Like S1 and S2 before him, S3 also indicates that stretching out orientation over a longer period of time—“several shorted days”—would have been helpful, although, like the others, he see why this would be difficult to accomplish. He found the 7-8 hours of “straight intellectual activity” fairly difficult, an adjustment made more difficult since he had been doing physical labor before arriving on campus. He found himself “losing focus a little bit by the end of the day.” He also believes that some of the technical training could have waited, for instance the Syllabase presentation on Friday afternoon. He thinks the program may be useful for some students, overwhelming for others, but he thinks that at the very least this could have been covered in 684.

For S3, because he was already living and working in town, the development of friendships and peer interaction is something he feels he can and must take the initiative on. Most of his friends reside outside the English department, but he plans to involve himself fully—as a member of the environmental writing group (Ridgelines) and playing in the department Sunday afternoon basketball, where a few of the lecturers play as well. S3 notes that in terms of his audit lecturer and observer lecturer that he is more drawn to the person who observes him than to the person he observes. One of these lecturers is very organized while the other is a dynamic discussion leader, and this TA is more inclined to try to learn from the dynamic teacher instead of the organized one. He anticipates feeding his programmatic and intellectual needs by getting to know his

advisor better. S3 seems quite well “plugged in” socially. He seems to be quite strategic and naturally inclined toward the social aspects of this experience.

Informal/Nonschool Education—cultural/familial context

Asked to choose among professional interests, recreational interests, family, culture, gender and beliefs/values as the larger influence on his teaching, S3 selected family to discuss first. Both of S3’s parents are highly educated and involved in education. His mother worked her way through various levels of education to eventually serve as director of physical education for the state of Michigan. His father has a PhD in adult education and conducts upper management training in leadership and team building with both private industry and governmental agencies. His father, in particular, encourages critical thinking, having been a “self-proclaimed socialist and atheist” who simultaneously attended church with his family. S3 remembers his father saying, “You don’t need to think like people are telling you to think,” and this theme is repeated in S3’s later narrative and follow-up interview, seeming to be a central idea in this TA’s overarching philosophy of life and teaching. His parents divorced when he was five years old, but maintained strong contact with their children. As a youth, S3 was actively involved in the Congregational Church in Michigan, which had a strong social activism role in the community, sponsoring refugees. He recalls a particular event during his confirmation when he said (and he points out, felt free to say) “Well, I don’t know if I believe what you’re telling me about God, but I believe that there’s probably something more out there than what we can see with our eyes.” He says he wasn’t terribly rebellious, but he also never took information “at face value.”

S3 indicates that reading was always valued in his home and that there wasn’t must television viewing in either his mother’s or father’s homes. His parents continue to be readers, his mother enjoying historical fiction and his father able “to discuss literary things to some extent because he tried to be well-rounded as far as art and reading.” S3 has several siblings, many of whom are step-siblings and two of whom were adopted from troubled homes. His father and step-mother homeschooled the adopted children. S3 himself was educated in public schools, starting out in suburban schools and in 5th grade being bused to an inner-city school. He describes himself as “very privileged” to have gone to urban schools in a diverse setting. Among other things, he was able to take AP courses and study with a teacher who had himself studied at Oxford. He believes that “a lot of people don’t have those opportunities any more—or like there seems to be this idea that there aren’t any good ones [urban public schools] left.” Asked if this connects to his possible desire to teach in an urban school setting, he says yes and then admits that he romanticizes the environment, “thinking I could take these students who don’t have good teachers anymore ...and I can make things exciting for them for a couple years.” He says he’s been thinking more and more about teaching in Denver and explains that his wife who currently is a youth treatment counselor, is seeking alternative licensure for inner city elementary teaching.

Other relevant nonschool educational experiences revolve around S3’s work with his hands as a carpenter/renovator. This work taps into his belief that “you need to be a well-rounded person.” Working his way up from being a gopher for a couple that was renovating a couple of 100-year old homes to more recently being a supervisor of maintenance for an apartment complex here in Fort Collins, S3 looks at this work as “a life experience so when I own my house someday—” “Being a supervisor was essentially a training/teaching experience, he points out, and here he describes an episode in which he left a new employee alone to do a job and the kid botched it. This kid was “fresh out of high school, from a pretty wealthy family, had never gotten his hands dirty,” and S3 asked him to gut a bathroom, which involved knocking out the wooden towel bars that were held in by 80-year old ceramic brackets. The kid misunderstood him and knocked the brackets out of the wall, and S3 says he realized that the mistake was his own, as supervisor, “trying to not immediately blame him and think about where the communication gap was and

whether it was partially my fault.” He concluded this anecdote by saying that he learned patience from his role of supervisor and that this experience “definitely influences how I think about education.”

When asked what provoked S3 to want to become a well-rounded person, he attributes a large part of it to his move from Central Michigan University to the University of Toledo *[Memo: S3 comes back to this discussion in a later document, where he also talks about the differing demographics of these two places.]* In Toledo he moved in with his dad who owned a 100-year old house and S3 became intrigued by the architecture especially as he became involved in its renovation.

During S3’s senior year of high school he was thinking about teaching elementary school and did an internship at one, volunteering two or three hours in the afternoons as a recess playmate and a paper grader. He tells the story of the day he brought in his saxophone, guitar, and tuba and played for the kids. His next teaching experience came when he was a teaching assistant for a teaching assistant to a literature prof teaching E140 at CSU. He describes this professor as one he learned a great deal from and describes her as “very clever”: “She brings in a lot of visual aids and starts at a basic level, has them analyzing children’s books, saying, ‘Take the reader response method to reading this children’s book and then move it to the next level.’” S3 followed this model when he did a solo teaching week and taught myth to the E140 students using “The Emperor Who Wears No Clothes” to get started. When asked if grounding things in a basic level before moving to more complex applications is something he might continue to use, he indicated that he’d been thinking about having students bring in favorite songs to analyze.

Educational Background and Philosophical Considerations

S3 begins by talking about his being bused in the later grades of elementary school, out of his neighborhood and into the city, and he recalls it as “a fairly good experience, and nothing really traumatic comes to mind.” The first teacher he recalls vividly was his 6th grade teacher who was a Vietnam vet and favored sports and competition. The theme of the classroom was tigers, and this teacher played “Eye of the Tiger” as the theme song. S3 laughs when he talks about it, but although he goes to some lengths to distance himself from the competitive approach this teacher pursued, he remembers having thoroughly loved this teacher and his approach at the time. He also recalls happily the research time this teacher allowed, where the kids were encouraged to do encyclopedia research on animals and were allowed to follow their interests in un-structured and largely un-supervised free time. Here was a time “where we could start to think about what we wanted to think about. I really enjoyed that.”

In high school S3 was involved in many things—tennis, band, jazz band, etc., but he started valuing the social aspects of school more than the academics. By the time he was in college S3 was clearly more of a social animal than an academic. His grades suffered some as a result, as he failed a few. Still he recalls a particular experience when he went to a 400-level English exam having read neither of the books being tested and wrote an essay response that earned him an A- as well as the comment from his teacher that he’d “brought in some valuable insights he hadn’t thought of before.”

After three years of partying, he transferred from Central Michican to the University of Toledo where he became a much more serious student. Sometimes, he says, he wishes he’d have applied himself earlier “because now that I’m in graduate school I get the feeling there’s some pieces back there that I’m missing.” He says he half hope half fears that his own students will be like him and he says a big indication of whether they’re going to be like him will be shown by their

attendance or failure to attend. He believes that “some of the smartest kids stop applying themselves, so it will be interesting to see.”

Asked what kind of image he hopes to project, S3 says he'd like to seem open, accessible to students and their differing ideas yet not misleading to them via friendliness so that a poor grade is somehow a betrayal. Among current teachers whom she might model his teaching after is both the lecture model of Professor Bill Trembath and the seminar classroom of SueEllen Campbell and Donna LeCourt. He says a combination seems best. “In Trembath's class sometimes I felt like I sort of understand all this stuff that I've been given, but I don't know how to put it into my own words . . . And then in the other class . . . sometimes I felt like it lacked focus and I needed a little lecture sometimes.” S3 also noticed while he was describing these differing models that he referred to the lecturing professor as “Dr.” and to the seminar professors by their first names.

Asked his view of the role of schooling and specifically higher education, S3 said that it should serve to make a person more well-rounded. He understands neither the business student who think they're going to college solely for their careers nor the “people who tell me ‘I don't want to go to college because I don't know what I want to do.’” An education is justified on the ability to critically think alone, to be “better able to view the world around you and form your opinions instead of taking for granted what people have been telling you your whole life.” Here we see definite shades of S3's father's influence.

S3, in conclusion, is a storytelling individual. He couches many of his points in concrete and specific examples, vignettes actually. He is a teacher who may find the continued use of narrative a valuable way to gain understanding of his teaching issues. Concluding the interview, he says the act of talking about his educational life story “clarified a lot of [his]views about education.

Appendix K – Within-Case Analysis of Jack’s Data

Within-Case Analysis of Jack's Data

LSI1	LSI2	Teaching Log	Critical Event 1	Critical Event 2
Program	Philosophy			
2 nd year graduate student	asked S3 if he had found that his first semester confirmed his thoughts about the value of education. S3 indicated that yes, he had really concentrated his CO150 section on critical thinking during the classroom time and writing in one-on-one conferences	day 3 he announces that he feels great about being a teacher. Student involvement in classroom activities and discussions seems to be his gauge for the day's success	In this event, S3 was struggling to decide how best to present the first class upon which he would be observed	
may help explain why this TA remains so upbeat over the course	he brought up his father again within the first minute or two of this second educational life story interview. He quoted his dad as saying, "Well, you know, as scary as it is, most of these students won't need to write these kinds of papers once they're out of college, but think about what's wrong if they can't think critically the time they get out of college."	Yet he looks at this as learning, saying, for instance, "I learned some valuable lessons about keeping focused on the main ideas and about group dynamics."	I felt at the beginning that I was teaching this curriculum that somebody else had written, and I'd be talking, and you know, we even had transitions and introductions written out for us and being a first-time teacher I stuck to those pretty well, especially in the first week.	
S3 plans to teach at either the college or high school level. If he were to teaching high school it would be urban, struggling with whether to opt for the academic opportunities of higher education or the teaching challenges of the public school setting	Teaching Effectiveness – Critical Thinking vs. Writing	Additionally, he is both reflective and concrete in his planning. Areas in which he feels himself planning to give thought and additional work include first foremost, "thinking on his feet." He says, "I think I need to find a balance between doing fun stuff to get them interested and the less fun exercises that teach them essential things that they have to learn."	describing it as almost an out-of-body sensation: And sometimes I'd be in front of the class and I'd hear myself speaking and I was sort of listening to myself from the outside and realizing that it wasn't my words and it felt really kind of strange.	

his motivations for pursuing the TA was the financial consideration	He found that he could teach small writing lessons in class but really focused on writing when meeting with them in conference. He says that a major lesson for him this term was that "there's only so much I can do in front of 20 . . . but the only way they're really going to become better writers is to do it	Day 6 seems to have found a method for classroom management when he decides he will spend the first 15 minutes of class time doing a mini-lecture and then will consistently get them involved in hands-on activities after this	This absence of ownership seems to have taken additional toll in terms of the TA's already suffering authority in the classroom. S3 wonders, "Am I qualified to impart some knowledge to these freshmen and sophomores, using a syllabus that I have not created and words that were written for me?" He finds himself fearing the student question because his knowledge of the content, he believes, is only as deep as the words on the page he had just recited.	
"It helps me focus on my actual academics, being able to see what I'm going to school for and that would be teaching."	S3 made the impetus of his classroom time revolve around critical thinking rather than writing, per se, he claims	he observes: "I need to start thinking more of ways to teach <u>my</u> way instead of relying so heavily on the syllabus	On the day he is observed he decides he must "put something of himself in." So he decides to use a technique he learned from the professor he was a teaching assistant for previously	
When asked if his academic interest in literature and his teaching composition are merging, notes a practical consideration—he will always be engaged in reading and commenting on papers	Yet in later comments when he discusses some of his classroom methods, particularly his review of groups' in-class crafting of thesis statements and introductions, it seems that he may have done more teaching of writing in class than he acknowledges	Day 7 S3 shows evidence that he is already responding to the particular needs of his students. Having noted that organization and evidence support were missing in Essay 1, he emphasizes backward outlining	This professor liked to ground difficult lessons in simple object lessons that the students immediately understood—grounding myth in a familiar fairy tale, for instance. He had learned from this professor that a mini-lesson of 3-4 minutes at the beginning of a	

			touch day would lay a foundation of understanding for students.	
good to learn what 18-19 year olds are thinking about	S3 indicates that he tried to take advantage of the small class setting to provide students with a primer in overall student goals and "what it takes to get through college" such as talking to your professors and going to their offices.	Doing a mini-workshop on a homework assignment, S3 notes that students will need additional guidance on workshop strategies and protocols	He realized that he would "have to integrate more of myself into the lesson plans and also that sometimes I [might] start on my own terrain, terrain I'm comfortable in . . . and also to start on my students' own terrain." He says, "I think what I learned was that just to be myself."	
particular version (curriculum) of composition may do some things for him since it enlarges his view of texts via the cultural studies approach	Enthusiasm	Day 8 positive observation that "I'm learning! Most days I feel a little inadequate, but I know that I'll improve as time goes on." Hence, we see that this TA may be no more or less successful in the classroom than other TAs but is rather more resilient in his attitudes and forgiveness of imperfection in himself	energy it took to prepare his own version of the material. Asked how this process went, he said, "It takes a lot of thought . . . obviously I was force to think about how it's gonna connect."	
mostly because it helps him learn "to think on my feet as far as leading discussions."	Asked about his enthusiasm levels for his program and his teaching, he indicated somewhat greater enthusiasm for his program and still high enthusiasm for teaching, although "sometimes I'm not overly enthusiastic about teaching comp."	Day 9 S3 is completely dissatisfied with the discussion he generates and makes note to prepare clear-cut questions before class rather than improvise during class time	S3 believes it was made quite clear in the orientation that the course director encouraged and supported such experimentation as he did.	
Asked about his level of enthusiasm—first for his program and second for his teaching, S3 indicated 8	applying for a lectureship to begin in the fall	Day 10 S3 discovers a teaching method that seems to work for him the rest of the semester. On this day, he sets up groups and in these groups students compose possible thesis statements that they then	he said he received none of his inspiration from the lecturer he was observing. He described this individual as having taught him how to stay on task	

		brief to the class and S3 then critiques. He seems to be dealing directly with writing with this method	and organized, "but for the most part he's very regimented."	
Teaching got a jubilant 10 on the enthusiasm scale because of the great day he had just enjoyed	<u>Training</u>	Of note here is the comfort he has created in his students who are taking the front of the room and presenting	Asked if this critical event liberated him, S3 said it did so for a day. Other classes did not go so well, he confessed, but he says, "I did learn that the days that went smoother were the days that I more tailored the lesson plan to my own liking." In the written narrative, when describing that day, S3 writes: "As the words leave my mouth, they actually sound like my own words . . . Finally I am teaching. For the first time it is my lesson and not that of the composition faculty that created the syllabus from which I am working."	
specifically getting students to think about things they hadn't thought about; enjoying their enjoyment of him with his long hair and "laid-back attitude." Also, that students seem to look up to him, take value in what he's trying to teach. seems to be getting students to think in new ways about old things	Returning to the orientation training from the beginning of the school year, I asked S3 if he felt there were any gaps now that he's finished a term of teaching. -was for the course to somehow cover some grammar	Day 11 next time he'll provide various introductions for them to look at and for him to critique as guidance for better intros		
S3 expressed some concern about becoming too accessible, so much their friend that a low grade would be a complete surprise.	Otherwise, he indicates that he was very happy and impressed by the training he received and even revised his earlier comments	Day 13 he notes that he has some difficulty making the first lesson of each new essay work well and clearly. Transition days are difficult, and this TA		

	from the first interview about doing more microteaching. "We did a lot of those in 684."	realizes that extra attention to these days will be necessary		
Being an authority figure versus being a buddy seems to be a tension	Grading and Authority			
teaching has been somewhat stressful for S3 and he wonders if he "stresses too much" over it. "teaching is just one of those things you have to practice over and over and reflect upon it and improve."	Asked how the grading versus accessibility (authority vs. buddy) issue worked out, S3 indicated that it didn't turn out to be a problem at all. Mid-term evaluations suggested that the students did not always understand his grading, but no one challenged his authority	Day 14 he is hard on himself, taking the blame for a flat discussion. his work today as "poor facilitation" and one recalls his lessons with the carpenter apprentice who tore out the 80-year-old ceramic brackets. Rather than become impatient with the young worker (or his students) he wondered what he had done that failed to communicate the idea. teacher responsibility suggests his high level of maturity		
He acknowledges some level of concern for the actual curriculum he is delivering—how well he understands it	Non-school Influences	Day 15 shows S3 looking for ways to challenge ("push") his students toward deeper analysis		
accept the fact that adequate preparation involves stress and time, and that adequate preparation leads to success in the classroom. "I definitely find myself doing detailed lesson plans and trying to write things in my own words, taking them out of the syllabus I was given and to reword them so it feels more a part of me than something that I've just been told to teach." <i>Memo: Of the several TAs, S3 indicates as much or more actual preparation as the others. One wonders if this TA's relative</i>	When asked about which non-school factors had played most importantly in his teaching, he thought that his blue collar work had perhaps been most significant. hands-on group work that he came to favor where "a couple of weeks before each essay was due, I'd have them get into a group and get out an overhead and write possible claims or even a whole introduction. You know, crafting those sentences, and then having them go up in front of the class and	Day 17 S3 indicates that he is somewhat confused by the audience and purpose expectations of Essay 3.		

<i>success may be linked to the work ethic he describes.</i>	present those			
Here also we see reference to the syllabus and "words not my own" theme	he believes that his acceptance of differences came into play since he had some very conservative students with whom he disagreed but kept his views under the lid. I asked about acceptance and tolerance in another way then, asking if his urban education and exposure to diverse students had been important at all, and he acknowledged the limited applicability to the non-diverse CSU campus	Day 19 S3 moves to workshopping sample essays and a discussion of the "nitty-gritty" of the assignment. He makes note that his students need to practice the workshop in order to become more critical.		
S3 indicates some difficulty with anticipating where conversation may go in the classroom.	When asked about whether he had noted similarities between his students and himself, he said that his mom had pointed out this resemblance while listening to him complain about students	Day 21 finds S3 feeling stronger in his introduction of the final assignment: "I did a better job of introducing the assignment than I did previously		
He struggles with whether it's appropriate to edit their ideas or not, as in, "that's nice, but this is what I had in mind. So you want to allow—you know, you don't want to discourage their thinking but at the same time you want them to walk away knowing these are most of the main points." S3 seems to be asking, What is the corrective role of the instructor over content, and how does one provide it in the classroom?	S3 discovered that he preferred a laid-back style, allowing homework to be turned in late and judging patterns of absence on a case by case basis. <i>[Memo: One concern here may be a tendency to dispense unequal punishment/consequences for same behavior. This is a values and ethics issue every teacher must eventually face—doling out opportunity and consequence with absolute uniformity</i>	Subsequent to this introduction S3 indicates some worry about his ability to teach argumentation and also expresses displeasure over student accountability for reading assignments.		

	<i>and fairness.</i>			
Asked about orientation (intensive teacher training before the semester began), S3 felt prepared, "for the most part."	Philosophy	Day 26 he gets his feet back under himself and discusses appeals via speeches that he collected from Jesse Jackson and Bill Clinton		
it may have been useful to do more practice teaching (microteaching) in front of peers—2 or 3 times instead of just the one. there are some things the training could not prepare TAs for, for instance just being in front the real student group for the first time.	Philosophically, S3 indicates that he realizes that "education is part of the experience they need to get his year, but it's not the entire experience they need to get." He also seems to have learned that for students to get off task during group work is inevitable and not necessarily a bad thing. He says he wants to "let them be in their own territory part of the time." <i>[Memo: Here we may be seeing echoes of that 6th grade class in which research and free time were opportunities to explore whatever a student wanted to think about. This had been the most memorable topic of his elementary years, and we see it coming back here.]</i>			
He found the 7-8 hours of "straight intellectual activity" fairly difficult. He also believes that some of the technical training could have waited	Future			
For S3, because he was already living and working in town, the development of friendships and peer interaction is something he feels he can and must take the initiative on	At the conclusion of this interview S3 indicates a high level of excitement and enthusiasm for the next semester of teaching. he's "starting to think			

	about how to change things," perhaps especially Essay 2			
S3 notes that in terms of his audit lecturer and observer lecturer that he is more drawn to the person who observes him than to the person he observes	Talking about teaching a lecturer's 4-4 load, he indicates anxiety and states his assumption that "I think it's ultimately gotta be the students who lose out."			
S3 seems quite well "plugged in" socially. He seems to be quite strategic and naturally inclined toward the social aspects of this experience				
Informal/ Non-school				
S3 selected family to discuss first. Both of S3's parents are highly educated and involved in education. Mother: director of physical education for the state of Michigan. His father has a PhD in adult education. His father, in particular, encourages critical thinking, having been a "self-proclaimed socialist and atheist"				
S3 remembers his father saying, "You don't need to think like people are telling you to think," and this theme is repeated in S3's later narrative and follow-up interview, seeming to be a central idea in this TA's overarching philosophy of life and teaching				
As a youth, S3 was actively involved in the Congregational Church in Michigan, which had a strong social activism role in the community, sponsoring refugees				
He says he wasn't terribly rebellious, but he also never took				

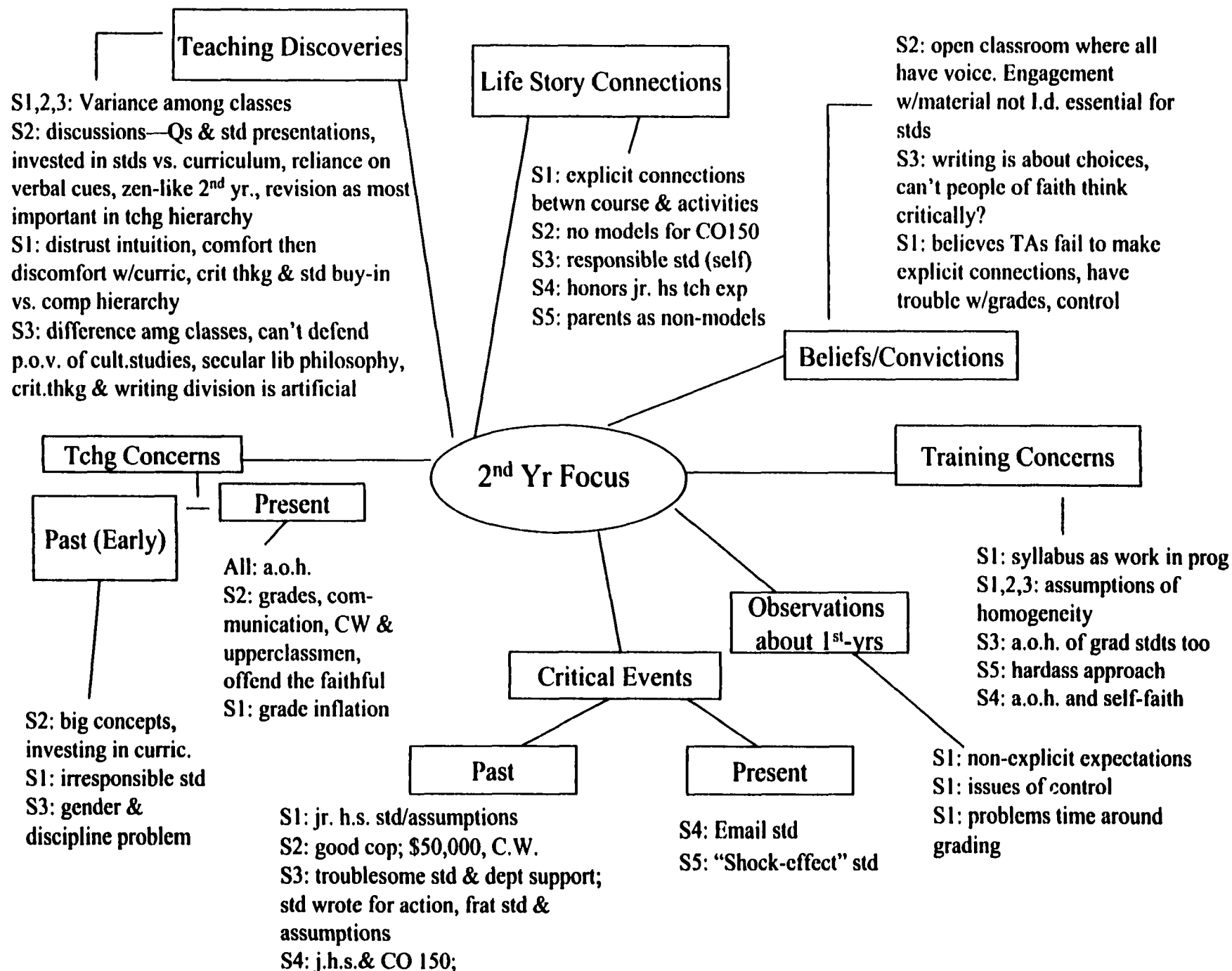
information "at face value."				
S3 indicates that reading was always valued in his home				
S3 has several siblings, many of whom are step-siblings and two of whom were adopted from troubled homes. His father and step-mother homeschooled the adopted children				
S3 himself was educated in public schools, starting out in suburban schools and in 5 th grade being bused to an inner-city school. He describes himself as "very privileged" to have gone to urban schools in a diverse setting				
Other relevant nonschool educational experiences revolve around S3's work with his hands as a carpenter/renovator. This work taps into his belief that "you need to be a well-rounded person."				
"Being a supervisor was essentially a training/teaching experience, he points out, and here he describes an episode in which he left a new employee alone to do a job and the kid botched it.				
When asked what provoked S3 to want to become a well-rounded person, he attributes a large part of it to his move from Central Michigan University to the University of Toledo				
He tells the story of the day he brought in his				

saxophone, guitar, and tuba and played for the kids				
His next teaching experience came when he was a teaching assistant for a teaching assistant to a literature prof teaching E140 at CSU. "She brings in a lot of visual aids and starts at a basic level, has them analyzing children's books, saying, 'Take the reader response method to reading this children's book and then move it to the next level.'"				
Educational Background				
S3 begins by talking about his being bused in the later grades of elementary school, out of his neighborhood and into the city, and he recalls it as "a fairly good experience, and nothing really traumatic comes to mind."				
The first teacher he recalls vividly was his 6 th grade teacher - Vietnam vet. played "Eye of the Tiger". competitive approach				
In high school S3 was involved in many things... valuing the social aspects of school more than the academics. By the time he was in college S3 was clearly more of a social animal than an academic				
After three years of partying, he transferred from Central Michican to the University of Toledo where he became a much more serious student				
He says he half hope				

half fears that his own students will be like him				
Asked what kind of image he hopes to project, S3 says he'd like to seem open, accessible to students and their differing ideas yet not misleading				
Among current teachers whom he might model his teaching after is both the lecture model of Professor Bill Trembath and the seminar classroom of SueEllen Campbell and Donna LeCourt. He says a combination seems best				
Asked his view of the role of schooling and specifically higher education, S3 said that it should serve to make a person more well-rounded. An education is justified on the ability to critically think alone, to be "better able to view the world around you and form your opinions instead of taking for granted what people have been telling you your whole life."				

Appendix L – Concepts Maps

Concept Map 1



Concept Map 2

