Graduate Teaching Assistants' Development of Expertise in Teaching First-Year Composition

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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August 2014

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe thanks to many people for their contributions to this project. First, I am grateful to the graduate students who participated in this study. Already juggling the demands of graduate school and teaching college composition for the first time, I am thankful for the time they gave up to this study, for their courage in inviting an observer into their classrooms, and for the insights they offered into their experiences during that first year of teaching. I wish them all success and fulfillment on whatever paths they might follow after their graduate studies.

I also want to offer thanks to the members of my doctoral committee: Dr. Michael Keene, Dr. Kirsten Benson, Dr. Martin Griffin, and Dr. Susan Groenke, for their encouragement throughout this project. I also owe thanks to my additional dissertation readers Dr. Tanita Saenkhum, who offered insight into methodological considerations for this study, and Dr. Joseph Harris, whose support of this project gave me faith that the research presented here may be useful to writing pedagogy educators and writing program administrators. This study would not have been undertaken without early support from Dr. Jenn Fishman, whose can-do attitude prompted me to begin this research early in my graduate program and whose confidence in this work gave me the sustained me when I was uncertain about continuing with it. I am especially thankful to have been guided by the chair of this dissertation, Dr. Michael Keene, whose enthusiasm for writing reminded me that it was a pleasure and a gift to sit down each day in front of the computer. I have also been exceptionally fortunate to have had the support of Dr. Kirsten Benson, whose painstaking consideration of this work and critical insight were essential to my thinking about this study. I could not have asked for a more caring, thoughtful mentor and collaborator, and I can only hope to approximate these qualities with my own students.

To the many friends and family who supported me throughout my graduate studies, I owe my sanity and persistence. My classmate and colleague Emily Murphy Cope, whose constant presupposition was that I *was* writing, has kept me *actually* writing in our small, post-it note-covered office. I'll miss the walks and brunches where we hashed out ideas and came up with plans for collaborative research. To my father, Joe Wisniewski, I owe the work ethic and stubbornness that carries anyone through a doctoral program. I also thank him for supporting my early love of language and for insisting on the value of education. Finally, I thank my husband and best friend, Eric Larson for encouraging me through moments of doubt and sharing the accomplishment of completing this work.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to learn about the processes by which novice college composition teachers develop pedagogical thinking, including how graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) respond to new teaching challenges. While previous composition studies research on GTA preparation has emphasized the influence of prior writing and classroom experience, we still have gaps in our knowledge about novice instructors' learning and development, including about the role of reflective practice in shaping pedagogical thinking and classroom instruction. Using qualitative research methods, this study sought to construct an account of the processes by which GTAs reflect upon and react to teaching challenges. Data from multiple interviews and classroom observations were collected in two phases over a two-year period, with six novice GTAs participating in each phase of the study.

The data revealed that the ways in which these GTAs framed and responded to teaching challenges were shaped by their existing interpretive frameworks, composed of their prior experience; teaching knowledge; beliefs about teaching, learners, and writing; and self-defense mechanisms. Their accounts indicate that when they experienced a sense of dissonance in their teaching, often prompted by a feeling of frustration with their students' writing performance or with their FYC program's expectations, they usually reflected on that problem in limited ways that rarely prompted beneficial changes to their instruction. Generally, instructors made no pedagogical changes when they were uncertain of what to modify, how to implement a change, or felt that students or the writing program were at fault rather than their practices. At times they did make pedagogical changes, yet ones that contradicted the FYC program guidelines, though some did make changes to their teaching practices that would better support student learning, even if unevenly implemented. This study suggests that, without guided intervention from

writing pedagogy educators, reflection may be ineffective and lead to inertia or entrenchment rather than growth or change. Longitudinal research, studies of the role of composition curricula in GTA development, and continued research on how GTAs read and process classroom cues are needed to better understand the effects of writing pedagogy education and reflective practice on teacher development.

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CHAPTER 1

NOVICE INSTRUCTION IN THE COLLEGE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

One of the most commonly required university courses since the late-nineteenth century, college composition remains "the number one subject" undergraduate students take (Menand 146). While the course itself—tools, pedagogical approaches, and disciplinary grounding—has changed dramatically, the practice of staffing these classes with graduate and non-tenure track instructors has endured since the 1890s (Connors 195). Such staffing practices have recently gained national scrutiny, especially in the wake of increased calls for transparency and accountability in higher education. For instance, former Harvard President Derek Bok denounced this labor system in 2006, observing, "No other single course claims as large a share of the time and attention of undergraduates. And yet, when it comes to *implementing* the writing requirement, few institutions have managed to do what is necessary to achieve success" (83, original emphasis). Bok goes on to chart the rising proportion of required courses taught by English graduate students and non-tenure track faculty, declaring that this group was responsible for teaching "more than 95 percent of all compulsory writing classes in Ph.D.-granting English departments" by the 1990s (83). Scholars of higher education such as Marc Bousquet and Louis Menand have commented on the consequences of this labor system for undergraduate education, as it "continuously replaces its *most* experienced and accomplished teachers with persons who are *less* accomplished and *less* experienced" (Bousquet 42). In other words, while universities value the idea that undergraduate students should receive some form of college-level writing instruction, many believe they have not provided sufficient support to ensure the quality of writing instruction that students receive. Bok emphasizes this challenge, arguing that university administrators tend to "underestimate the difficulty of teaching composition" and, by assigning

the task of teaching it to underprepared instructors, "illustrate the all-too-frequent tendency to pronounce a goal important enough to justify a required course without devoting the effort or the resources needed to make this enterprise a success" (100-101).

Novices to teaching, and often to the field of rhetoric and composition, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) of first-year composition (FYC) are regularly compared to the first-year writing students they teach (e.g., Duffelmeyer; Hesse; Estrem and Reid, "Writing"), yet not enough research exists about the ways they learn to enter the discourse community of composition instructors—there are still some gaps in our knowledge of how they come to talk, act, and think like writing teachers. This study aims to fill in part of that gap, answering recent calls for empirical scholarship on writing programs (Anson; Haswell, "NCTE"), including scholarship on GTA learning and development (Reid, "Preparing"). The goal of this study is to contribute evidence-based findings that will help writing teacher educators understand the processes by which novice teachers develop pedagogical thinking and expertise in teaching writing, including how GTAs' understanding of writing pedagogy changes over time, how they teach writing to undergraduate students, and how they respond to teaching challenges.

Statement of the Problem

The last decade has seen renewed concern about the literacy skills of America's adolescent and young adult population, with recent headlines, books, and government reports painting a grim picture of undergraduates' writing skills.[1] In higher education, perceived declines in graduates' writing ability have produced anxiety—even outrage—among students, parents,

[1] While scholars such as Robin Varnum suggest that America has seen five distinct waves of literacy crises from the Civil War to the mid-1980s, others, such as David Fleming, argue that the United States has been in a continuous state of literacy crisis since its inception. Scholars like James Paul Gee and David C. Berliner ("Three") suggest that America has a "schooling" problem rather than a literacy problem, arguing that criticism of literacy achievements tends to overlook America's comprehensive education system and the inability of the public schools to make up for inequalities in students' home lives.

business leaders, and government officials. This outrage has been fueled by publications such as Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa's 2011 *Academically Adrift*, a study of 2,322 students enrolled in twenty-four four-year institutions who took the Collegiate Learning Assessment in the fall of their freshman year and spring of their sophomore year. Based on minimally improved scores from one year to the next Arum and Roksa concluded, "Three semesters of college education thus have a barely noticeable impact on students' skills in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing" (35). To explain and contextualize these results, Arum and Roksa drew on additional empirical research, including the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education and the National Survey of Student Engagement, arguing that college students make most "gains in general skills …in the first two years of college" (36) and highlighting the finding that "half of seniors report that they have not written a paper longer than twenty pages in their last year of college" (37). In the aftermath of Arum and Roksa's publication, these conclusions were sensationalized in inflammatory articles like "Why College Students Today Can't Write" and "12 Points Detailing the Crisis of Poor Writing in America."

Inevitably, discourse surrounding this perceived crisis in students' literacy skills raises alarms about the negative ramifications for the U.S. workforce and national economy. The report *Are They Really Ready to Work?*, a collaboration between The Conference Board, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Corporate Voices for Working Families, and the Society for Human Resource Management, conducted an in-depth survey and interviews with human resource professionals and other senior executives in 2006 to determine "the corporate perspective on the readiness of new entrants into the U.S. workforce by level of educational attainment" (2). On "the most important skills—Oral and Written Communications, Professionalism/Work Ethic, and Critical Thinking/Problem Solving," over 50% of high school

graduates were rated "deficient." Further, more than 25% of college graduates were "perceived to be deficiently prepared in Written Communications" (7). Ultimately, this consortium calls for the business community to increase its involvement in educating the future workforce (8). Since the 2008 economic downturn, U.S. employers' concerns about college graduates' skills and knowledge have only intensified; for example, *It Takes More than a Major*, a 2013 study of business and non-profit leaders, found that more than 80% of survey participants wanted two- and four-year colleges to place "*more* emphasis" on "critical thinking, complex problem solving, [and] written and oral communication" to increase the potential for graduates to succeed in today's global economy (Hart Research Associates 8, original emphasis).

While such literacy crises are likely manufactured or exaggerated by the media, testing companies, and public officials (well-meaning or otherwise), as David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle, David Fleming, Richard H. Haswell, and others have documented, public anxiety about students' writing "deficiencies" has led to increased scrutiny of what students are being taught, how they're being taught, and whom they're being taught by. As education reform leaders call for heightened school accountability, propose alternative models of accreditation, and support new educational platforms such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), they have also turned their attention to the teacher educators and teachers charged with writing instruction. Margaret J. Marshall traces the historical pattern of public discourse criticizing higher education and consequent criticism of teacher professionalization programs from the late 1880s to early 2000s; Berliner and Biddle chart a similar course for K-12 education. This pattern of public criticism would appear to persist in contemporary discourse about the nation's literacy crisis. Not only have teachers at the K-12 levels been subjected to increased accountability and assessment measures, but schools of education have been targeted in publications such as the National

Council on Teacher Quality's 2013 *Teacher Prep Review*, a consumer rating guide meant to enable prospective teachers to avoid schools in this "industry of mediocrity" that "chur[n] out first-year teachers" without adequate knowledge and skills to begin working effectively in the classroom (Greenberg, McKee, and Walsh 1). [2]

At the college level, critics have targeted professors' preference for research over teaching, lecture-driven courses that emphasize rote memorization over student engagement and critical thinking, and the abandonment of first-year and introductory courses to GTAs and adjunct faculty.[3] For instance, Arum and Roksa roundly criticized the quality of teaching in higher education, writing:

> "With regard to the quality of research, we tend to evaluate faculty the way the Michelin guide evaluates restaurants," Lee Shulman, former president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, recently noted. "We ask, 'How high is the quality of this cuisine relative to the genre of food? How excellent is it?' With regard to teaching, the evaluation is done more in the style of the Board of Health. The question is, 'Is it safe to eat here?'" Our research suggests that for many students currently enrolled in higher education, the answer is: not particularly. (121)

Focusing more specifically on the writing instruction college students receive in FYC courses, other critics have also denigrated the "safety" and quality of this education. For instance, Thomas Bartlett's "Why Johnny Can't Write, Even Though He Went to Princeton," opens by reporting one student's negative experience in her first-year writing course:

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[2] See Herman for an overview of post-No Child Left Behind accountability and assessment measures; see The Education Trust's "Accountability in K-12 Education" for a representative example of pro-accountability discourse. Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Mary Kim Fries offer a useful analysis of "the accountability warrant" in teacher reform discourse.

[3] For example: Arum and Roksa; Basken; Bok, *Underachieving Colleges*, esp. pp. 3-4, 31-34; Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning; Hanford; Khan.

> "It was rotten," she says.
>
> She describes a disorganized class taught by a graduate student who was killing time and his students' enthusiasm. "I have never heard of anyone who had a good or even passable experience in their writing course," she says. (A39)

Other media reports took up Bartlett's criticism of FYC; for instance, *National Review*, a conservative weekly opinion journal, published Stanley K. Ridgley's "College Students Can't Write?" shortly after Bartlett's piece, claiming that "hundreds of thousands of recent college graduates today cannot express themselves with the written word … [b]ecause universities have shortchanged them, offering strange literary theories, Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, and other oddities in the guise of writing courses." As evidence, the article quotes one anonymous Duke graduate who described a lack of learning about writing from disaffected GTAs more interested in talking about their graduate research than in teaching composition:

> They basically brought in disinterested graduate students, gave them no oversight, and said 'go to it.' With no supervision, those grad students would talk about their research into, say, Shakespeare's sexuality. They'd talk about *anything* rather than teach you clear and concise writing. They themselves probably didn't know how to write. It was a sham, and I had to learn to how to write outside the Duke classroom, on my own." (Ridgley n.p.)

While this media coverage styles college-level writing instruction as a "sham" by focusing on stories of students' negative experiences in these courses, other advocates of education reform underscore the difficulties GTAs encounter as they attempt to balance the demands of being both a teacher and a student. For example, Bok offers a more contextualized view of the multiple pressures GTAs face in and beyond the composition classroom:

> Most graduate students lack the experience to deal with the challenges of a basic composition course. Although they are more likely to receive some sort of training today than in years past, a week's orientation or, at best, a semester course on teaching composition is hardly preparation enough for the task of guiding freshmen coming from the overcrowded classrooms and indifferent instruction of many American high schools. Besides, graduate students have other concerns that matter more to them: finishing a thesis, mastering a specialty in English literature, finding a tenure-track job. Faculty advisors frequently warn them not to spend much time on their teaching lest they tarry too long before completing their degrees. Amid these competing pressures, freshmen in the writing course often lose out. (85)

Not only must GTAs assume responsibility for guiding potentially underprepared students through their first introduction to college writing, often without extensive preparation themselves, they must balance this workload with their own academic study, professional goals, and personal commitments.

Of course, the staffing of FYC by graduate instructors and adjunct faculty is not limited to the Ivy League. Despite recommendations from organizations such as the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges that "[f]ormal courses in the teaching of writing (including English Composition) should be the responsibility of well-trained, qualified professional staff" (27), new and non-tenured teachers remain the predominant workforce for undergraduate writing instruction. The Modern Language Association's last survey of English Department staffing, released in 1999, revealed that doctoral-granting institutions delegated about 52% of their FYC classes to graduate student instructors, part-time faculty were responsible for another 24.3% of FYC classes, and full-time, non-tenure track

faculty for 17.5% (Laurence 216). To present those numbers differently, Anne Ruggles Gere's more recent survey of 643 responding writing programs found that graduate students were responsible for teaching some 10,867 sections of FYC each semester—more than 260,808 students at those schools alone (4).

Presuming that the staffing of writing courses with GTAs and non-tenure-track faculty will be an ongoing—and increasing—fact of institutional life, it is necessary to examine this system to better understand its impact on writing instruction, particularly in FYC. Most graduate instructors of FYC are responsible for teaching one to three courses per semester under the guidance of a writing program director. GTAs are not only novice teachers, but often non-specialists; many MA and PhD students in English departments[4] specialize in literature or creative writing, not rhetoric and composition. As Sharon Crowley has pointed out, admitting students to graduate programs in English on the basis of scholarly and creative potential—with little attention to their interest in or experience teaching—leads to the possibility "that the people who are selected to teach first-year composition may be uninterested in composition theory or pedagogy; further, they may be temperamentally unsuited to the interactive nature of composition classrooms" (5).

Not only do many GTAs lack teaching experience and disciplinary expertise in writing, but they also work within English departments which historically have assigned a low status to the teaching of writing and the preparation of new writing instructors. Since its inception at Harvard in the 1890s, FYC has been characterized as a remedial course, in part due to the belief that the "real work" of literary scholars—and thus of English departments—was to write scholarly criticism and acquaint students with literature. The college English classroom was not,

[4] First-year writing programs traditionally have been part of English departments, but increasingly are being governed as separate programs or housed within independent departments of rhetoric and composition (see, for example, O'Neill, Crow, and Burton).

as the 1892 Harvard Committee on Composition and Rhetoric noted, "the place to acquire dexterity in the mere daily use of the mother tongue" (qtd. in Fleming 9). This perspective on teaching writing persists in English departments today (e.g., Dobrin, "Introduction"; T. Miller). Further, as rhetoric and composition scholars sought to legitimize their work within literature-dominated departments, rhetoric and composition theory—"what to teach"—was often privileged above practical teaching methods—"how to teach" (Kitzhaber qtd. in Dobrin, "Introduction," 13). Though GTA preparation has grown more vigorous over the last several decades, the balance between theory and pedagogy remains contentious and GTA education remains far from unified, consisting of anything from a few days of pre-semester orientation to one or two semesters of composition pedagogy. Methods of writing teacher preparation vary widely (e.g., Dobrin, *Don't*; Pytlik and Ligget), and writing teacher educators lack a common language for discussing methods of teacher preparation (e.g., Latterell; Roen, Goggin, & Clary-Lemon).

In summary, although there have been waves of national concern about students' writing ability leading up to, in, and beyond higher education, postsecondary writing instruction is now largely entrusted to the novice teaching of MA and PhD students.[5] These GTAs often lack pedagogical experience and expertise, have little or no training in rhetoric and composition, and may have little inclination to teach the course well or at all. As Crowley famously asserted, "Universities and English departments have been given much better teaching in first-year composition than they have any right to expect, given the unprofessional employment practices that are associated with the course" (5).

[5] I recognize that non-tenure-track faculty make up another significant part of the FYC workforce, as indicated above, but my focus here and in the remainder of this study is on GTAs.

Although rhetoric and composition scholars have examined such staffing conditions in light of controversies such as the legitimation and abolition movements in the 1990s (e.g., Berlin, "English"; Connors; Crowley; S. Miller) and in the contemporary labor reform movement (e.g., Bousquet; Downing; Horner; Seitz) little research has been done to investigate GTAs' perceptions of the first-year writing course, their experiences teaching it, or the knowledge and habits of mind they bring to bear on their teaching of writing. Criticizing this lack of awareness in her 2011 *CCC* article "Preparing Writing Teachers: A Case Study in Constructing a More Connected Future for CCCC and NCTE," E. Shelley Reid observed that much of our current understanding of GTAs' experiences and development rests on anecdotal descriptions of practica courses, while "[f]ew studies of writing pedagogy education are data-driven, longitudinal, or inclusive of more than one program" (692). The first empirical studies of novice FYC teachers were published in the 1990s, focusing on GTAs' relationships to composition theory and often charting paths from resistance to assimilation. For instance, Elizabeth Rankin conducted case studies of five GTAs during their third semester of teaching FYC to discover how family, gender, sexual orientation, and scholarly specialization affect teaching. She found that new teachers were resistant to composition theory because it "seemed to deny the value of personal theorizing" (49). Christine Farris conducted a participant-observation investigation of four GTAs during their first year teaching and found that their understanding of composition theory was generally inconsistent and that teachers who favored a social approach to writing were more likely to be critical about their teaching (*Subject* 170-71). In one of the few longitudinal studies examining GTA education to date, Sally Barr Ebest conducted eighteen case studies investigating how process theory can be applied to the writing pedagogy course and used to overcome teacher resistance.

Since Reid's call to action, a surge in empirical research about GTAs' experiences as novice teachers has increased our understanding of the impact of their fraught institutional position on their teaching practices. For instance, Dylan Dryer offered insight into the relationship between GTAs-as-students and GTAs-as-teachers by investigating their perceptions of and struggles with their own academic writing and how those influence their perceptions of undergraduate writing. Jessica Restaino examined the labor experiences of four GTAs during their first semester of teaching. Focusing on teachers' relationship to process theory and pedagogy, she applied Hannah Arendt's framework of labor, work, and action to usefully acknowledge the institutional labor practices that undergird GTA employment and education. Most recently, Reid and Heidi Estrem, with Maria Belcheir, conducted a multi-institutional, three-year study investigating influences on GTAs' pedagogical principles and beliefs about writing, finding that novice teachers were more strongly affected "by prior personal experiences and beliefs about their experiences in the classroom than by their formal pedagogy education" (33-34). Their study also revealed few correlations between methods of teacher preparation and teachers' principles, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies, as most GTAs' teaching principles were "based on long-internalized (and sometimes very general) interpersonal values" like making students comfortable or using group work (46).

Many of these studies advance reflective practice as a method for helping novice teachers overcome resistance to theory and thus reconcile the theory-practice gap. To help GTAs move toward theory-based practice, these scholars suggest that writing pedagogy educators should engage students in reflective practice. By using reflection to make their assumptions and theories-in-use explicit, GTAs should become more flexible and adaptive (Estrem and Reid, "What") and move toward "a healthy critical 'attitude' toward themselves, their assignments,

composition lore, the course, and the composition program as whole" (Farris, *Subject*, 173). Reflective practice has also been promoted as a method of continuing teacher development beyond the practicum; for example, Estrem and Reid suggest GTAs should participate in ongoing teacher development over several semesters that asks them "to identify teaching challenges and tricky situations from their classrooms and then help them reflect on and work to understand those challenges in light of multiple scholarly and communal resources" ("What," 476). However, this scholarship has not yet identified the effects of reflective practice on actual classroom teaching, and Restaino questions the role reflection can play as novice graduate instructors struggle to survive the first semester of teaching. Restaino cautions, "The opportunity for reflection may not emerge during the first semester" as teachers work just "to keep it together" and deal with "the more immediate, recurring pressures of grading and classroom management" (24).

Faced with the problems surrounding the staffing of FYC and with the reality that institutional structures are slow to change—especially when those structures are financially advantageous—those responsible for directing writing programs and preparing graduate students to enter the classroom are faced with some difficult questions: What do GTAs need to know to best serve their undergraduate students? What do they need to feel confident about when they first set foot in the classroom? What resources do GTAs use to plan and theorize their course assignments, schedules, and daily lessons? How are those intentions enacted in the classroom? How do new instructors make sense of classroom successes and failures?

While writing teacher educators have been discussing these questions for years and creating teacher-education programs that, in effect, present answers to them, the lack of empirical data leaves them unresolved and in need of investigation. The goal of this dissertation

is to contribute evidence-based findings that will help writing teacher educators understand the processes by which novice teachers develop pedagogical thinking and expertise in teaching writing. This study will examine the interaction among novice teachers' institutional positions, teaching and learning objectives, and instructional practices. Ultimately this project seeks to provide evidence-based information that may better inform GTA preparation, which in turn should enrich undergraduate writing instruction.

Research Questions

This study seeks to add knowledge about the relationship between GTAs' pedagogical thinking and delivery of FYC writing instruction through a qualitative investigation of twelve novice teachers. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) How do novice FYC teachers' beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy change during their first year of teaching?

2) What factors affect how novice FYC teachers' beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy change during their first year of teaching?

3) How do novice FYC teachers enact their writing pedagogy in classroom practice?

4) How do novice FYC teachers respond to teaching challenges?

Brief Description of the Study

To understand how novice teachers develop pedagogical thinking across different models of writing pedagogy education, this IRB-approved study was conducted in two phases. For each phase of the study, participants were recruited through a brief verbal invitation in the composition pedagogy class and a follow-up email; to be eligible, graduate students needed to be scheduled to teach FYC for the first time in the following fall. While both MA and PhD students were eligible to participate, so long as they had not taught composition before, only master's

students elected to join this study. The first phase followed six MA students through the composition pedagogy course and first year of teaching; the second followed another six MAs through the pedagogy course and their first semester teaching. These pedagogy courses were taught by different faculty, who used different course structures, assignments, and teaching methods. The GTAs in this study taught at a state flagship university, in a FYC program that emphasizes rhetoric, argument, and research skills as well as writing process.

Phase I Data Collection

To understand the experiences of participants as they progressed through their pedagogy class and first year of teaching, I collected data from interviews, observations, and course documents. I conducted six semi-structured, 90-120 minute interviews with each participant: one during the first month and one during the last month of the three semesters of this study. These interviews elicited information about how teachers defined and understood writing and rhetorical knowledge and their pedagogical goals and practices. To gain a more holistic understanding of these teachers' beliefs about writing and rhetorical knowledge, I also inquired about their writing history, their current writing, and their perceptions of student writing and learning. I audio-recorded and transcribed all of the interviews.

I also observed each of the participants twice during both semesters of their first year teaching FYC. I videotaped these observations and also took field notes. My classroom observations focused on the teachers' presentation of writing and rhetorical knowledge and implementation of class activities. I also noted students' behaviors during class activities. When possible I collected course documents such as syllabi, schedules, unit assignments, and written handouts.

Phase II Data Collection

To narrow the timeframe of this study, I collected data during the second phase from the pedagogy class and only the first semester (rather than first year) of teaching. During the pedagogy course I acted as a participant observer, taking daily field notes that described the day-to-day classroom activities and the general topics of conversation. I also collected participants' reflective essays about classroom activities and course topics to identify common themes and attitudes. Participants were interviewed near the beginning of the pedagogy course to provide information about their initial attitudes toward and understanding of writing, teaching, and student learning. These interviews lasted 60-90 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Participants were also asked to complete two surveys, one after the initial interview and one at the end of the course, in order to gain insight into how participants' attitudes toward and understanding of writing, teaching, and student learning may have changed over the semester.

During the fall semester of 2012, as participants taught English 101 for the first time, each participant was observed in the classroom twice. I also collected course documents such as syllabi, assignments, instructional handouts from participants' English 101 courses, and graded student papers (thus adding important information missing from the first phase of the study). Toward the end of that semester, I conducted a 60-90 minute semi-structured interview with each participant; these were audio-recorded and transcribed. These interviews asked about their perceptions of writing, teaching, and student learning. Data from each phase of the study were analyzed using grounded theory methods in which codes were developed inductively and comparatively to identify recurring themes across the participants' narratives.

Significance of the Study

This study was intended to add data-driven research to the body of rhetoric and composition scholarship on the preparation and development of novice graduate instructors of FYC. As Estrem and Reid have argued, "TA education is … a practice steeped more in thoughtful lore than in systematic research" ("Writing," 224). While much anecdotal evidence exists about graduate pedagogy education, very little is known about how GTAs take up knowledge from the pedagogy course and apply it to their actual teaching of composition or about the types of knowledge GTAs rely on in the classroom. This study attempted to gain insight into GTAs' decision-making processes in course planning and actual classroom teaching as well as to increase our understanding of how GTAs respond to challenging teaching situations.

Furthermore, this study importantly brings research from the field education, particularly K-12 English teacher education, into the rhetoric and composition conversation about teacher development. While periodic calls to form alliances between these fields are issued (e.g., Alsup, Brockman, Bush, and Letcher; Tremmel), they have rarely been implemented in a sustained or systematic manner. However, such research is essential to developing a full picture of the processes by which novice teachers acquire the knowledge and habits of mind crucial to effective instruction.

This study also adds to the growing body of research-based evidence about effective writing pedagogy education practices that can be adapted for local contexts. In their call for additional data-driven studies of writing pedagogy education, Estrem and Reid highlight the need for "research-based principles for action" that will allow teacher educators and writing program administrators to "speak more effectively to a variety of constituencies about the resources,

complexities, and time needed for productive, sustained writing pedagogy education" ("Writing," 239). By offering an in-depth look at the processes by which a group of GTAs at one institution acquire habits of pedagogical thinking and confront challenging teaching situations, this study hopes to add to the national conversation about "what we *know* about how to best *teach and mentor those who teach writing at the college level*" (Reid and Estrem, "Writing," 237, original emphasis).

As instructors of the most-required university course, GTAs are often one of the first faces that first-year students encounter; therefore, they influence not only undergraduates' literacy education, but also student retention and the public perception of college writing instruction. By better understanding the processes by which novice instructors develop pedagogical thinking, this study aimed to improve the education and support of GTAs so that, hopefully, fewer students will leave their composition classes with the impression that disinterested instructors had given them a "sham" education.

Limitations and Delimitations

The findings from this qualitative research study are not intended to be broadly generalized to represent the experience of all novice teachers of FYC. The objective of this study was to reveal the experiences and development of two cohorts of graduate student instructors at one public, doctoral-granting, state flagship university; these experiences may or may not be shared by other GTAs in similar situations. Additionally, participants in this study received a particular version of teacher preparation that may limit the representativeness of this study's results, as this writing program emphasized preservice GTA education: Prior to teaching for the first time, new GTAs spent a year tutoring in the Writing Center and observing experienced

instructors. They took their composition pedagogy course in the spring prior to teaching the following fall.

Participation in this study was delimited to graduate students enrolled in English 505: Composition Pedagogy at the University of Tennessee during the spring semesters of 2010 and 2012 who were preparing to teach FYC for the first time. Due to the institutional setting, most eligible participants were master's students.[6] This study was further delimited by its timing; to complete data collection and data analysis in a timely manner, the first phase of this study followed GTAs through the pedagogy course and first year of teaching while the second phase followed them through the pedagogy course and first semester in the classroom. With these delimitations, the results of this study are not representative of GTAs who begin teaching FYC as doctoral students or who receive in-service teacher training in addition to or instead of preservice training. Additionally, while this study may shed some light on the development of a small group of novice GTAs' pedagogical practices over the first year in the classroom, it cannot speak to the processes by which novice instructors develop expertise in teaching writing beyond the first year.

Terms and Definitions

Pedagogical Knowledge

In his seminal research on teacher knowledge, Stanford educational psychologist Lee S. Shulman outlined three categories of knowledge necessary for teaching: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge is the understanding of ways of representing knowledge to students and of what will be difficult or easy for students to grasp ("Those" 9). Shulman ("Knowledge") suggested that teachers with poor subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge tend to fall

[6] Though some Ph.D. students were eligible to participate in the study, not having taught at their previous institution, none elected to take part.

back on teacher-centered, didactic methods of teaching. Slightly modifying Shulman's categories, educational researcher Pamela L. Grossman distinguishes among four interrelated categories of knowledge necessary for effective teaching:

> *General Pedagogical Knowledge*: Knowledge of learners and learning styles, classroom management, instruction, and purposes of education (6);
>
> *Subject Matter Knowledge:* Knowledge of the content area and of the "substantive and syntactic structures of the discipline"—the paradigms that organize the field, the questions that guide ongoing inquiry, and the acceptable evidence and proof claims for a discipline (6-7);
>
> *Pedagogical Content Knowledge*: "[K]nowledge and beliefs about the purposes for teaching a subject at different grade levels" (8); "knowledge of students' understanding, conceptions, and misconceptions of particular topics" (8); curricular knowledge, including where to find resources and knowledge of horizontal and vertical curricula (8); and "knowledge of instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics" (9);
>
> *Knowledge Of Context*: Knowledge of students, the community, the school district, and the school in which the teacher works (9).

Grossman suggests pedagogical content knowledge may be the most important and cognitively advanced category of teaching knowledge because it draws together both general pedagogical knowledge and disciplinary or subject-matter knowledge. In other words, this type of knowledge provides teachers with the ability to apply the pedagogical strategies that will be most effective for teaching a particular subject, such as composition.

Complicating matters, the notion of subject matter knowledge in FYC has been widely contested: Some argue the course introduces students to a skill; others suggest it can introduce

students to writing research scholarship; and others identify rhetoric as the subject matter. For the purpose of this study, Anne Beaufort's five domains of writing knowledge provide a framework for understanding writing knowledge, offering the most complete conceptual model available of the mental schema necessary for writing. Beaufort defines these five domains as: discourse community knowledge, genre knowledge, writing process knowledge, subject matter knowledge (i.e., knowledge of the subject that someone is writing about), and knowledge of the rhetorical situation.

Pedagogical Thinking

For the purpose of this study, pedagogical thinking differs from pedagogical knowledge in that it is the process by which teachers deliberate over multiple pedagogical alternatives and choose among them. In 1973, education researcher Richard J. Shavelson posed the question, "What is *the* basic teaching skill?" He answered that it is decision-making, especially decision-making during actual classroom teaching. While knowledge may exist at the level of resources, tools, and concepts that a community of practice has evaluated and agreed upon as justified or true (Ellis 3), the term "thinking" is used to indicate how a teacher uses such concepts and resources to plan, make sense of, and make decisions about classroom actions.

Reflective Practice

The concept of reflective practice is one important component of teacher thinking; briefly, reflective practice can be defined as the process of understanding and improving one's own teaching by reflecting on personal experience in addition to knowledge derived from others (Zeichner 10). While teachers may reflect on successful classroom practice, reflection is more often associated with teachers' ability to understand a problem—"a puzzling, curious, or perplexing situation"—framing and reframing it in different ways (Loughran 129).

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter One situates the problem of GTA pedagogical thinking and expertise in teaching writing within current discourse about the quality of higher education and the staffing practices of FYC. I include a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the main research questions. I also indicate the significance of the study, identify limitations and delimitations, and provide definitions of "pedagogical knowledge," "pedagogical thinking," and "reflective practice."

The second chapter reviews relevant scholarship on GTA education and novice teacher learning and development. I first offer a brief historical overview of FYC teacher preparation to establish some of the ongoing concerns in writing pedagogy education. I then provide present empirical scholarship on FYC teacher preparation and writing instruction, suggesting that much research in composition studies has concluded by recommending reflective practice as a means of fostering teacher development and professionalization. Following that, I discuss educational research on reflective practice, drawing on the rich body of scholarship in the K-12 teacher education literature and higher education studies, and I conclude by pointing out gaps in the literature about GTA learning and development.

The third chapter outlines the research design of this project, including the theoretical framework and methodology that guided the study. I begin by discussing the theoretical framework of social constructivism and its impact on the study's design. I then describe the site of the study, research participants, sources of data and methods of data collection, procedures of data analysis, and the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and dependability of the findings.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study with an emphasis on the dominant themes that arose from GTAs' discussions of their teaching experiences. The findings show that when

confronted with classroom situations that troubled them, the GTAs engaged in limited and superficial reflection that only occasionally led them to resolve the problem. Specifically, when these GTAs were prompted by a feeling of frustration to reflect on their teaching practices, they reacted by making no change to their practices, by making a change in deliberate contradiction to the writing program's guidelines, or by making a change that better supported student learning, if unevenly. These outcomes were contingent on teachers' existing interpretive frameworks, composed of their prior experience; teaching knowledge; beliefs about teaching, learners, and writing; and self-defense mechanisms.

In Chapter Five, I summarize the findings and discuss the implications for GTA education and first-year writing instruction. Based on the findings, I argue that reflective practice may be ineffective unless writing teacher educators intervene with guided reflection at regular intervals and about troubling classroom problems to help novice instructors develop a set of strategies that they can apply to different situations. I then suggest ways that these findings, which offer data-driven support for graduate-level pedagogy curricula (i.e., courses, workshops), can be used to improve both teacher preparation and first-year writing instruction. I also present recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature related to the preparation and ongoing professional development of graduate instructors of first-year composition. I first provide a brief historical overview of FYC teacher preparation in order to contextualize the ongoing questions that writing pedagogy educators and researchers debate. I next offer a presentation of empirical scholarship on FYC teacher preparation and instruction to establish what we already know about GTA learning and development. I then discuss relevant research from K-12 teacher education, higher education studies, and studies of professional expertise, especially those that offer insight into the role of reflective practice in the development of teaching expertise. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of gaps in our knowledge about the ways in which novice GTAs of composition assimilate new learning into their thinking about and practice of teaching writing.

Textbooks, Training, and Writing Pedagogy Education:

A Brief History of GTA Preparation

While the preparation graduate instructors of composition receive before and during their initial entrance to the classroom has changed dramatically since the modern enterprise of FYC began at Harvard in the 1890s, many of the same challenges continue to be debated: *Who* are the graduate instructors responsible for teaching first-year writing and how does that identity affect their performance in the writing classroom? *What* form(s) of preparation will best enable those instructors to take charge of a writing class? *When* will that instruction be most effective?

Until recently, with the growth of graduate programs in rhetoric in composition, the *who* of GTA preparation has been presumed to be relatively stable: graduate students of literature who have little interest or prior experience in teaching writing. The nineteenth century

restructuring of American undergraduate universities that took place as the Germanic university model, with its emphasis on graduate training and increasing bureaucratization, along with the contemporaneous shift from oral to written discourse in rhetorical training and influx of undergraduate students with "deficient" writing skills (Pytlik 4), created the conditions that established the modern reliance on graduate instructors of first-year writing (Connors 171-72; see also Berlin, *Rhetoric*; Crowley; Gold, Hobbs, and Berlin; T. Miller; Parker). The concomitant rise of mandatory composition led to the formation of a "permanent underclass" of composition instructors who were "oppressed, ill-used, and secretly despised" (Connors 172). This "permanent underclass," responsible for grading the hundreds of weekly themes these composition students churned out,[7] quickly became "a grim apprenticeship" (Connors 172) for graduate students pursuing "the real of work literature" (Connors 195). Robert J. Connors points out that the result of this situation – young scholars in training to become literary researchers while teaching freshman composition to pay the bills[8]—was that "instructors quickly came to hate rhetoric and composition with a passion that almost matched the feelings of their unfortunate charges" (196). Connors goes on to chronicle the impact of this workforce on composition classes, citing one 1918 NCTE report to argue, "There is a great deal of evidence that the young, aesthetically oriented, highly specialized students of literature and philology were exceedingly poor composition teachers, 'inexperienced, unfitted by nature for the work, ill-trained, and sometimes, in addition, reluctant and disaffected'" (198).

[7] By the turn of the century, composition classes had grown so that individual teachers were at times responsible for upwards of 200 students (Connors 191). The influx of students and increased emphasis on written discourse led to an enormous amount of work; for example, Fred Newton Scott reported reading in one year "something over 3,000 essays, most of them written by a class of 216 students" (qtd. in Connors 191); Barrett Wendell is reported to have read and graded 24,000 papers at Harvard in 1892, while at Minnesota, "one professor and three assistants taught 800 students in the Department of Rhetoric" (Connors 191).

[8] Or, at least, to pay *some* bills; Connors found that GTAs' average yearly salary at the turn of the twentieth century was about $650. For comparison, full professors averaged a yearly salary of over $2,300 in 1907 (199).

In her "sprinting tour" (3) of graduate teaching preparation from 1850-1970, Betty P. Pytlik notes that such teaching and learning conditions led to the early realization that graduate instructors of composition would benefit from some sort of special preparation for teaching (4). However, once such training courses began to be established, from about the Civil War on (Pytlik 4), resistance to this preparation arose as a dominant theme in early writing pedagogy scholarship and continued through the twentieth century. Graduate students of literature were warned not to spend too much time or energy on their teaching, for, as Robert S. Hunting argued in 1951, "insofar as a graduate student or beginning instructor spends time with a training course and gives more than the minimum required time to teaching freshman composition, he is doing hurt to his professional career" (3). Adolphus J. Bryan, Chairman of Freshman English at Louisiana State University in the 1950s, similarly emphasized the resentment toward teaching that arose from being pulled in multiple directions , noting that "most teachers who enter the field of English look upon composition as a necessary evil to overcome on their way to the goal of literature teaching" (6). As a writing program administrator, he raised ethical and practical concerns related to designing a training program for a workforce of inexperienced graduate students who were teaching FYC to fund their graduate studies, who were more invested in those studies than in teaching, and who were employed by the university because they were a cheap source of labor (7-8).

In the latter half of the twentieth century, as composition programs began to more commonly be directed by academics with training in rhetoric and composition, these conceptions of a resistant GTA labor force, more interested in and devoted to the study of literature—or, increasingly, the production of creative writing—than to the teaching of writing, continued to persist. Douglas Hesse sums up this viewpoint:

> [F]or many graduate students the reason they're in graduate school is not to learn how to teach writing but to write fiction or to talk about literary or cultural ideas; those interests challenge, at least to them, the assumptions and practices of the writing program. [To] such students the writing program is often deemed "repressive" or "hegemonic" or "workmanlike" or "dull." Interestingly, those teachers often hyperconstruct a stereotypical teacherly identity, becoming the very dogmatic teachers against which they complain. "I would never do this as a fiction writer," they suggest, "but I'll become a rule-bound grammar cop (for example) in my teaching of freshman composition, because it's not 'real' or 'important' writing anyway." (qtd. in Payne and Enos 55)

With the growth of the field of rhetoric and composition, such concerns about the status of many GTAs as disciplinary outsiders—non-compositionists—contributed to the perception that the composition pedagogy course and other forms of GTA preparation were embattled sites that vied not only to prepare instructors for the classroom but also to overcome images of the field as "subordinate and servile" to literary studies (Dobrin, "Introduction," 22).

Issues arising from the composition of this labor force—a group of graduate students who may be disinterested in the subject matter of composition or disinclined to teach at all, with little or no prior teaching experience before entering graduate school—have shaped the discourse surrounding *what* should be included in graduate teacher preparation and *when* it should occur. As funding and support to prepare GTAs of composition for the classroom gained traction in the mid-twentieth century, that debate has centered on the content of the composition pedagogy course and the extent to which it should be framed as an introduction to teaching methods, composition theory, and/or the history of rhetoric and the English language.

Historically, composition teachers received little or no training, gleaning most of what they knew about composition through the textbooks they used to teach it (Connors 77-78). Instead of providing preparation courses, most writing programs held the longstanding assumption that "a good man will learn to teach through teaching … and that if one could write English, he could teach others to write it" (Pytlik 4; see also Roen, Goggin, and Clary-Lemon 357). Periodically, methods courses did arise, such as George Miller's at the University of Cincinnati in 1913 and Harvard's English 67 in the early 1910s; the latter was notable for its contention that any teacher of writing should be a writer himself, and so graduate students shared writing with their peers as they took a methods course that emphasized responding to student writing, teaching usage and mechanics, preparing lectures, and conferencing with students (Pytlik 5-6). Still, these methods courses were not widespread, and many programs refused to offer such courses or to offer credit for graduate students who chose to take them (Dobrin, "Introduction," 13-14; Hunting 6). In part, credit was not awarded because of the perception that these courses were more aligned with education or professional training than with English, or were perceived as "extra-curricular" (Hunting 6; see also Dobrin, "Introduction," 13; Pytlik 9). For instance, Albert Kitzhaber wrote that the University of Kansas program introduced the course Rhetorical Background of Written English in 1950, a composition pedagogy course that purposely avoided discussing teaching methodologies, partially to distinguish their program from education and better align it with English (Dobrin, "Introduction," 11-13).

With the rise of GIs attending university in the 1940s and 1950s, more students streamed into composition than ever before, hence creating a need for more graduate instructors to teach the courses and providing an exigence for GTA preparation. As Pytlik notes, "the short- and long-term impact of the GI Bill on freshman composition and TA preparation has not been

extensively documented" (10); however, she explains that the institutional response to this exigence was slow to come, and many who grew to become leaders in the field of composition studies, such as William Irmscher (Pytlik 10-11) and Richard Fulkerson (xi-xiii), recalled walking into the composition classroom having received no preparation beyond a common syllabus and a required textbook. Nonetheless, with the establishment of national organizations to support college-level teachers and teacher educators, such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1949, GTAs of composition began to more commonly receive some formal training in teaching by the 1960s (Roen, Goggin, and Clary-Lemon 356). The 1970s gave rise to a generation of composition directors who had completed graduate coursework in rhetoric and composition with and who began preparing novice teachers with some tried-and-true strategies—class visitations, apprenticeships, group grading, student-instructor conferences (Pytlik 14), and faculty or graduate student mentors (Weiser). By the end of the 1970s, composition scholars like Richard C. Gebhardt were beginning to argue for a greater integration of composition theory in the composition pedagogy course. Although GTA preparation began to receive more attention, few programs offered more than a one- or two-week (sometimes one- or two-day) pre-semester teaching orientation (Fulkerson xii), and those programs that did offer a full semester or more of teacher preparation continued to struggle to gain credit-bearing recognition for the course.

That had changed by the end of the 1980s[9] when, as Stephen Wilhoit observes in his bibliographic essay about trends in GTA preparation, most departments "required TAs to participate in pre-service workshops, take credit-bearing courses in composition theory and pedagogy, and have their classroom teaching evaluated by faculty members" (17). These

[9] The CCCC Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing was first published in 1982 to provide guidelines for the preparation of writing teachers at all levels.

methods remain common today, as writing pedagogy educators draw upon a range of strategies for preparing novice FYC instructors, including preservice orientations, practica, apprenticeships and mentoring programs, tutoring as preparation for teaching, role-playing, teaching journals, teaching portfolios, and reflective practice. Approaches to GTA preparation and the composition pedagogy course have been classified in several ways; for instance, in her mid-1990s survey of thirty-six doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition, Catherine Latterell found that apprenticeships, practica, teaching methods courses, and theory seminars were the most common modes of GTA education (10). While Latterell described these modes as existing along a continuum, in general, she found that the practicum emphasized "practical and immediate training in teaching strategies" for in-service teachers (10); the theory seminar explored histories and theories of writing instruction (10-11); apprenticeships, which might take place either pre- or in-service and involved observing other teachers' classrooms, were usually tied to another mode of GTA preparation (11-12); and teaching methods courses, the primary instructional goal of which was "to immerse GTAs in the language and methods of a program's writing pedagogy," served as a "bridge" between practica and theory seminars (14-15). Latterell discovered that most programs relied on a single course to prepare novice teachers (10), typically in the form of a practicum taken during GTAs' first semester teaching (18); her study has not been replicated to determine if this remains true today.

In their review of writing teacher education from antiquity to the present, Duane Roen, Maureen Daly Goggin, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon similarly differentiate between four major schools of thought about educating composition teachers: "functional, organic, conversion, and multiphilosophical" (358). The functional approach is dictated by "'what-to-do-on-Monday-morning,'" in which "TA preparation is meant to serve the institution, theory should play little if

any role, and professional training is not the responsibility of graduate education." (358-59). The organic approach takes the form of an apprenticeship, in which "TA preparation serves graduate students, theory may or may not play an important role, and professionalization is a useful goal" (359). The conversion approach is directed by a belief that "TAs need to learn, and teach by, the theory and philosophy on which a particular program is built" (359). Finally, in their schema, the multiphilosophical approach "build[s] on the diverse theoretical premises and philosophical assumptions with which TAs enter teacher preparation programs"; "TA preparation should serve graduate students, undergraduate students, and/or the institution; theories … are central to such preparation; and professionalization may or may not be a necessary goal" (359). Ultimately, as Wilhoit argues and Roen, Daly Goggin, and Clary-Lemon agree, "Today TA in-service programs must balance three related needs: to educate TAs in composition theory and pedagogy, to maintain a theoretically coherent writing program, and to respect TAs' own theories of writing" (18). While both Latterell's and Roen, Goggin, and Clary-Lemon's schema are useful for thinking through approaches to preparing GTAs to teach composition, in practice, the terms used to discuss methods of GTA education remain slippery and the actual methods used tend to blur and blend these approaches.

The degree to which composition theory is included in these definitions points to the most extensive strand of scholarship on writing instructor preparation, for much of the debate over GTA preparation in the last twenty years has been centered on the extent to which the composition pedagogy class and/or practicum should privilege theory over practice. Since many programs rely on only one course for their GTA preparation—and, before the expansion of graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, that one course might have been the only introduction to composition studies that graduate students in literature or creative writing

received—in many incarnations, the pedagogy course included "a general introduction to composition studies, to teacher professionalization, to research methodologies in graduate-level English, to theory (to specific theories), to writing, and so on" (Dobrin, "Introduction," 19). Such a coverage model has led to questions about the balance of theory and methods in that class and, along with the reasons outlined above, created conflict and tension in the course (Ebest; Powell, O'Neill, Phillips, and Huot 127; Rankin; Trubek). A related question has arisen over the way theory functions for the graduate students enrolled in these courses: to what extent does it serve to legitimize the field of composition in the eyes of the many literature and creative writing students who are required to take the course[10], and to what extent does it actually help provide tools for novice teachers in the composition classroom?

Situating the course as a location in which "composition's 'theory wars' or theory/practice debates are played out with very material ramifications" ("Introduction," 3), Dobrin argues that "the practicum course is a powerful tool not only for guiding the ways new teachers learn to think about their teaching, but also for controlling how and in what ways the very discipline of composition studies is perpetuated. The cultural capital of composition studies is maintained and immortalized by way of the practicum" ("Introduction," 4). Dobrin contends that the pedagogy course "defines for the noncomposition specialist what composition is" ("Introduction," 21), enculturating GTAs into a particular ideology that extends beyond the class itself: "By professing a particular cultural capital through the practicum, the program itself is able to maintain control over what can and should be taught not just in FYC classes but also in any other class students then teach" ("Introduction," 25). Ultimately, Dobrin asserts, "The practicum … is one of the most powerful policing tools in English" ("Introduction," 25); he

[10] Dobrin emphasizes that the composition pedagogy course is the only course required nationally of all English graduate students, thus providing an initiation "into the cult of teaching" (22).

claims that GTAs will teach how they're taught to teach, from the practices and theories they're taught, thus perpetuating a particular brand of pedagogy in and beyond the FYC courses they teach.

While many would agree with Dobrin's contention that composition theory should be a central element of the pedagogy course both to legitimize the field and, more importantly, to provide teachers with a solid foundation for their teaching practices, others question whether and how the inclusion of such theory will help GTAs in their day-to-day classroom decision making, especially GTAs who might be resistant to that theory to begin with, and seek ways to help novice teachers assimilate composition theory to better inform their practice. For example, Juan C. Guerra and Anis Bawarshi describe revising the University of Washington's Expository Writing Program practicum in response to the desire for "more of a focus on 'how to teach writing' (in a very practical sense) than on an 'introduction to the field of comp/rhet'" (48), hoping to create a balanced approach that offers GTAs both "a grounded and pragmatic understanding of how best to teach writing while simultaneously ensuring that whatever practices they do learn are theoretically informed" (43).

Hesse details his graduate students' resistance to reading composition texts and provides some insight into why GTAs resist this material, claiming, "students resisted material that was new to them, partly by invoking ideas they perceived as commonsensical or natural, partly by comparing these readings to texts as they imagined texts should be. When readings failed to fit their existing sense of things, they responded not by engaging the contents but by calling into question their forms" (225). In other words, frustration with reading challenging new material manifested as resistance to the works themselves, a move Hesse characterized as similar to that undergraduates make when confronted with challenging material. Hesse suggests that encounters

with theory should help new teachers confront their "common sense" understanding of teaching, remind "them what it is to be a beginner," and help them "explain difficulties that graduate students are having both as students and as teachers" (226). To make these connections, Hesse suggests that graduate students should be asked to write reflective critical responses to the readings to grapple with and assimilate new knowledge (227-28).

Like Hesse, other scholars have written about reflective methods for helping instructors come to terms with their relationship to composition theory, teaching writing, and writing. Gail Stygall, for instance, similarly recommends reflective practice as a "corrective" to three main problems that plague teacher educators: "most of the students have little interest in writing in and of itself, most of them have not had any coursework in the area"; most of these students "are good at 'English,' receive high grades, and expect students to be just like they are"; and "teachers teach the way they were taught" (41). Likewise addressing high school and college composition teacher educators, David Smit advocates reflective writing as a method for helping prospective teachers assimilate and apply what they learn in their theory and methods courses; in particular, Smit contends that these teachers should be asked to write in a range of genres, especially the genres they will be teaching, to make them "self-conscious about their own writing processes" and "sensitive to the many ways writing gets done and the many variables that go into writing in any particular rhetorical situation" (69).

Other pedagogy educators advocate for more varied forms of reflection that might become integrated into GTA education and ongoing professional development. Betty Bamberg describes her efforts to create a "culture of reflective practice" (150) that begins with the practicum and extends through advanced teaching workshops through teachers' second- and fourth-year portfolio construction. During the practicum, Bamberg suggests, more experienced

mentors can ask GTAs to "reflect orally on their experience by identifying problems and then to project possible solutions" (151). Other opportunities for reflection include receiving and reflecting upon feedback about their teaching, identifying a problem and designing and assessing a response to it, and preparing a statement of teaching philosophy (155-56). Bamberg asserts that these activities are successful in building a teaching staff of reflective practitioners, but these assertions are undocumented. Chris Burnham and Rebecca Jackson similarly describe creating a culture of reflective e practice through an approach they call "program-ness," placing GTAs in different teaching contexts (pre-semester orientations, Writing Center consultants, classroom teaching, and so on) and encouraging "them to reflect upon the similarities and differences among the contexts and through reflection to discriminate exemplary practices from acceptable practices" (160), ultimately theorizing their own practices. Specific reflection activities include keeping a teaching journal, observing and reflecting on a peer's class, and creating a teaching portfolio (164).

Christine Farris's "Too Cool for School" presents another descriptive account of a writing program's efforts to foster reflective practice during a shift from a FYC curriculum focused on argument to one that prioritized "the critical analysis of popular culture" (97). Here, Farris usefully acknowledges the fact that many GTAs, "presumed through the ages to be sufficiently qualified to teach the current-traditional version of composition, may indeed want, need, and expect their first-time teaching experience to be familiar, successful, and uncomplicated in the very ways that seasoned compositionists have come to complicate and professionalize it" (99). Farris suggests that when GTAs encounter challenges, they are more likely to turn to blame or resistance than to reflection, reasoning that "if there is a master syllabus and a sequence of assignments, then there must be 'ideal types'—teachers who teach writing and

students who learn it—*perfectly*. So if at first teaching does not go well, then it must be the fault of (a) the syllabus, (b) the textbook, (c) the approach to composition, (d) the director, (e) the students, (f) the TA, or, on any given day, all of the above" (101). To counter such tendencies, Farris argues that the writing pedagogy class should share with GTAs the kind of work that experienced teachers do: reflecting on what didn't work, revising plans in light of that, and modifying our intentions when we see how they actually work with the students in our classrooms (105). In part, Farris suggests, GTAs could learn some of these skills by preparing a reflective teaching statement that includes a case study of a revised assignment or of one student's progress; she also recommends that GTAs should take a proseminar concurrent with teaching for the first time (104).

A few scholars have encouraged dialogic approaches to reflection; Shirley Rose and Margaret Finders, using their own relationship as a source of insight, propose that writing pedagogy educators could use a "reciprocal model of reflective curriculum negotiation" in which "two or more teachers reflect together—an interchange in which each participant reciprocates the contributions of the others" (77). They suggest that this face-to-face form of reflection could more effectively allow teachers to examine their own beliefs, a process that is "rarely productive in isolation" (77). Somewhat similarly, Linda Miller Cleary describes using in-depth phenomenological interviewing as a pedagogy in her writing teacher education course, a class taken by both English Education students and GTAs. Like Rose and Finders, Cleary argues that such a dialogical approach will help writing teachers reflect more deeply on their own histories with and beliefs about writing and teaching writing, allowing them to "make informed decisions about how they want to teach writing without the manacles of the past or without unreasoned rebellion against that past" (75). Students share the results of these interviews as a class, and

Cleary claims that the themes raised by students often resonate with the articles and scholarly work they read throughout the semester, offering them a foothold with the more theoretical aspect of the class.

Though the literature outlined above provides useful insight into the forces that have shaped contemporary GTA writing pedagogy education, it also suggests that little consensus has yet been achieved about the forms of GTA preparation that work best for different purposes. Responding to the wide array of approaches to preparing novice teachers, Kathleen Blake Yancey argues that composition studies needs a general model of teacher preparation, one that balances local needs with nationally accepted practices. However, as scholars like Reid have pointed out, most of what we know about writing pedagogy education is based on anecdote and lore, while little scholarship has been "data-driven, longitudinal, or inclusive of more than one program" ("Preparing," 692). This lack of empirical data means that "writing pedagogy education has in practice too often relied on approaches that are locally self-evident or based on 'common sense,' rather than growing deliberately from the work of a formal subfield with theories and practices that are steadily reflected upon, critiqued, researched, and refined" (Estrem and Reid, "Writing," 224). As Estrem and Reid observe, such "thoughtful first-person testimony" provides useful insight into successful local practices and fosters national conversation, but "the lore-like and success-focused approach of this mode of writing has limited power to expand scholarship in [writing pedagogy education]" or to respond to the concerns of public stakeholders ("Writing," 227). This discussion will now turn to the few empirical studies of GTA learning and development that have been conducted in composition studies.

Empirical Studies of GTA Learning and Development

Little empirical research has been conducted about the experiences of novice GTAs of composition; scholars have typically examined teachers' initial entrance into the composition classroom, often investigating the influence of the writing pedagogy course on GTAs' perceptions about and instruction of FYC and the ways in which GTAs develop theory-based practice over the course of that year. The first of these studies, however, Wendy Bishop's 1990 *Something Old, Something New*, did not explicitly focus on GTAs; nevertheless, I include it here as Bishop's questions, research methods, and findings shaped the early empirical investigations of writing pedagogy scholars.

Bishop sought to investigate how returning writing teachers experienced the graduate pedagogy course, including how much teachers were influenced by the theory presented in the course, how it affected their teaching, and the effects of prior attitudes and beliefs on teachers' ability to change during and after the pedagogy course (xi-xii). Bishop used a qualitative research design consisting of participant observation of the pedagogy course and case studies of five experienced teachers, for which she collected data from classroom observations, phone interviews, classroom surveys, teaching journals, and other artifacts. The pedagogy course Bishop observed advocated a whole language, process approach to writing instruction; of her five participants, two taught at community colleges and three taught at four-year colleges. Bishop found that teachers did change, though few had straightforward conversion narratives; instead, teachers "filtered all their learning through personal constructs that affected the way their classrooms actually developed" (130). Using this concept of "personal constructs" developed by psychologist George Kelly, Bishop suggested that the integration of the public theories of writing presented in the pedagogy class with teachers' private theories of writing

depended upon the degree to which their personal constructs were permeable or impermeable (131). While all five of Bishop's participants incorporated some recognizable version of the public theories of writing they learned in the pedagogy class into their own classrooms, their implementation of this theory was based on their existing personal constructs.

Furthermore, Bishop found that these experienced writing teachers decided to seek out advanced graduate coursework because of a feeling of "*dissonance* between their everyday teaching reality and a classroom ideal" (139). They hoped to refine their instruction, and to do so they needed to experience *congruence* "between the training seminar model and their own classroom needs" (139), as well as *tolerance*, which allowed teachers "to refrain from judging the 'fit' of seminar materials long enough to allow them to 'believe' in the model classroom and to develop a workable curriculum guide" (140). Ultimately, Bishop concluded:

> Assimilation of class learning and activities for [some teachers] was a long-term process and occurred in spite of [their] not expecting any influence or change. It seems obvious, then, that teaching change, like writing change, is slow and convoluted. There is no clear developmental process which mandates that teacher change has to occur *during* a pedagogy seminar or during the teacher's first post-seminar writing class …Teacher change, then, can occur unexpectedly and at a later date, the seeds for change still having been sown in the pedagogy seminar. (143)

This work, with its focus on *experienced* teachers, gained important insight into the processes involved in teacher learning and development, especially Bishop's cautionary note that teacher change might not be able to occur until a later date, when the instructor's personal constructs might be more permeable to integrating new learning into existing knowledge and beliefs.

Elizabeth Rankin was prompted to undertake her qualitative interview study of five GTAs after reading reflective teaching narratives they composed for the composition pedagogy course she was teaching. The success of these narratives caused Rankin to posit that "this rowdy, resistant group of TAs is learning more, from reading their own teaching, than my more dutiful groups in the past had learned from reading the experts" (x); she decided to solicit volunteers from that class to continue talking with her about their teaching the following fall, during their third semester in the classroom. Rankin's analysis of these interviews focused on these GTAs' relationship to composition theory, and she found that these instructors generally remained resistant to composition theory, staying practice-oriented rather than theory- or praxis-oriented. In particular, Rankin suggested that novice GTAs find composition theory "alienating" and value "personal theorizing" more highly (49). Rankin connected that personal theorizing to the backgrounds and attitudes GTAs brought with them into the classroom, including age, gender, sexual orientation, family influence, and, for one participant, prior teaching experience; she found that these background characteristics fostered conditions that would or would not lead GTAs to think theoretically about teaching. In particular, Rankin suggested that dissonance is one important component to this theoretical thinking, "the sense that our implicit theories about what writing is, or how we learn it, or how we teach it, conflict with the theories we encounter explicitly or implicitly in course texts, the program philosophy, or the teaching seminar" (80). Rankin found that when "that dissonance is minimal," GTAs were less likely to think about the values and assumptions that influenced their teaching (80-81). Additionally, Rankin found that a certain comfort with academic discourse allowed instructors to think theoretically about their teaching, as they gained language to help them identify, and therefore question, their beliefs about teaching (81).

Rankin concluded that GTAs' thinking about teaching and classroom actions are characterized by an ambivalence created by cultural representations of teachers: "They're not sure they want to be teachers, given the way our culture sometimes defines that role. Teachers are lecturers, disciplinarians, grammarians, authority figures. They would rather be friends, foster parents, coaches, priests, or therapists—all roles that they see more positively than the teacher role, all roles that they can see themselves performing in some way" (119). In sum, Rankin's study, like Bishop's, shows that GTAs' practices are more influenced by their prior personal experiences and beliefs than by composition pedagogy; though the intention of Rankin's work is not necessarily to provide recommendations for writing pedagogy educators, she does note that the reflective practice of talking and writing about teaching may support GTA development by allowing them to articulate, if not clarify, their assumptions and beliefs about teaching, and thus overcome their resistance to composition theory (x, xv-xvi, 127-28).

Similarly, in her *Subject to Change*, Christine Farris's research found that the teaching practices of novice GTAs were neither stable nor necessarily consistent with their beliefs about teaching, and that learning to teach writing "moved from a personal belief about writing to an awareness that composition teachers have a broader role in teaching students according to their abilities, interests, and needs" (171). Farris conducted her research in the mid-1990s, using an ethnographic, participant-observation approach to follow four MA students through their first year of teaching. Working within an expressivist-infused writing program, Farris's participants received little preparation beyond a 3 ½ day pre-semester orientation; they followed a common syllabus and used the program's required textbook, Donald M. Murray's *Write to Learn*. Like Rankin, Farris was concerned with determining the ways in which new instructors developed a personal theory of writing, and like Bishop, she drew upon Kelly's notion of personal constructs

to explain this process. Farris cautioned that new teachers' praxis is not necessarily tied to disciplinary knowledge but "has much more to do with exposure to 'lore' and with socialization within a scene that includes their own classrooms, the discipline, and the institution and with the change that originates in the theories of writing they bring to that ever-changing setting" (9). Rather, new knowledge is assimilated through a process of connection making that associates new experiences with prior knowledge and allows for the modification of existing personal constructs (31-32). Essentially, these personal constructs serve to "channelize" teacher thinking: "If we want to think about something, we must follow the network of channels we have laid down for ourselves. Only by recombining old channels can we create new ones. These channels structure our thinking and limit our access to the thinking of others" (33). Farris's study revealed that as teachers attempted to resolve differences "between their own theory and practice, between their expectations for student writing and the results, and between their theory and the theories of others," their thinking about teaching began to change and develop (161).

The apparent centrality of this process of resolving differences in her participants' development led Farris to posit that reflection played an important role in these changes; she explained:

> It is my sense that the self-reflection permitted by this 1-year study… assisted my subjects in making their implicit theories of discourse explicit and more flexible. As working theories, they used them, both to teach and to reflect critically on their experiences. In doing so, they not only retained what they found to be successful strategies, they also sought explanations for what they felt to be their failures. (165)

She went on, "Frequently, it was in the very act of telling me what had or had not worked successfully or in filling out the class log forms that the instructors clarified their working theory

by articulating what was not working and what it was they would do differently in practice next time" (165). This process of reflection enabled teachers to make their implicit theories explicit, allowing them "to maintain, as reflective practitioners, a healthy critical 'attitude' toward themselves, their assignments, composition lore, the course, and the composition program as a whole" (173). Farris concluded by recommending, among other things, that teachers need weekly opportunities for reflection, perhaps taking the form of mentor group meetings, observations of other teachers' classes, and ongoing teaching logs that can help them record and reflect upon their own teaching "data" (173-75).

Sally Barr Ebest's qualitative study of writing teacher resistance remains the only longitudinal research conducted on GTA learning and development to date. Published in 2005, Ebest began her study in 1990 and developed eighteen case studies out of the data she collected over five years. Though initially setting out to study women's relationship to composition pedagogy in the practicum, Ebest eventually came to focus her research on GTAs' resistance to "nontraditional pedagogy" like peer response groups and collaborative learning, and especially to investigate the ways that reflection enhanced students' understanding of such pedagogy (11). Ebest found that resistance was typical of one-quarter of her participants and was most pronounced among men; she found their resistance was "more extreme—characterized by anger, sarcasm, or inappropriate language" and lasted longer than that of female students (99).

Overall, Ebest found that three factors contributed to GTA change: "age, writing experience, and engagement in composition pedagogy" (99). Among these participants, Ebest discovered that resistance to composition theory stemmed from reasons that reflected their prior experiences with and beliefs about writing: inexperienced teachers and novice graduate writers valued a "relatively conservative approach to writing" and resisted the process approach, such as

freewriting and drafting activities (101). GTAs who were "inexperienced teachers and experienced but superstitious writers "believed that good writers were born, not made" and "that good writing was the result of inspiration" (101). Finally, the GTAs who were inexperienced teachers but "experienced writers secure in their own process … were skeptical of theories of writing and learning at odds with how they wrote and reluctant to engage" in "intrusive" activities like peer response (102).

For the most part, Ebest discovered that by employing composition pedagogy to teach the practicum—decentering the classroom, using small group work and peer response activities—GTAs generally came to accept the usefulness of this approach for their teaching and writing (13). Ebest also advocated reflection as an important component of teacher preparation, particularly the use of reflective teaching logs; departing from prior researchers, Ebest stipulates that such reflection will need guidance and frequent feedback, "preferably weekly" (57). Finally, Ebest suggests that "engaging students in action research may be the most effective means of addressing and overcoming their resistance to pedagogy" (61), as it offers an opportunity for them to investigate new pedagogies and to learn a new research methodology. More particularly, Ebest suggests it offers a site for reflective writing, as TAs should "keep research logs in which they describe, speculate, reflect, and trace the development of hypotheses and conclusions" (61); she found, "Resistance ceased altogether after I began assigning action-research projects" (133).

This study provides two important insights for writing pedagogy research: First, it brings the relationship between GTAs' prior *teaching* experience and prior *writing* experience into focus, finding that these elements worked interactively to shape GTAs' pedagogical thinking. Second, Ebest was the first to place emphasis on the need for *guided* reflection, noting that GTAs may not come to new or productive insights on their own. However, while this study suggests

that reflection may be a powerful tool for decreasing GTA resistance in the composition pedagogy classroom, it does not reveal subsequent changes in GTAs' actual teaching.

In 2011, Amy Rupiper Taggart and Margaret Lowry published perhaps the first multi-institutional, quantitative study of GTA perceptions about their preparation. Initiated when both Rupiper Taggart and Lowry were assuming new positions as writing program administrators, they decided to survey experienced GTAs to find out, first, their perceptions of what their teacher preparation had consisted of, and second, how they felt about that preparation. They distributed a 10-question, mixed-method survey to their respective GTAs, which was completed by 24 of 41 GTAs at Lowry's institution and 9 of 26 at Rupiper Taggart's. Their analysis of the surveys revealed that GTAs were most concerned about developing cohorts, grading and responding, and developing teacher ethos, primarily classroom management. Additionally, their survey indicated that GTAs valued a scaffolded approach to creating their own teaching materials, causing them to suggest that WPAs need to "buil[d] material repositories" such as "[p]rogram wikis, shared course management sites, and department files of materials" (100). Because these GTAs reported that their "peers' feedback was invaluable," Rupiper Taggart and Lowry recommend using classroom observations to foster cohorts, as well as involving more advanced graduate students in composition workshops and other leadership roles (100-101). They found that overcoming classroom management issues was more problematic, as "instructors' gender, race, age, and sexual orientation, as well as their personalities and past professional experiences, affect their teacherly *ethos* as much as particular aspects of their teacher education" (103). To help GTAs explore their relationship between theory and practice and to develop their own teaching persona, Rupiper Taggart and Lowry recommend using reflective teaching journals and case studies (103). This study, then, helped to expand not only

the methods used to study GTA learning and development, but it also further illuminated the challenges that GTAs regularly encountered while trying to build a teacher identity.

The first writing pedagogy research to use genre as a lens for investigating the experiences of novice GTAs of composition, Dylan B. Dryer's recent study of ten novice FYC teachers offers insight into the relationship between GTAs-as-students and GTAs-as-teachers, finding that these teachers projected their own ambivalence toward and difficulty with academic writing onto their undergraduate students. Drawing data from three interviews with ten master's students in their first semester of teaching, including "stimulated elicitation" interview questions following these participants' reading of and commenting on an anonymous English 101 paper at each interview, Dryer found that novice GTAs' response to student writing was shaped by their own fraught relationship with academic writing. Regardless of the confidence with or pleasure in writing academic texts that they expressed in the interviews, Dryer discovered that each GTA "reported some combination of difficulties with, ambivalence about the conventions of, a feeling of lack of preparation for, inferiority relative to peers, or explicit cynicism about academic writing" (429). Dryer's analysis of these interview accounts led him to conclude that most GTAs held "flattened" perspectives of student writing that essentially disallowed students from having agency as writers; he explained, "no undergraduate was imagined to have an idiosyncratic genre profile, to have made personal compromises in his or her use of academic writing conventions, to have questioned his or her preparation for postsecondary education relative to his or her peers, or to have experienced ambivalence or cynicism about academic writing conventions" (431).

Dryer characterized this overarching process of removing agency from undergraduate writers as "projection," in which GTAs projected some aspect of their own relationship to academic writing onto their students (432-33). These projections were often associated with

GTAs' writing anxiety and writing practices and shaped these instructors' pedagogical thinking along the lines of "What's good for [me] is what's good for students" (433). Through a process of "exception," some GTAs "found ways to differentiate themselves from projected students whose academic literacy practices (naturally) resembled their own"; in these cases, Dryer found that GTAs ascribed to themselves a particular purpose or motivation for writing, but removed that agency from their students (436). Finally, Dryer found that two of his participants "utterly effaced" their own ambivalence, cynicism, and "complexity of feeling about academic writing" from their projected undergraduate writers (438). Taken together, Dryer argued that the moves by which these teachers differentiated their writing concerns from those of their students helped to "consolidat[e] their authority as teachers" (441).

From these findings, Dryer posited that writing pedagogy education should include "certain deroutinizing *practices*" that might help GTAs make explicit and change their "commonsense, tacit, conventional *theories* and the performed identities through which such theories are enacted" (441, original emphasis). Drawing on Reid's contention that GTAs should produce "deliberately *difficult, exploratory,* and *critically reflective*" writing ("Teaching," W198), Dryer proposed that they explore the genres that "help produce the identities of novice graduate students/novice composition teachers," such as seminar papers, syllabi, assignments, and comments on students' papers (442). His suggested assignments for GTAs in the pedagogy class include: "Strategize ways to write seminar papers 'as a TA' or to write comments on student texts 'as a grad student,' negotiating which uptakes seem to transfer between systems (and why) and which need to be resisted (and how)" (442-43) and "Examine the interdependent systems of documents that scaffold the seemingly autonomous figure of 'the teacher' so as to learn how teachers are constrained and enabled by training, curricular requirements, historical

traditions, assumptions about students, teaching, and language, and so on" (443). While the effects of such activities on GTAs' classroom practices remain to be explored, and though Dryer's research design limits his findings from being too easily generalized to the ways that GTAs might construct the writerly identities of actual students in their classrooms, this study usefully brings into focus the ways that GTAs' own position as novice writers shapes their perceptions of and responses to student texts.

The first book-length study of GTAs' experiences since Ebest's, Jessica Restaino applied Hannah Arendt's political theory as a theoretical framework to investigate the challenges a group of GTAs faced during their first semester in the classroom as they took a concurrent practicum and taught from a common syllabus. Using a qualitative, participant-observation research design, Restaino collected data from four graduate students; the data collection included observing the writing program's orientation, occasional observations of the practicum course, the participants' final projects for that course, audio-recording a "monthly 'happy hour'…at the campus bar for drinks and discussion," classroom and conference observations, student papers with marginal comments, and emails, which became the primary data source (6). Restaino drew upon Arendt's interdependent concepts of labor, work, and action as a lens for this study; she defines labor as the "giant task of staying alive" (14), an "endless and repetitious cycle" (7) that raised questions about how new writing teachers sustain themselves in the classroom. Restaino explained that in Arendt's theoretical framework, work and action are mediating forces that interrupt labor. Action is public and "is represented by the moments of brilliance that happen despite, or in the course of, our daily lives" (15). Finally, work "is the lasting record, made by human hands, of our most striking words and deeds." Restaino indicated that by exploring the "interplay between these concepts," she "came to value a middle space for graduate students, where they can experiment

safely on the border between work and action while also safeguarding themselves from labor's consumptive grasp" (16).

For Restaino, labor captures novice teachers' efforts simply to stay afloat during the first semester in the classroom; like the other writing pedagogy researchers mentioned above, Restaino found that this initial entrance to teaching was characterized by tension between theory and practice, as these GTAs "often learn[ed] to enact classroom practices without intellectual exploration of the theoretical rationale for those practices" (22). Restaino found that these novice GTAs were most concerned with "figuring out how to be teachers while, of course, teaching their first class(es)," which caused her to suggest, "The opportunity for reflection may not emerge during the first semester" as teachers work just "to keep it together" and deal with the day-to-day issues of grading and classroom management (24). Furthermore, Restaino's focus on the relationship between what new teachers do and how they think about their teaching serves as an important reminder that "how we practice has something to do with how we learn to think about writing instruction, and, of course, vice versa" (25). For the instructors in her study, Restaino found that process pedagogy became a survival tactic: "writing process strategies are positioned—for the new teacher and for students—overwhelmingly as laboring activities, exclusively as 'process-as-practice,' the 'stuff' to do to make the class really happen" (28). Though utilized mechanistically and formulaically, divorced from its theoretical underpinnings, in Restaino's study process pedagogy offers novice instructors a sort of life vest in the composition classroom. Additionally, Restaino found that GTAs were "'in the process of becoming but not yet complete as writing teachers" (66), pushed into action too quickly with negative consequences such as "resentment and ambiguity" (67). With that concern in mind, Restaino suggests that the composition practicum could serve as a "middle space" where GTAs

might be "protected and encouraged to experiment" (114) to allow them to "figure out their own relationship to the fraught task of knowledge making in composition" (113). Restaino posits that such activities might help prevent GTAs from making the "either/or" choice of their graduate studies over teaching when they feel that their constant labor fails to "stick" (115). This work usefully captures the overwhelming nature of teachers' initial classroom experience, as Arendt's framework offers a lens for better conceptualizing the many struggles GTAs face as composition workers and the ways in which they try to break through the cycle of labor.

Most recently, Reid and Estrem have shared results from a multi-institutional, multimodal, three-year study investigating the extent to which GTAs' confidence in and beliefs about teaching were influenced by their formal preparation, including the pedagogy seminar and ongoing mentoring, inservice training, and professional development activities. Their study included survey data (88 total survey responses over three years) and interview transcripts (41 30-minute semi-structured interviews over three years); the participants remained anonymous to Reid and Estrem, as all interviews were conducted by trained undergraduate and graduate research assistants. Though the study spanned three years, the research design prevented Reid and Estrem from making claims about GTAs' changes over time.

Overall, Reid and Estrem found that novice teachers were more strongly affected "by prior personal experiences and beliefs about their experiences in the classroom than by their formal pedagogy education" ("What," 460; "Effects," 33-34), a finding that concurs with the conclusions of Bishop and Farris. Reid and Estrem learned that teachers integrated knowledge from the pedagogy course unevenly into their understanding of teaching writing and that few differences existed between novice and more experienced (second- and third-year) GTAs. Their study also revealed few correlations between methods of teacher preparation and teachers'

principles, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies, as most GTAs articulated vague teaching principles, often "based on long-internalized (and sometimes very general) interpersonal values" like making students comfortable or using group work ("Effects," 46) and thought about teaching through the "lens of student management rather than composition pedagogy" ("Effects," 54).

Interview accounts revealed that when faced with "tricky, difficult, or surprising teaching situations" ("What," 463), a few GTAs told "stories of pedagogy (understanding these teaching-related situations as teaching moments for themselves or as pedagogical issues)," though most told "stories of students," such as student resistance, student acclimation to college, or student-GTA relationships ("What," 464). Estrem and Reid found that few GTAs seemed to demonstrate a reflective stance toward their teaching, as only three moved from stories of particular challenges to "deep reflection" of their own biases and the effects of those biases on their teaching ("What," 464). However, most of their participants told stories about challenging students, though Estrem and Reid were careful to point out that these GTAs "*weren't* blaming students," but simply working through frustrations that arose from interactions with students ("What," 468). In many cases, GTAs related problems of student resistance—students who had a negative attitude toward the course or who questioned these instructors' authority ("What," 468-69); other challenges appeared to arise from moments of "studenting": "what to do with students who don't come to class, who come unprepared, or who are dealing with challenges in other parts of their lives" ("What," 469). For the most part, Estrem and Reid's students seemed to locate useful and healthy resources to help them solve these problems—clarifying the issue, taking another approach, or talking to a peer or mentor—and most did report that the problem was resolved, though Estrem and Reid noted the "sparseness of approaches" from composition pedagogy that some instructors were able to apply ("What," 474).

Estrem and Reid conclude by suggesting that writing pedagogy educators may need to better support GTA reflection, calling for "added spaces for guided discussions of teaching" ("What," 476; see also "Effects," 59). They explain what these guided discussions of teaching might include:

> We can ask [TAs], at various points over several semesters, to identify teaching challenges and tricky situations from their classrooms and then help them reflect on and work to understand those challenges in light of multiple scholarly and communal resources. Such approaches will help TAs broaden their repertoire of possible approaches as well as sharpen their skills at creating reasonable responses to challenging pedagogical situations. ("What," 476)

Finally, arguing that knowledge from the writing pedagogy course "occupies a limited and sometimes peripheral position in [GTAs'] daily thoughts and practices regarding teaching writing" ("Effects," 48-49), Reid and Estrem encourage writing teacher educators to extend teacher education "beyond the first year," offering sustained, structured opportunities for "TAs to further integrate, connect, and reflect on a range of pedagogies" ("Effects," 62).

Taken together, these empirical investigations of the experiences and perceptions of graduate instructors of composition provide a number of important insights. First, instructors' existing beliefs and assumptions about teaching, shaped by their prior experiences and cultural representations of teachers, affect their acquisition of new teaching knowledge. Additionally, GTAs' experiences with their own writing affect their likelihood of employing knowledge gained from the pedagogy course in their classroom practices and shape their perceptions of student texts. Moreover, the context of GTA teaching, including their status as simultaneous novices and authorities, may cause them to seek out tools that will sustain the day-to-day

struggle of maintaining a coherent classroom, focusing on the *what* and *how* of classroom activities and losing sight of why such approaches might work or what goals or theoretical values they might support.

Many of these studies of writing teacher preparation have suggested that GTAs can be best helped through the difficult and recursive process of learning to teach by becoming reflective practitioners, adopting the habit of reflecting critically on their teaching practices in order to change, grow, and build a repertoire of effective pedagogical practices. By using reflection to make their assumptions and theories-in-use explicit, GTAs should become more flexible and adaptive (Reid and Estrem, "Effects") and move toward "a healthy critical 'attitude' toward themselves, their assignments, composition lore, the course, and the composition program as a whole" (Farris, *Subject*, 173). Some strategies for helping GTAs become reflective practitioners include asking them to: keep a teaching log that receives regular feedback (Ebest; Farris, *Subject*; Farris, "Too Cool"); use mentor groups as a site for vocalizing difficulties (Bamberg); participate in contextualized role-playing activities (Finders and Rose) or in-depth interviews (Cleary); write teaching philosophies and reflective cover letters for teaching portfolios (Bamberg; Farris, *Subject*); write "deliberately *difficult, exploratory*, and *critically reflective*" assignments (Reid, "Teaching," W198) and response papers to assigned readings (Hesse); and write critical reflections about the genres that "help produce the identities of novice graduate students/novice composition teachers," such as marginal comments, syllabi, and assignments (Dryer 442). Reflective practice has also been promoted as a method of continuing teacher development beyond the practicum; for example, Reid and Estrem suggest GTAs should participate in ongoing teacher development over several semesters that asks them "to identify teaching challenges and tricky situations from their classrooms and then help them reflect on and

work to understand those challenges in light of multiple scholarly and communal resources" ("What," 476). While drawing attention to the role of reflective practice in teachers' development is both useful and important, the application of such practice to the actual teaching of writing remains to be explored.

Reflective Practice and Teacher Development

Reflective practice is based on the premise that understanding and improving one's own teaching begins with reflection on personal experience rather than with knowledge handed down by others. Dating back to John Dewey but coming into composition studies primarily through Donald A. Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner*, reflective practice emerged as a theory of learning against the backdrop of behavioral psychology and what Schön terms "Technical Rationality," a positivist view of knowledge derived from scientific experiment and dispensed to practitioners. Seeking to better understand the ways that professionals make sense of unique, uncertain, unstable, complex, and value-conflicting problems, Schön posits that professionals draw on tacit knowledge, or knowing-in-action, and make decisions by reflecting-in-action, or thinking about something while doing it. As reflection-in-action is typically prompted by surprising or unwanted situations, Schön suggests it can lead to theory-in-action, a working theory that professionals can put to use when they encounter similar situations in the future (58). However, Schön recognized that practitioners are not always able to state or describe their theory-in-use, may articulate an espoused theory at odds with their actions or theory-in-use, or may act as though they do not have a theory-in-use. To change an existing theory-in-use or learn a new one, practitioners must make their tacit knowledge explicit and available for critique through reflection. Schön suggests one way practitioners do this is through problem setting, a process by which a practitioner "convert[s] a problematic situation to a problem" to be solved

(40). He argues, "When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the 'things' of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them" (40). In other words, as practitioners name and frame the problem, they articulate their theory-in-use.

Schön posits that this process of naming and framing problematic situations gives rise to a repertoire of strategies practitioners can draw upon when faced with divergent situations. Practitioners accumulate these strategies by conducting "frame experiments," or reflection-in-action, in which the practitioner "may surface and criticize his initial understandings of the phenomenon, construct a new description of it, and test the new description by an on-the-spot experiment" (62-63). This experiment generates both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the problematic situation (68). Schön cautions that this process of naming and framing may be constrained by a practitioner's knowledge and experience; he explains:

> When practitioners are unaware of their frames for roles or problems, they do not experience the need to choose among them. They do not attend to the ways in which they *construct* the reality in which they function; for them, it is simply the given reality … When a practitioner becomes aware of his frames, he also becomes aware of the possibility of alternative ways of framing the reality of his practice. (310)

This challenge to reflection-in-action has been critiqued by many scholars in teacher education; however, the implications of these limits imposed by inexperience and lack of knowledge have not yet been widely explored by scholars of writing pedagogy education, who commonly work

with graduate students without prior knowledge of or training in rhetoric and composition and little prior classroom teaching experience.

Since Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner*, the notion of reflective practice has become a central tenet of K-12 teacher education and has been increasingly theorized and problematized by educational researchers; in particular, scholars have further delineated the temporal dimensions, purposes, and criteria for effective reflective practice. For example, Kenneth M. Zeichner and Daniel P. Liston outline five temporal levels of reflection: rapid reflection, a form of reflection-in-action that occurs "immediately and automatically while [teachers] are acting"; repair, another form of reflection-in-action, is a "quick pause for thought," such as assessing how students are reacting to a lesson; review, a form of reflection-on-action, which can occur at "any time during or after the teacher's work day" and is typically "interpersonal and collegial"; research, a process that may take weeks or months as "the teacher's thinking and observation becomes more systematic and sharply focused around particular issues" through practices like teacher research; and retheorizing and reformulating, a process in which teachers examine their practical theories in light of academic theory and research and that may take place over months or years (45-46). Importantly, they argue, "teachers need to reflect within all of these dimensions" to avoid "superficial reflection in which teachers' practical theories and practices are not questioned" (47). Michael Eraut, a researcher of professional learning, complicates these temporal dimensions of reflection, describing three time-bound modes of cognition: instant/reflex, rapid/intuitive, and deliberative/analytic (407). He argues that these levels of cognition are associated with accumulated experience; while novices may be overwhelmed by problem-solving in new situations that they must deliberately process in light of prior knowledge, gains in experience allow them to move toward semi-routinized behavior with "more

rapid access to usable information and a reduced need for deliberation," thus easing the cognitive load (407). Eraut suggests that the survival of new teachers depends on their ability "to reduce their cognitive load by prioritisation and routinisation during their first year of employment" (408).

Reflective practice researchers also emphasize the importance of establishing criteria for the purpose and quality of reflection. Zeichner and Liston warn against "generic" reflective practice, which they define as the advocacy for reflective "teaching in general, without much attention to how teachers reflect, what the reflection is about, or the degree to which the teachers' reflections should involve an examination of the social and institutional contexts in which they work" (61). They suggest such a generic approach to reflective practice actually could be detrimental to teacher education, since it does not identify the types of situations and responses that could benefit from reflection (62). As Zeichner and Liston caution, while all teachers think about their teaching, "not all thinking about teaching constitutes reflective teaching. If a teacher never questions the goals and values that guide his or her work, the context in which he or she teaches, or never examines his or her assumptions, then … this individual is not engaged in reflective teaching" (1).

Zeichner and Liston illustrate the distinction between superficial reflection and reflective practice through the example of Rachel, a student teacher who is asked to find a solution to a classroom problem: a group of six fourth-grade students don't stay academically focused during their free choice period (2). At first, Rachel approaches the problem by thinking in terms of discipline and how to "punish inappropriate behavior" to keep the class from spiraling "out of control" (2). Later, in a student teaching seminar, Rachel reframes the problem, questioning why five of the six students she had defined as "disruptive" were minority students and thinking back

to her teacher education courses to find new approaches for working with these students. As Zeichner and Liston explain, in the first scenario, while Rachel is thinking about a classroom problem, she locates the problem in the students and does not question her assumptions. In the second scenario, Rachel adopts the mindset of a reflective practitioner by posing the problem in new ways that allow her to question her own motivations and the context of her classroom, locate the problem in the teaching situation (rather than the students), and change her approach (3).

Educational researcher Tony Ghaye usefully defines the types of learning that reflective practice can aid. He describes these as affective learning, or learning by making sense of feelings and emotions; cognitive learning, in that reflection can help teachers think differently; positive action learning, or learning that is turned toward moral and ethical action; and social learning, in which reflection helps teachers learn from others (3). This social component of reflection, missing from Schön's original conception, has been widely endorsed by other scholars; Zeichner and Liston, for example, emphasize that reflection is "a social practice" and that solitary reflection is less effective "because our ideas become more real and clearer to us when we can speak about them to others" (18). Ghaye contends that teachers will benefit from "reflective conversations" that engage teachers' educational values, prior experiences, and future plans (47).

In addition to articulating criteria for effective reflective practice, literature on reflective practice in teacher development has highlighted several key challenges to reflection. Among the most important of those challenges are teacher knowledge, experience as learners and teachers, and existing beliefs and attitudes. Though these components are interrelated, I present them separately below to emphasize the main problems each raises for reflective practice.

Teacher Knowledge

As mentioned in the discussion of Schön's work above, lack of prior knowledge may limit teachers' ability to name and frame problems. George Hillocks, Jr., in his two-year study of twenty experienced teachers,[11] also emphasizes the limitations of teacher knowledge on reflective practice. Hillocks set out to discover the types of knowledge that teachers drew upon to shape their curricula, classroom activities, and teaching strategies (5), suggesting that "differences in teaching may amount to differences in ways of thinking about the nature of knowledge, in epistemology" (6). He defined two different epistemological orientations among his participants: objectivist, or teaching-as-telling, and constructivist, where students were seen as active agents in their own learning (20), and found that teachers with objectivist orientations relied more upon declarative knowledge delivered through lecture and teacher-led discussions, while the teachers who held constructivist orientations relied somewhat more on procedural knowledge—involving students in some way in the process of writing and/or constructing knowledge about writing (41). For the most part, Hillocks found that his participants relied on "practical learning theory" to guide their decision-making, in which teachers seemed to believe, "[I]f I explicate the rules, and if students do appropriate exercises in applying the rules, then students should be able to use the convention appropriately in their writing," and which seemed to be acquired through teacher lore (113). Additionally, Hillocks found that teachers' knowledge did not appear to change much over his two-year observation period. These findings led Hillocks to conclude that "[t]eachers are not cognizant of formal learning theories" (123); categories of knowledge are constructed individually, influenced by life experience, exist as arguments, and interact strongly; epistemological stance exerts a "powerful influence on the construction of teacher knowledge"; and "the nature of reflective practice is strongly shaped by the practical

[11] Of the study participants, nineteen taught at an urban community college and one taught high school.

theories at work, the constructed categories underlying them, and a teacher's epistemological stance" (124). While Hillocks still advocates for reflective practice as the primary lever for changing teacher practice, he warns teacher educators that "reflection is necessarily limited by the nature of teacher knowledge" (129).

Other researchers have confirmed that teachers' decision-making tends to be more influenced by prior experience and socialization than by the knowledge they are exposed to in teacher education courses. In fact, educational researchers have found that teacher education programs may have little, if any, effect on teachers' practices (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner). Some have suggested that a theory "wash out" occurs during teachers' early years in the classroom, in part due to the context of the school setting, where a gap between theory and practice tends to persist as teachers do not typically use the theoretical language they learned at the university to define their practices and fall back on more traditional, transmission modes of instruction (Zeichner and Tabachnick 9). Theories of situated learning help to explain novice teachers' difficulty assimilating and applying theoretical knowledge. Drawing on Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's work, Fred A. J. Korthagen argues that "all knowledge … is originally grounded in personal encounters with concrete situations and influenced by social values, the behavior of others, implicit perspectives, and generative metaphors" (103). Korthagen suggests that, rather than focusing on conceptual development, teacher educators might more productively aim for perceptual development; that is, an educational program that supports learners in becoming capable of discerning aspects of the situation that he or she had not been able to see before (101). By introducing teachers to a range of "fruitful practical experiences," these teachers will be more likely to seek a theory to explain a series of similar situations; in that sense, then, Korthagen argues that development of theory has to be self-motivated rather than

initiated in a top-down presentation from the educational program (102-03). Though Korthagen does not point to the types of experiences that will best support teacher learning, this work on the relationship between experience and knowledge raises another limitation to effective reflective practice: the lack of experience of the novice practitioner.

Teaching Experience

In his work on reflective practice in teacher education, John Loughran, like Hillocks, raises concerns about the limitations of teachers' knowledge and experience on their ability to set and solve problems. Specifically, he notes the paradox that while teacher educators may recognize problems that students confront in their early teaching and offer solutions, students may "struggle to align the problem with the stated solution. This may well be because students do not always see the problem in the same way as the teacher educator, or more so, that they do not see the problem as being a problem" (9). Two bodies of work can help shed light on the role of experience in teacher problem-solving: First, the long history of scholarship on the influence of teachers' prior schooling experiences, and second, theories of teacher development and expertise.

Since Dan C. Lortie's 1975 study of public school teachers, the long "apprenticeship of observation" has been invoked to help explain teacher socialization and development. Lortie argued that, unlike other professional fields, student-teachers have already "spent 13,000 hours of direct contact with classroom teachers" (61) before enrolling in their training program—13,000 hours in which they form a perception of what it means to be a professional in their intended field. However, Lortie cautions that such a lengthy apprenticeship may serve to limit rather than expand students' understanding of teacher behavior, as they "se[e] the teacher front stage and center like an audience viewing a play," rarely gaining insight into the ways teachers

choose goals and activities within "a pedagogically oriented framework" (62). Teaching, then, becomes a process of imitation, based on "liking and disliking, identifying with and rejecting," that does not lead to a critical awareness about those choices (63). Furthermore, while teachers may not be surprised at the tasks associated with their positions, they may be surprised by the problems they encounter; having spent so much time in the classroom from the vantage point of the student, novice teachers may regard the "problematics of teaching" simplistically—believing that they have already acquired a background in the classroom, novices may be less likely than their counterparts in other professions to see their knowledge as limited and thus "underestimate the difficulties involved" (65).

Peter Smagorinsky has explored the implications of such prior schooling on the early classroom teaching of English Education students. In particular, he argues that the apprenticeship of observation and the context of schooling preserves traditional, "conservative" pedagogies, characterized by transmission of knowledge to students in a "teacher-and-text-centered approach" (20). Despite other pedagogical models promoted by teacher educators, many of which stem from Dewey's progressivism—including children in active learning, taking the development of critical intelligence as a central goal, Smagorinsky found that even by first grade, children were firmly embedded in the culture of authoritarian schooling, so much so that it proved difficult to introduce them to alternative pedagogies (24). Teachers, too, continue to maintain such authoritarian approaches; Smagorinsky observes, "Even when teachers depart from lectures and lead discussions, classrooms often remain hierarchical. English teachers, for instance, tend to lead 'discussions' in which they steer students toward conventional interpretations of literature, in spite of claims to be seeking open-ended exchanges" (24-25).

James Marshall and Janet Smith offer some insight into the apprenticeship of observation that English Education students experience in their post-K-12 coursework. To determine the pedagogical practices modeled by university English professors, Marshall and Smith collected data from interviews with thirteen teachers of English classes and their course syllabi. They found that these teachers' classrooms seemed to be similarly teacher- and text-centered, noting that most classes asked students to read a text, to discuss it in class, and then to write about it. They explained, "Students read, discuss, and write—almost always in that order —with the assumption that the 'teaching' is in the discussion, in the exchange of ideas with the instructor and the other students in the class" (256). Moreover, Marshall and Smith found that all of the professors they interviewed "saw large-group discussions of specific texts as a central feature of their teaching" (256), and that "most faculty expressed dissatisfaction and even dismay when their own voice seemed to overpower their students" (257). Finally, the professors in this study indicated that they most often assigned "the argumentative essay—usually, a close reading of a specific text with thesis and quotations as evidence"; Marshall and Smith claim, "The essay was the primary vehicle through which students represented their understanding of what they had read, and more generally, it was a genre of writing – and a way of thinking – that faculty felt students should master" (259). Despite the longstanding history of graduate literature students teaching first-year writing, little information has been collected about the effects of this post-secondary apprenticeship of observation on their teaching. This work provides some insight into the types of classroom teaching that they may have observed most recently as advanced undergraduates, and that they may still be observing in their graduate coursework.

Theories of teacher development and expertise also help to explain why experience plays a central role in novice instructors' ability to reflect productively about their teaching. David C.

Berliner outlined five stages of teacher development in his work *The Development of Expertise in Pedagogy*: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. His work on novices is most applicable to research on GTA learning and development, and Berliner asserts, "The point of beginning teaching is the accumulation of experience. That is all beginning teaching is for and that is all we should expect of it" (21). In the novice stage, teachers learn the elements of the tasks they need to perform, assign labels to those elements, and develop an understanding of "context-free" principles, like "'give praise for right answers,' 'wait at least three seconds after asking a higher-order question,' 'never criticize a student'"; novices tend to conform to these rules and procedures fairly inflexibly (2). In a series of experiments involving experts, novices, and postulant teachers (the latter of whom have some professional field experience but have received alternative forms of teacher education), Berliner found that novices struggled to make sense of the classroom environment and to take in the whole scene at once, could not identify patterns in negative student reactions to a class activity, lacked a framework that allowed them to distinguish between important and unimportant aspects of a situation, and lacked the routines that help both students and teachers organize the class and ensure that it runs smoothly. Additionally, novices did not have the experience that allowed them to judge typical and atypical events; in other words, novices have to try to process all aspects of a class which limits their ability to identify and focus on the most salient characteristics of a problem—they do not yet know what to attend to in the classroom situation (17-18). Here, the accumulation of "real-world experience" appears to be far more important than the theoretical or scholarly work presented in teacher education (3), as that experience allows novices "to understand what individual differences look and feel like in the classroom, how creative lessons interact with other instructional goals, and how level of processing can be inferred from classroom cues" (21). Like

Korthagen, Berliner suggests that early teacher education might better focus on "perceptual training—teaching the novice to see what teacher educators believe is important for later development" (21). Berliner ultimately cautions that the goal of developing "reflective practitioners, sensible decision makers, and proficient problem solvers" may not be appropriate for novice teachers (26).

Other work both supports and challenges these observations about the role of experience in teacher development. Offering a six-phase model of teacher development, Betty E. Steffy, Micahel P. Wolfe, Suzanne H. Pasch, and Billie J. Enz suggest that career teachers move through the following stages: novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and emeritus (4). This study is most concerned with the novice and apprentice phases; the novice stage begins with preservice education and continues through student teaching, while the apprentice phase begins when teachers take full responsibility for designing, planning, and implementing instruction (6). Steffy et al. argue that growth from one level to the next results from reflection and renewal as teachers to resolve cognitive dissonance and acquire new knowledge about their practices (11). Offering a more in-depth look at this novice stage of development, Michael J. Berson and Rick A. Breault extend Berliner's work on the experience of novice teachers in the overwhelming classroom environment. They find that in the first jarring months in the classroom, novice teachers focus more on their "outward appearance as classroom performers" and "miss understanding the complexities of student behavior" (30). Berson and Breault assert that "the best [novice teachers] can do is to muddle through their first year and gain the experience needed to make sense of their work in the classroom. Novices enter an occupation in which action is imperative. They have good reasons for insisting that what they most need to do is 'to learn to act and talk as classroom teachers'" (qtg. Bird et al. 33). To stay afloat while they gain

experience, novices rely on existing curricula and textbooks, and spend more time on classroom control (33).

Another stage model that offers useful insight into teacher development was explored by Barbara B. Levin in her fifteen-year longitudinal study of four teachers. Here, Levin draws on the Ammon and Hutcheson Model of Pedagogical Thinking that suggests teachers move from fairly one-dimensional thinking about teaching to increasingly complex, multidimensional thinking. The model posits that teachers move from "naïve empiricism" where teachers believe that learning comes from "experiencing" and teaching is essentially "showing and telling" to the level of integration, where learning comes from problem solving and teaching is essentially guided thinking across domains (Levin 9). Levin's work largely confirmed this model as she investigated how teachers' pedagogical understanding grew and changed over time; she learned that "teachers' pedagogical understandings changed and developed into more complex ways of thinking when they had to solve problems or when they confronted dilemmas in their practice" (242). Levin indicated that these moments of dissonance or "disequilibrium" occur when "things are not going the way teachers imagine they should in the classroom or when there is a mismatch between a teacher's image of teaching and learning and the reality they observe in the classroom" (242). Additionally, Levin observed that teachers initially demonstrated a disparity between their thinking about teaching and their actions, noting that they exhibited greater congruence as they accumulated experience and their pedagogical thinking became "more sophisticated and complex" (283). In her work with Paul Ammon, Levin suggested these moments of disparity might "indicate leverage points for efforts to promote teacher development" (22) in that they offer an exigence to intervene in teachers' development in particular areas, encouraging them to use this sense of dissonance to think through

inconsistencies in the class. Smagorinsky, Amy Alexandra Wilson, and Cynthia Moore observed similar moments in their longitudinal study of one English teacher, whose initial classroom instruction appeared "pre-conceptual in that her instruction rarely unfolded as she envisioned it would, requiring her to diagnose what went wrong and attempt a new approach" (280). Without such intervention, Brandy's actual classroom practices began to be more closely aligned with conservative pedagogies of her school system than with the more student-centered approaches she had learned in her teacher education program.

The role of teaching experience on GTA classroom performance has not been widely documented; however, David M. Shannon, Darla J. Twale, and Matthew S. Moore's study of TA teaching effectiveness revealed that it strongly correlates with success in the university classroom. Their survey of 129 TAs across disciplines revealed that "the only type of training that produced a significant effect on teaching effectiveness ratings was an undergraduate degree in education" (447).

Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

Teacher beliefs and attitudes are closely related to prior experience and knowledge, and likewise exert powerful pressure on teachers' pedagogical thinking and reflective practice. Berson and Breault argue that these prior beliefs and attitudes and how those beliefs become altered by the teaching experience are one of the most important factors determining whether the novice teacher makes the transition to apprentice (35). They explain, "Novice teachers use their prior beliefs as a kind of interpretive lens through which they process or 'read' new information about teaching and decide what is practical and possible" (36). New teachers need to examine their prior beliefs "early in the preparation process" to better assimilate new learning from teacher education into their instructional decision making (36).

M. Frank Pajares's oft-cited work on teacher beliefs indicates that these existing beliefs about teaching and students create an affective component of teacher learning, creating a "signature feeling" that can aid or impede recall (321-22). It does so "by improving access to memory files due to the coloration of the feeling," acting "as the glue that holds elements of memory together for long periods," and "serv[ing] a constructive and reconstructive memory function by filling in incomplete memory gaps during recall and/or filtering information that conflicts with the signature feeling (321-22). In other words, Pajares explains, belief structures "filter information processing; screening, redefining, distorting and reshaping subsequent thinking" and "play a key role in knowledge interpretation and cognitive monitoring" (325). Importantly, Pajares also maintains that college students bring with them already-established beliefs about teaching and that "[b]elief change during adulthood is rare" (325-26). Hillocks, for example, found that teachers' attitudes and beliefs about students was one major factor impacting differences in their classroom practices. He found that teachers who were non-optimistic about students typically focused on problems and weaknesses in student writing, "without speaking to any strengths of the students" (44). They were also more likely to spend more time on frontal (transmission) teaching and on teaching imparting more information about grammar and sentence structure than on other types of knowledge (49).

Dewey also argued that teachers need three attitudes to predispose them toward reflection: open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. He defined open-mindedness as the tendency to seek additional input, think through alternatives, and question our own perceptions and beliefs (29). Responsibility involves a feeling of accountability to students beyond the particular classroom moment and a careful consideration of the ways in which an action works and the students for whom it works; ultimately, responsible practitioners take

intellectual responsibility for their actions (30). Finally, whole-hearted teachers are engaged, enthusiastic, and absorbed in their work (30). In light of the work described earlier in this literature review, these three attitudes may pose some challenges to GTAs' ability to be effective reflective practitioners.

As this scholarship reminds us, reflective practice can be difficult for novice teachers, who often lack the knowledge and experience that would help them identify, articulate, and address classroom problems. When confronted with a teaching challenge, the ways new teachers frame to themselves the nature of the problem and the change they feel is needed (if any) are not yet well known in composition studies. Since reflective practice strategies cannot be implemented as a generic, one-size-fits-all model, composition studies needs more finely-grained understandings of the ways novice GTAs respond to teaching challenges and to identify situations or moments in which the intervention of critical reflective practices could lead to change.

Gaps in the Literature on GTA Education and Development

In general, there is a great deal of descriptive literature in composition studies about the identity of graduate instructors of first-year writing, successful components of GTA preparation, and the relationship between theory and practice in the composition pedagogy course. While few empirical studies of GTA learning and development have been conducted, those that exist provide useful insight into the influence of prior experience and beliefs on teacher development and the relationship between GTAs-as-teachers and GTAs-as-writers. Though much of this research has revolved around the ways in which GTAs use theoretical knowledge from their preparation to inform their personal theories of teaching composition, others have pointed out that teachers' ability to take up new information during the first year of teaching may be

constrained by their struggle to stay afloat in the day-to-day labor of classroom teaching. Additionally, much empirical and descriptive scholarship in composition studies recommends reflective practice as a method of GTA development and ongoing professionalization, but the actual impact of reflection on GTAs' actions has not been considered at length in these discussions. Contributing to this lack of understanding about how reflective practice may or may not work as a mechanism of teacher change is the omission of existing scholarship from K-12 educational researchers that outlines challenges to reflective practice that novice instructors face.

Overall, despite the important changes we have seen in GTA preparation to teach composition in the last few decades, many challenges remain for educators who want to support the GTAs who, like their first-year students, are asked to "learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try the peculiar ways of knowing" that "define the discourse of our community" of writing teachers. To continue paraphrasing David Bartholomae, these teachers "must learn to speak our language. Or they must dare to speak it, or to carry of the bluff" since they will be asked to act like teachers "long before the skill is 'learned.' And this, understandably, causes problems" (4-5).

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This study was informed by a social constructivist framework and used qualitative research methods to investigate the relationship between GTAs' pedagogical thinking and classroom writing instruction. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine:

1) How do novice FYC teachers' beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy change during their first year of teaching?

2) What factors affect how novice FYC teachers' beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy change during their first year of teaching?

3) How do novice FYC teachers enact their writing pedagogy in classroom practice?

4) How do novice FYC teachers respond to teaching challenges?

Below, I outline the steps I took to answer these research questions. First, I discuss the overall design of the study, including the theoretical framework and its influence on the research methodology and methods. I then describe the research site and population, procedures of data collection and analysis, and the trustworthiness and dependability of the findings.

Research Design

Because the research questions sought to gain insight into the experiences and beliefs of novice graduate instructors of composition, this study used a qualitative, naturalistic research design. Qualitative research seeks to discover qualities of "processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency" (Denzin and Lincoln 14). According to Sharan B. Merriam, "The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and

describe how people interpret what they experience" (14). Such a descriptive, interpretive approach is appropriate for this study as it seeks, in part, to counter and respond to the large body of scholarship that relies on anecdotal evidence and lore about the effectiveness of GTAs' training in composition pedagogy, resistance to composition theory, and actions in the classroom. By incorporating the voices of novice FYC instructors, this study contributes to our understanding of how GTAs interpret their own classroom experiences and the processes they use to think about and respond to those experiences. In addition to valuing the participants' perspective, this study sought to make sense of the experiences of novice FYC teachers within their social and institutional context—as new members of advanced graduate study of English, initiates to an institutional culture that has often devalued the teaching of first-year writing (Crowley; Dobrin), influenced by present and prior schooling (Grossman; Lortie), with competing goals and motivations that may at times be at odds with the day-to-day struggle of teaching for the first time (Rankin; Restaino). Qualitative research helps make visible such situated experiences by "transform[ing] the world" into "a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self" (Denzin and Lincoln 4). As Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln go on to explain, "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (4). Using a combination of interviews, classroom observations, and teaching documents, this study locates the meaning-making activities of FYC teachers within the context of preservice preparation and teaching composition for the first time.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses social constructivism as a theoretical framework, as it acknowledges "the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin and Lincoln 14). The terms "social constructivism" and "social constructionism" are often used interchangeably; however, for the purposes of this study, I will adopt the language of qualitative researchers Merriam and Denzin and Lincoln and use the phrase "social constructivism." Guided by this theoretical paradigm, I believe that meanings emerge for individuals in the context of everyday social interactions with others and with culture, and I recognize that researchers participate in eliciting and creating this meaning.

Social constructivism has roots in the sociology of knowledge, particularly in the work of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, who investigated how knowledge becomes established as a social reality. They contend that people produce the social world through language and dialogue with others, as language allows people to identify external patterns, objectify subjective experience, and typify experience by categorizing it under broad labels that make sense to the individual and to others (38-39). Through its "transcending and integrating power" (39), "[l]anguage objectivates the shared experiences and makes them available to all within the linguistic community, thus becoming both the basis and the instrument of the collective stock of knowledge" (68). The process by which members of an institution or community construct and pass on knowledge is ongoing; social constructivism takes "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty 42). In other words, constructivism regards

knowledge not as an objective truth that exists outside the individual or as a "mirror" of reality (Kvale 42), but as "emergent, developmental, nonobjective, viable constructed explanations by humans engaging in meaning-making in cultural and social communities of discourse" (Fosnot ix). Importantly, this view takes into consideration not only individual meaning-making but also recognizes the social and historical lenses offered by culture (Crotty 54).

Social constructivist theory affected the research design and methods of this study, as I attempted to understand the ways in which novice graduate instructors of composition constructed their experience by gaining multiple views of the phenomenon and locating it "in its web of connections and constraints" (Bryant and Charmaz, "Discursive," 607). In keeping with the constructivist paradigm, I adopted a naturalistic set of methodological procedures (Denzin and Lincoln 32), using multiple interviews and classroom observations to investigate how social interactions with students, peers, professors, family, social organizations, and others shape GTAs' understanding of writing knowledge and the writing practices they employ in their classrooms. Additionally, I understand GTAs' institutional position as part of their social context, as they are in the process of determining whether they plan to remain in academia, and if they decide to do so, what it means to be someone who teaches literature, creative writing, or rhetoric and composition. They are also employed as academic laborers, essentially coerced into teaching FYC in order to fund their graduate study; while many GTAs look forward to teaching and accept the task responsibly, competing pressures from their personal, academic, and teaching lives affect their goals, motivations, and decisions. These concerns led me to design interview questions that not only asked about the participants' understanding of writing and the writing practices they used in the classroom, but also asked about educational, familial, and intellectual

backgrounds, interactions with students and peers, and their perceptions of the writing program and their composition pedagogy course.

Grounded Theory Methodology

One of the research methodologies associated with social constructivism is grounded theory (Denzin and Lincoln 32-33), which seeks to construct theory from data instead of gathering data to verify a pre-existing theory. Proposed and described in Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss's foundational text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, the purpose of this research methodology is to arrive "at theory suited to its supposed uses" (3). For Glaser and Strauss, theory should ultimately be useful in practice, both to help experts, students, and "significant laymen" better understand a particular behavior as well as to guide research by offering "a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining" (3). More especially, Glaser and Strauss argue that theory "must fit the situation being researched and work when put into use" (3). In other words, grounded theory, built from the data up rather than "forced to fit an existing theoretical framework," should make sense—the reader should "have an immediate recognition that this theory, derived from a given social situation, is about real people or objects to which they can relate" (Stern 114). The theory developed from the data may be substantive or formal; Glaser and Strauss regard both as middle-range theories that "fall between 'the minor working hypotheses' of everyday life and the 'all-inclusive' grand theories" (33). Substantive and formal theories can be understood as variations on the same wavelength, in that theoretical sampling in multiple substantive areas may lead to increasing abstraction and thus the development of formal theory. Substantive theory, which this study sought to develop, addresses "delimited problems in specific substantive areas such as a study of how newly disabled young people reconstruct their identities" (Charmaz 8).

Grounded theory research is especially useful for identifying and describing a process; as such, it informed the design of this study of the processes by which novice GTAs develop pedagogical thinking. As is appropriate in grounded theory research, this study relied on a cyclical process of data collection and comparative analysis; the role grounded theory methods played in data analysis is described below. Unlike strict grounded theory studies, this research study did not rely on theoretical sampling or on the posing of hypotheses (Hood 156). However, this study did meet the central requirement of grounded theory research: it sought to develop a substantive theory of GTA learning through the collection and interpretation of rich data.

Research Methods

Site

This study was conducted at The University of Tennessee, a southeastern state flagship university, in an English Department built on an English studies model, with faculty and graduate students specializing in literary studies, creative writing, and rhetoric and composition. Although the research site was chosen largely due to ease of access, its characteristics may be similar to other doctoral-granting English departments in public universities. At the time of this study, the university enrolled approximately 21,033 undergraduate students (Office of Institutional Research and Assessment). The average ACT Composite score of incoming freshmen was 26, and average incoming GPAs ranged from a low of 3.76 to a high of 3.89 during the years 2009-2012 (Student Information System and Student Record Master). About 89% of these first-time freshmen were in-state residents (Student Information System).

Most graduate students in the master's and doctoral programs at this institution receive funding by teaching composition. The FYC program is composed of a two-course sequence, English 101 and English 102, that is required of all undergraduate students. In these courses,

students gain the critical thinking, reading, and writing skills that will enable them to communicate effectively in their later academic, professional, and civic lives. Serving approximately 3,300 students a year, this nationally recognized program employs over 100 teachers (graduate students as well as part-time and full-time adjunct staff) and is overseen by the Composition Committee, composed of nine members, and an administrative team: the Director, Associate Director, and Assistant Director of Composition.

To prepare for teaching at this institution, master's students in the English department spend their first year in the program shadowing experienced instructors (apprenticing with a different instructor each semester) and occasionally grading papers or teaching a few classes in those instructors' courses. They also spend the year tutoring in the university's writing center, which involves bi-weekly training meetings. All master's students take the composition pedagogy course in the spring of their first year in preparation for teaching the following year. This course is taught by one of the rhetoric and composition faculty, who rotate responsibility for teaching it. The pedagogy class introduces students to the history and theory of teaching rhetoric and composition and works with them to develop syllabi, in-class assignments, and unit assignments.

In the second year of the program, these master's students teach two sections in the fall of English 101 and two in the spring of English 102. At this institution, the 101 course is designed to introduce students to basic rhetorical knowledge and asks them to analyze the persuasive texts of others and to produce their own responsible arguments. Students practice delivering arguments that employ rhetorical appeals to move an audience toward a particular purpose, using an appropriate medium and genre for the situation. The 102 course introduces students to writing through research and covers historical, qualitative, and secondary source research. Instructors are

invited to create their own theme for the course; proposals are submitted to the composition office for approval.

In the spring of 2010, during my first year as a PhD student, I was invited to participate in the composition pedagogy class as a graduate student co-instructor. This position introduced me to the tensions inherent in designing such a course, and it also introduced me to the difficulties that new teachers experienced making sense of the material covered in the course. My experience in this class led me to pose my research questions and design this study. I had the opportunity to reprise this role, with a different faculty instructor, in the spring of 2012. I say more about the ethical dilemmas of this position below, in the section titled "Researcher's Role."

Population

This study used a convenience sample of graduate students selected on the basis of their location (at the same university as the researcher) and availability (Merriam 77). While convenient, the sample was also purposeful, selected for relevance to the research problem. By employing purposeful selection of the setting and individuals, I believe that I gathered information necessary to answer my research questions—what Joseph A. Maxwell calls "the most important consideration in qualitative research" (88). Participants in this study were graduate students at a large public, doctoral-granting university who would be teaching FYC for the first time after preservice preparation; while not intended to be a representative sample, this population may share characteristics with novice GTA composition instructors in similar contexts.

All of the graduate students enrolled in the composition pedagogy course in the spring semesters of 2010 and 2012 were invited to participate in this study. To be eligible, graduate students needed to be scheduled to teach first-year composition for the first time in the following

fall. While both MA and PhD students were eligible to participate, so long as they had not taught composition before, only master's students elected to join this study. Seven students in the first cohort agreed to participate in the study; however, one withdrew from the study after his first semester teaching. Six students from the 2012 cohort chose to participate; all completed the study.

Procedures

This study was originally designed to investigate the experiences of one group of GTAs over their first year of teaching by collecting data from interviews, classroom observations, and teaching documents; however, as I began collecting and analyzing data, I started to wonder what factors might influence different cohort's understandings of writing pedagogy and classroom actions. With the encouragement of my dissertation committee, I created an additional research question that led to a two-phase research design in which I investigated the perceptions and experiences of two groups of novice FYC teachers. I began this study in Spring 2010 and followed the first cohort of participants through their composition pedagogy course and first year of teaching, concluding that round of data collection in Spring 2011. I began the second phase of data collection in Spring 2012 and, for the sake of finishing my doctoral program on time, finished collecting data in December 2012.

After obtaining the support of the faculty member teaching composition pedagogy in the spring of 2010, I submitted an IRB proposal and received approval to begin the study. I recruited participants through a brief introduction to the study during a class period of the composition pedagogy course and a letter I distributed after that presentation. Seven students in the course expressed interest in participating in the study. At our first interview session, I explained the project individually with each participant. Each participant was given an Informed Consent Form

that contained information about the study's main research objectives, risks and benefits of participating, methods of maintaining confidentiality, audio-recording of interviews and subsequent transcription and eventual destruction of audio files, and video-recording of classroom observations and eventual destruction of video files. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that all data pertaining to them would be destroyed after withdrawal. Each instructor was asked to sign the form after reading it carefully, having the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and agreeing to participate. (See Appendices A for a copy of the Informed Consent Forms). The setting for subsequent interviews was agreed upon between the participants and researcher; most often, we used enclosed media rooms in the university's library. Each participant chose a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality in the presentation of results. As I noted above, one participant decided to withdraw from the study; all materials pertaining to that individual were destroyed.

My decision to investigate the experiences of a second cohort of novice FYC instructors was facilitated by existing plans to conduct a collaborative study of the effects of an inductive, problem-based approach to the composition pedagogy course. After obtaining permission from the faculty member teaching composition pedagogy to join the class as a participant-observer, we amended our IRB proposal to include data collection for the purposes of my dissertation. The IRB proposal for the second phase of this study was submitted and approved in early spring semester of 2012. I recruited participants by providing an oral introduction to the objectives and benefits of the research project during a class period of the composition pedagogy course, after which I distributed a handout with a short description of the study. I then emailed students in the class with a short statement about the project and an invitation to participate. Six students expressed interest in participating in the study, and Informed Consent Forms were distributed at

the first interview session. As with the first cohort, these forms included statements about the project's purpose and scope, risks and benefits associated with the study, data collection methods, procedures for maintaining confidentiality, and voluntary participation in the study. After carefully reviewing the Informed Consent Form, each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions. The instructors signed the form after agreeing to participate in the study. (See Appendix B for a copy of this Informed Consent Form.) Each participant chose a pseudonym; in the two cases when a participant did not supply a pseudonym, the researcher created one.

Data Collection

The data collection procedures for each phase of this study are presented separately, due to some differences in methods. The first phase of the study collected data from six 60-120 minute semi-structured interviews with each participant, classroom observations, and classroom documents. The second phase of the study collected data from two 60-90 minute semi-structured interviews with each participant, participant observation of the composition pedagogy course, reflective writing composed in that course, two classroom observations during participants' first semester teaching, and classroom documents. See Table 1 on the next page for an overview of the data collection timeline.

Phase 1: Spring 2010 – Spring 2011

Interviews

During the first phase of the study, I conducted six semi-structured, 60-120 minute interviews with each of the participants; one during the first month and one during the last week of each semester for a total of 36 interviews from this phase of the study. My classroom observations informed these interviews, and I principally focused on why these teachers chose

particular classroom activities, how they constructed those activities, and what they hoped to achieve through them. Semi-structured interviews, where the interview guide is "a mix of more and less structured questions," are characterized by flexibility (Merriam 90). While I desired to obtain some specific information from each respondent during these interviews, I was predominantly guided by a list of questions to be explored and asked follow-up probes to clarify participant's responses or pursue unanticipated but fruitful avenues. As Merriam explains, this interview structure "allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (90).

Table 1. Overview of Data Collection

Project Timeline	
DATE	**TASK**
February 2010	• Received IRB approval for phase I • Recruited participants
March 2010	• Interview 1
May 2010	• Interview 2
September 2010	• Interview 3 • Classroom observation 1
November 2010	• Interview 4 • Classroom observation 2
February 2011	• Interview 5 • Classroom observation 3
March 2011	• Additional classroom observations of Aaron and John
April 2011	• Classroom observation 4
May 2011	• Interview 6
December 2011	• Submitted IRB application for phase II
January-May 2012	• Participant observation of English 505: Composition Pedagogy
February 2012	• Received IRB approval for phase II • Recruited participants for phase II • Interview 1
May 2012	• Collected participants' reflective writing from English 505
Early-mid October	• Classroom observation 1
November	• Classroom observation 2
November-December 2012	• Interview 2

The interview protocols included questions such as: “Tell me a story about a challenge you faced in the classroom.” “Tell me about a writing-related assignment you thought would work but didn’t work out very well.” “What do you know now about teaching writing that you didn’t know at the beginning of the semester?” Additional probes included questions like: “How did your students react to that activity?” “What changes did you make to your teaching after encountering that problem?” “Can you describe a moment that helped you gain that new understanding?” To gain a more holistic understanding of these teachers’ beliefs about writing knowledge, I also inquired about their writing history, their current writing, and their perceptions of student writing and learning. (See Appendix C for a sample interview protocol.)

Qualitative interviews are an appropriate research method for this study, as I sought to learn about novice GTA composition instructors’ beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy and their experiences as new FYC teachers. Interviews are also an appropriate method for a social constructivist research framework. With the understanding that knowledge is inter-relational, formed in the relationship between the person and the world, Steiner Kvale argues that in the interview knowledge emerges from the interaction of interviewer and participant. This concept is central to qualitative research interviews; however, Kvale also identifies additional components of the mode of understanding in the qualitative research interview; for example, the interview seeks to investigate the participants’ life world, discovering the central themes the participants “understand and live toward” (29). Kvale further emphasizes that the main task of qualitative research interviewing “is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say” (31)—not only to identify the central themes, but to describe and understand them. Furthermore, such interviews are qualitative, using language to obtain “nuanced descriptions” of the participants’ life world; they are descriptive, aiming to obtain “uninterpreted descriptions” of

what the participants experience, what they feel, and how they act; and they seek to describe "specific situations and action sequences from the subject's life world" rather than general opinions (32-33). Kvale also includes deliberate naïveté as part of the interviewer's stance; the interviewer should enter the exchange without presuppositions, open to "new and unexpected phenomena" (33) while still focused on particular themes within the participant's life world (34). The interviewee may make ambiguous or contradictory statements; the interviewer must clarify whether such ambiguities are a result of faulty communication or reflect real inconsistencies or contradictions (34). Similarly, Kvale notes that participants may obtain new insights during the interview itself and thus change their descriptions of a theme, and he cautions that "the questioning in research interviews may instigate processes of reflection where the meanings of themes described by the subjects are no longer the same after the interview" (34). Finally, although the interview "may be anxiety provoking and evoke defense mechanisms in the interviewee as well as in the interviewer" (35), a well-conducted interview can be a positive experience in which the interviewer and interviewee talk about a topic of mutual interest (36).

As I conducted interviews for this study I tried to be mindful of such concepts, particularly checking my own presuppositions about participants' experiences in the pedagogy course and composition classroom. Kvale's caution about defense mechanisms was also important to this study, as I occasionally found myself reacting defensively to participants' characterizations of the composition pedagogy course, the field of rhetoric and composition, and their composition students, and I tried to understand participants' anger and venting as their own form of self-defense. I do believe that participants came to new insights about their teaching and beliefs about learners and learning during the interviews and, when possible, I have tried to capture that process of critical reflection.

Kvale defines several characteristics of interview quality, such as the extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the participant and the ratio between interviewer and participant responses. Kvale also suggests the interviewer should attempt to interpret the respondent's account throughout the interview and to verify those interpretations during the course of the interview (145). In each of my interviews, then, I worked to balance my own turn-taking with that of the participant, ensuring that the majority of talk belonged to the interviewee. I also attempted to clarify my emerging understanding of the participants' experiences by sharing my perceptions and asking the GTAs to respond.

In her discussion of constructionist qualitative interviewing, Kathryn Roulston emphasizes that interview data do not offer access to a participant's inner or "authentic sel[f]," but "represent situated accountings on a particular research topic" (208). Additionally, Roulston underscores the notion of interview talk not as reports of "what people actually believe, observe, or do," but as "accounts" that can help researchers investigate the "'sense-making work through which participants engage in explaining, attributing, justifying, describing, and otherwise finding possible sense or orderliness in the various events, people, places, and courses of action they talk about" (qtg. Baker 218). This understanding of interviews as accounts informs my presentation of the data, for while I hope to shed light on the processes by which novice graduate instructors of composition develop expertise in teaching writing, I can only present what participants expressed at the moment of the interview. Furthermore, while interviews with these participants offer insight into the process of reflection, these accounts should be understood as public representations of their decisions filtered through a self-protective lens, especially when instructors felt that they had made a "wrong" or unsanctioned choice (Wengraf 16-18).

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. I transcribed most of the interviews myself (about 30 of the 36) and received a research grant to have a transcription service complete the last few transcripts from this phase of the study. This service was a great asset, as I spent four to eight hours transcribing each interview, depending on its length and the speaking speed of the respondent. I listened to each audio-recording to verify the transcripts, clarifying inaudible remarks and adding information about intonation or nonverbal gestures when appropriate. Transcripts were labeled using the participants' pseudonyms.

Classroom Observation

In addition to conducting interviews, I observed two weeks of each participants' composition class over the duration of each semester, once at the beginning and once at the end of the semester. In Spring 2011, I asked two participants, John and Aaron, for permission to observe additional classes; they agreed and I added a mid-semester week-long observation period, where I visited both sections of their English 102 classes instead of only one. I wanted to spend additional time in their classrooms because I considered both instructors to be extreme cases, in which their actual teaching practices departed most widely from their original intentions. Maxwell suggests that extreme cases can provide a "crucial test of these [emerging] theories, and can illuminate what is going on in a way that representative cases cannot" (90). With these additional observations, I finished the first phase of this study with a total of 36 classroom observations. I videotaped these observations and also took field notes. When observing these classes, I concentrated my attention on the teachers' presentation of writing-related concepts, implementation of class activities, and classroom persona. I also noted students' behaviors during class activities. I used these classroom observations to inform the

interview protocols; in my analysis of the data, these sources were used primarily for purposes of triangulation.

In this phase of the study, I was not an active participant in the classes I observed; since I videotaped class sessions, I typically set my equipment up at the back of the room or to one side, where I could follow the instructors' movements and capture some of the students' reactions. At the suggestion of a faculty mentor, I decided to videotape class sessions so that I would have a record of the event to return to, a resource that proved useful as it took me a few class sessions to learn to take effective field notes. I asked the instructors to tell their students ahead of time that I would be visiting, and I usually took a few moments at the beginning of class to explain my presence, tell students a little about the study and my purpose in recording the class session, and allow them an opportunity to ask questions. To the best of my knowledge, no student expressed discomfort about my practice of recording class sessions. One participant did express some anxiety about having her class recorded after a particularly chaotic and, she felt, unsuccessful class session. I reassured her that the video would not be shared with anyone and offered to omit it from the study, if she wished; she decided to allow me to keep the recording and to continue taping the classes I observed.

Observation was a necessary research method for this study because I wanted to better understand the relationship between novice GTAs' classroom actions and their understanding of writing pedagogy and perceptions of their pedagogical knowledge. Hillocks suggests that studies of teaching and teacher knowledge need to combine interview and observation methods, as teachers' classroom performance may reveal more about what they know than what they say (22). Hillocks writes:

> We should expect to find ideas and beliefs about practice embedded in the actions of practice. On the other hand, if we watch only the classroom practice, without being privy to the commentary of the teacher, we will be unable to understand the intentions and assumptions underlying the performance. Therefore, to better understand the teaching, it will be necessary to examine both what teachers do and what they say about it. (24)

While this study was more concerned with the development of teachers' pedagogical thinking and thus focuses primarily on data collected through interviews, classroom observations offered important insight into not only what novice GTAs did in class, but also into how their interview accounts of classroom events either coincided with or departed from my record of that event. For example, in their accounts of classroom activities GTAs sometimes described students as being highly involved or excited about the material, whereas my observations revealed that few students participated in discussion, some texted under their desks, and none took notes. Or, at times, the opposite—they felt that students were not being forthcoming, whereas I saw students sitting up alertly and taking notes.

My classroom observations were fairly unstructured, and I chose to let the focus of observations be guided by my research questions and the class sessions themselves rather than by a code sheet (Merriam 120). Initial class visits always included a grand tour observation, where I took field notes on the major features of the situation, including the physical setting, the instructor and students, classroom activities and interactions, the timing and sequence of classroom events and activities, the apparent goals the instructor and students were trying to accomplish, and any emotions that were expressed (e.g., confusion, excitement) (Merriam 120-21; Spradley 78). For each class I observed, I also noted the number of students present and sketched a diagram of the classroom layout, indicating where the students and instructor were

located. I also recorded the date and time of the observation, the actual times the instructor began and ended class, and the times that "chunks" of the class period began or ended (e.g., a class might be composed of opening remarks and business, discussion of a text, and a short writing activity). After these descriptive observations, I recorded more focused observations where I sought to gain a more in-depth understanding of particular relationships in the setting (Spradley 101-02): the instructor's relationship to course material and pedagogical activities, the students' reactions to these activities, and the relationship between the instructor and students. Finally, I used selective observations to identify and investigate differences between specific relationships (Spradley 128). For instance, after conducting focused observations in which I examined instructors' relationship to course materials and pedagogical activities, I asked "What differences can I see in the ways teachers incorporate direct writing instruction into their classes?" In practice, after my first few classroom visits I often moved between focused and selective observations in a single class period. My field notes attempted to create a rich description of the setting, participants, and class activities; to capture direct quotations, especially teacher-student talk; and to record my own thoughts and impressions in the setting (Merriam 131). I tried to follow up this observation protocol by writing a research memo within 24 hours of the class observation. In practice, however, I was sometimes guilty of postponing this practice, and not all of my handwritten notes were developed into fuller memos.

Classroom Documents

When possible I collected course documents such as syllabi, schedules, unit assignments, and, when used in class, written handouts. However, if I was not present in the class when such documents were first distributed, I rarely received the document. Generally, I requested documents once verbally and once by email. I used these documents to guide my interview

protocol and to fill in my understanding of the teachers' course and unit goals, presentation of writing assignments, and day-to-day instruction.

Phase 2: Spring 2012 – Fall 2012

To narrow the timeframe of this study, I collected data during the second phase from only the pedagogy class and the first semester (rather than first year) of teaching. While many of my data sources remained the same as in the first phase, several additional sources of information were added.

Participant Observation

During Spring 2012, I acted as a participant-observer in the composition pedagogy course. In this role, I worked with the professor of the course to design the syllabus and semester assignments, helped lead class discussion, and taught a few classes. As a researcher, I took daily field notes that described the day-to-day classroom activities and the general topics of conversation. My purpose in adding participant-observation data collection to the second phase of the study was to add more detailed information about the participants' preservice training, especially the discursive knowledge they received from the pedagogy course. Keeping a record of the course would also help me check participants' later impressions of their training against my perceptions of the concepts they covered and materials they generated in that class.

According to James P. Spradley, the participant observer has two purposes in a social situation: to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation (54). The participant-observer seeks to become aware of things that are normally blocked out of consciousness by adopting the habit of explicit awareness, raising her level of attention and paying attention to things that might normally be tuned out (56). Similarly, the participant-observer approaches the social setting with a wide-

angle lens, seeking to take in "a much broader spectrum of information" than usual (56). The participant-observer must also alternate between an insider and outsider experience, sometimes participating fully in the experience without stepping back and other times remaining a detached observer (57). Merriam characterizes participant observation as a "schizophrenic activity," accompanied by constant anxiety about whether one is juggling her roles appropriately, paying attention to the right thing at the right time, or managing the constant influx of data (126-27). My experience seemed to meet that description, as I was often worried about whether or not I was contributing enough to the conversation or capturing enough in my field notes.

Reflective Writing

As well as observing the composition pedagogy course, I also collected participants' reflective essays about classroom activities and course topics to identify common themes and attitudes. Much of this writing could be considered reflection-for-action, in that GTAs responded to prompts about their plans for unit assignments and schedules, grading and responding to student writing, and making student writing the center of class. Students in the pedagogy class also wrote reflective pieces about their own experiences as writers and about what makes writing "good." This reflective writing helped me to better understand the experiences and beliefs about writing that GTAs brought to the classroom and to gain some insight into how their pedagogical thinking and course planning developed over time.

Interviews

I asked members of the second cohort to participate in two interviews, once near the beginning of the composition pedagogy class and once near the end of their first semester teaching. As discussed above, the second phase of the study was conducted as part of a collaborative research project; I therefore worked with my two collaborators to draft interview

protocols and to conduct and transcribe interviews. Participants were interviewed near the beginning of the pedagogy course to provide information about their initial attitudes toward and understanding of writing, teaching, and student learning. They were interviewed again near the end of their first semester teaching, when we asked about their perceptions of writing, teaching, and student learning. (See Appendix C for a sample interview protocol.) All interviews were 60-90 minutes and followed the interview criteria described above for the first phase of the study.

Classroom Observation

During the fall semester of 2012, as participants taught English 101 for the first time, each participant was observed in the classroom twice. As with the interviews, class observations were divided among my collaborators and myself. These class observations were not videotaped; instead, I relied on detailed field notes, following the protocol described for phase I.

Classroom Documents

As in the first phase of the study, I collected course documents such as syllabi, assignments, and instructional handouts from participants' English 101 courses. I also collected a sample of graded student papers from each participant, thus adding important information missing from the first phase of the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative process of reading through interview transcripts, field notes, and other data sources for patterns and themes in relation to teachers' beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy, significant teaching and learning experiences, and responses to troubling classroom situations. As many qualitative researchers point out, data analysis should be concurrent to data collection, part of the ongoing research project rather than a separate stage that comes at the end (e.g., Charmaz; Corbin and Strauss; Denzin and Lincoln;

Maxwell; Merriam). My ongoing data analysis guided subsequent data collection, including the decision to add a second cohort to the study. Furthermore, I believe that with the amount of data I collected for this project, I would have been overwhelmed and paralyzed had I left data analysis until the end of the study.

Data analysis was both inductive and comparative (Merriam 175). First, I made notes and memos to myself as I listened to interview tapes prior to transcription, transcribed the interviews, and reviewed observation field notes. After transcribing interviews and loading them into ATLAS.ti, I read the transcripts repeatedly, looking for recurring topics and categories within participants' accounts, as well as for any classroom events that seemed especially noteworthy or significant (e.g., activities that were felt to have worked especially well or especially poorly). As I read through the data, I moved "between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation," all the while seeking to generate particular meanings or insights that were relevant to my research questions (Merriam 176). I first identified segments of the data that seemed responsive to my research questions and began open coding, assigning codes to all bits of data and then re-reading transcripts to group those codes into categories that seemed to fit together (Merriam 178). Codes were also guided by my review of the literature, and I looked for terms related to reflection, problem-solving strategies, prior classroom experience, and beliefs about writing and teaching. As I moved on to new transcripts, I compared emerging codes to previous categories or themes, revisited those categories and revised them as necessary, and added new ones as needed (Glaser and Strauss 106; Merriam 180). This process of renaming categories and subsuming some categories under others continued until I reached the point of saturation and the process of coding moved from being inductive to deductive (Merriam 183). Anthony Bryant and Charmaz define this process as

a form of abductive reasoning, in which researchers take an inductive approach to individual cases, conceptualize theories, and then check deductively through further data collection ("Grounded Theory in Historical," 46).

In addition to using the constant comparison method, I used analytic tools such as questioning the data, looking at emotions (e.g., pride, frustration, anger), looking for words that indicate time ("when," frames for events), and searching for the negative case (the exception to the rule) (Corbin and Strauss 69-84). I paid particular attention to participants' context, attempting to identify the circumstances and conditions of their emotions and actions (Corbin and Strauss 88)—namely, the context of graduate studies in an English department at a large, public university, the context of the FYC program, and the context of the composition classroom.

This process of generating initial codes led me to notice patterns in the data about teacher's beliefs, values, knowledge, instructional practices, feelings of success, and teaching challenges. In fact, this study had not originally set out to focus upon GTAs' reactions to classroom problems, but the data suggested that teachers' processes of pedagogical thinking were most apparent when they came up against troubling teaching situations. For example, the codes I generated for teaching problems, such as "Problems of Course Design and Implementation": assignment design, sequencing assignments, lesson planning, grading and managing the paper load, and classroom management, were in close proximity to codes for resources that teachers drew upon, such as peer feedback, Composition Office representatives, textbooks, and rhetoric and composition scholarship.

After realizing that the process by which GTAs develop pedagogical thinking, including how their beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy change over the first year, was most closely associated with teaching problems, I followed Juliet Corbin and Strauss's advice on

coding for process. They define process as "ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handling a problem" (97)—for instance, the process of reflecting on and addressing a teaching problem with the goal of resolving it. Occurring over time and involving different activities, interactions, and emotional responses, processes are related to context "because persons act in response to something, the something being the issues, problems, situations, goals, and events occurring in their lives. The relationship between structure [context] and process is very complex, leading to infinite variation in the intensity, type, and timing of action/interaction/emotional responses" (Corbin and Strauss 97). Corbin and Strauss go on to explain that, as contextual conditions change, the ongoing action/interaction/emotion also changes; a process may vary in similar situations because individuals will perceive and define the situation differently and give it different meanings (97). Corbin and Strauss point out:

> Process demonstrates an individual's, organization's, and group's ability to give meaning to and respond to problems and/or shape the situations that they find themselves to be in through sequences of action/interaction, taking into account their readings of the situations and emotional responses to them. In addition, process illustrates how groups can align or misalign their inter/actions/emotional responses and in doing so maintain social order, put on a play, have a party, do work, create chaos, or fight a war. As researchers, when we analyze data for process, we are trying to capture the dynamic quality of inter/action and emotions. (98)

This study was concerned with determining how novice GTA instructors of composition developed pedagogic thinking, in part by studying how they responded to troublesome teaching situations. I therefore coded data for events that participants defined as particularly problematic,

their emotional responses to those events, and the subsequent actions they took to deal with those events, hoping to capture this dynamic process.

Corbin and Strauss suggest asking the following questions of the data when analyzing it for process:

> What is going on here? What are the problems or situations as defined by participants? What are the structural conditions that gave rise to those situations? How are persons responding to these through inter/actions and emotional responses? How are these changing over time? Are inter/actions/emotions aligned or misaligned? What conditions/activities connect one sequence of events to another? What happens to the form, flow, continuity, and rhythm of inter/actions/emotions when conditions change; that is, do they become misaligned, or are they interrupted, or disrupted because of contingency (unplanned or unexpected changes in conditions)? How is action/interaction/emotion taken in response to problems or contingencies similar or different from inter/action that is routine? How do the consequences of one set of inter/actions/emotions play into the next sequence of inter/actions? (100)

These questions guided my ongoing analysis of the data.

In the final stages of data analysis, I worked to move from description to interpretation and increasing abstraction. To visualize how the categories fit together I created diagrams, attempting to "capture the interaction or relatedness of the findings" (Merriam 189). While I tested several models with members of my dissertation committee, I eventually determined the one presented in the next chapter best explained the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness and Dependability

Rather than forming meta-narratives or grand theory, constructivist qualitative research emphasizes local context, the "social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality where knowledge is validated through practice" (Kvale 42). In other words, qualitative researchers are less interested in validity or legitimation of knowledge than they are in the usefulness of the knowledge they generate. Crotty emphasizes this point, writing, "What constructionism drives home unambiguously is that there is *no* true or valid interpretation. There are useful interpretations, to be sure, and these stand over against interpretations that appear to serve no useful purpose" (47). Instead of using the positivist "criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity," researchers in the constructivist paradigm adopt "[t]erms such as *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability*" (Denzin and Lincoln 32-33, original italics). Clive Seale further cautions qualitative researchers that "Trustworthiness is always negotiable and open-ended, not being a matter of final proof whereby readers are compelled to accept an account" (468). However, researchers may take steps to ensure the trustworthiness, dependability, and usefulness of qualitative research, and I outline below the measures I adopted to come to what I hope is a persuasive and practically useful account.

First, I selected a topic that I believe was worthy of study, being "relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative" rather than "only opportunistic or convenient" (Tracy 840). Through personal experience as a co-instructor of the required composition pedagogy course for new teachers, I came to question the development of GTAs' pedagogical development, something rarely the subject of empirical investigation in rhetoric and composition scholarship. I was also guided in my inquiry by a thorough review of existing literature, not only in rhetoric and composition but also in K-12 teacher education and higher education studies.

Second, my intensive and long-term involvement in this study yielded a quantity of data from multiple sources. Maxwell explains, "Repeated observations and interviews, as well as the sustained presence of the researcher in the setting, can help to rule out spurious associations and premature theories" (110). Not only did I conduct multiple interviews and class observations with each participant, but I repeated my research with two cohorts of novice instructors. Throughout the study, I was immersed in the setting as both researcher and member of the GTA community (see "Researcher's Role" below for more information about how this role influenced the study). I collected "rich data" from verbatim transcripts of interviews and detailed, descriptive observation notes (Maxwell 110). Sarah J. Tracy argues that such rich rigor can provide a study with "face validity—whether a study appears, on its face, to be reasonable and appropriate" (841).

I use methods of thick description, multivocality, and triangulation to achieve credibility, or "the trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings" (Tracy 842-43). Tracy defines thick description as "in-depth illustration that explicates culturally situated meanings" and "abundant concrete detail" (843); by multivocality, she means that multiple and varied voices appear in the research (such as participants with differences in gender, age, race, class, etc.). In the findings presented in the next chapter, I hope to achieve both thick description and multivocality, offering concrete details derived from interview transcripts and observation notes and weaving together the voices of my participants: men and women whose ages ranged from 22-40, who came from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds.

Denzin and Lincoln argue that triangulation is an alternative to validation rather than "a tool or strategy of validation," suggesting that the combination of multiple data sources, methods, and perspectives can add "rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any

inquiry (7). Collecting multiple sources of data also "encourages consistent (re)interpretation" (Tracy 843), thereby reducing the risk that a researcher's conclusions "will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method" (Maxwell 94-95). This study relies on data collected from multiple sources to secure a more in-depth understanding of the processes by which novice GTAs develop pedagogical thinking. Interviews and class observations serve as the primary sources of data. Maxwell suggests that the combination of interview and observation data can provide "a more complete and accurate account" of actions and events than either could alone (94). He writes:

> While interviewing is often an efficient and valid way of understanding someone's perspective, observation can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data. This is particularly important for getting at tacit understandings and 'theory-in-use,' as well as aspects of the participants' perspective that they are reluctant to directly state in interviews. (94)

Drawing information from both interviews and observations, then, allows me to gain deeper insight into GTAs' development of expertise in teaching writing by collecting not only their stated understandings of writing pedagogy but also by seeing what they do in action and what tacit resources they make use of.

In addition to collecting interview and classroom observation data, I collected data from other sources that deepen my understanding of the context. These additional data sources include course documents, participant observation of the Spring 2012 composition pedagogy course, and reflective writing from that course.

Finally, I sought to gain additional perspectives on my emergent findings. I shared thoughts about the direction of the research with participants and solicited their verbal feedback,

in interviews, about how my thinking coincided with or contradicted their own sense of the phenomenon. I also shared emergent findings and tentative models with members of my dissertation committee and sought feedback. I twice attended research forums at national conferences, where I shared portions of coded transcripts and my emergent findings with other graduate students and advanced scholars in the field: I was privileged to work with Beth Daniell at the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Qualitative Research Network in 2012 and with Christine Farris at the Rhetoric Society of America's Research Network, also in 2012.

Qualitative researchers also work to achieve transferability, or resonance. This concept refers to "research's ability to meaningfully reverberate and affect an audience" (Tracy 844). Transferability can be understood as an alternative to generalizability; Merriam argues that knowledge gained from qualitative research can be generalizable in the same way that knowledge can be transferred among similar situations (225). Tracy suggests transferability occurs when "when readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action" (845). The conclusions drawn from qualitative research might be regarded as "working hypotheses" that "can offer practitioners some guidance in making choices—the results of which can be monitored and evaluated in order to make better decisions in the future" (Merriam 225). I hope that the conclusions and implications for practice that I offer at the end of this dissertation will be useful to writing pedagogy educators and writing researchers. By extending our understanding of the processes by which novice GTA instructors of composition develop pedagogical thinking and expertise in teaching writing, I hope this study makes a significant contribution to practical and theoretical knowledge in the discipline of rhetoric and composition.

A final criterion for effective qualitative research is sincerity, which can be achieved "through self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, transparency, and data auditing" (Tracy 841). In the section below titled "Researcher's Role," and throughout this dissertation, I hope to make my own "biases, goals, and foibles" transparent, as well as their effects on the "methods, joys, and mistakes of the research" (Tracy 841). From the inception of this project through the writing of the dissertation itself, I kept an audit trail. Seale calls auditing "an exercise in self-reflexivity, which involves the provision of a methodologically self-critical account of how the research was done" (486). An audit trail allows other readers and researchers to follow the trail of the investigator; it offers a record, in the form of memos or a research journal, of how the project was arrived at, data was collected and analyzed, and decisions were made (Merriam 223).

From the beginning of this project, I kept records of my brainstorming, planning, and decision-making. At first, these records often took the form of short, informal memos to myself about ideas for the study, typically written on loose sheets of paper and bound together with a paper clip. As the study progressed, I also collected notes from brainstorming sessions with dissertation members and feedback on early drafts. Throughout this process, I have moved back and forth from handwritten notes jotted during data collection, transcription, and analysis and typed notes collected in digital spaces. I began the project working with Microsoft Word and Excel as my primary data management systems; however, as the amount of information I gathered grew, I migrated most of my materials into ATLAS.ti (with the exception of video data and some early coded transcripts), where I also made a practice of writing memos to myself during and after data analysis sessions. I have also saved email communication about this project from dissertation committee members and participants, providing a detailed record of the timeline and decisions related to the project.

Ultimately, qualitative researchers are seeking to see if the results of a study are consistent with the data collected and seem dependable based on the audit trail. Merriam notes that qualitative researchers "seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it. Since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no benchmark by which to take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense" (220). Instead, researchers must ask, "Do the results make sense given the data that was collected?" For me, that answer is yes; I hope that other readers of this work will agree.

Researcher's Role

Maxwell defines "reactivity" as the researcher's influence on the setting, events, and individuals being studied (108); he notes that the researcher generally has less influence in the participant observation role, where the setting itself exerts the most influence on participants' behavior (109). In interviews, however, "the informant is always influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation" (109). This influence may be minimized by asking open-ended questions, but Maxwell cautions that trying to minimize the researcher influence "is not a meaningful goal for qualitative research" (109). Instead, the researcher should try to understand her influence on the interviews and setting. Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater reminds researchers that they "are positioned by age, gender, race, class, nationality, institutional affiliation, historical-personal circumstance, and intellectual predisposition. The extent to which such influences are revealed or concealed when reporting data is circumscribed by the paradigms and disciplines under which we train, work, and publish" (115). She goes on to say, "All researchers are positioned whether they write about it explicitly, separately, or not at all" (115). In what follows, I will explain my positionality in relation to my participants and will address ethical considerations that have not already been mentioned.

When I began this study, I was a first-year doctoral student in rhetoric and composition. While I was a co-instructor of the Spring 2010 composition pedagogy course, my role was more "behind the scenes" than active in class; I participated in shaping the course's syllabus, assignments, and daily activities, but I rarely led discussion or responded independently to student work. I believe most students in the class saw me as more of a peer or friend, and based on their exit interviews, I believe participants in the first phase of the study chose to become involved because they wanted to do me a favor as a friend. During the first phase of the study I was also enrolled in graduate coursework, and while I tried to separate my role as a researcher from my role as a friend and colleague, that separation is more a fiction than reality. Many of our interviews either began or ended by talking about end-of-semester projects, the hectic schedule of graduate school, or shared academic interests, and I occasionally talked about the study and my emerging findings with participants in informal settings—for instance, over dinner or at a happy hour. I suspect that participants in this first cohort may have been more frank in their interviews with me because of that relationship, and I hope that I remain true to our friendship in my presentation of the findings.

By the time I began the second phase of this study, I was a member of the Composition Committee and perceived as a graduate student highly involved in the FYC program—I participated in teaching workshops, was an advanced student in the rhetoric and composition program, and was known to conduct research on the experiences of GTAs. I was also invited to participate in the composition pedagogy class as a more active instructor; I helped design the course syllabus, schedule, and assignments, and I was responsible for leading some class sessions. I also responded directly to students' practice teaching modules in that class, and so was perceived as having more authority than I had in my previous incarnation as a co-instructor.

Furthermore, mid-way through the spring semester of 2012, I applied for and was selected to be Assistant Director of Composition, a position in which I would be responsible for formally responding to GTAs' syllabi and assignments and course proposals, observing and evaluating classroom performance, and helping teachers troubleshoot difficulties with students, materials, and so on. In other words, during the second phase of this study I carried more programmatic authority and was perceived as higher up in the department hierarchy than the GTAs who I worked with. In contrast to the first phase of the study, several of the participants in the second phase referred to me in interviews as their "teacher" rather than as their "friend." Furthermore, some of the data I collected for the second phase of the study—class observations and course documents—was part of the Composition Office's routine evaluation of novice teachers; while collecting such data did not place a greater strain on the participants, it did change the circumstances under which data was gathered.

In both phases of the study, I felt "echoes of the interview," or changes in my relationships with study participants during and after the study (Warren 96). These changes were especially prominent in the second phase, and while I believe all participants were forthright and valued our "teaching conversations," I do suspect that my closer position to that of participants in the first phase led to more frank discussions of the difficulties and challenges encountered by novice teachers. Farris, a graduate student conducting research about other graduate students at the time of her *Subject to Change*, characterized this relationship as one of "equal, reflective, practitioner peers" (4). Robert S. Weiss cautions, "What is essential in interviewing is to maintain a working research partnership. You can get away with phrasing questions awkwardly and with a variety of other errors that will make you wince when you listen to the tape later. What you can't get away with is failure to work with the respondent as a partner in the

production of useful material" (119). I do believe that in each phase of this study, I established and maintained such partnerships.

I described above the procedures I followed to obtain informed consent and reduce the risks of participating in the study. Thomas Newkirk critiques the "seduction and betrayal" of informed consent forms, particularly researchers' tendency to highlight the benefits that will come from participating and to disguise the fact that they may be likely to say negative things about participants. Newkirk reminds us that "[l]iteracy researchers operate in hierarchical systems in which they typically 'study down,' creating descriptions of those with less education, professional status, economic resources" (5). Graduate instructors of composition are typically studied by those with greater professional status, such as faculty and program administrators, and can be considered to reside at the bottom of the academic food chain—as I explained in my introduction to this dissertation, GTAs teach for a pittance, often subject matter they lack interest in or familiarity with, juggling the goals and responsibilities of graduate school with those of the composition classroom. While I am not so far beyond my own first days in the classroom that I have forgotten the frustration, anxiety, and excitement of being a new teacher, I have moved progressively beyond that experience in terms of expertise as a composition teacher, disciplinary knowledge in rhetoric and composition, and authority as a writing program administrator and researcher. Newkirk suggests that treating participants ethically should involve "a willingness to bring up issues, problems, or questions" (13), an opportunity for teachers "to respond to interpretations of problematical situations" (13), and a "responsibility to work with the teacher to deal with problems the researcher and teacher identify" (14). As this study progressed, my conversations with GTAs increasingly became reflective teaching dialogues in which I tried to help novice instructors better understand and resolve troubling classroom situations; early

interactions with participants, as I was getting to know the university's FYC curriculum myself, were characterized more by mutual grappling with uncertainty.

Through the lengthy and recursive process of data collection and analysis, I tried to bring sensitivity to the research. Corbin and Strauss describe sensitivity as "having insight, being tuned in to, being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings in the data" (32). They remind researchers that "our backgrounds and past experiences provide the mental capacity to respond to and receive the messages contained in data" (33). However, the researcher must also remain true to the data themselves, focusing on "what the participants are saying or doing" rather than relying on the researcher's perceptions of an event (33). The researcher "must locate the expressed emotions, feelings, experiences, and actions within the context in which they occurred so that meaning is clear and accurate" and remain open to having her assumptions and expectations contradicted (57). Throughout my study, I tried to be aware of ethical issues such as over familiarity with the participants and the setting. I worked to question my understanding of the participants' experience in the composition pedagogy course, knowing that my perceptions of that course are likely to be very different from their perceptions. To keep these ethical issues in mind, I wrote research memos in which I questioned my "instruments of perception"—the background, disciplinary beliefs, and knowledge (Zeni, Prophete, Cason, and Phillips 114)—that informed my encounters with the participants. I hope I have remained open to what the data revealed about the experiences and development of new graduate instructors of composition.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This study was designed to investigate the processes by which novice teachers develop pedagogical thinking and expertise in teaching writing, including how GTAs' understanding of writing pedagogy changes over time, how they teach writing to undergraduate students, and how they react to classroom problems. The questions that guided the study were: how do novice FYC teachers' beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy change during their first year of teaching; what factors affect how two cohorts of novice FYC teachers' beliefs about and understandings of writing pedagogy change during their first year of teaching; how do novice FYC teachers enact their writing pedagogy in classroom practice; and how do novice FYC teachers respond to teaching challenges? The presentation of the data offers the answers to these questions.

The data were collected in two phases. In the first phase, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the six participants; in the second, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of six participants. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information about the participants' experiences in the graduate assistant mentoring program (including their Writing Center tutoring, composition pedagogy course, and apprenticeship with more experienced FYC instructors), past schooling and familiarity with composition and rhetoric, and pedagogical thinking about course activities and assignments, student development, and particularly problematic or successful teaching experiences. I analyzed the data inductively and comparatively to develop recurring themes across the participants' narratives. Data from classroom observations were also collected to develop a more complete picture of these instructors' classroom practices and their tacit beliefs about teaching writing. I used these

classroom observations to generate interview questions; in my analysis of the data, these sources were used primarily for purposes of triangulation. Additional data from participant observation of the required composition pedagogy course, reflective writing from participants in the second phase of the study, and teaching materials were also collected to help develop a picture of each participant's initial understanding of and experience with college composition and writing pedagogy.

This chapter presents the main findings from the data. First, I construct a brief description of each participant, including relevant demographic data. Following that, I present the major finding of this study, a model of the processes by which novice GTAs identify, reflect upon, and respond to teaching challenges. This model is presented according to the components of the process. I first describe the teachers' existing interpretive frameworks, which guided the actions they took after reflecting on their teaching practices. These interpretative frameworks were composed of their prior experience; teaching knowledge; beliefs about writing, teaching, and learners; and self-defense mechanisms. Following this discussion, I describe how teachers identified teaching problems and the actions they took after reflecting on those problems. Specifically, when these GTAs were prompted by a feeling of frustration to reflect on their teaching practices, they reacted in one of three ways: by making no change to their practices, by making a change in deliberate contradiction to the writing program's guidelines, or by making a change that better supported student learning, if unevenly.

Participant Demographics

Twelve GTA instructors of composition agreed to participate in this study, six in each cohort. All joined the study during their second semester as master's students; none had previously taught first-year composition. Of the group, nine (75%) had taken FYC as

undergraduates themselves. Six (50%) had prior experience in some sort of teaching situation: several had worked as undergraduate peer writing tutors, several had taught English abroad, two had taught or co-taught college classes, and two had gained secondary teaching certification in English, though only one had actually taught high school. Below, I brief offer individual profiles of these participants to provide a sense of their educational backgrounds, previous teaching experiences, disciplinary specializations, and career aspirations.

Cohort 1

Aaron was enrolled in the literature concentration in his master's program and had no previous teaching experience. Having achieved high scores on his A.P. English exams, Aaron was not required to take FYC as an undergraduate. Aaron had been accepted to a PhD program in literary studies when this study ended.

Like Aaron, Andrew was enrolled in the MA concentration in literature. According to Andrew, an FYC equivalent wasn't offered at his university; instead, he took a 100-level class in literature. He did not have any prior teaching experience before his MA program. At the time this study ended, Andrew had been accepted to a doctoral program in literature.

Bart, also enrolled in the literature track in his MA program, had taught English abroad for a few years prior to graduate school. Bart had completed English 101 and 102 at different institutions; he characterized both of these courses as writing about literature. At the end of this study, he hoped to continue studying literature as a PhD student but had not yet been accepted into a program.

Edward had joined the MA program to study literature and cinema studies. As an undergraduate, he had taken a two-semester FYC sequence, characterizing the first course as an "easy A" and the second as a survey of literature. Edward did not have any prior teaching

experience before this study. He had been hired as a part-time adjunct when this study ended and has since been accepted into a doctoral program.

John, also specializing in English literature, had spent six months teaching high school English abroad before beginning his MA program. During his BA, John took English 101 and 102, which he characterized as emphasizing process and grammar. By the end of this study, John had been accepted into a doctoral program to continue studying literature.

Paige, who specialized in rhetoric and composition, had taken first-year composition through dual enrollment her senior year of high school. When this study ended, Paige had not yet completed her MA; she tentatively planned to teach at community colleges once she finished her degree.

Cohort 2

Betty, who joined the MA program to study literature, had not taken FYC as an undergraduate and did not have prior teaching experience before her master's program. Since the end of this study, she has been accepted into a doctoral program to continue her studies in literature.

Bob, who was also studying literature in his master's program, had been required as an undergraduate to take a three-semester sequence in English that included an introduction to writing and two survey courses in literature, spanning classical Greek to contemporary fiction. Bob said that he had seen himself as a mentor and teacher since high school, when his English teacher encouraged him to tutor other students in writing. He was also selected as an undergraduate TA his junior and senior years, a position in which he taught several class sessions each semester in upper-level literature courses. After he graduated, Bob was hired to direct a

first-year program at his undergraduate college, where he taught freshman seminars. After completing his MA, Bob left to pursue his PhD in literature at a different university.

David was enrolled in the creative writing concentration in the English department. He characterized his college career as "piecemeal," but did take an FYC course at a community college. He did not have prior teaching experience before beginning his master's program. After completing his MA, he was hired as an adjunct by colleges in the area.

James joined the master's program to study literature; he was unfunded his first semester and therefore was paired with a mentor instructor for English 102 but not for English 101. He had tested out of the first semester composition course as an undergraduate but was required to take the second, which he completed as a two-week summer course. After graduating, he taught high school English for several years and spent one year teaching middle school English abroad. At the end of this study, he was tentatively planning either to return to teaching high school or to teach abroad again.

Lizzy also entered the master's program to study literature. She completed what she characterized as a "traditional" two-semester FYC sequence at the technical college she attended. Before entering the master's program she tutored writing at a technical college for a year. She also designed and taught a four-week summer online course on her thesis topic for a non-accredited institution. After completing her MA, she stayed on in the area as an adjunct instructor.

Victoria entered the master's program in rhetoric and composition directly after completing her BA in English. During her undergraduate education, she took a first-year composition course, where she recalled writing analyses of songs and participating in peer

review. As an undergraduate, she also worked as a peer tutor in her university's writing center. At the end of this study, Victoria had accepted a professional position.

A Model of Reflection and Action

The data revealed that the ways in which these GTAs framed and responded to teaching challenges were shaped by their existing interpretive frameworks. These interpretative frameworks were composed of their prior experience; teaching knowledge; beliefs about teaching, learners, and writing; and self-defense mechanisms. The data also indicated that when faced with a teaching challenge, these GTAs typically reflected on the problem in a limited, fleeting way and made no or few changes or changes that only rarely resolved the problem. Following their awareness of disconnect and limited process of reflection, one of four outcomes was likely: inertia, where the instructors recognized some adjustment was needed but made no change in their actions because uncertain of what to modify or how to implement a change; self-approbation, where the instructors made no change in their actions because of a sense that students or the writing program were at fault rather than their practices; rejection/replacement, where the instructors made a change despite an awareness that it contradicted the FYC program guidelines; and flexibility/experimentation, where the instructors experimented with teaching practices that would better support student learning, if unevenly.

From the data, I developed a model of problem identification, reflection, and instructional adaptation (see Figure 1). In what follows, I begin with a description of the interpretive frameworks that seemed to be guiding the participants' understandings. I then discuss the problems teachers reported encountering and the actions teachers reported having taken after reflecting in some way on that problem in light of their interpretive frameworks.

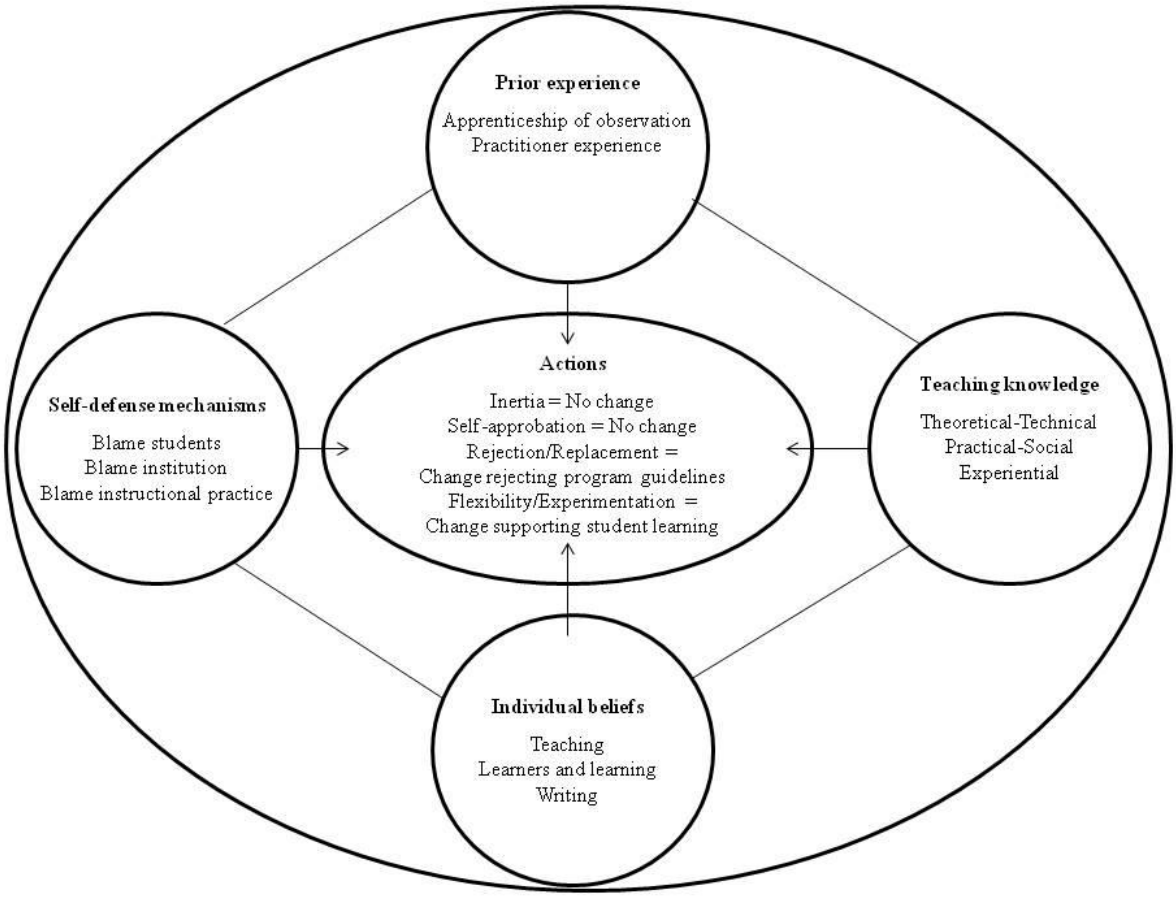


Figure 1. Model of Problem Identification, Reflection, and Instructional Adaptation

Interpretive Framework Affecting GTAs' Reflections and Actions

Patterns in the data revealed that participants' interpretive frameworks filtered their responses to classroom challenges, shaping the way they identified and framed teaching problems. While each participant's interpretive framework was unique, all shared similar components. In what follows, I will first briefly describe the common elements of GTAs' interpretive frameworks. I will then describe the individual framework that each GTA brought to bear on his or her teaching challenges, focusing on the most important components of each individual's framework for the problems he or she encountered in the first year of teaching.

The data revealed that instructors often brought prior experience to bear on the teaching challenges they encountered. These teachers' stories showed that they were likely to draw on their K-16 apprenticeship of observation to better understand troublesome classroom issues and to direct their actions; in particular, these GTAs turned to their experiences with influential teachers, writing, and rhetoric, and to their memories of themselves as students.

The teachers' accounts revealed that, in addition to their experiences as students, they drew upon experiences as tutors and apprentices in the English 101 and 102 mentoring program as well as teaching experiences outside of FYC to help them better understand problems or makes changes to their instruction. The instructors' stories indicated that this type of prior experience was most often called upon to help them think through student engagement and development, and to help them overcome common classroom management issues, such as pacing lessons and handling the grading load.

The instructors' stories also revealed particular types of knowledge or resources these GTAs drew upon to help them better understand their students, (in)effective pedagogies, and teaching problems. Participants turned to theoretical or technical knowledge when they recalled or sought out articles or concepts they had first encountered in their pedagogy class or in their FYC textbooks. When participants drew upon theoretical or technical knowledge, they turned to authoritative sources that had been in some way endorsed by the field of rhetoric and composition. More often, these instructors turned to practical or social knowledge when they encountered a teaching challenge, seeking information from members of their peer cohort, more experienced instructors in the writing program, or Composition Office representatives, such as the Director and Assistant Director of Composition. In these cases, instructors were often trying to troubleshoot recurrent problems or make day-to-day plans by collecting program lore.

Additionally, GTAs drew upon experiential knowledge to help them better understand their students and pedagogies. These GTAs described themselves as learning-as-they-go, coming to a greater understanding of what works and what doesn't through trial and error.

Individual beliefs about teaching, learners and learning, and writing also influenced GTAs' framing of and response to teaching problems; these beliefs may have been formed, in part, in response to prior experience and may have influenced GTAs' acquisition and application of teaching knowledge. These instructors held beliefs about teaching in general that influenced their practices in the writing classroom, particularly about the purpose of education and the ideal relationship between students and teachers. They also held beliefs about teaching writing, more specifically, including what the writing classroom should accomplish in terms of empowering, engaging, and altering students' abilities as writers, readers, and critical thinkers. In addition, these GTAs held beliefs associated with students and learning, such as how students learn best and students' work ethic and motivations. Beliefs about writing also shaped their approach to teaching composition, including beliefs about what writing is for, writing processes, and the relationship of writing to identity.

The final category in the interpretive paradigm is composed of the instructors' self-defense mechanisms. When explaining the action they took upon reflection, the instructors often justified their decision by blaming students, the institution, or their instructional practices. Their interview accounts suggest that these first two behaviors helped novice teachers rationalize their instructional decisions and protected them from feeling anxious, guilty, or inadequate. The latter, blaming instructional practices, seemed to be a more positive move, as it helped teachers rethink their teaching strategies and address their challenges in more effective ways.

Together, these interactive components exerted differing degrees of pressure, depending on the situation, that influenced the outcome of the teachers' reflection.

Aaron

The K-16 apprenticeship of observation that Aaron drew upon included teachers whose instructional practices he admired and the writing he completed as an undergraduate student. Aaron indicated that his practices as a writing instructor were strongly shaped by a humanities professor whom Aaron hoped to model himself after, explaining that this teacher "emphasized the idea of the short responses, the one or two pages, and I see how that could be an effective way of getting students focused on a specific idea in a specific text or piece of research, and getting them to say something unique or original or their personal perspective within a brief span and getting it out there on paper and then moving on. I think could be an effective way of getting students to generate ideas." Aaron felt that these responses offered a "foundation for discussion, which is something that I want to do in 101 and 102 as an instructor, is to promote discussion more so than just straight lecturing."

As an undergraduate and first-year MA student, Aaron took several creative writing classes and was particularly impressed by the workshop pedagogy he experienced there. Aaron explained, "I think the idea of workshop in general, kind of giving specific feedback about whether a certain piece of writing is effective as it's written. And I like the idea of a workshop that gives the writer somewhere to go from, you know, this is how you improve; this is what works well; this is what doesn't work well; I had questions about this; could you possibly expand on this idea; those kind of issues that I think I want to apply to a composition classroom."

Aaron's writing experiences in college—especially the lack of variety of writing he experienced—also influenced his thinking about composition, especially English 102. Aaron said

that he did most of his writing in English and other humanities courses. He recalled that he did not write a paper longer than six or seven pages until he entered advanced honors seminars, noting, "And I remember thinking that that was odd at the time. That, you know, I knew people in other disciplines that were turning in ten, twenty-page papers, and I always thought English would have extremely long papers and that would be it." Aaron also said that he did not have much direct writing instruction in college, saying, "That, for the most part, is something that didn't happen." Instead, he wrote mainly "the basic kind of literary analysis, from what I can remember. … I guess basically close readings." According to his interview accounts, this focus on one main type of writing seemed to limit Aaron's ability to conceptualize different genres in the composition class.

Although he did not have prior teaching experience, Aaron had accumulated practitioner experience as a temporary AP exam rater and by shadowing instructors in the writing program. This latter experience seemed most often to exert pressure on the ways Aaron responded to teaching challenges. As a first-year master's student, Aaron taught two full class periods each semester on his own, with the supervision of his mentor instructors, and these early teaching experiences shaped the strategies he drew upon as an instructor of his own courses. For these class sessions, Aaron said that he struggled to involve students in class discussions of texts. In English 102, for example, he led a discussion of three short stories, all revolving around the theme of globalization. Overall, he explained, the pedagogical strategy he took away from those teaching experiences was to "have questions ready to go," and then if students don't understand the questions, to break them down into smaller questions "until we get to something that is immediately approachable, that is not gonna take them to have even read a text to answer a question and then kind of working their way back up into more complex questions." Overall,

though, Aaron said he was frustrated by his experience in English 102, saying, "I think I just got some bad luck with the 102; I am not entirely certain how that specific class syllabus fits into the department's expectations. However, again, I am not entirely clear on what exactly those expectations are. You know, what a solid … hands-on research paper looks like … It didn't seem like it was fitting or it was teaching the research specifically."

Furthermore, Aaron said that he became disillusioned with the practice of small group peer review he observed in that class, noting, "The comments that some of those students make are not the most helpful." According to his report, this observation made Aaron sure that he wanted to include whole-class peer review workshops in his FYC courses, though it also made him realize he would need to "hol[d] their hand a little bit in terms of this is what you need to look at, this is what a good paragraph is, this is what a good thesis is, kind of instilling those ideas so that they can make constructive critical remarks when it comes to workshopping within a classroom."

Aaron was more likely to draw upon experiential teaching knowledge than theoretical-technical or practical-social knowledge when he was faced with teaching challenges. Seeming to struggle with the rhetorical theory he was introduced to in his pedagogy class, Aaron said that he seldom found that scholarship to be useful. He explained this feeling, saying:

> I feel like the, the different theories on what constitutes rhetoric and whether everything is rhetorical, I feel like those kind of theories are helpful in terms of an academic who's committed to the study of rhetoric, of language, of literature. I feel like that's a lot to throw at a freshman who's just trying to figure out, you know, what context means, what *exigence* means. And you know, I feel like, for better or worse, that kind of the basic and

over-simplistic definitions of the rhetorical situation are at least something that they can wrap their heads around.

According to his account, Aaron consistently felt that the pedagogy course paid too much attention to the disciplinary history and theories behind the curriculum than to the actual teaching of FYC and that the class failed to provide him both with "firm definitions" of the specific assignments and an understanding of "different teaching strategies" for each of those assignments.

Aaron explained that he worked through most problems on his own rather than seeking other sources of knowledge, although he did occasionally talk with other "second-year MA students" about "how do you make sure kids show up for class and turn in their stuff on time" or to "ge[t] ideas from people for paper assignments or class policies." He said that trial-and-error helped him answer questions like: "How do you inspire discussion, how do you keep discussion going, those real pragmatic ideas of should you come prepared with a list of questions, do you need to learn how to make stuff up on the spot."

Beliefs about teaching, learners and learning, and writing also shaped Aaron's responses to teaching challenges. Aaron said that he valued "student-oriented" pedagogy, and one of his main goals as a teacher was for students to carry class discussion. Aaron also hoped to give students "ownership over their own writing or voice" and "break down the traditional hierarchy of me being in front of the class and everyone looking at me," and he said that he believed the whole-class writing workshops would help him achieve these goals. Aaron said he believed that students are "hesitant to talk about their writing" and sometimes need "time to chill out and calm down before, especially for the ones that have been working on their paper since like two in the morning, telling them that it's okay, you know, we can get through this." According to his

report, Aaron sometimes found his beliefs about students challenged as a teacher; he explained that he was surprised to find "it's really hard to get students to find something they're interested in." Aaron went on to say, "I thought, just based I guess on my own college experiences, that students would be interested in generally the things that I assigned; that wasn't necessarily the case." Aaron's beliefs about teaching and learners seemed at times to conflict with his beliefs about writing, which he described as a process of translation where students "convert" or "transpose[e] thoughts or talk onto the page," and which led him to craft more activities where students were "talking about writing" rather than actually applying the research or writing skills they were learning for a particular unit.

Self-defense mechanisms came into play in a few of Aaron's stories about teaching problems. For instance, when Aaron found that students' drafts did not change as dramatically as he had expected after being workshopped, he blamed the students for not putting in the work and "barely scratching the surface of the issues raised" in the workshop. Aaron also blamed the institutional context for preventing him from becoming as effective a teacher as he wanted to be, saying, "I like the entire experience of teaching. I only wish that I was not as busy with GRE studying, MA comps, thesis writing and other classes so that I could spend some more time developing and planning more creative ways for students to engage and understand the material."

Andrew

Andrew was most likely to draw upon prior experience to help him understand and confront teaching challenges, recalling prior teachers, learning activities, and observations of experienced FYC instructors in the writing program. For example, Andrew said that he was strongly influenced by two prior instructors, a Milton professor and a high school teacher, whose classroom personalities and pedagogies he wanted to emulate. Of the Milton professor, Andrew

said that he wanted "to model myself after him," especially his syllabus, high expectations for students, and passion for subject matter, saying, "He was really great; he was always available outside of class and he helped you, and he was super passionate about his thing, and that's what I want to be when I'm in class, be super passionate about whatever I teach … That's the main thing I'll probably take from schooling … I'm going to take him with me to each of my classes." The high school teacher Andrew recounted also had high expectations and encouraged students' interests:

> [He was] just very personable, you know. I felt comfortable around him…. But at the same time, when he was in class, he was very authoritative; he expected a lot from me, but you knew that he was demanding. There wasn't a dissonance between what he expected and the way he taught. It was very like okay, once you're in the class, you know that he expects a lot of you, and you know that you need to give a lot back to him. And if you do, you'll get rewards. You'll learn a lot.

Andrew explained that he wanted to "mode[l] myself on those certain professors or certain high school teachers. ... Not so much assignments or things like that or in class so much, but their personalities."

Andrew also drew upon his practitioner experiences in the GTA mentoring program to help him decide what he did and didn't want to do in his own classes. His English 101 mentor, for example, "taught a lot out of the [required writing handbook]." Andrew said, "I'd look at their faces when he taught, and they'd be just so bored." Seeing this caused Andrew to feel that "passion is a big part of" teaching, and "if you put work in, if you bring stuff to class, if you show videos or all those different things, I think they're going to reciprocate that and be excited

about it too." Andrew said these beliefs were confirmed for him when he taught a few class periods:

> When I taught they were super-excited. I remember one class, [the 101 instructor] was like, "Okay guys, well I won't see you Thursday; Andrew is teaching," and one of the girls … was like "Yay!" and [the instructor] was like, "That's not nice." But it's like, what do you expect when you put no work into it? And then I would come to class and I'd have, use my computer and stuff, and do all this interactive stuff, have handouts and stuff. So I just feel like in that way … I feel like if you put no work in, they're not gonna put work in.

Much like Aaron, Andrew rarely turned to theoretical-technical knowledge as a resource, but more often relied upon experiential knowledge. When Andrew did mention theoretical-technical knowledge he had encountered, he most often cast it negatively. For example, although his pedagogy class did not present this concept, Andrew believed he had been taught to spend time each day teaching students grammar. He explained, "I always disagreed with [the pedagogy professor] when she was always, 'We have to teach them the basics of writing.'" At other moments, Andrew indicated that he rejected the theoretical-technical knowledge that he did encounter: "We read over this cognitive development stuff, like we read over Piaget, where it's like, I don't know how I'm going to apply that when I'm working with a student, but I'm supposed to." Instead, Andrew described the knowledge he brought to the classroom as very experiential, though he did see a need for a more theoretical understanding. He explained, "The best thing for me is just going in front of the class and teaching. But, at the same time, I realize that I need to be more cognizant of the literature about teaching, cause I almost feel like I've gotten my own way of teaching now, like I've got this set way of teaching, and is it good or bad,

I don't know."

Andrew's beliefs about teaching, learners and learning, and writing also shaped the ways in which he identified and understood classroom challenges. As indicated above, Andrew believed that passion was most important to effective teaching. He also valued a balance between being authoritative and approachable as a teacher, explaining that his "theory of teaching…is playing the two roles in class" by being someone who is "authoritative in a way, and establishing yourself as someone with *ethos* and someone with credibility and somebody who is there to help them learn and all this kind of stuff, but is also gonna test them" and also "having that other face in class of somebody who is very approachable, who … knows his stuff more than the student, but in the other sense is still a student, is still a learner." Andrew's accounts showed that he also believed that students learn best when they write about topics they're engaged with, but that "a lot of students don't realize that you can write about fun stuff." He explained that he saw his purpose as a writing teacher as "helping students write about things they want to write about" and "to have them care about the world."

According to his report, Andrew believed that learning to write is closely associated with learning about grammar. For example, when asked about how he learned to write, he responded, "Getting taught to write? I remember more junior high, I remember, I don't know why, I couldn't figure out what the difference between a noun and a verb was; I don't know why I had such a hard time with it, but I just remember a lot of grammar stuff in junior high especially."

When faced with some teaching challenges, Andrew was likely to blame students for not putting forth the effort he expected. At times, he characterized students as resistant, saying, "I think they're always against intellectualizing anything, so if you can intellectualize something that they are going to hear a lot [like a rap song] then maybe that resistance will break down as

they keep hearing that song." This tendency to blame students for resisting academic texts seemed to lead Andrew to rely more often on short, pop culture texts like music videos. Additionally, when some lessons failed to work as intended, Andrew sometimes blamed students for being lazy: "It's just laziness, I think, to be honest. They don't try to learn. Students are just lazy."

Bart

As a FYC instructor, Bart was likely to draw on his prior experiences as a student and as a teacher. According to his report, Bart regularly thought back to what he liked or disliked as a student to shape his own instructional practices. He explained, "I understand from my own standpoint—I don't think I said this in my first class, but in my second class I just laid this out, that once I understand something, I get bored with it. I have to move on. I have to get something new, and I know some people are like that, so cater to them for a class period" by introducing new or more advanced material.

Bart indicated that he also felt able to draw upon his prior practitioner experience teaching English abroad and church classes. He explained these experiences gave him confidence, saying, "Just standing in front of the group and assuming the position as authority. It doesn't matter what you're teaching, if you've had that position before, it helps you move into other teaching positions very easily." Bart said that this practitioner experience also gave him greater insight into "the signs of they're not getting it, or they don't care what you're talking about, or this is not the most effective way to teach this. And also just knowing to incorporate fun … even in college."

Bart's practitioner experience within the GTA mentoring program also served as a touchstone, and his account revealed that he came to two important realizations about the

English 101 curriculum through his year in the mentoring program: First, students did not understand rhetorical analysis; he explained, "students had no idea what they were being asked to do, and from sitting in on classes where they were being told what to do, it wasn't clear exactly what they were supposed to do as far as how they do it." Moreover, Bart said he felt that teachers' tendency to give open-ended prompts for the rhetorical analysis was ineffective, explaining, "Even if they kind of got the idea of rhetorical analysis, the sort of wide-open view of the paper scared them, like they didn't know what was expected of them, and so they didn't know what sort of thing to choose to write about." Drawing on these experiences, Bart said he decided to restrict his students' choice for the rhetorical analysis to a single text and to de-emphasize rhetorical terminology in his class.

His observations of the assignments and student work that came into the Writing Center also influenced Bart's decision-making. He explained, "I had the idea of teaching things like Barthes and whatnot, and I was worried that [students] wouldn't get it." After learning that another teacher taught "Foucault and a lot of other stuff" and seeing that "her students … seemed 1) interested and 2) they got it," Bart said it "was heartening, to be like, 'I can do stuff I want to do, and they will get it."

Bart's reports revealed that he typically drew upon practical-social knowledge when planning lessons and working through problems. When asked what resources he turned to when he encountered problems, Bart said that he most often talked with his wife. He said, "That's helpful enough. I don't need somebody to come along and be like, 'Here's the solution,' because nobody has the solution." In addition to his wife, Bart explained that he also "talk[ed] to other people in the program" when he needed ideas, "especially the people who have been doing it for a while." When Bart sought theoretical- technical knowledge, he said that he usually turned to

the writing program's approved textbooks, the Writing Center website, and additional writing center websites.

Additionally, Bart's beliefs about teaching and himself as a teacher came into play when he was confronted with teaching problems. For example, according to Bart's account, he believed that he would not benefit from other people's input about his teaching because he had enough experience to form his own conclusions. He described this stance, saying, "When you feel comfortable doing something, it feels uncomfortable to have someone determining whether you're doing it well. When you *know* you do it well, it's so irritating to have someone there watching, like 'Well, you can do this better.' Well, yeah, I know I can do that better. I'm at a stage where I'm comfortable with what I'm doing well; I need to think about those things on my own; I don't need someone else telling me." Bart also believed that teaching writing should help not only his students but also himself. He explained, "My goal has been to make this class on rhetoric and composition not only something I understand but something that's beneficial to me in the end. … I wanted more than just to get paid out of this; I wanted it to actually help my own writing." At the same time, Bart said that he believed he still needed to have authority in the classroom as a teacher, even though he saw himself as a learner. He described how this feeling influenced decisions about his class:

> What I also try to do, though, is to make it something comfortable to me, as I did with the thing where I talked about literary theory and turned it into forms of analysis that were already associated with what we were doing. I had to do that. In my mind, not only did it give them alternate forms and alternate ideas to think about if they wanted to, it also finally put that stamp of authority on what I'd been saying up to that point.

Bart's beliefs about students as learners also shaped his response to troubling classroom issues. Bart said that he began teaching with the belief "that students aren't in composition to learn. They're in composition because they're supposed to take composition." However, he found this belief challenged, saying, "I've found that that actually undermines the whole idea of the class and takes away from any real fun they can have in it. So I've moved away from that expectation that they're there because they have to be and recognized in my own head that … they're adults; they don't have to be there. They can walk out. They don't even have to come, but they do." According to his account, this new realization caused Bart to "try to help them make it fun instead of boring themselves to death" by encouraging students to "relate to stuff they actually care about instead of trying to force them into a particular mold of like this what you need to be in college."

At times, self-defense mechanisms seemed to exert pressure on Bart's decisions about classroom problems. For instance, Bart expressed frustration with students' tendency to ask similar questions repeatedly; he said, "At some point, it would seem like the questions would stop, like, 'You've heard the answer. What exactly are you expecting me to say? Something that's going to make it all magically work for you?' I realize that it's different, but I've answered the same questions over and over and over. It's like, 'Okay, please just take the answer I give you.'" In another instance, Bart repeated this frustration, again blaming students for not understanding concepts they had discussed in class and trying to manipulate him as a teacher: "I'm pretty sure that some students ask questions waiting for you to say something that they can manipulate to be what they want it to be, and then they'll run with that. Then they'll do it that way and say that you said this, and it's like, 'No, I didn't. I know I didn't say that.'"

Betty

The prior experiences that affected Betty's approach to the composition classroom included one particularly influential teacher and her practitioner experience in the workforce. Though she mentioned a number of memorable writing teachers, Betty seemed to be most influenced by a high school teacher who was well-known as cynical and challenging; Betty described her experience with this teacher, saying, "He was one of the first teachers to tell me, 'I can tell you wrote this in 20 minutes.' He was like, 'And it's very good.' … And he failed me. Now he said, 'Since you can do this in 20 minutes,' he goes, 'tomorrow you can give me a new paper.' … That was the first time I had someone call B.S. on my stuff, which was good for me. Because I was writing, it came fairly easily to me." Betty felt this teacher challenged his students in a good way, recalling that he asked them to "read very challenging things" and "expected seven-page papers. Which was good, and he just really insisted and we didn't get a chance to debate it. People were like, 'That's too long'; he's like, 'No it's not.' And I mean, his answer would be to show some critical essay that was. But that was good. It was a good—I'm glad I had him before I went off into college.' Betty seemed to take this no-nonsense approach to students and writing with her into the FYC classroom.

Before joining the master's program, Betty had accumulated practitioner experience with writing in the workforce. She explained, "In my professional life, writing became very important but really in a business-bastardized form." She characterized the type of writing she did as "very practical." In some ways, she said, this experience with professional writing "made it harder … to make real arguments and be expanding over three pages of anything" when she returned to school. Betty said this experience helped her "understand where students can come from" when they struggle in undergraduate classes.

According to Betty's account, she drew on multiple types of knowledge to help her avoid and respond to teaching challenges. For instance, Betty said that she implemented some of the theoretical- technical knowledge she had learned in the pedagogy course, such as Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's backwards course design, something Betty found "extremely useful. Obvious but useful." She explained that she used the concept to design each course unit, saying, "I took the outcomes for each, let's say unit. Here's what is expected to be learned in rhetorical, contextual, whatever. So then I took those three and I worked backward from each assignment of, 'Okay, here's what I want them to end up being able to do. Now we've got to get to that point.'" Betty also reported being influenced by Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz's "The Novice as Expert"; she said this idea of students-as-novices shaped her understanding of students' relationship to academic writing and her expectations for them. She explained that she felt students would be more likely to succeed "if you … make sure that they buy into being novices. Which, you don't say, 'You are a novice; I shall inform.' But that—my introductory, not the first class, that second class, basically this is a whole new world of writing, and everyone's going to expect you to know this, and you don't. Because you haven't been taught that."

Additionally, Betty drew upon practical- social knowledge as a teacher; for instance, like many members of her cohort, Betty said that she borrowed a peer's *Jeopardy*-style game to teach citations. Overall, Betty said that she made use of a number of concepts she had learned in her first year of the program, and she felt this offset problems she might have encountered. Betty described her position, saying:

> My class design was hardly innovative; I will fully admit that. I just used a lot of what we learned and put it in. So like I said, I had a couple really good assignments and interesting ways we approached it, but it was not, I didn't see a need to break—to be like, "No, no! I

want to do it this way!" So, but because of that, at least for me, I didn't hit anything that I thought was [a real problem].

Betty's approach to naming and framing classroom problems was influenced by her beliefs that writing classes should prepare students for the workplace, teachers should be empathetic, students are responsible for their own learning, and writing is a craft. Betty explained that she saw FYC as having a very practical purpose in preparing students for writing beyond the freshman classroom. When teaching, she said, she tried "to not teach the stuff in some sort of English vacuum. Of, you know, here's what we're doing in this paper, and no, you're never gonna have somebody you work for ask you to do a rhetorical analysis. But you are going to have people ask you for business reports and an analysis, or a financial analysis … To keep linking the classroom activity to the wider world, if you will." Additionally, Betty said she felt that a teacher needs to have "a level of empathy, and you have to realize that you can't expect—which I never did—you can't expect analytical perfection. You just, that's stupid. You're gonna set everybody up for failure, and you'll be furious."

In her accounts, Betty often came back to the notion that students should be responsible for their own learning. Betty said that she is "definitely someone who believes in a directed learning experience, however, with the choice to, how far you want to take that learning on the student. I'm there to direct and to aid. I'm not a parent." Betty went on to describe how this belief influenced her decision to rely on collaborative learning activities, saying:

I wanted them to be responsible to each other, and especially responsible to themselves. I think we're so reticent about doing that, like, "Oh, they're transitioning; it's gonna be too hard." I think we're going about it the wrong way; I think what it is, is we can't halfway do it, of like, "You're sort of an adult but you're sort of not." I think what we have to say

is “I’m here to help you, but you must come seek it.” … And I also like them working with each other. They’re gonna have to do that the rest of their lives. And even if you don’t like the other people, you’re gonna have to try to do this.

Seemingly related to these beliefs about students’ responsibility for directing their own learning, Betty also said that she considered writing to be “an artisan craft. Meaning that I think, I mean anybody of an average intelligence can learn how to craft it better.” To gain skills in this craft, Betty said she believed people “need practice, you need to do it, and you need to read as well.”

When students did not appear to take responsibility for their own learning, Betty’s reports indicated that she came to blame them for classroom problems. For example, Betty said one frustration she encountered was “getting [students] to do the work…To do all the work and take the class seriously, as I feel they should.” At another point in her account, Betty elaborated on this feeling, saying, “It bugs me when they don’t, especially when it’s due to stuff like you haven’t done your work; that just drives me crazy. But that was their choice, so I don’t feel bad about it.”

However, in cases when students did seem to be putting forth a reasonable amount of effort, Betty was more likely to blame instructional practices for not working as intended. In one case, for example, a group activity did not work as Betty had hoped, and she reasoned that it didn’t work because students “couldn’t translate their experience into the way it worked for others … They didn’t see their decisions as being informed by outside factors. They saw—which I should have thought about this—they saw theirs as being very unique, special, only me ever had these feelings about. I mean a couple did, it wasn’t all, but it was a stretch.”

Bob

Prior experience with challenging professors and as a classroom practitioner shaped Bob's actions as a FYC instructor. For example, he recalled a high school English teacher who had a reputation for being especially challenging. He explained, "She was just a hard grader and, you know, she may have actually wanted you to care, which, that's not the case for every teacher I had in high school. Held you accountable, that kind of stuff." Bob described his experience with this teacher, remembering:

> Getting papers back that were just riddled. You know, just one of these like bleeding paper kind of grading situations that you see. She used a green pencil, I remember, and not red; it was a green pencil, and would grade everything. And active versus passive voice just kept coming up, kept coming up, kept coming up. And I realized that, you know, the subject of my sentence had to do the action of the sentence, and that wasn't working. And I realized why that was important—because it was unclear, and that if it's unclear, then people aren't going to understand what I'm trying to say. And it's important that people understand what I'm trying to say. And I guess that that kind of first clicked—it's important that people understand what I'm trying to say—that first kind of clicked there.

Bob characterized himself as "much more open-ended in the way that I think about grammar and how people write, like right to discourse or whatever." Still, this teacher's ability to show Bob when he "wasn't thinking" seemed to be something he took with him when responding to student work.

Bob described being similarly impressed by one of his graduate professors whose attitude toward students he particularly admired. He explained that this professor "is constantly making

us ask, 'Why do you care about this? What are your commitments here? What's your angle here?'" Bob went on to explain:

> I think that that's a good thing to ask students. It actually makes us pretend that they have brains and that they have opinions and that they're not just this thing that we need to mold and get, you know, check these things off that we taught them these things. Which you've got to do, I agree, you've got to do it. But I think that I try to create an atmosphere where a student can be themselves and that that's, an English class is a place where they can do that because it's where we learn how to convey those commitments in a real way.

After receiving his undergraduate degree, Bob accumulated practitioner experience by teaching a freshman seminar course for a few years. He said that this course "was basically just a how-to-be-a-college student course." Bob went on to say, "I emphasized writing and rhetoric probably more than my colleagues … And we talked about thinking critically, and I did a lot of stuff with rhetorical fallacies, or one year it was election year and I had students analyze debates and that sort of thing."

When thinking through his teaching, Bob described drawing on theoretical-technical knowledge he had learned in the pedagogy class. For instance, much like Betty, Bob found the concept of backward design to be useful for creating his course and avoiding problems; he explained, "I thought about what [students] needed to know at the end of the unit, and I thought about preparing them to achieve that, and then I thought about the best way that I could gauge that." Bob also described turning to resources like John Bean's *Engaging Ideas* to implement activities like "fishbowl discussion" or using Joseph Harris's "seminars."

Bob's beliefs about teaching and learners were also important components of the interpretive framework he brought to the composition classroom. In particular, Bob said that he

believed the purpose of teaching was to help students see that they could engage with authentic questions and use writing to accomplish their own goals and pursue their own commitments. Bob explained that these beliefs led to his "student-centered" approach to teaching, saying:

> I still care about their needs, and I care about where they're at, and I want to make sure that we're creating something in class that's gonna help them where they're at … I care about how what I'm doing in class is developing their other kind of things … things like empathy, like apathy … I want students to be honest. I want students to be authentic and be able to be themselves … I try to get students to own up to their own commitment.

Bob went on to explain that these beliefs impacted his teaching, in that "I try to create an atmosphere where a student can be themselves." Related to these beliefs about teaching, Bob's beliefs about learners seemed to revolve around the fact "that they're part of a university community." He explained, "I think I'm kind of passionate about this stage in a student's life, where they go to college. It's very different depending on the student. You know, it's either a really big financial risk, or it's an expectation, or it's a, it's a really diverse kind of situation."

Bob's self-defense mechanisms seemed to rarely affect his actions when faced with a problem, except in instances where he perceived students to be disengaged. For instance, when one lesson plan did not work as expect, Bob blamed the students for their disinterest, saying, "I just felt like that class is very—they don't get out until 4:30, and they're just pissed off that they're sitting there. At least they seem to be. You know, they're sitting there, they don't really know why they're there, and there's this attendance policy; they gotta be there. And they're passive aggressively mentioning their other classes that don't have an attendance policy. And, you know, I'm just like fed up with it. I'm just like, 'Okay guys, I get it. Great.'" Even though Bob seemed initially inclined to blame students in this case, he also questioned he instructional

practice, saying, “I don’t think the students understood why we were doing it, and that’s on me in a lot of ways.”

David

The prior experience that David drew upon as a teacher seemed to be most associated with his schooling experiences as a student and writer. For example, David thought back to his own experiences as a student to help him understand the work habits of the students in his classes. For example, David seemed to feel empathy for students who struggled to keep up or do well in class, noting, “I cannot create a new work ethic or organization or anything in an individual. That’s the thing. I look back when I was that age and I understand it. I understand the mindset. It’s obviously… some kids are real producers even at a really young age, but I didn’t have everything together at that age and I can’t say that I totally was thrilled or cared. I was so wrapped up in other things.”

Though David said he had taken FYC as an undergraduate, he remembered little about it except an argumentative paper about “abortion, death penalty, those big topic things.” His undergraduate thesis project seemed to exert more influence on his thinking about writing and teaching writing. He explained that because of the size of the project, “I didn’t even know where to begin, where to start writing.” Through the process of working with his director, David said that the thesis began to take shape, saying, “She would direct me in those sorts of things, like you need to work on this idea. You don’t need this, those sorts of things, to help me shape the thesis. Go in this direction. We need more information on this, etc., etc. It just built and built and built and built until finally it got down to small comma.” Additionally, describing himself as a writer, David explained, “Any writing project I feel like I have to have a personal interest or investment in that project to—especially ones that involve research. I'm not going to spend the time

researching and working super hard at something that I can't get behind. Even if it's something like social or moral or political that I don't agree with, that's not the same thing, because you can be arguing against something. You can be interacting with something." As a writer, David felt that the process of writing "is mysterious … You start a thesis, by the end of the thesis, or some big writing project, you try to remember it, like I don't even know how I got here. That's what I mean that it's mysterious, because when it's happening it's hard to remove yourself from yourself to see exactly what's going on. So, if someone tried to say, explain or write out what writing consists of, it would be difficult to do." David indicated that he felt able to draw on these experiences to better help and understand his students.

The teaching knowledge that David turned to when working through teaching challenges was most often practical-social or experiential. For example, David described using practical program resources, like "hijack[ing] … a template for each assignment, looking at what the objectives from the university were and what concepts they were supposed to learn. Literally when putting it together I pasted it on my own page that I was working on so I could be looking at that and try to build around that and make sure that those concepts, those ideas were specifically included in lessons." Additionally, David said that he found the social knowledge he accumulated from interviews for his composition pedagogy teacher-research project to be "really helpful"; he explained, "I specifically try to use something that I felt highly insecure about or unsure about or whatever so I could access the information that I wanted for me, and that was provided from my interviewees in spades. All these little tips, all these tricks, all those sorts of things… and learning the things too. Stuff like over-planning and you had more than you could possibly cover and writing exercises, all that sort of stuff." Similarly, he said that he drew on the "camaraderie" of the graduate program:

> Maybe being stuck on something, not knowing what type of lesson, how you could do something X, Y, Z, being able to reach out to a fellow student, "What are you talking about [in class]?" … Then sometimes just freely sharing stuff, "That's worked awesome for me, try it." "What is that? Let me see, I'm going to use that," and then trying it out and it works and it's great. I don't know. I found that relieving and super-helpful.

David said that he also used experiential knowledge he accumulated through classroom teaching to help him address challenges. He explained that while he found some concepts from the pedagogy course useful, "There's nothing that's going to teach you like actually when you're doing it." For example, David explained that he used student papers to help him better understand how effective his teaching was, saying, "It's so helpful after a paper comes in because you're really able to see like what trends… did I drop the ball somewhere and not teach this to them? What's going on here?" Similarly, he described his teaching of rhetoric as successful, though based somewhat on trial-and-error: "I know it's one of those things that I need to practice … too. I feel confident with the material. I just look forward to being able to go deeper with it myself and figure out more inventive ways, fun ways, activities to present the material."

David's beliefs about writing, teaching, and learners also shaped the way he thought through teaching challenges. For instance, David regarded writing as an art that can be learned, though he also saw that process of learning as lengthy and mysterious. David explained that he felt writing is similar to other arts or skills, saying, "Like if you're really into athletics or you're into music or whatever. I think that once you begin that it's continuous and you never reach the end and you never … That's part of the beauty of it too. You don't write that one piece and then go, 'Oh, well that's good, I'm done.' There's always something else. There's always something

you miss. There's always something you can learn." David went on to say that this theory of writing made him see that "it's important for students to know that it is a process and that it is unending and that it is something …that sometimes the rewards of writing are hard to see. The frustrations are very easy to experience and easy to see."

David's interview accounts indicated that he held two main beliefs about teaching that guided his actions in the FYC classroom. First, he felt a responsibility and accountability to students who are "paying or their parents are paying large sums in tuition and they're here for an education." David said that "weight of responsibility" made him want to "make sure that they learned what they were supposed to learn" and caused him to feel concerned about being able to "properly transmit the concepts that those students are meant to learn." Second, David seemed to believe that one purpose of teaching writing was to help students adopt "a general sort of professionalism … as far as their work that they produce for whatever class." David said that this belief led him to be concerned about "simple things like formatting and editing, proofreading," explaining, "as I saw it that the higher up they go, next year, next semester, that the stakes are going to keep getting higher." Not only did David want to prepare students for later writing in the university, but also for the "professional world too. I say there is a standard, whether you're in accounting or law or whatever you go into, science or whatever."

David felt responsibility to students as a teacher, but he also believed that students should take responsibility for their own learning. He explained, "The responsibility falls on the lap of the student." David said that unlike in high school, where students spend more time in class with teachers, in college "It's in their court… whether they want to take notes, how much they're willing to put in. I think that's where the rubber hits the road, when they really see that there is so much learning responsibility that they have too."

Self-defense mechanisms did not seem to play an important component in David's interpretive framework, though he seemed more likely to lay blame with individual lessons than with students or the institution. David described his difficulty evaluating the success of class activities, saying, "Some days I would walk away from a lesson unsure, like, 'I really hope they got that.' … Yes, there was plenty of self-doubt there off and on. Of course I'm in the class, I'm in that environment, so sometimes it's hard for me to be objective, to be able to—I can't have that distance and actually see what is going on there, unless it's by giving a quiz or specifically being able to gauge where they're at."

Edward

The prior experience that exerted most pressure on Edward's interpretive framework was his K-16 apprenticeship of observation, especially his own experience in FYC courses and the range of writing experiences he had encountered in college. For example, Edward said that he had a positive experience in English 101, which he took from an instructor who ran an engaging, "discussion-heavy class" in which he remembered "actually having fun." He explained that this instructor was "a high-spirited teacher, respected the students and respected our opinions and was really willing to listen to our opinions, and at no point did I doubt her engagement in the class and her motivation to teach us things." Edward explained that this positive experience gave him "a lot of confidence" that helped him enjoy the class. On the other hand, Edward said that he specifically wanted to avoid the teaching style of his English 102 instructor, who "pretty much just sat at the front of the class and talked, and no one really paid any attention, and just talked about the literature that we read. I mean no one ever really took notes, because he just kind of droned on, quite honestly, and everyone knew they could do well enough on the papers to where they'd get an A in the class."

Additionally, Edward said that he had been introduced to rhetoric as an undergraduate, in both his English 101 class and in later writing courses. For example, he remembered "being introduced to *ethos, pathos, logos,* and I think we did the rhetorical analysis" in English 101. He also described taking a sophomore-level "basic rhetoric course" where he "was reintroduced to *ethos, pathos, logos*. Terms like irony and stuff and audience, so it was almost like 101, a repeat of 101." Again, Edward felt that he was not challenged by this curriculum, saying, "I mean that class was honestly a joke, too," in that it set low expectations for students.

Edward felt that he was able to draw from a variety of disciplinary writing experiences that helped him better understand the types of writing students would do after FYC. He said that he felt this perspective helped him craft more useful assignments and activities that would give students transferable skills they could take to other courses. Edward explained:

> I want to focus on why the concepts we learn and the application of those concepts, and the eventual immersion into an academic style of writing is extremely important regardless of field. And hopefully my experience ranging from science and math to public administration, political science, so I'll be able to empathize with their experience, relate, and explain it in a much more general manner than maybe I could if I had a tunnel vision with the English Department, or had developed from just being in the English Department.

Edward also described his experience in creative writing courses as important for the way he approached the teaching of writing, especially the use of writers' workshops to share and critique student texts and the practice of writing "for yourself" rather than for an audience.

According to his account, Edward sought knowledge from multiple sources to help him better understand his teaching. For instance, Edward returned throughout his first year as a

teacher to theoretical-technical knowledge he had first learned in the pedagogy class, including the work of Peter Elbow and Mina Shaughnessy; he particularly valued Elbow's suggestion to "get [students] writing and writing and thinking about their writing, like revision, revision, like it's a process … and just recognizing that there's a vulnerability to writing and that we're not perfect." Similarly, Edward said that he also valued Shaughnessy's work for helping him to realize "that everyone's capable of learning, and that regardless of the student, there are ways to help them. ... I think that's, the emphasis on everyone is capable of learning, you just gotta find the right way of teaching it to them, I like that idea behind her theory." However, Edward noted that he had not actually read Shaughnessy's work, only descriptions of it.

In addition to these sources of theoretical-technical knowledge, Edward said that he also commonly drew upon the program's approved FYC textbooks. He explained, for instance, that to prepare to teach rhetoric, he "went through [his course's rhetoric-reader] multiple times, and I thought that was a great resource for me and for them." Edward indicated that he sometimes struggled when he felt the textbooks did not provide him with ample knowledge as a teacher; for example, he worried about his method of teaching a historical research unit in English 102 because "there's only two chapters in the [required textbook] … and they're kind of all over the place. And so … I was worried I was gonna separate kind of from the goals of the department, cause I really felt like I had to define a lot of it myself, and the value of historical research."

Edward said that he also drew upon practical-social knowledge when working through troubling classroom issues. Edward sought program resources, like sample lesson plans, when he was unsure about what to do in class. When he was unable to find those resources, he said that he felt frustrated and wished that the program offered more, like "templates for teaching … each unit" in English 101 and 102 to help "make sure we're in line with the goals of the department."

In addition to those templates, Edward said, "It would be nice to have some pre-packaged inquiries" for English 102 and "pre-packaged lesson plans" for English 101, "at least that you can pull out and see, maybe if you're having trouble filling in the gap here and there."

Edward indicated that he also drew extensively from social knowledge. He explained that participating in interviews for this project helped him "to "hear what didn't work well; I hear what did work well, and I can use that to move forward." Edward said that he also sought advice from one of the experienced instructors he worked with in the GTA mentoring program and from the Director of Composition. More often, though, he said that he turned to his peers, "other first-year comp, new people in the same situation as me." For example, Edward said that he struggled to understand and design the position argument unit in English 101 and so talked about it with other first-time teachers who could "empathize" with his problems.

Experiential knowledge also gave Edward insight into his teaching. At the beginning of his first semester in the classroom, Edward said that it took a period of "trial-and-error" to figure out his timing and what worked well in class. As the semester went on, Edward said that he began to better understand "how [students] would react to certain things; I knew if people would need to discuss certain things or how well they'd discuss certain things, so I didn't have to, you know, when you make a lesson plan sometimes you anticipate like 'What if they don't really respond well to this, and I have this backup plan.' Like, I didn't have to make as many backup plans."

Edward's beliefs about teaching, writing, and learners and learning worked interactively to exert pressure on how he framed teaching problems. As a teacher, Edward believed that the most important qualities he could bring to the classroom were diligence and compassion; he described a good teacher as follows:

> One that takes the time to really prepare that frame [for learning], prepare what's important within that frame, prepare ways in which to communicate those important things within that topic frame, and … again a genuine motivation behind sharing these ideas and redirecting these ideas to where they're applicable to the students' lives academically and socially, personally. So it's diligence and compassion, in a way. That's a good teacher, I think. Diligence in the sense that you take the time to learn the subject yourself as well as you can … Diligence in that sense, and also a genuine compassion in presenting that knowledge within a given frame.

For Edward, that diligence and compassion meant that teachers should "individualiz[e] your teaching the best you can, and working for each student, for every student is important. And believing in them. As corny as that sounds, but. I think that's important, and something lost on a lot of professors, so." Edward described this feeling of accountability to his students as being "sometimes very problematic for me. And almost emotionally distressing for me, too … I hold myself extremely accountable to their education because they're paying to come here, they're taking their time, they're putting in the work, I need to make sure it's worth their while. So, holding myself to that level of accountability eats up a lot of time, but in the end I think it'll be worth it." Edward went on to say that he saw teaching as "a chance … to push students in the right direction, get them to think, perhaps, in a more effective matter, allow them to communicate, express their ideas in a more effective manner. What a gift I can give them. Though it's not going to be perfect and I'm not going to do it as well as some other teachers, I'm going to do my best to do it."

Edward's beliefs about writing also shaped his approach to the composition classroom; in particular, he believed that the goal of any writing was "pure communication" and that effective

writing is "violent." Edward explained that his "goal as both a writer and as a teacher is to work toward that goal of just pure communication, unadulterated, perfect communication in which the idea is, from one party to another, it's transferred. But obviously that's an ideal and it's impossible." Edward explained that he saw writing as a "way to explore the world"; it also "forces you to reflect upon culture and upon politics, upon everything. And it really challenges you to engage it and think about it. And I think when you do that, you, again, it's a more worthwhile existence, I guess." Additionally, Edward said he believed good writing should be violent, explaining, "When you're violent with your writing you both can draw blood, but you can get punched in the face at the same time, too. And sometimes you're just swinging around and not hitting anything." He said he felt that without taking a chance and "violently breaking new ground … [writing] is just a waste of time."

Edward's accounts indicated that he spent a fair amount of time thinking about his students, and he believed that the learners in his classes were drawn in different directions, overwhelmed at times, but generally had a strong work ethic. Edward explained, "They're freshmen. And a lot of them have other things on their mind … A lot of them are in fraternities or sororities, or they're playing sports—there's so many social things to do as a freshman that you come to class a bit, you're kind of detached and just not ready to learn." He also noted, "You're really vulnerable as a freshman too," especially as their lives "are so in flux." Moreover, Edward said that he was impressed by the effort he saw students put forth; he explained, "Most of them are really hard workers. And they're just really willing to learn." At the same time, though, Edward said, "They're naïve about a lot of things, ignorant. But I mean, it's not their fault, and it's not a bad thing necessarily."

At times, Edward drew on the self-defense mechanism of blaming the institutional

context when he faced teaching challenges. In his second semester teaching, Edward expressed his frustration that this institution did not adequately support graduate student teachers, saying, "It's all on your shoulders" to come up with assignments and lesson plans. Edward said that he also felt pulled in different directions as a graduate student; he worried, "I definitely prioritize teaching those classes over anything else I do here at UT, and I don't think that's the way they'd have it. I don't think that's the way I'm supposed to do it, but I don't care. I'd much rather work with these 46 students." He felt that being pulled in multiple directions had a negative effect on his teaching and worried that students would feel let down, saying:

> Hopefully they saw that I was willing to work with them in whatever capacity I could. … There were ... a couple emails that got lost in the box and I forgot to respond to them, which I felt extremely guilty about … I feel badly about that. So I think they sensed that I was a little frazzled with work. And maybe some of them took that poorly. Or took that negatively. Or viewed that negatively. So that's just the casualty, I guess, of being a grad student slash teacher.

James

James's prior experience as a writer in his K-16 apprenticeship of observation and his practitioner experience as a former teacher exerted most influence on his approach to challenging classroom situations. For instance, James recalled struggling with control as an undergraduate writer, saying, "I remember doing the assignments, but not doing the assignments as assigned … I would have to do the first thing I thought of." James said this experience helped him relate to "students who struggle with control like that." James also said that he worried about his ability to form ideas as a writer, explaining, "Sometimes I feel like an uninspired writer. Sometimes I wish that I wrote more from inspiration, than from necessity … I feel a tremendous desire to have

ideas that are worthy of expressing. Maybe that makes me a little overwrought sometimes. Maybe that makes it harder for me." James went on to explain, "I really want to write for personal fulfillment, but there's something that blocks me there." Additionally, James said that he began to see changes to his writing after joining the graduate program; he explained, "I've really embraced my role as a novice; really sensed the novice in myself as a writer." James said that he had "wanted positive feedback" and "kudos" as an undergraduate, and now found himself "really jealous for constructive feedback at this level." James felt this openness to feedback and correction was important for students, saying, "I think the students for whom a class is most productive, or for whom writing sessions in the writing center are most productive, are students who are open to learning something; who feel like they have something to gain, often because they don't feel competent."

James's practitioner experience seemed to shape his approach to teaching FYC, especially his feelings of confidence in the classroom. He described his experience as a high school teacher as less than ideal, saying, "Obviously I didn't, but I wanted to give my salary back to the state because I had some students who English was their favorite class, and it may have been when they left, but I just totally failed." However, this prior experience did give him some confidence in the FYC classroom; he explained, "I don't have an over-confidence issue but I think I was comforting myself with experience to some extent. It's helped me throughout this to remember that having teaching experience doesn't … it makes a difference but it doesn't … not to think of myself as an expert, which I probably wasn't doing in the first place, but maybe was a little bit because I had more teaching experience compared to the average Master's student in the class." Though his prior teaching experience may have helped James have somewhat more confidence as a novice FYC teacher than some of his peers, it seemed to have a greater impact

on his feelings of failure and success, ultimately making him more critical of his teaching.

James seemed to draw primarily on theoretical-technical and practical-social knowledge to help him set and resolve classroom problems. For example, James drew on theoretical-technical knowledge he had gained in the pedagogy class, such as Sommers and Saltz's work on novices, which he used to better understand the needs of his students; he explained, "There are just things that are more … there are things that the average college student cares about more and I hope none of this sounds like an advocation [sic] of responsibility on my part, but I think everybody who comes in with the right frame of mind—everybody that comes in with that novice frame of mind … I think I was a really good resource for those students and I'm really relieved that's the case." Additionally, he felt that the rhetorical knowledge he gained in that class was valuable for his understanding of English 101, noting, "Rhetorical theory, regardless of whether or not it's your favorite thing in the world, is really useful because it's concrete. It gives students a set of new terms; for many of them, they'll be new terms that they can learn, and it gives them something concrete to latch onto." James also said that he was strongly influenced by Harris's work on making student texts the center of the writing class; James explained that he built in "seminars … in an effort to put [students] in touch with each other's writing." James also drew on practical-social knowledge to help him design lesson plans and troubleshoot problems. Like others in his cohort, he used a *Jeopardy*-style game to teach citation, though came to feel, "It didn't go very well. It just didn't work very well. It wasn't the most efficient way of covering that material." James noted that he also talked "to some of my colleagues" to gather ideas for assignment design.

Beliefs about teaching, writing, and learners and learning also shaped James's approach to classroom issues. James believed that teaching was valuable and saw himself doing it long-

term, explaining, "The reason why I'm pursuing this degree is that I can become a teacher … What I dream about, are being in the classroom with students." As a writing teacher, James believed that "student texts themselves [should be] the object of instruction. That's something I've read that really resonates with me." He explained:

> I think it's something that you can really be explicit about as a teacher, it's not a sneaky strategy … On your syllabus, you can say, "Our texts are this, this, and your writing." You can really emphasize it. That's one way of emphasizing the importance of what they're writing, is that we are going to learn to think about writing, talk about writing, talk about good writing, talk about your good writing, and really make them feel as though what they're doing is not sending a product out into some void somewhere, where it's graded by a robot and sent back. It's actually becoming the center of some kind of conversation.

James's beliefs about writing shaped his understanding of his task as a writing teacher. In particular, he saw writing:

> As similar to a lot of really complexly determined social behaviors, in that you learn over time, and you're not aware that the things that you're learning actually pertain to writing … I think it requires a whole social person and the development of that social person is very complex. And if we're honest about the writing class here, it's more complex than we can develop fully in three hours a week over the course of one semester. That doesn't mean that there's not work to be done, that we can do.

In addition to these beliefs about writing, James's beliefs about how students approached writing shaping his thinking about the FYC classroom. For instance, he felt that most students "are so micro-focused" on their writing. He explained, "They're so intent on the details. They've been

trained in high school to be so conscious of—especially things like grammar, and mechanics, and those kinds of surface issues. They've been so trained to be conscious of writing in that sense, that I think even something as basic as conceiving writing as a medium for their ideas … this happens a lot with students who write really writerly writing." James said he tried to imagine "what [students'] writing experience must be like; he believed that for students, "It's almost as though the entire task of writing a paper becomes a thing in itself; a beast in itself. It becomes more to them than just the communication of ideas … it becomes a thing like, 'I've got to write a paper now. I've got to adopt my paper voice.' It becomes this really overwrought social experience, that in the end, is more than the thing itself."

James also believed that he could only have so much influence on students in a writing class; he explained, "I feel like there are students who are predisposed to learning and students who are predisposed to not. I don't mean that to be fatalistic about the results, I think they can both reverse courses according to what you do." He believed that "some students … came in with the right blend of confidence and work ethic but sense of a need for development. I think there are some students that came in really over confident or really, really distracted usually by pledging fraternity."

When faced with teaching challenges, James seemed most likely to blame the institutional context or instructional practice as his self-defense mechanisms. For instance, James said that he felt "a little disappointed" by his experience teaching English 101. He went on, "It wasn't helped by the fact that I felt like I was doing things on the fly because I was trying to figure out the curriculum as I went." Though he felt "generally successful," James said he didn't see as much progress in students' writing or his own teaching as he had hoped. He noted, "I didn't invest the time I maybe would have if this was my full-time job, like if I wasn't also a

graduate student."

In some cases, James placed blame on a particular instructional practice. He said that he had been disappointed with his use of Harris's seminars, saying, "The seminars didn't serve that function to the extent that I thought they would and I think part of it was it was the first time that I had ever done it." James thought that in future classes, "I might actually do whole-class workshops instead." He explained, "In terms of revision, there's kind of a wash in to how much revision it encourages; I think the performance of reading each other's work gets the philosophical point across more so than a seminar."

John

The prior experience John drew upon to think through his teaching included his own experiences as student and his practitioner experience in the GTA mentoring program and teaching English abroad. For instance, John described himself as having mixed experiences as a student, which seemed to lead him to have inconsistent expectations for his own students. According to his account, in some cases, John would put forth a minimum amount of effort to complete a project. He described writing a term paper in high school, saying, "And I remember trying to meet that quota [for sources] in using, at some point checking a book out of the library that was some illustrated, definitely in the juvenile section, definitely 20 to 25 pages." He went on, "It was like a child's book, but I definitely used that for one of my sources. And that was learning about how to do research, but also learning about how to just have one or two main sources and then somehow find a way to stick in a sentence form your other seven." However, at other times, John described himself as a self-motivated learner who put forth more effort than was required. He recalled a sophomore-level undergraduate communications course, saying, "I ended up writing, you know, the requirement was like a 7-10 page paper, and it became this

burning question for me that encompassed biology, I was interviewing physicists and psychologists and things like this, and I ended up turning in this 23-page paper; my professor was like, 'Oh, shit.'" Though John said he realized that kind of behavior "is not normal," he did want students "to have an experience of authentically engaging with a question" and felt frustrated when he was not sure of "ways to engage the students more in the work we're doing."

John's practitioner experience in the GTA mentoring program, especially English 101, gave him a sense of what he *didn't* want to be as a composition teacher. John explained that the class "felt disjunctive; I didn't know where we were going or where we were at a lot of times. … And also, I was fighting to stay awake, partially because of the [8:00 a.m.] hour, partially [the instructor] just wasn't a very interesting lecturer. He never really established a connection with the class that they were enthusiastic or very responsive." This experience caused John to characterize English 101 as having "the tendency to be one of the potentially most boring classes that a student ever will take." As a result, John said he formed a "commitment … to making it not that, to really making it an animated and engaging experience." Seeing students' reactions in this class, John seemed to set himself in opposition the instructional approach he'd observed and came to prioritize student engagement as a component of effective pedagogy.

His prior practitioner experience also helped John troubleshoot problems like pacing lessons. John, who had taught English abroad for six months prior to his MA program, said that experience had given him practice thinking about "the blocks I'm gonna use to build the class." He explained that he might do "10 minutes of an opening exercise … and then I'd do 10 minutes of instruction, and then I'd do 15 minutes of another exercise." However, he felt this prior experience did not transfer smoothly to his role as an FYC teacher, saying, "It's a little different because those were just chunks, linguistic chunks, whereas now it's themes and ideas."

Though John said he drew on theoretical-technical knowledge acquired from his pedagogy class, he also said that he relied more often on practical-social and experiential knowledge to help him address troubling classroom problems. John explained that he had been impressed by the idea of teaching for transfer of learning and was hopeful he had encouraged it as a teacher:

> If they can make connections down the road between the work we've done here—like this idea of transfer, cause I tried to emphasize that—they can sort of see how, either now or at some point when they're writing a lab report or something, see how—or, remember the moves they made that I kind of put a checkmark and said "Oh, this is great" or something, or I said "Consider this next time." If they can retain the knowledge of how to make that move, to be either rhetorically effective or just sort of efficient presenting information or something, I feel like that's a big goal for me.

John said that he had also been influenced by an "article on cognitive theories in writing," both in terms of his own writing and that of students. He explained, "Thinking about writing as thinking sort of allowed … me conceptually to give myself permission to write in a less restrictive way … and allow[ed] the act of writing to be a thinking through." John said this concept also gave him insight into student writing, saying, "I felt like I could really see how these first sentences, these shitty universal openings, 'Since the beginning of time people have eaten food and wanted to know why, or and had hungers of different kinds,' you know, things like that. But now I understand that, I feel like this is writing at the thinking stage, and they're trying to get the wheels turning."

When confronted with teaching problems, John indicated that he most often turned to members of his peer cohort, "Just to check in and be like, 'Hey, am I crazy, or does this happen

to other people, or how are you dealing with this?'" John said that he also talked with his English 102 mentor from his first year in the program, although, he said, "not as much as I think I could have and would have been helpful."

Overall, though, John said that he felt "very unsystematic in my knowledge of writing" and that he had to develop his own understanding of writing and teaching writing, saying, "I feel like I've had to develop my own, like it's incremental how I have become self-conscious about the writing process for myself and how I can communicate that to my students. And so I feel like each semester, I'm learning different ways to express things that I know sort of explicitly about writing, that I see in writing that is good." John said it was "a little bit unnerving to feel like I'm commenting on writing and trying to tell them how to improve, and it's always been a very intuitive process for me … So yeah, sometimes I feel that is a little bit frustrating, cause I don't feel as authoritative in my ability to respond to that." John explained the effects of this lack of systematic knowledge on his class preparation, saying that he came to realize "there was just a limit to what I could realistically accomplish in preparation. And everything was new to me; I hadn't read any of the essays before, that I was assigning, I hadn't read the [textbook] before, cause, in my 101 we used a different text. And so it was all kind of experimental."

John's beliefs about teaching and learners also seemed to guide his understanding of troubling classroom situations. He said he believed teaching was valuable in part because it had a:

> Moral content where it forces me to be receptive to all different kinds of people. And I think to expand my soul in a way … Morally, I feel like I have to be attentive and responsive and responsible to all these different kinds of people, and respond to beautiful women with the same—or respond to the not so attractive, or maybe the people that are

> … less engaging—respond in the same way to them that I do to the people with the sparkling personalities … Like my job is to treat all these people with equal attention … And so I feel like for me, that becomes, I don't know, a real source of personal growth … So, I don't know, it's a little bit hokey and a little bit like, maybe more personal, but that's for me actually a strong motivation.

Moreover, John said he believed the purpose of teaching writing "is to delight and instruct. And I feel like if my classroom can be one which delights and instructs, that we're doing serious work but it's also exciting work" then he would have met one of his main goals.

John's beliefs about students also shaped his classroom approach; he said that he believed that writing can be a "born skill" or innate ability but that anyone could improve, saying, "I feel like there are people who find it easier to write, but that it's not, I don't think it's something that you can or can't, that either you're good at or you're not." John believed it was his responsibility "to try to meet each student's level where they're at. And help them to grow as a writer, to become better as a writer."

When faced with troubling classroom situations, John was likely to employ self-defense mechanisms of blaming students or the institutional context. For instance, when students didn't catch on to a concept easily, John seemed to feel frustrated, saying, "It seems like a lot of the kids expect you to go out to them, right, the learning process is you making yourself accessible to them, rather than they are here at this university, seeking knowledge, desiring to be educated, and to improve themselves or whatever." John explained that he felt his students were a technological generation "used to a passive mode of learning through screen interfaces, and so you need to entertain us … I mean on certain level I feel it is impingent [sic] upon me to be sensitive to their learning style; on the other hand, I feel like it is not their prerogative to define

how the university needs to reach out to their learning style." John related this to his own experience as a student, saying, "I went to school and was like 'Yeah, I want to do whatever I can here,' you know, I'm going to school and showing up and asking questions and understanding that my role was to seek; it's not the professor's job to like kowtow to me or something, so." Similarly, John blamed students for not meeting his expectations on assignments; he noted "I feel like it's not so complicated. Like, I've given you a sheet that's very clear and very specific and detailed, why won't you take an extra five minutes and read the damn thing, you know."

In other instances, John blamed the institutional context for problems he encountered in the FYC class. Describing his experience feeling overwhelmed at the beginning of English 102, John said, "I feel like we're asked to do a lot in this, and sometimes I feel like too much. Okay, so we're supposed to do research methods, writing—research methods, by the way, that I am not versed in—writing, and this content. And so my approach at the beginning of the semester was sort of like, well, you know what, I know that's what the institution wants but it can't always get what it wants."

Lizzy

The prior experience Lizzy seemed to think back to most often was a particularly memorable teacher, her undergraduate thesis director. Lizzy characterized this teacher as fairly abrasive, noting, "I would get fired for doing some of the things she did like, 'What the hell is this?' on the paper, that kind of thing, which I was very ambivalent about." Lizzy was also ambivalent about the changes this teacher exerted on her writing, saying, "I question how much of [her mentorship] was editing and transforming my writing into something that wasn't my writing anymore." Still, Lizzy felt that this experience made her "a bit more aware" of

wordiness, effective vocabulary, and the need for proofreading. Mostly, though, Lizzy credited this teacher with helping her see "how psychological writing was" and how "our writing is so much connected to our identity." Ultimately, Lizzy suggested, this experience caused her to "really question how do you treat students." She said, "It did make me think a lot about writing and what makes a successful writer, teacher of writing to a certain degree, that kind of thing."

When faced with teaching challenges, Lizzy most often turned to practical-social forms of knowledge. She noted that she did try to implement some of the theoretical-technical knowledge she had learned in the pedagogy class, such as backward course design, but wasn't sure how well she applied it, saying, "Even though I got exposed to some of the backward course design and making a lesson plan and all of that stuff, I knew about all of it and I was using it, I felt like I wasn't, because of just lack of experience." More often, Lizzy drew upon social knowledge, and said that she often turned to the Director of Composition and other representatives of the composition program for help with her teaching. For example, Lizzy said that she began working with the Director of Composition "because by mid-semester I realized I was trying to be creative and innovative and reinventing the wheel, and I should have been utilizing rubrics and just really utilizing what stuff was already out there because even though I took the comp class and everything, I just think I'm not at the level where I'm … I think I need that support system."

Lizzy's beliefs about learners and teaching also shaped the way she thought through teaching challenges. For example, Lizzy said that she felt challenged when her beliefs about students did not match reality. Lizzy explained that she was:

> Surprised at some of the problems like not having a thesis statement. Not meeting page length by any measure, anything close to appropriate. Stuff like that. Not being able to …

> I was shocked by some of my students, my weaker students that couldn't really articulately, even see that you need to organize your paragraphs, topics sentences. I just feel like that should be really, I thought that would be a little bit more natural. When we talk to our friends, don't we think in an organized way? I guess I've seen the reality of where these students are. I'm making adjustments for my 102 and such.

As a teacher, Lizzy believed that English 101 and 102 should be "pragmatic" classes, aimed at "preparing [students] as professionals with whatever field they go into." Lizzy also valued engaging with her students, noting, "I felt like I had a really good rapport with them and it made up for some of my flaws as a teacher, too." However, she worried about connecting "too much" with her students, especially "some of the girls in my class that are like I was in college," as she wanted to be fair in her grading practices.

When faced with teaching challenges, Lizzy was more likely to blame her instructional practices than to blame students or the institutional context; as indicated above, she was also likely to seek help to work through problems. Lizzy said that at the beginning of her first semester teaching, she "was just going through the motions with what the comp office said" rather than thinking through her own goals for the course. She explained, "I think I was really cocky in August. I was joking with a friend, I think the first semester of teaching is like you're like the cocky teenager. Like, 'I got this.' By mid-semester, you're like, 'I don't have this.'" This openness to thinking through her teaching seemed to lead Lizzy to blame her instructional practices for not working as intended. For example, she explained that she had initially assigned a novel as part of her English 101 readings, but then realized she "wasted so much class time and half the students aren't going to read it." This realization caused her to "revise" the texts she used

to introduce the concepts, asking students instead to view a film and read some "academic articles, like *New York Times* articles" to gain to insight into those concepts.

Paige

According to her account, the prior experience Paige drew on most often as a teacher was her K-16 apprenticeship of observation, especially her own writing experiences, and the practitioner experience she gained in the GTA mentoring program. Paige described herself as being most strongly influenced as a writer by working on a student publication in high school. Paige explained that she had worked on both the yearbook and school newspaper, and that the experience had taught her a lot about revision and responding to others' work, saying, "What I remember most is the revision process that we did … I got a lot of things back that said 'Double it.' So I got used to that, not being uncomfortable with someone responding critically to my work, and learned ways to respond to other people's work." Paige also drew upon her own experience as a writer, explaining that writing did not always come easily to her. She said, "I have a hard time getting it on the page. I think all kinds of great things, and I can freewrite, and I can make notes, and I can make connections between different things, but the putting the butt in the seat and sitting still, and the drafting something that's going to be like 'a paper,' that's the most challenging thing for me." Paige said this difficulty was most exacerbated when she felt she was writing to an unreceptive audience:

> I had an experience last semester where I was so frozen because of the audience I perceived that I, I mean I almost couldn't write. And I've had people come into the writing center talking about that same kind of, "I just know that as soon as my teacher sees this, they're going to think it's awful, and I have this terrible picture in my head, and

I just can't do it." So that frozen feeling. Because when I change my idea of who I'm writing for, sometimes that does help.

Paige reported feeling that she had gained important practitioner experience during her first year in the master's program, especially shadowing more experienced teachers and tutoring in the writing center. For instance, Paige said she admired how her English 101 mentor taught rhetoric with "a checklist, which is really kind of cool." Paige planned to make use of the same exercise in her own class, explaining, "Cause there are all these terms that are really scary. And it's just a strange shift, I think, for students. And I think even for me, in looking for a concrete handle to grab onto." Paige felt this checklist "became a tool—a heuristic they could use on any text … so they got into the practice of thinking in that way with this kind of tool that they had. And I think that that will help them be able to do it later."

Paige felt her experience in the writing center provided the most insight into teaching writing. She explained, "I think that the bulk of what I learned about teaching, I've learned in the writing center. I think that it gives you the chance to see those holes in what you know, or see the holes in like your ability to actually express what you know to somebody and how differently each person is gonna hear it." Paige said she valued learning more about students' experiences as writers, saying that the writing center gave her a chance "to get a different kind of view of where the students are and what their lives are like. We have such a casual relationship; I think once you're the teacher in front of the room it's easy to forget that these are kids that sometimes are on the verge of tears. So I think it's really useful to have that kind of introduction to how are you going to communicate to someone else the things that you know about writing."

Paige reported turning to multiple types of teaching knowledge when she faced challenging classroom situations. Much of the theoretical-technical knowledge Paige recalled

using came from her tutor training and from projects she completed in graduate classes outside the pedagogy course. Paige explained that she "learned most" from tutoring, especially the concepts that "writing is thinking and really realizing … that not all writing is for the same purpose, and we do writing in all different kinds of ways for all different kinds of reasons." Paige said this idea was something she used in her teaching, saying, "That's something that I think that I would take with me and feel more authoritative about … I think I thought it before, but now I actually think, 'Gosh, lots of people think this.'" Paige also completed projects about the effects of student publications on the environment of classrooms and about popular education, both of which she said shaped her approach to teaching FYC.

In addition to these theoretical-technical types of knowledge, Paige also drew upon practical-social knowledge as a teacher. She said that she most often turned to "experienced teachers" when she needed support, occasionally utilizing an informal teaching group that met during her first semester in the classroom. In most cases, Paige indicated that she sought advice about lesson plans and classroom management. Paige also said that she wished the writing program offered more materials for new teachers, such as "some practical advice about how do you keep your records, what does it look like, is it something you do on paper, how do you work it in the [university online system]?"

Paige also described accumulating experiential knowledge over her first year as a teacher. In particular, she talked about coming to some tentative conclusions about class management, saying:

> Just seeing the difference in the way I behave in class, seeing the concrete difference it makes just if I shift things just slightly. That's trial-and-error troubleshooting, like, "Oh, okay." I think just getting my head above water enough has helped me with

> troubleshooting the organization or the record keeping part, just getting a grip on what it is that I need to be sure that I'm doing to make that easier; I think you just learn that as you go, maybe.

At the end of the year, Paige explained her feelings about this trial-and-error approach to learning, saying:

> I've come to understand a little bit more that in some ways I probably am a little bit terrible at [teaching], and that just because it's a learning process doesn't mean that it's not something I should do. I've learned to see it as a process of experimentation, as well. Which is a little bit scary cause then I feel like I'm not a good professional cause I don't have my shit together and all lined up. And, you know, even if I had everything all lined up, it doesn't always go according to plan. But I—seeing it as an experiment, like, you know what, I'm learning, and I'm purposely trying things to see if it will work and if it will not work, and it's okay to do that.

Paige's beliefs about teaching and learners seemed to most influence her decisions about instructional choices. According to her account, the belief most central to Paige's teaching was that classrooms should be decentered communities of learning. Paige explained, "My aim was to create a community among them. I think that that's working; I think that they see themselves as an entity—whether I am part of that entity or not, I'm not sure … But I like that feeling of community." Moreover, Paige said that she believed in decentered learning because "it's good for people. I believe that people can learn that way, and they can learn to be more self-reliant as opposed to looking to some authority for knowledge … I think that's good for people to start to understand that they are able to create knowledge themselves." Additionally, Paige said she believed that the purpose of teaching writing was "to help more people be able to be heard, to

make themselves understood, to be persuasive, to have access to things that they either think that they don't, or they genuinely don't have access to because they can't speak the same language that's being spoken where they want to be."

Paige indicated that her beliefs about students were challenged during her first year as a teacher. She said that she realized composition "is not their priority class. They are torn between the priorities of please and do a good job, and please my peers and let's just get out of here and kind of blow this off." This realization led Paige to understand that students need to have concrete expectations; she explained that she "overestimated what they're comfortable with. They're all very bright, very bright students. And they all have the ability to talk about things that are complicated, but I feel that it's a little bit unfair to ask them to set the boundaries."

When faced with difficult teaching situations, Paige was most likely to use self-defense mechanisms of blaming the institutional context or students rather than instructional practices. For instance, Paige spoke at length about her "serious reservations about what people in my position are asked to do." She explained:

> Because I think that something has to give. And it's unfair to say, you need to juggle all of these things, that I don't—I can't think of another situation that you're in that you're asked to do all of that all at once. And especially if you're someone who's so new, even still new as a graduate student, that seems—that just seems wrong to me. It just doesn't seem right. So I don't know the solution to that, but it really feels like academic hazing to me. It seems like some sort of hazing process, and what's unfortunate is that there are students— it's not just me that is affected by this. There are freshman students who need very important things and are paying for very important things, and it doesn't seem fair that they could possibly get short-shrift because somebody was busy, or had other

> priorities … I think, if you put that many things on a plate, that's—I don't understand how you can expect excellence? You can't.

In some cases, Paige also blamed students when her activities or assignments did not work out as she hoped, expressing frustration about students' "lack of listening." She explained, "I do have things written down; we have a syllabus, so that's always there as a reference … What isn't there we've discussed in class, generally multiple times. And so … I'm repeating myself over and over, and you still think you didn't hear what I said. Like, it's as if I never said it, really sort of frustrating thing."

Victoria

The prior experiences Victoria seemed to turn to when faced with a challenging teaching situation most often involved her K-16 apprenticeship of observation, especially her own experiences as a student. For instance, Victoria recalled an experience in middle school that she credited with giving her confidence as a writer. She explained writing, "These very bare-bones narratives that we were given once a week. They were like 'the man jumped down' … They were very simple like see-Spot-run sentences and we were encouraged to take it and fill it out however we want it … I think it's an interesting method. I know a lot of people are like, 'Oh, templates are the worst when you're teaching to write,' but I loved that." Victoria felt that this activity gave her practice with a form of "extensive revision":

> You already had sentences that you were locked in to but you had to take them and revise them and make them … you would take an eight-line paragraph and make it three pages; filling it out however you wanted to. That I think was the exercise, and I did that 7th and 8th grade, that made me: A) love writing. Understanding how it could transform something. And B) I don't know what it was about starting from something like that,

> starting from something that was already written and just getting, "Oh, this is editing or revision. This isn't like I'm having to stare at that blank screen with that stupid blinking bar." I don't think there's anything more intimidating than that.

Victoria felt this practice made writing less "intimidating"; she explained, "I think the blank page can be one of the biggest opponents to telling people that they can write."

As an undergraduate, Victoria took a FYC class that emphasized "non-traditional texts" and that exposed her to peer review. She noted:

> I think it's funny that a lot of my peers, they never sat through peer review being a peer. It can be frustrating. … [T]here's no way you're going to be able to smooth over everyone's ability levels, and you don't want to do that, but it can be frustrating for someone with a higher ability level to be in a group with a lot of people that … I hate to say it but when I was in peer review they would like to sniff it out, you know what I mean? They'd be like, "This girl can edit my paper." "Please look at this, read it." People were emailing me outside of class drafts that I was like … "I can't, that's not fair" or "I'm not supposed to be doing this."

This experience shaped Victoria's understanding of the negative associations students can have with peer review.

Additionally, Victoria's experiences as a student caused her to feel surprised when students put forth less effort than she had. Wondering why students chose not to revise their papers, Victoria explained,

> Anytime I got to revise a paper, even if I'd made a 90, I would freak out, going at it. I don't think that I recognized—I mean, either undergraduates have changed. I'm sure they change continuously, but it's hard I think for a teacher that's really young to think that

> the undergraduates they're encountering are going to be that different from the way that they were. The majority of them are hugely different, especially, again, I think you have to consider that these teachers are in graduate school now. I mean, they're there for a reason, right?

Victoria described making use of multiple types of knowledge as a first-year teacher of composition. According to her report, she took a number of theoretical-technical concepts from the pedagogy class, particularly concepts related to day-to-day lesson planning. For example, she drew several strategies from Bean's *Engaging Ideas*, such as fishbowl debates and course preparation assignments. In some cases, Victoria indicated that she encountered a negative application of theoretical-technical knowledge; she described struggling with the idea of backward course design, apparently feeling that it limited her ability to teach effectively: "I wonder how detailed you can get with your course design and not trap yourself or if there's a way to get around that because I did like a breakdown of what we were doing each day and almost wished that I hadn't gone that far. Or if I had done backward course design for say unit two, I hadn't put that on the syllabus." Additionally, Victoria described feeling anxious about the theoretical-technical knowledge she encountered in the pedagogy class; she explained:

> As far as teaching good writing it's scary, because it wasn't as scary before I took the class and there's all these theories behind it. It's been 90 years in the works of moving from product to process … It's like we all look back ten years ago and say what were we doing, and you're afraid that ten years from now people are going to look back at your class, like, what was she doing? She wasn't using students' prior knowledge and she wasn't encouraging transfer in the right ways, so it's been kind of overwhelming.

According to her account, these feelings led Victoria to desire more explicit, practical advice

from experienced practitioners, saying, "I think when you're that green so to speak, some of those experiences, even in the most general sense, can be very valuable versus this is what scaffolding is and these are the conceptual benefits of backward course design versus this is what I do on Monday morning and it's worked well for me in the past."

When Victoria needed that practical, day-to-day advice, she most often turned to members of the composition office or to her peers. She mentioned talking about her teaching several times with the Director of Composition, especially about disciplinary problems. Moreover, Victoria said that she found reassurance by talking with her peers, explaining, "I would think I am the worst teacher. I left this off my assignment sheet or I didn't make this clear enough in class or I got three student emails asking a follow-up question about this … I would panic and think I must be doing not the best job, and then I would run into colleagues in the printing room or in the mail room and they'd say, 'No, I did that and then I did this. I had a student say this, and I reacted this way.'" Victoria went on to say, "It's a very comforting thing to be around a community of people that also are struggling or also are putting the pieces of puzzle together as you go along, but it's also a very comforting thing to be in an open discourse with those people because it's a way of workshopping ideas before you get into the classroom."

Victoria said that she also valued the experiential knowledge she accumulated through the practice of teaching. She explained, "Nothing taught me as much about teaching than teaching. I didn't think that my practice necessarily would inform so much of the things that I believed about teaching and the ways that I approach teaching, but 90% of what I ended up doing didn't come from Bean or Graff or any of those other wonderful, intelligent, smart people. I think you just have to get your feet wet, and there's no way around it. You have to feel uncomfortable … Then you just have to fix it."

Victoria's beliefs about learners and teaching also exerted pressure on the ways she came to identify and think through troubling classroom situations. Victoria seemed to hold conflicting beliefs about her students, at times saying that she was surprised by their "open-mindedness" and at others characterizing them as resistant to instruction. Victoria said that she found students have "made all these excuses before they even let their writing be read. That's something that really bothered me and it really … that supported my thesis that at least some reading and writing, at least some starting point, some confidence building point can help students at least start to process. Pick a topic, learn how to brainstorm, that kind of thing." As part of building that confidence, Victoria believed that teachers needed to "value the way that students are already writing and they have been writing for maybe a decade before they get in that chair." These beliefs about students influenced and were influenced by Victoria's beliefs about teaching; she especially valued teaching process and using popular texts. For example, she explained that she valued "using using commonplace things [like YouTube videos] or interests, non-academic interests for your students who aren't super interested in academic discourse. I think too that necessarily makes the class feel a little bit more relaxed or a little bit more laid back."

According to her report, when Victoria encountered teaching challenges, she was most likely to employ the self-defense mechanism of blaming students rather than the institutional context or instructional practice. Victoria described being frustrated by students who chose not to revise their papers, who resisted "taking feedback sort of prescriptively and changing" their drafts. Victoria also said she was frustrated when her group activities did not work as planned, especially in one class where students "were completely silent. They just never spoke. The other class just talked, talked."

Identifying a Problem, Reflecting, and Taking Action

The data also indicated that when faced with a teaching challenge, these GTAs typically reflected on the problem in a limited way and made no or few changes to their instruction. Following their awareness of disconnect and limited process of reflection, one of four outcomes was likely: inertia, where the instructors recognized some adjustment was needed but made no change in their actions because uncertain of what to modify or how to implement a change; self-approbation, where the instructors made no change in their actions because of a sense that students or the writing program were at fault rather than their practices; rejection/replacement, where the instructors made a change despite an awareness that it contradicted the FYC program expectations; and flexibility/experimentation, where the instructors experimented with teaching practices that would better support student learning, if unevenly.

Inertia

The teachers' accounts revealed that there were some instances in their classes when they became aware of a disconnect between their intentions and actions that caused them to identify a situation as problematic; in most instances, these problems were related to course design and implementation, such as assignment design, lesson planning, and classroom management. These teaching challenges prompted GTAs to reflect, in some way, on their instructional practices; most often, their decisions seemed to be most influenced by a lack of prior experience and lack of teaching knowledge. After reflecting on these situations, teachers chose to take no following action because they were uncertain of what to modify or how to implement a change, seeming to enter a state of inertia in which they appeared disinclined to take action or seek help resolving the problem.

Several teachers felt frustrated by the writing that their students produced and identified this failure of student work to meet their expectations as a teaching problem. For example, upon receiving his final set of papers in English 101, Edward commented on his disappointment with the work his students submitted. As he explained, his goal for this assignment, a source-based argumentative essay, was for students to demonstrate that they understood "the nuances of the academic argument," in that it involves speaking through sources and "not just using research to state a certain point." He further clarified his reasoning behind this assignment, explaining that "speak[ing] through the sources" involves not just agreement or disagreement, but meeting the source "halfway … to weigh out the ideas, scale them out, and find an equation to make your argument work." Instead, he felt that his students were "just deeply ingrained with a position-paper-type mindset. It's either a yes or no answer; whereas, obviously, it's not that at all." After reflecting on this problem of students' source use, however, Edward did not know how else to intervene. When he tried to think of other ways to approach teaching this skill, he seemed to feel constrained by a lack of options, saying, "Maybe I should have just—I don't know how I could remedy that, because I don't want to replicate what they learned in high school." Not sure of what additional strategies he could try in the classroom, Edward said that he decided to lower his expectations "for a workable freshman paper" and seek out "glimpses of them separating themselves from this yes-or-no, pro-con format." In this case, Edward entered a state of inertia, wanting to change his method of teaching source-based arguments but uncertain of how to implement change.

Similarly, Paige reported feeling frustrated by students' performance in her English 102 course, where a collaborative writing project did not live up to her expectations. Paige had hoped to create a classroom community in which students worked together to design and produce a

group publication. While she believed the final product was "satisfactory" to most of her students, she also felt that the project failed to meet many of her goals, such as working collaboratively to make decisions and plan the document. For example, Paige noted that the students chose to use a template for their website rather than work through questions of visual design together. Although Paige had designed the assignment for students to deliberate together and direct their own learning, she felt frustrated that students instead made decisions based on the effort they would–or wouldn't—need to put into a task. As Paige explained, "Even when the decisions were made together, often it was like, 'Okay, you chose this because it was the easiest thing.' And they even will say, 'Well this is the easiest, so let's just do it.' So I was a little bit disappointed." Though disappointed by the lack of student interaction, Paige was not sure what she could have done differently. According to her, she made no changes to her assignment or method of instruction because she was not sure what to change, saying "I'm not sure; I'm not sure how I could structure that [assignment] better to make that [interaction] happen more." Upon reflecting on this troubling classroom situation, Paige remained uncertain about what to modify, entering a state of inertia caused by a perceived lack of alternatives, a difficulty imagining how she might re-structure the assignment so that its outcomes would match her intentions.

John also reported feeling dismayed with his students' written performance on his first English 101 assignment, a rhetorical analysis of a music video. Having shadowed a 101 class during his apprenticeship period the previous year that focused mainly upon identification of the Aristotelian appeals of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, John said he had intended to teach a more robust version of rhetorical strategies, wanting to push students "towards a more than surface-level response" in their assignments. Nevertheless, he felt that most of his students' written work

showed a reliance on a reductive presentation of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. After reviewing their papers, he said, he knew he wanted to change his approach to teaching rhetoric in the following course unit, in which students composed an expanded rhetorical analysis of an assigned reading. He was aware that something had not gone as he had intended—that the outcome of his teaching had not resulted in the quality of analysis he had desired. However, he explained that he did not know what aspect of his classroom practice or his treatment of rhetorical theory to change. He had found teaching rhetoric difficult because, as he said, "I've never taught this stuff before, so I kind of don't know where to go beyond *ethos, pathos, logos, exigence*, rhetoric—like I don't have any system that I'm, that I have access to that allows me to sort of move freely about these concepts." He went on to explain that this lack of rhetorical knowledge "created a situation where I'm kind of scrambling each class" for ideas of what to do with students. Although John said he spent at least two to three hours preparing for each class, even in the second unit of the course he felt that he was still "flying by the seat of [his] pants" each class period. Ultimately, despite having seen a need for change in what he was doing, John felt uncertain about how to make changes, ending up in a state of inertia: a desire to make change but an inability to do so.

As John's experience helps to illustrate, not only did instructors identify students' written performance as a problem, they also identified their ability to teach particular writing concepts as a challenge, especially the rhetorical concepts associated with the English 101 curriculum. Like John, Paige struggled to teach rhetorical concepts so that students would grasp them in a non-reductive way. Unlike John, Paige reported feeling that she had access to a fairly wide repertoire of rhetorical concepts, moving beyond *ethos, pathos*, and *logos* to Burkean identification and language choices like repetition. Paige explained her approach to teaching rhetoric, noting, "I didn't want to talk about the [rhetorical] triangle, but I did. And so, again, and I didn't want to

focus on *ethos, logos,* and *pathos*, but I did." While she tried "drawing the triangle in a hundred different ways, to try to get the idea across that these aren't, this isn't a formula so much as a function," students instead seemed to "grab onto the handles" of the rhetorical appeals. Paige felt that while some students "have moved past *ethos, logos,* … others just don't have a depth of understanding about it." She identified this reductive understanding of rhetoric as a problem, saying, "They do want to just say, 'He uses *ethos, logos,* and *pathos* to be persuasive.' And I don't know, I don't know how to fix that." After reflecting on how she might address this problem, Paige felt that she did not have other options for teaching these concepts, aside from "continu[ing] to ask questions." She felt that she had not yet discovered how to communicate those ideas to students in the right way, entering a state of inertia where she desired to help those students better understand and employ rhetorical concepts without a pedagogical strategy for doing so.

In several instances, this problem teaching particular concepts was combined with the challenge of designing course units and assignments. Bob struggled to teach the rhetorical concept of context—the social, historical, and cultural influences on a communicative act—and felt troubled by his design of a contextual analysis assignment that asked students to select an article from a website, blog, or popular magazine and identify contextual constraints on the author's argument. Bob explained that he felt students still learned something from the assignment, as "they understand that not everybody has the same starting point in terms of assumptions and in terms of commitments and that sort of thing, which I'm not sure that they all got that when we started the semester." However, he was displeased with the assignment itself, saying, "I think it was a little open ended—mainly because I think I just wasn't really sure how to teach it, so I think I was just leaving it kind of open to see what would materialize and then

maybe try to use that to teach." Trying to anticipate what students might produce, Bob seemed stumped by a lack of clarity about what he wanted students to do and what might help them best understand the concept; entering a state of inertia, he chose not to change the assignment or to seek out resources that might help him better understand it.

Similarly, Paige identified assignment design and scheduling as a problem in her English 101 course, particularly her first two course units. Paige explained that she had conceived the rhetorical and contextual analyses as a "paired set of essays" in which students would revise their rhetorical analysis into a contextual analysis to underscore the process of "re-visioning something" by "envisioning [it] in a different way." Despite these intentions, Paige said that she was prompted to reflect on this strategy by feelings of frustration and confusion that arose as she tried to accommodate her students. She shared the difficulty she ran into, saying:

> I decided that I would let them—I intended for them to do rhetorical and then contextual, but the same piece that they're analyzing. As the papers went on and as they were asking questions, I said, "Well, I will allow you guys to write the contextual first if that makes more sense to you." And I think—I don't know, I'll have to see how the paper, the end papers work out. I think in some ways it works, because some of them wrote a contextual analysis first, even though they were trying to write a rhetorical analysis. And so they've been able to use that and feel like they still have advanced toward what they were doing. But I'm not sure yet if it makes it delineated enough between them, with them working fluidly between the two. I see some that I see that it's working, and I'm not sure overall if I feel like that's effective. So, I guess we're on the contextual. But some of them are working on rhetorical. So.

Still in the middle of this experiment, Paige entered a state of inertia caused by uncertainty about her expectations for these assignments, unable to say whether her approach to these papers was working or not and hoping the final papers would give her some guidance.

Bart also encountered difficulties conceptualizing the structure of his English 101 class and expressed confusion about how the first two units of the course, focused on rhetorical analysis, prepared students for the last two units, which introduce students to the rhetorical production of their own argumentative texts. In one interview, Bart expressed his dismay with this structure, saying, "One way I could sort of look at it is, like the first half of the course is more of a, a training for the second half of the course. I don't like that, entirely." Although he wanted to create a more explicit connection between the contextual analysis and students' later work, he was unsure how to go about doing so, explaining, "I'm really not sure exactly how to make it more seamless, make it more, I guess, relevant." Here again, Bart enters a state of inertia, wanting to make some change to his class—to create a more seamlessly scaffolded sequence of assignments—but uncertain about how to do so. Instead, after briefly reflecting on the problem, he said that he decided to "just stop worrying about it so much."

According to her report, Victoria also identified course scheduling as a teaching problem; she explained that she felt constrained from making changes after having implemented backward course design to create her course and unit schedules. She reported that one of her English 101 sections was "completely silent. They just never spoke … so I wanted to change my approaches." However, Victoria felt "stuck" with the activities she had planned when she created her syllabus before the beginning of the semester. She expressed her frustration, saying:

> I mean, you've planned out how you're going to gauge their learning. You've planned out exactly the objective. You planned out the small activities on the way to the

> objective. Like you've already gone, I mean, backwards but step by step. What if you planned a lot of group work in a class where no one speaks and they don't respond well? Because that was what was happening in my first class. They would get in groups and just stare at each other. Very awkward. I would walk around trying to—I was literally the only one talking most of the time, trying to get them to talk. Then it was very strange. I would walk around to the different groups, and the other groups would stare at me as I was talking to the one group, so I knew, not at all the way that it was supposed to be going.

Feeling trapped by her pre-semester planning, Victoria explained, "For some reason, I thought that if they didn't know what they were doing every day on day one, that I was not being responsible." In fact, she said, "I had kind of like a panic in terms of 'Oh my gosh, what if I stop class [early]? What if we don't have anything else to do?' … It was sort of a security blanket for me to give them—this is what we're going to do each day." Prompted to reflect on her scheduling and class activities by a feeling of frustration that students were not receptive or engaged, Victoria entered a state of inertia, carried along by a sense that she could not alter the schedule she had given students at the beginning of the semester. Feeling unable to make changes when activities did not work as planned, Victoria made no changes to her course.

These instructors also identified aspects of individual class sessions such as pacing and particular activities as teaching problems. For example, David encountered teaching problems in pacing the day-to-day instruction of his English 101 class. He identified as particularly frustrating the "days where [students'] previous night's homework, the exercise, the things I had planned … that we got through them too quickly." He went on to explain, "Part of that being inexperience too, just maybe not having something else in my back pocket that I could apply and

instead of forcing them to stay in class and stare at me and me stare at them and not know what to say and fill the room with that discomfort, saying, 'Okay, that's all I have for you for today,' and letting them go." After these classes, David said, he "would leave school, campus in a bad mood and just thinking like, 'I cannot let them leave early.'" Though these experiences caused David to think about ways to "prevent this from happening," he entered a sort of state of inertia, unable to draw on prior experience to help him manage pacing or to think of ways to fill a 75-minute class period after he had exhausted his planned activities.

In several interviews, John identified his ability to engage students in active discussion as a teaching problem. John said that he felt frustrated by students' lack of participation in class discussion and explained that he hoped to facilitate active discussion where students carried the conversation but was uncertain about how to do so. He had come to realize that something "really cool" happened when he could get students to "pick up the ball" and direct the conversation themselves, and explained that he thought this happened more with "open questions" and when he had "general points" he wanted to cover rather than "very specific points" about the readings or texts. However, according to his report, John really enjoyed lecture. He explained,

> I enjoy enthusiastically trying to communicate some of my ideas that I think are important, or that they're just exciting to me. Like I go tangential all the time because I feel like, 'Oh, man, like this shit's awesome,' you know. So I really enjoy lecture. I question sometimes whether it's the most effective. But I feel like it's a lot of fun, and you know, I always got off, I always picked up on my professors' enthusiasm, even if they weren't sort of like trying to be sensitive to my whatever, like I, you know, I dug that, so.

Combined with this preference for lecture, John explained that he felt uncertain about how to foster productive class discussion. For instance, John recalled a particularly challenging class period when students were assigned to read an excerpt from Studs Terkel's *Working* but did not seem interested in discussing it. John said he was surprised by this: he felt it was an easy text, had planned for students to sit in a circle and discuss it, and thought the text was provocative (e.g., "I was like, 'C'mon guys, you can't not react to this; she's calling you whores!'"). John said that he didn't know what to do in this situation except force discussion, saying, "I didn't plan a lecture; I had some thoughts about [the chapter] and some questions to pose, but my thought was we'd come in and they'd tell me what they thought was interesting and we'd talk about it." While this teaching challenge—the absence of an expected robust discussion—caused John to reflect on his classroom strategies, John was in a state of inertia created by a sense that he did not have access to alternate methods for eliciting student discussion, as well as by his own personal preference for "monologuing."

Several instructors identified teaching problems associated with individual lessons that did not work out as planned. For example, James felt especially dismayed with a lesson about MLA citation, in which he tried to use a *Jeopardy*-style game to involve students in learning about conventions of source use and attribution. He expressed his frustration, saying, "It didn't go very well. It just didn't work very well. It wasn't the most efficient way of covering that material." In particular, James wished that he had set aside more than one class period to work through the material, but felt constrained from putting that in his schedule because "I had all this other stuff I needed to talk about." Reflecting on this activity in one of his interviews, James explained how he approached teaching this session, noting that he had found a PowerPoint template "that was specifically designed for *Jeopardy*" that he used to plug in his questions, but

realized the next day that "the way it was set up was confusing and I had plugged them in wrong." James couldn't use the materials he had prepared and instead "had to make a board on the whiteboard and then work from a set." He felt that this wasn't an "efficient" approach to the lesson but that he "didn't really have time to come back to it." However, he felt that since he had assigned the reading, he could still hold students accountable to this material. In sum, while James began with an innovative idea for teaching MLA citation, he felt that his plan did not work in practice; though he continued to hold students responsible for this material, James entered a state of inertia, uncertain of other methods for teaching citation and attributing his inability to re-teach the concepts to external constraints imposed by the timing of the semester.

Betty related a similar incident in which she experienced a failed classroom activity but was uncertain about how to troubleshoot her lesson plan at the time. In this case, Betty had asked students to work in small groups to draft a recruitment ad aimed at the "traditional freshman" in order to illustrate the concept of audience awareness. Betty felt that this activity "just didn't work"; she thought that the students "didn't see their decisions [to attend a college] as being informed by outside factors." Instead, as Betty explained during an interview in which she thought back on this event, "they saw theirs as being very unique, special, only me ever had these feelings." Betty felt she "should have thought about this," but hadn't expected it at the time. When the assignment did not work as she had planned, Betty "stopped everyone" and then wrote an example on the board, which helped students better understand the assignment. However, Betty felt that this class "was clumsy, awkward." She said, "If I could have come up with something else at that moment to switch to I would have, except I just didn't. And we're, you know, we're at like 35 minutes through and it's a 50-minute class; I'm like, 'Ugh, I can't think of something new right now.'" Seemingly unable to draw on a repertoire of strategies at the

time, Betty appeared entered a state of inertia, deciding to stick with a class activity even though it was not working as she had intended.

Classroom management was another area often identified as a teaching problem or challenge, as teachers struggled with maintaining authority and control in the classroom and disciplining students appropriately. For instance, Victoria's accounts returned repeatedly to feelings of frustration caused by difficulties with classroom management. In one interview, Victoria recounted the moment when she knew that she needed to regain control of her classroom. She explained, "I had a moment mid-semester where one of my students was texting, and I was like, 'Can you please put that away?' and he did this and held his finger in the air as he finished his text message. At that point, I was like, 'Oh, my gosh. I'm a terrible authority figure. None of my students respect me. I'm awful.'" This experience caused Victoria to reflect on her "teaching personality" and her ability to discipline her students. She said, "That was just something I'd never—it wasn't that I was averse to doing it. It was just that I didn't know how to. Do I discipline my students? How much am I allowed to discipline my—in terms of talking or texting or something like that?" Victoria recalled that another instructor had warned her to establish authority in class from the very first day, and she felt that this advice "was absolutely true." She explained that after her frustrating experience with the one student, she:

> Started to notice every little thing. It was just like everything's falling apart. This weird feeling, but I think that it doesn't work to try to switch at that point because I got a reaction of like betrayal, almost, from my students when I started like, "Pay attention. Put the phone away. If you don't put the phone away, leave the class." People started walking in late or would be sort of blasé about it, and I would start calling them out at that point. Trying to make the turn at that point I think it has a weird sense of betrayal from your

> students that you've changed. Like a Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde thing. Whereas again, if you had just started off in a more sort of—I don't know what you even call it. You just exude … authority, that this isn't a place for talking or texting, and you're going to listen, and this is a very serious academic setting.

Here, Victoria entered a state of inertia caused by the realization that she needed to change her classroom disposition. Though Victoria attempted to implement some change by addressing students' negative behaviors, she seemed to believe that her efforts to take on more authority caused students to feel betrayed but not to modify their behavior and was uncertain about how to change her personality to more effectively manage the class.

Paige also struggled with classroom authority. According to her report, she hoped to establish a decentered, student-run classroom; however, as her first year as a teacher passed, she realized that she needed to take on enough authority to hold students accountable for their actions. Paige explained that she was prompted to reflect on this issue by two classroom incidents: one in English 101, where students refused to work quietly and cooperatively in groups and instead "chaos reigned," and once in English 102, when half the students failed to meet a deadline to submit their research proposals. Talking about this second incident, Paige exclaimed, "I was mad!" She went on to say, "That's really the tough thing for me, is how do I hold them accountable and still let them be the boss." She reported that by the end of the semester, she came to "think that there were some students who needed to be, they needed something more structured. And I came away thinking that I had done some a disservice by not offering that." Here, Paige realized that she needed to change her teaching practices but entered a state of inertia in which she was unsure of how to reconcile her teaching philosophy with her emergent understanding of what students needed to learn best, thus making no change in her

teaching.

Grading and managing the paper load also posed teaching challenges for many of these instructors. Lizzy, for example, related her difficulties designing an effective grading rubric, explaining, “By mid-semester I realized I was trying to be creative and innovative and reinventing the wheel and I should have been utilizing rubrics and just really utilizing what stuff was already out there because … I think I need that support system.” Lizzy further clarified her situation, saying that she had made a rubric that “just inflated their grades, and I was already inflating them naturally because I’m a new teacher.” She explained that even though her pedagogy class had exposed her to backward course design and lesson planning, and she “knew about all of it and I was using it, I felt like I wasn’t, because of just lack of experience.” Lizzy said that this feeling that what she was doing was not working led her to seek help from the Director of Composition. However, Lizzy would not always follow the advice she received, saying, “I might adapt it, but not often. I’m sure I’ll change that, but I don’t really have the wisdom yet.” Despite seeking help, Lizzy entered a state of inertia brought on by a sense of noviceness that kept her from fully implementing the advice she received.

Bart also identified a problem associated with grading; in this case, he felt the he did not provide effective feedback on student writing. Bart explained:

> I think my feedback on their writing could be more concrete. I think maybe it's because, in my mind a lot of times, I can see how their paper could be better, but I can't describe it. In one of my—the way I grade papers is by correcting them. I go through and I correct them, and then I look back through and see how much correction I had to make. That gauges what the grade should be. In my mind, I know what they need to do, but getting that down on paper, or at least making it known like, "What specifically do they need to

> work on?" Saying things like, "clumsy wording" or something like that doesn't really make any sense, so I don't say things like that. I take more of a minimalist approach of just trying to give them a big picture. But in the end, I feel like I'm not saying what they need to hear to fix the problem

Though wanting to make some change to his practices—to provide students with feedback that will help them write more effectively—Bart was in a state of inertia, relying on his ability to "correct" papers rather than making a change or seeking resources that would help him better articulate what he wants to tell students.

Paige reported feeling overwhelmed by the paper load in her first semester of teaching. Looking back on the semester, she said, "I learned a lot about grading. I learned never, ever, ever ask them to turn in two papers at the same time. Along with a huge portfolio, just don't do that." In addition, Paige reported having trouble with the book-keeping tasks associated with grading, saying, "It took me a long time to figure out just how to make it make numbers, or make anything that resembled numbers." Like Lizzy, Paige attempted to create and use grading rubrics, but found that they "just did not work for me. So it was more subjective-seeming than I wanted it to be." According to Paige's account, these issues became a teaching problem because her students felt frustrated by not receiving timely feedback on their assignments. Though Paige felt that she got faster at grading as the semester progressed, she said that she continued to worry about totaling the grades, explaining that "the math just freaked me out, and so I just stopped trying" to keep track of grades through the university's online system. Paige also connected her difficulties with grading to a larger problem being explicit and concrete about the purpose of students' assignments. She noted that at the end of the semester, her students said, "Sometimes we did not understand what was going on." Although Paige intended to be "more firm, more

clear, more bounded," she continued to struggle with "being more concrete" in her second semester of teaching. While she wanted to make changes to her teaching practices, Paige was in a state of inertia, paralyzed by a lack of experience and knowledge.

Much like Paige, Edward also identified his turnaround time on papers as a teaching problem, saying that he "didn't turn it over as quickly as I would have liked to, and I felt kind of guilty about that, for the students." According to him, Edward's difficulty returning papers promptly stemmed from feelings of responsibility toward his students; Edward explained, "I felt like I was cheating them if I didn't comment a lot on the papers." In addition to marginal comments, he also typically wrote "a 200-300 word response at the end." Edward attributed his problem returning papers quickly to the context of being a novice teacher in graduate school, saying, "They do ask a lot of us, cause a lot of us are at least taking two classes or teaching two sections with no base material." He went on to explain that while he had drafted some materials in his pedagogy course, his understanding of the materials he would need changed once he began teaching. Like Paige, Edward wanted to change his grading practices to better meet his students' needs; however, he was in a state of inertia in which he felt prevented from doing so by the context of teaching for the first time while also fulfilling his requirements as a graduate student.

Self-Approbation

The instructors described other instances in which they became aware that their classroom practices were not working as they intended or hoped; the problems they described in these cases included lack of student engagement with course texts and discussion, classroom management issues, student resistance to revision, individual lessons that did not work as planned, and student writing that did not meet instructors' expectations. In these situations, the instructors' accounts revealed their actions were most influenced by the ways they framed their

prior experience and individual beliefs about writing, teaching, and learning. In these situations, the teachers had prior experience with the instructional method, even if it had been applied in a different context, and were therefore able to draw upon their K-16 apprenticeship of observation. Further, they had enjoyed the instructional method as students and, generalizing from their own experience, expected that their students would also enjoy it. Also, in these cases the instructional method being used typically aligned with the teachers' strongly-held beliefs about writing and teaching. These interactive elements worked together to produce a state of self-sanction or self-approbation in which they did not question or change their use of the practice and which caused them to place blame for the problem elsewhere, often with students.

One teaching problem encountered by these instructors was the challenge of eliciting student engagement with class texts and discussions. Instructors often framed these problems around the difficulties of linking course readings and writing assignments, encouraging students to complete the readings, and drawing out student discussion of texts. John, for example, valued teaching multimedia, pop culture texts in his English 102 classes, but felt that students had trouble connecting these texts to their writing assignments. For instance, he reported relying on television shows like *Arrested Development* and *Modern Family* as his primary texts for teaching qualitative research. According to his account, he made this choice to "have something we can talk about in class" while still learning about research methods. John added, "I just, for whatever reason, I didn't feel compelled to actually go out and find research" that would serve as models for what students were producing, such as "sociological and psychological … case studies and things like that." John felt that offering students such resources would have "helped them get comfortable with this type of work." Despite recognizing a need for change, John continued to teach qualitative research through additional pop culture texts, like Lil Wayne and Lady Gaga

songs that he thought students would find engaging. John said that he felt many of his students didn't respond to those texts the way he expected, explaining, "I felt like maybe …they didn't give themselves permission to really jump into that one, or maybe they just weren't interested." Eventually, John said, he came to realize that he was "not sure how much that [Lil Wayne lesson] really clicked with them as far as how this connects to their work." After being prompted to reflect on the relationship between his course texts and student writing by a sense that his activities were not working to convey the research skills students would need to complete their projects, John refrained from making any changes to his approach, preferring to select texts that would be entertaining for him and his students to discuss. In this case, John entered a state of self-approbation, believing that his choices *should* work regardless of whether or not they did.

Similarly, Andrew discussed the problem of connecting his daily instruction to students' writing assignments in English 102. Andrew reported, "There's not a super-good sync-up between what I'm doing in class and what they're writing about," and felt this was "one weakness of my classes." According to his account, this problem caused him to further reflect on the texts and daily activities he chose for his class. Andrew explained that he decided to focus on making his class fun and engaging rather than to worry too much about how well he was connecting in-class activities to students' assignments, saying "I just try to make my class fun…and I try and make them write about stuff they're interested in and that they find fun." He further described his approach, saying:

> I think that, if we talk about interesting things in class, it gets their creative minds going. That will help them write. How that happens from my creatively-thinking class, doing group work presentations, in-class writing, discussions. Writing—I don't know. I'm not

like—I don't know. I hope it does. I think it does, but I don't know—I don't have the exact sync-up.

Continuing to discuss the relationship between his in-class activities and teaching of writing, Andrew seemed to worry about how to "teach writing in class to everyone." For instance, he said that many of his students were still mishandling source use and attribution in their papers, but wasn't sure that he could "justify" class time working through these issues. Andrew said that after reflecting on this problem, he decided that "teaching grammar in class just seems so mundane to me." He explained, "It's an 8:00 a.m. class. They're really half asleep. It's really tough, to be honest, to get them going." Andrew entered a state of self-approbation that caused him to refrain from making a change to his class structure; though he reported feeling pulled by his institutional responsibilities to teach aspects of writing like grammar and citation, he preferred to discuss rap songs and films, and seemed to justify doing so by prioritizing student engagement in an early class.

Bob also discussed the challenge of connecting particular readings and class activities to learning goals for student writing assignments. Recounting one class in particular that did not work as well as he had hoped, Bob said that he "decided to have a movie day" and show students several scenes from *Animal House*. He explained that students were working on a paper in which they would write to a university administrator to recommend a change in policy, and so he had "been trying to give them readings to get them thinking about the motivation behind administrators making certain policies, so they understand their audience" for the paper. Prior to showing selections from *Animal House*, Bob had asked students to read a short article called "Oh Bluto, Where Art Thou? *Animal House* at 30," which he chose because it "talks about the differences between the college administration that's depicted in that movie and now."

According to his account, Bob chose to incorporate *Animal House* because he felt that students weren't very engaged with the class; he described the situation as follows:

> I just felt like that class is very—they don't get out until 4:30, you know, and they're just pissed off that they're sitting there. At least they seem to be. You know, they're sitting there, they don't really know why they're there, and there's this attendance policy; they gotta be there. And they're passive aggressively mentioning their other classes that don't have an attendance policy. And, you know, I'm just fed up with it. I'm just like, "Okay guys, I get it. Great." And I turn on *Animal House*, in an attempt at trying to like bring some levity to the situation, and kind of get them to think about this whole process, the university, and to do it in kind of a funny way. And like, maybe twice anybody laughed. And it was just one of these weird things; I don't know if the jokes fell flat in the movie, or. But it was just this thing where—and of course, I'm measuring success by laughter or whatever; it might have been the most effective thing I did all semester and I'll never know about it.

Bob suggested the activity might not have worked as intended because "the students were not really sure why we were watching it….I feel like part of the reason for that is I didn't connect it as succinctly as I could to the content that we were dealing with." Bob went on to note, "At the end of the day that's a move that's funny because it's funny, and it's like 'Why do we have to talk about serious stuff with the movie?'" In this case, though Bob recognized a problem with his practice—he did not explicitly connect the texts students worked with for an individual class period to the work they were doing outside of class—he made no changes to his instruction. He instead entered a state of self-approbation, where his hopes that a movie could simply be enjoyed as a movie and that students might engage more enthusiastically with the course outweighed his

recognition that this was not a particularly successful activity.

Students' lack of engagement with a film shown in class was also a problem that Andrew encountered. He explained that he had decided to show *La Haine,* a black-and-white subtitled French film, in his 8:00 a.m. class, saying, "I got really frustrated last class when we watched *La Haine*. Three people fell asleep. I went over and I went like this [pushes interviewer on shoulder]. I pushed on him and I'm like, 'Wake up.' I don't know; it just made me angry." Andrew said that he had expected students to be more involved with the film, noting, "I gave them a sheet, 'Answer these five questions,' and it wasn't a passive activity … I thought I was being nice and rewarding them for handing in the paper." Explaining his feelings about this class period, Andrew said, "I think the worst thing a student could do, I think, is fall asleep. You can backtalk me. Good. At least it shows interest. People asleep? I just have no patience for it, to be honest." Prompted by his sense of a disconnect between his intentions for this activity and its results, Andrew engaged in limited reflection on the problem; after reflection, he entered a state of self-approbation, certain that students should have responded positively to being rewarded by watching a movie in class and blaming students for falling asleep during the film.

These instructors also identified students' resistance to completing the reading as a teaching challenge, particularly as it influenced students' ability to take part in class discussion. In her English 102 course, Paige reported feeling especially frustrated when students failed to complete the assigned reading. According to Paige, she initiated a discussion about "the issue of reading, and what we decided as a class—which is okay with me—is that we would ditch some of the chapters [from the required textbook], which they hate, and instead read some of the information they had about their own communities, so they were gonna share their own readings. Thought, 'That's a great idea, let's do that.'" Paige said, "Having fulfilled their request to read

what they had said they had an interest in," she expected they would complete the task and that the next class period would go better than previous ones. However, Paige went on to explain, "The responses that I got back from them made it clear to me many of them had not even shared something to read. And a good many of them had not read anything. So it was just a dodge of the reading." According to her report, Paige was surprised that this activity had not gone better, since students had been allowed to do "the reading they wanted."

Paige also raised the problem of eliciting class discussion, particularly as this problem was related to reading. She explained:

> Discussions are tough. It's really hard. Like I said, either they're just not listening or they really are just sitting there not talking at all; I have to call them out. Which is weird.
>
> *Interviewer: Mhm. Do you have any ideas about--?*
>
> Apathy. Maybe. Some of it is they weren't doing the reading. I mean, some of it really was, just were not doing the reading. Which is partly, I think, what the reading is and partly that they just thought they didn't have to. I had a student say, "Well, do you read ahead?" I was like, "What do you mean?" "Well have you read the book?" I was like, "Yeah, I've mostly read the book; I know the parts that we're talking about, absolutely." He was like, "Well can you just tell us what's important?" "No. No. That is not my job. It is your job to read these things." So I think part of it is that.

Though Paige felt frustrated that students were not completing the reading or participating in class discussion, she explained that she decided upon reflection to continue to using the same strategies: sitting with them around a table rather than standing, relying on the students "who always speak up," calling on students who were quiet, and encouraging students to direct their own learning. Paige felt this latter strategy was especially important, saying, "I think that it's

good for people to start to understand that they are able to create knowledge themselves. There may be a disconnect with these students between that and just goofing off; I'm not sure they're recognizing the responsibility part of it [self-directed learning], that actually this isn't easier, it's harder." In this case, Paige entered a state of self-approbation: though disappointed with her students' classroom performance, after reflecting on this situation, Paige chose not to modify her actions.

Betty also identified students' resistance to reading as a major teaching challenge she faced during her first semester. She described this problem as follows:

> They liked *Seeing and Writing* because there's a lot of pictures, and I always had class work that was developed around it. *Harbrace* they hate. ... [T]hey were reticent about reading *A Little Argument*. I don't know why; it's the smallest book. To me that seemed like the easiest; it's this big [gestures at slim size with thumb and forefinger]. But I also think there is a tendency—they had excellent attendance; they definitely worked, but on the scale of things I have to get done, I think there is a little bit of, "Eh, it's English." I was so furious after one pop quiz about that, I did, I ended the class early saying, they're wasting their time; they're wasting my time, go. That seemed to snap everyone back, because I generally wasn't that aggravated, but I was aggravated that day.

Betty went on to explain that not only were students not reading, "They were also bringing their books in unwrapped." According to her account, Betty used activities like whole-class discussions and occasional quizzes (three over the semester) to encourage students to complete the reading. She explained these strategies, saying, "I just kept going with it, and eventually I just made, I would stop allowing certain people to answer, just start randomly calling. A little bit of the public shame, we'll get there." In this situation, Betty has identified her students' resistance

to reading as a teaching problem, and, after briefly reflecting on the situation, decided to continue her regular practices rather than to make a change. Betty entered a state of self-approbation, certain that her pedagogical approaches of whole-class discussion, pop quizzes, and public shame should solve the problem.

Classroom management issues were identified as teaching problems by several participants; in particular, these GTAs described troubling situations that included maintaining their own classroom authority and responding to difficult students. For instance, John was troubled by his ability to manage his teacherly ethos and to maintain authority in the classroom. He explained, "There was just a period of a week or two with each [English 101] class, in kind of different times, where I really knew I was fighting for their attention and respect and stuff. And part of it was my preparation, so being in class and navigating those moments, that was probably one of the most challenging aspects of the semester." John clarified what he meant by "preparation" in this context, saying, "There have been times when I didn't have the time [to run through the lesson in his head ahead of time] or I wasn't even sure what I was gonna do." During his first semester teaching, John also mentioned coming to class late several times or coming unprepared, unfocused, and ready to "wing it." John explained that he felt this lack of organization helped students see him as more human and more "vulnerable." By the end of the semester, John said that he recognized the need to "get my shit together a little bit better," explaining, "I just feel like sometimes I came across as just like really frenetic, which did, I think, damage my ethos to a certain extent." Still, John had not changed these behaviors by the end of his second semester in the classroom; for instance, I noted that he entered class fifteen minutes late on one of my observation dates and he responded that "it wasn't a completely unprecedented event" and that he was late "often. At least by a couple of minutes." According to

his report, John felt, "In some way the tardiness helped bring me down to a human level. Which I actually really like. On the other hand, I think it does kill some of the ethos. So maybe just poke myself in the ass to show up maybe at the most five minutes late. Maybe just show up every day like two minutes late. That's fine. That's acceptable." In this instance, John identified a teaching problem—damaging his authority by routinely coming to class late or unprepared—yet made no change to his actions, entering a state of self-approbation in which he rationalized his behavior.

Instructors also identified working with difficult students as a teaching challenge. Victoria described her experience working with a student who challenged her authority based on her gender and age as "the biggest challenge" she had in her first semester. Victoria explained that she had to intervene with this student, a non-U.S. native, after he touched her on the arm and completed an assignment with inappropriate content. According to her account, Victoria had asked students to design a Facebook page that could appeal to future employers; this student "explained some of his color choices in his Facebook page and said that he had worn a red muscle shirt to appeal to his future female employer's sexuality." Victoria described her response:

> That was obviously like, well, I'm not an employer, right? For this mini-situation, I'm a superior …or maybe not. I don't know. Just an authority position, not saying I'm superior. That coupled with arm touching, coupled with some of the things he was saying in class about mostly gender stuff. He was making another of my shier female students feel uncomfortable, particularly one day in group work. At the point when it started affecting another fellow female student, that's when I decided to go ahead and speak with him.

Victoria explained that she met with the student at the library to discuss these issues, following

advice she received from the Composition Office. Explaining that she "didn't have any trouble after that," Victoria noted that he even completed one class project, an advertisement, that demonstrated "perfectly acceptable…discourse about sexuality. It's academic and it's formal." She said, "I felt like it was resolved pretty well." However, as she finished this story, Victoria went on to discuss this student's final group project, a public service announcement; she noted that his group "decided to do date rape" and that "his peer evaluations did come back that he was very sort of blasé and said a lot of things like victim blaming and women are stupid, that they get themselves put in these situations." Victoria realized, "At the end, it was really not as redeeming, right? I felt the situation really turned around, and then maybe not so much. The feedback I was getting, the negative feedback, was solely from the female group participants." Here, Victoria identified a teaching challenge—disciplining inappropriate student behavior—and, because she believed that her intervention with the student should have worked, failed to notice and put a stop to subsequent negative behavior. In other words, Victoria entered a state of self-approbation in which she felt that the disciplinary action she had taken should have been sufficient and kept her from realizing earlier that there were other actions she might have followed up with.

Similarly, Bart identified his encounters with an individual student as especially problematic. He explained the situation, saying, "I had this kid—I don't know what it is; I just don't think he can phrase questions well; like I don't think he can ask what he wants to ask. Which, you know, it's unfortunate, because the question that usually comes out is one of those questions where it's like, 'Are you seriously asking that?'" Bart went on to describe one instance of this type of interaction:

> He, around the time of the first draft for the rhetorical analysis was due, he raises his hand … And his question was, "So basically we're just reading this and writing how we

feel about it?" And like I, I like in my mind, I knew I had said so many times, you know, a million different things, none of them had anything to do with what he said. And I was like, [Heavy sigh] "Okay." And so, I thought it through and then tried to explain it again.

Bart said that when the due date for the second assignment came near, the student repeated this interaction. This time, Bart reported, rather than answering the question, "I just kind of stared at him for a second, and I was like, 'You should read some of the stuff I've put up online. Check out the assignment sheet, and if you still have that question, email me and we'll talk about it.'" Bart explained that these situations caused him to feel frustrated with the student because, "obviously they don't see the work that you've put in to making sure that they understand what they're doing long before the day before their draft's due. And it's just one of those moments where it's like, 'I've been wasting my time.'" Bart went on to note, "Luckily I have some bit of patience, because I think I would have gone off on these kids a few times already." Here again, Bart enters a state of self-approbation, identifying these encounters with a challenging student as a teaching problem and, after limited reflection on the problem, deciding not to change his practices because of his sense that the problem lies with his students rather than with any fault in his instructional practices or materials.

Student resistance to revision was another teaching challenge that these instructors encountered. Victoria, for instance, felt that her greatest frustration in her first semester of teaching was that students did not take advantage of the opportunities she gave them for revision. According to her account, she saw this problem as two-fold, in that students did not make good use of the suggestions for revision they received in whole-class peer review workshops and they did not use her revision policy, which allowed them to revise completed assignments for a new grade. Victoria explained that she had conducted six whole-class peer review workshops over the

semester, but felt that students were "not receptive" to "constructive criticism." Though she felt students received "really great feedback" from their peers, Victoria found that subsequent drafts didn't incorporate changes, perhaps because students were not taking their peers' feedback or their own writing seriously:

> I was just amazed at some point. I was always taking notes. I would open up the draft on the screen and I would take notes as the reviewers were speaking, and that was a great benefit I thought to having the tech classroom, but the students wouldn't have out pen and paper when they were being reviewed. They wouldn't even have a copy of their paper in class. Obviously, that was a requirement of peer review. I would just stop review sometimes and say, "Do you want to take any notes on the feedback that you're getting?" It was just very much instead of engaging and taking notes—I mean, not interacting, but the only interaction that there was was "I was up until 3:00 in the morning writing this. The Cincinnati game was last night."

Victoria explained that the workshops were "very much not what I expected." Though she had "decided to do whole-class peer review because I tend to think that if your writing is in front of that many people that you actually are more invested in it," Victoria was "just not sure that that worked out for me."

In addition to these frustrations she experienced with whole-class peer review, Victoria also felt frustrated that students did not take advantage of her revision policy:

> You tell that student "you can revise and your grade will go up," and they don't take advantage of that at all. You pour your heart and soul into all of these comments thinking that I'm being so specific here because this is exactly what the student needs to fix when they revise. I took that for granted in terms of *when* they revise and not *if*—and I would

> wait for the email. They had three class periods from the time that I handed the paper back to decide that they wanted—not even turn in the revision but just to decide that they would like to revise. I would wait for that email, and as time went on after I handed the paper back, I would stress out more and more like, "Such-and-such. She must have forgotten," but I didn't feel like I could email saying, "Are you sure you don't want to revise?" I didn't feel like that was a good strategy.

In this case, Victoria identified a single problem—student resistance to revision—that was related to several teaching activities, including commenting on student papers and leading effective peer review workshops. Because Victoria felt that her strategies should work—that students should use whole-class peer review workshops and teacher comments on graded work to help them become better writers—she entered a state of self-approbation and made no changes to her methods for encouraging revision.

Similarly, Aaron characterized student resistance to revision as a teaching challenge. Like Victoria, Aaron employed whole-class peer review workshops, which he used for each unit of English 101. Aaron modeled this pedagogy on creative writing workshops he had experienced as both an undergraduate and graduate student (and indeed said in our final interview he felt that it was the most effective strategy he had used as a teacher). While Aaron valued the use of these workshops, he also felt frustrated by students' post-workshop papers; this frustration led him to perceive a disconnect between what he wanted students to achieve and the quality of the students' written work. Aaron said he recognized that in workshops students relied more on his direction than on that of their peers, thus undercutting what he felt was the collaborative and student-empowering purpose of the workshop, and they also tended to make surface-level corrections rather than more substantive revisions to argument, structure, and so forth that he

hoped the workshop would stimulate. Aaron elaborated that he "noticed that the people whose work is being workshopped don't necessarily take everything to heart. Or, either they just have put in all the time at the beginning and don't want to do it at the end, but some of them have not done a whole lot of work to revise." Although aware the workshop did not appear to affect students' writing, Aaron said he did not see a need for change. Instead, he said he was pleased that students were participating in workshop discussions even though he was not always satisfied with the quality of their comments, which he described as "hit or miss." He felt it was up to the students whose papers were workshopped to do something with that criticism and he faulted them for failing to use the workshop to its full potential to affect their writing. Here again a disconnect between intention and results prompted some reflection, yet this limited reflection did not prompt Aaron to see a need for change.

These instructors also described teaching challenges associated with individual lessons or class activities. Edward, for instance, described his frustration with students' performance on a quiz he gave near the end of English 102. He had designed this quiz to "mimic, if not prepare them for, an in-class essay," explaining that he had "wanted them to reflect on the whole of the class and what we learned in the class, the key ideas behind the class both on the, to some extent, research end, and also what we learned about this particular topic." Edward said that he was surprised to find that students were confused by the task, saying,

> I don't think it was because of the way in which I worded the question; I think they're just so unfamiliar with that format, just a 30-minute in-class essay for a grade, really having to hit on the high points of the class, … identify the broader things and how these themes are connected, characterizing the broader goals of the class within a short essay. I think it kind of almost frightened them in a way. It's intimidating. I reassured them, "I

> know this is your first time doing this. I'm just trying to prepare you for these upper-level humanities classes, and even in classes outside of the humanities you'll be asked to do essays such as this." They still—I think so many of them are unfamiliar with having to write on their toes, especially when it's for a grade. They just get uncomfortable with it. So I don't know if that's just lack of preparation in high school or if they're just used to tests being purely objective, but that didn't go as well as I would like to.

Edward said that he felt disappointed that students struggled to identify "important themes" from the class and speculated that students were intimidated by the task. In particular, he said, students found the vocabulary of the question intimidating, as he had included a quote from a critical theorist in the essay prompt. Edward explained,

> None of them knew what the word "autonomy" meant. So I had to take some time to explain that, and they were freaking out. … I figured they'd at least be able to pick up on the context of it, because I talked about … [connections to the class theme]. But that immediately got them to freak out. And Robert Ray, you know, is not the most—I mean, he's accessible but—relative to some critical theorists, but for freshmen, non-humanities people, it's—I think his language might be a little bit too inaccessible and intimidating, too. So I used a big quote from that Ray book to contextualize the question. But again, I think they're afraid of having to bring in several elements from the class. They're afraid to be challenged, I think, in a way.

Edward explained that he tried to address students' confusion by explaining the question, noting that he "kind of directed their thought, in a way." According to his report, he reflected on the situation after the class, saying, "Maybe that's just the way I worded the question, but I went back through it several times after the class, and I'm like, 'I don't think it is.' I think it was pretty

clear what I was wanting with it, but I think just some big words threw them off track." In this case, though Edward felt that his students' reaction to his in-class essay was a problem, he entered a state of self-approbation, identifying the underlying problem as students' dislike of being challenged rather than an aspect of the prompt or activity itself and therefore making no change.

Instructors also identified student performance on written assignments as a teaching challenge. For instance, David expressed some surprise that he had to return repeatedly to the concept of thesis statements in students' papers, saying,

> That was sort of recurring, almost with every assignment to just sort of like ... and it did happen in every assignment, really conveying to them this is not a debatable claim. This is a claim of taste. You cannot really build a successful argument. This is in more the latter [English 101] papers, because the other ones they are reading maybe someone else's work. But how important they are and getting them to see that if your thesis statement is solid and in a good position then most of the time really your body paragraphs are just going to fall into place. It really internalizes and the internal timing of your paper and everything almost works itself.

David had felt that thesis statements:

> Could be a concept that I would address a couple of times and then it would be … I didn't expect them to understand or be masters of it. But, from the outset when you talk about what a thesis statement is and how it makes a debatable claim and things like that, then they would go, "Okay, the claim has to be debatable then," or not common knowledge, things like that. I think they would sometimes fall back and forget about them. That's why I feel like it would continually come up.

Here, David experiences a disconnect between his intentions and results that causes him to feel some dismay that students continued to struggle with thesis statements throughout their English 101 class; rather than further interrogating the methods he uses to teach this concept, David enters a state of self-approbation in which he believes the problem rests with the students.

Andrew also described teaching a particular skill as a challenge; he found that even after a lesson on integrating sources, students continued to mishandle quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing. Andrew explained that he taught these concepts by giving students "a worksheet. I showed three different ways to quote. One was a direct quotation and how you integrate that quote. You can put a person's name in and give a little information about them. You can just put the quote in and put the author's name in brackets … There's paraphrasing we went over a little bit like, 'What's a good way to paraphrase something you get from a book?' That's like summarizing. 'How do I make this paragraph to summarize it in two sentences?'" Andrew said he felt students were resistant to the activity telling him, "We don't want to do this," and he felt that "a lot of them didn't learn. A lot of them didn't do it correctly." Feeling frustrated that students continued to misattribute sources on their papers, Andrew reflected back on that lesson, and did not find fault with it. He explained, "We spent a good 15 minutes, we went over each answer, everyone was in class, but still they didn't learn how to do a simple thing. It's not simple. I shouldn't say that. It's putting a quote into a paper, and they just can't grasp it, some of them. It's just laziness, I think, to be honest. They don't try to learn. Students are just lazy." Having experienced a disconnect between his intentions for a lesson and the results of subsequent student writing, Andrew entered a state of self-approbation in which, after briefly reflecting on the teaching challenge, he decided that student laziness was to blame rather than further examining his instructional practices.

Similarly, Aaron found student performance on papers to be a teaching challenge, especially in his English 101 course. For example, after reviewing his students' rhetorical analyses, Aaron explained that he was dismayed by students' ability to develop their analysis, saying:

> The main kind of thing was just getting the length. And understanding what ideas need to be explained fuller. I don't know how many times I had to write, "Expand this"; "This is a separate, this could be a separate paragraph"; "Expand on this idea." They seemed hesitant to, as they term it, overanalyze something. They see that as kind of boring and, you know, really that's where their real work comes in, so.

Aaron also indicated that he had provided students with an assignment sheet that "explained exactly what you're supposed to be doing, you know, focusing on the details, and how do the details create this rhetorical message or appeal." According to his account, he had also assigned a *New York Times* article that he thought students could "use … as kind of a model or as inspiration to perform their own analysis of an ad or commercial or whatever that uses the female figure in some way to make a rhetorical argument." Again, Aaron entered into a state of self-approbation, confident that the measures he took to ensure student success on the rhetorical analysis should have worked and therefore placing blame with his students' dislike of analysis. With this combination of factors, Aaron made no change to his strategies.

In English 102, Aaron again experienced a feeling of disconnect between his expectations for an assignment and the results. In this case, Aaron asked students to write a reception study of a particular book for their historical research assignment. Having completed a reception study as a first-year master's student, Aaron felt this genre would be both interesting and fairly easy:

> I did one in a graduate class, I guess a year ago. And it seemed pretty interesting, it seemed like a different type of writing that—it seemed like it lent itself well to the type of research they were gonna do. They could get some experience doing research, doing archives. And I thought—in my mind, it makes making an argument a little less stressful, and a little easier, because you're just making an argument on what's there; you don't have to necessarily formulate your own ideas or your own take on the material. You just say what is out there, how were people talking about it. You just read some sources and kind of say what they were saying.

However, Aaron found that students struggled more with the assignment than he had expected, saying, "In practice, students got really caught up and concerned with, you know, where do they get to put their spin, and where is it their voice, what is—you know, they were very confused or unclear about the fact that saying a book was received in this way is an argument, and so were kind of challenged, I guess, by the assignment."

In addition, Aaron said that he felt disappointed because students were not as engaged with the activity as he had hoped. He explained,

> In a very I guess naïve way, I wanted to get the students energized and interested in reading different types of literature, different types of books with the idea that … they might want to go out and read a particular novel on their own and, like for a reception study read the book itself and then do the reception study about it, read something that maybe they hadn't read before. What ended up happening, for the most part, I mean some students told me that they had actually were gonna check out the primary source itself and read it through. A lot of them would just go to Wikipedia or write about a book that they had read in high school, like freshman year, so four years removed from reading it,

so they didn't necessarily, they couldn't get into all the details; it was more of a surface reading, not quite getting at all the nuances that they could have gotten into.

Aaron went on to explain that he "didn't realize they were struggling with that [assignment] until it was probably too late to really do much about it. They just would not give me any feedback on, you know, what your status is, do you have any questions on the paper, and it was just blank stares." Here again, Aaron was in a state of self-approbation, realizing that his reception study was not working as intended but choosing to take no action and instead blaming his students for being unresponsive.

Rejection/Replacement

The teachers' accounts revealed that, in some cases, they experienced a disconnect between their intentions and results that occurred when they prepared to teach concepts or research methods that were unfamiliar to themselves or their students, or when they struggled to understand a particular assignment or sequence in the FYC curriculum; these challenges triggered self-defense mechanisms that, interactively, exerted pressure on their actions and led them to feel frustrated and overwhelmed by the task of teaching FYC. After reflecting on these situations, these instructors came to adopt a stance of rejection, in which they understood themselves to be replacing some aspect of the program's curriculum with something that they felt more familiar with or had greater confidence in. Their feelings of being frustrated and overwhelmed led them to blame the institution for putting them—and their students—in this position, and they used that justification to support their decisions.

These instructors described as a teaching problem their sense that they were being unfairly asked to teach unfamiliar concepts and research methods. At the end of his first semester teaching, John experienced a feeling of dissonance, resulting from his classroom instruction, that

caused him to question his identity as a teacher. At the beginning of the semester, John explained, he had planned to prioritize direct writing instruction, especially by introducing students to a variety of genres and asking them to compose frequently in and out of class. However, John said that by the end of English 101 he had decided to limit the activities he asked students to complete. He explained that teaching the course had been "really difficult for me, because I didn't feel really comfortable in the rhetoric thing and commenting on writing, and sort of being self-conscious of the [writing] process and how to teach that was also new territory, so I felt like there was no place to latch onto something I knew."

This sense of disconnect between what he set out to teach at the beginning of the semester and what he felt able to teach motivated John to design his English 102 course around a topic he had studied as an undergraduate, giving him greater familiarity and comfort with the subject matter and teaching methods of the course. At the beginning of English 102 John further explained this decision, saying, "I feel like we're asked to do a lot in this [course], and sometimes I feel like too much. Okay, so we're supposed to do research methods, writing—research methods, by the way, that I am not versed in—writing and this content. And so my approach at the beginning of the semester was sort of like, 'Well you know what, I know that's what the institution wants but it can't always get what it wants.'" In other words, while planning his English 102 schedule and assignments, John thought about his teaching challenges in English 101 and decided to privilege teaching thematic subject matter in his section of the course, devoting class time to discussion and lecture rather than to teaching writing or research methods. Although John was aware that his action was unsanctioned, his desire to incorporate familiar subject matter led him to reject the FYC program's guidelines and to replace them with his own agenda.

Like John, Bart also questioned the FYC curriculum, especially the program's decision to focus English 102 around both research methods and a particular topic of inquiry. Bart explained, "102 is about research, but I don't know that we set it up to succeed in that. I like the inquiry topics because it can be personalized, but if it's about the research, then maybe it should just be about the research." Bart went on to critique the English 102 curriculum, saying, "I think it's designed with a lot of ways to fail, and we shouldn't give [students] the expectation that they enter in from 101 to one of these [classes] with the skills they need to succeed." Bart indicated that he felt frustrated by his ability to adequately teach students these research skills in the amount of time allotted, arguing, "The three units that you do in 102 should be three separate classes. You should spend an entire semester on historical research, an entire semester on qualitative research, an entire semester on entering academic conversations." Furthermore, Bart said that he felt this balance between teaching research methods and teaching the topic was a real problem with the class, saying, "I guess the purpose of the inquiry topics is to teach [students] how to focus on one specific topic in doing that. I guess, honestly, it's just teaching the research methods, but in the end, I think the inquiry topics work because the … teachers want them to work, that they like doing what they want to do. I don't know if it gets across the message to us and to the students that the most important thing is the research."

According to Bart's account, this challenge was most present for him during the historical research unit; he said that he was "very excited about the history [unit] because I got to talk about so much cool stuff" and also "g[ot] to watch really cool movies along the way." Bart said that he devoted most of the class time in this unit to watching science fiction and horror movies related to his inquiry topic and talking about the ideas they raised. He explained,

> I don’t know how not to be more interested in talking about the [topic] than I am about talking about historical research. When we talk about stuff out of the [required textbook], I try to give it as much of my enthusiasm and whatnot, but it's not as interesting, and I'm imagining nobody sets up their inquiry topic for it to be not interesting so that the research can be in the foreground. Even as much as the [textbook] as we're reading and as much as I'm focusing on the writing, I'm imagining they're going to come out of the class with more information about the [topic] and ideas about the [topic] than they are about research.

In this case, though Bart understood the writing program’s expectations for the 102 curriculum, he felt that the class was trying to do too much by teaching three distinct types of research and an inquiry topic. Bart was in a state of rejection, replacing the class’s emphasis on modes of research with the topic itself—something Bart felt was both more interesting and more manageable.

Similarly, Andrew described experiencing a “disconnect between what they want me to do and what I feel I should do” in English 102, a feeling that he said began during his pedagogy class. Andrew explained that he felt frustrated by his lack of clarity about what the composition program valued in the English 102 course, noting, “Even when I was making my 102 proposal, I was so frustrated I didn’t know what they wanted.” For instance, Andrew expressed confusion over the sequence of the three assignments:

> It was weird. I mean the whole 102 thing was really weird to me the way it worked … You know what I mean, it’s “Hey, some people might need to run interviews so let’s teach them this,” and they’re all hands-on research, but some people don’t have to know how to do historical research, which I guess. I mean that’s what literary studies are about

> now, but then it's like, then we have to write in your field or something. I'm like how did these two papers prepare you for that exactly? … Just as a teacher sometimes, I don't know what they want from me, so I'm just going to teach them to become … Try to make them authoritative people, have confidence in their voice and think critically.

He explained his preference for spending class time discussing pop culture rather than research methods or writing, saying:

> That perfect class is one like I decided to put a video on. I wanted to surprise them. [A student] came in and she was like, "What are we learning today? I want to watch a video," and I'm like, "Maybe, you'll see." Then I put the computer plug in and they get excited. Is that good or bad? Do they just like my class because I show rap videos and talk about them? Are they learning anything? Is this fascinating for them? I don't know.

Andrew went on to discuss his approach to the FYC curriculum, saying, "505 gave me a certain way of looking at 101 and 102, which I think is just not fitting in with how I teach 101 and 102. I don't make them write every day, which I'm sure a lot of people do which is great. I just don't. I make them try and think every day. I'll give them a piece of something, a piece of culture, and I'll be like, 'Hey, well let's think about this.'" Having reflected on this teaching problem, his uncertainty about the English 102 curriculum, Andrew decided to reject what he found confusing and replace those components of the course—modes of research and direct writing instruction—with course content that he felt more invested in: critical discussion of pop culture texts.

In addition to problems that they themselves encountered with particular concepts or components of the FYC curriculum, these GTAs also identified problems with their students' perceptions of the curriculum. While teaching English 101, Bart reported feeling challenged by his ability to teach rhetoric and worried that students were "bored" by the rhetorical vocabulary

presented in the course textbooks. Bart said that "a lot of the students were having trouble just with the term 'rhetoric,' and even 'context' was something that was hard for them." Since students were having problems with those concepts, Bart said, "I tried to stay away from terms and tough sort of rhetorical theories and keep it to a practical level. While teaching them what they needed to know about the terms. Like, I still taught them *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, but I didn't say those words, because those are scary, and they're already wide-eyed and worried about the paper." According to his account, he decided to "give them different forms of analysis," even though he was concerned that the material he was presenting "was well over their heads." Bart explained that he asked students to read an excerpt from Jonathan Culler's *A Very Short Introduction to Literary Theory* and then gave them a "brief overview of how these different forms of analysis, as I was calling them—it's criticism, it's analysis, what's the difference—these different forms of analysis would work." Bart said he was surprised and excited that "some of them really got into the literary theory ideas, especially Foucault and things like that." Bart explained that he told students they could use "regular" rhetorical and contextual analysis in their papers, but encouraged them to try out "the other ideas…as a creative outlet." Moreover, Bart connected this approach to his own experiences as a student, saying, "Once I understand something, I get bored with it. I have to move on. I have to get something new." Seemingly concerned that other students felt that same way, Bart said that he brought in literary theory for the students "who are bored by the [writing] process; I wanted them to have something to do." Here again, after identifying a teaching problem—students are intimidated by rhetorical vocabulary—Bart engaged in limited reflection and decided to reject an aspect of the English 101 curriculum—rhetorical theory—and replace it with something more familiar: literary theory.

The data revealed a negative case of this pattern of rejection and replacement; in this

case, participants followed the same pattern, but their perception of what they were being asked to do by the program was factually inaccurate. Here, these GTAs felt themselves to be rejecting some aspect of the program and replacing it with something else, while in fact they were actually adopting or strengthening practices that were in line with the program's recommendations and values.

According to his account, Andrew felt frustrated that the program asked him to spend time in class on direct grammar instruction, and his sense that this was not an effective pedagogy caused him to spend class time on different kinds of writing activities that would support students' work towards their papers. For instance, Andrew imagined that if his composition pedagogy professor visited his class, "She would hate it. She would be like, 'What are you doing in this class? You are not doing what I taught you.' I don't know. I just make them do in-class writing, but I don't go over grammar." Though Andrew's pedagogy class did not instruct GTAs to spend large amounts of class time on direct grammar instruction, Andrew continued to associate grammar instruction with teaching writing. He elaborated, "I always disagreed with [my pedagogy professor] when she was always, 'We have to teach them the basics of writing' and it's true, don't get me wrong, I do slack a little in my class; I don't teach grammar as much as I should, but I feel you want them to be critical thinkers. I feel like basics of writing, yes, I can teach them grammar and I do when I look at their papers and stuff."

Andrew repeatedly said that he didn't "focus much on the writing," yet indicated that he often devoted class time to teaching concepts like thesis statements, transitions, and persona. Rather than teaching sentence-level issues in class, Andrew explained that he chose to address those problems on individual student papers: "I don't know. I just make them do in-class writing, but I don't go over grammar. I just try and do a good job on marking their papers ... I try to do a

good job of going over and saying, 'Okay, you're making the same grammar mistake over and over,' or 'This is a bad topic sentence. I've noticed that you don't write good topic sentences.' Then I try and write them a good follow up." In other words, Andrew's feeling that spending large amounts of class time on grammar instruction was not worthwhile caused him to feel frustrated by his perception that the program asked him to do just that. After reflecting on this problem, Andrew decided to reject the advice he believed he'd received, to spend class time on the skills students would need to succeed on their papers, and to teach grammar within the context of individual student drafts.

This negative pattern also occurred twice in Edward's accounts of his assignment design. First, Edward felt particularly frustrated with the position argument unit in English 101, which he characterized as "a waste of time" and felt that "it should be kind of struck from the curriculum altogether, because it just confuses students." Edward described the problems he encountered with this assignment, saying, "The position unit was really tough, and … it's just really tricky to fit in before the source-based argument paper. … I think it's just so, such a confusing transition from the rhetorical and contextual analysis to the source-based argument at the end. [Students] don't really know how to situate themselves within the assignment." Edward found the position argument especially troublesome because of his understanding that students were required to make an argument "but without using any sources," something he felt was a confusing and fake rhetorical situation. According to his report, Edward decided to make the position argument a group paper rather than an individual paper, focusing his grading "on the element of working in a group and communicating in a group" rather than on "the actual group paper." In this instance, Edward's feelings of frustration that arose from his sense that the position argument was not an effective assignment prompted him to reflect on this problem; he made changes upon reflection

that he perceived to be in contradiction to the program's guidelines, rejecting an evaluation of students' ability to craft an argument without sources and replacing it with an evaluation of how students established effective group dynamics to accomplish a task.

Edward described a similar teaching problem in English 102, this time with the historical research assignment. At the end of English 101, Edward said that he planned to talk with the Composition Office about how to approach the historical research unit, and he compared this assignment to the position paper and explained that he did not "want to make the same mistake I did with the position unit"; however, he ultimately did not seek additional feedback on this assignment. As with the position argument, Edward said that he was not sure what the assignment was supposed to accomplish, especially with the incorporation of a historical artifact, which he felt was unnecessary. He also indicated that he felt frustrated by the program's lack of resources for helping new instructors understand that project. He explained, "Yeah, there's a value in history, but you need to say more than that. I tried my best, but I felt like I had to do a lot. It wasn't terribly in line with the [required] book. And I wasn't sure if it was in line with the goals of the department, but I just kind of did it anyway." According to his account, Edward wanted to give students some historical breadth, "with research exploring kind of every corner, every nook that they possibly could with [the course topic]." He explained that to do this, he designed a group project in which students would produce both conduct historical research to create a professional text appropriate to his inquiry topic. Edward said, "I think in having to develop a narrative from your research, I think that's really again kind of just extracting what we can get out of history, what we can learn from history, how we can move forward with history. And that's really what I've been trying to do with the historical. Again, I don't know if that's terribly in line with what they want in the department, but it's the best I could do, I guess." After

experiencing the teaching problem of not being sure about curricular expectations, Edward reflected on this problem and decided to follow his own best judgment; he perceived himself as rejecting program expectations for the historical research assignment and replacing that assignment with one that fulfilled his own.

Flexibility/Experimentation

The instructors in this study described other situations in which they became aware that their classroom practices were not working as they intended or hoped, such as when students misunderstood or misused particular skills, performed poorly on written assignments, refused to engage with course activities, or when the class seemed to be out of control. These situations typically occurred after instructors had begun to gain some experience and confidence teaching and often involved GTAs who identified more strongly as teachers than as scholars; these attributes seemed to help GTAs have a greater openness to questioning their teaching practices and allowed them to be more flexible in the classroom. In this state of flexibility, instructors were more likely to experiment with new approaches to solve their teaching problems, sometimes seeking additional help or resources to do so. The instructors were likely to make these changes incrementally over a period of time, sometimes through a series of trial and error, and this outcome often happened after several instances of a particular classroom problem.

One challenge these teachers identified was students' lack of understanding or mastery of particular skills, such as analysis or conducting individual research. For instance, during her rhetorical analysis unit, Betty realized that students had trouble writing analysis. She explained,

> I found writing analysis, it wasn't that they didn't want to; they were not sure how to. Because they come out of a summary-based system. Which is, "I want to know what you've read. Give me the list of characters; give me the dates of the war." So they're not used to an analytical writing system. I mean, I don't think at all. What they are used to is,

> "In *Othello*, here's a list of characters, and on page four there's this, and here are my five quotes." And that's it … We don't expect any of that out of them. And for a lot of them that's their first thing, of like, "Look, I did the reading. Look, I know how to use *ethos, pathos,* and *logos*." Which I did not want in my paper, I hate that. "The *ethos* is this." But moving them out of it is very difficult because they just don't know how. I mean every paper that they've done, even research papers, are more showing, "Look, I found my eight quotes" than "I am using these quotes to support something."

According to her account, Betty decided to help students move from that habit of writing summary to writing analysis by designing a worksheet and activities that would help scaffold students' learning. Betty described this worksheet as follows:

> I made an entire worksheet on how to draft a paper and how to do analysis in a paper. And it's all—what it is, it basically makes for a very thorough rough draft slash outline. And it works, 1000%. And I made a few of them use it. I didn't insist for a couple, and then for a couple I was like, "No, no, no, go back." And what it does is it tells them how to step-by-step create a paper. Any subject, any topic, and any kind of method. But all papers have certain things in common: You're gonna have to have something vaguely analytical and you're gonna have to have a thesis statement. So I started, I went from just that, "Here's how to create a thesis statement" to, you know, they had their outline done, like "Here are the main points I want to talk about." Then how to create analytical sentences. I do a lot of drafting tools, cause you can just take out the words. They know that they can't keep those words in for a final paper. But, you know, "This connects to my thesis by doing this. This is significant to my argument by this. This is important, I chose to add this in here because of" … I'm not saying that all paper writing is an A, B,

> C fill-in-the-blank. However, when learning to do it—I mean, I didn't give them actual templates, cause that drives me crazy. But I did give them the rules and the structure and drafting techniques they can use to get to where they need to go. The conclusion is the hardest; I have rules for the conclusion as well that, if you follow, may not be the world's best conclusion, but it is a conclusion. That doesn't say, "In conclusion."

Betty said that she felt this worksheet, combined with in-class writing activities, helped to make "the paper and their writing the center of class." She explained that even the course readings were meant to be used in the service of student writing, saying, "Sample writing we looked at was either me writing as a student or was sample student writing. I mean, the stuff we read was stuff by professional writers, of course, but that was not as like, 'Here's what you want to emulate.' It was more like, 'Here's what you want to analyze.' And then, here's what other people have done, and here's when something works really well and here's when something doesn't." In other words, after experiencing a teaching challenge—students struggled to write analytic papers rather than summaries of texts—Betty reflected on this challenge, and, in a state of flexibility, decided to experiment with her instruction to better support student learning.

James also encountered the challenge of teaching students textual analysis in English 101, especially in the contextual analysis assignment. After asking students to compose a rhetorical analysis of a television ad, James said that he decided to change his approach to the contextual analysis, which he had originally intended to be about the same ad. Instead, he explained, "I decided that I really wanted … I really thought it was important for me to change the focus from doing a contextual analysis of the same ad that they had done … I thought it was a wasted opportunity to teach them an important skill in analyzing a text." James went on, "I changed the contextual analysis assignment because I didn't feel like using the TV ad was going

to really take me anywhere." According to his account, even after James had changed the assignment, students continued to struggle with the concept of analysis: "A lot of them made arguments about the issue and I talked about it a lot … After I had met with them for workshops or after they had turned in a document for a seminar or a reading response I would say, 'Guys, by the way, I'm reading this and this—I'm at workshops—I'm noticing that you guys are making arguments about these texts. Make sure that we're doing analysis and not argument.'" In this case, James felt troubled by the contextual analysis assignment, especially about students' ability to write analysis rather than argument. Inhabiting a state of flexibility, James experimented with his assignment after reflecting on this challenge, asking students to analyze an article rather than an advertisement. While this new approach helped scaffold student learning toward the third and fourth units, in which students work more closely with textual arguments, James found that students continued to struggle to write analyses, causing him to follow up with additional teaching experiments.

Another problem these teachers encountered with students' skills was the challenge of teaching writing to students with widely varying writing abilities. According to his account, Andrew felt prompted to make an adjustment to his teaching in English 102, saying "I'm trying to do more in-class writing this semester because, I don't know, I didn't do it that much in 101. I'm not sure why. I think I'm just … a lot of times I just ask them, 'What do you guys want to do? Do you want to do in-class writing or talk or do group work?' Of course, they never say in-class writing. Now I just ask them and I say, 'No, we're doing in-class writing,' so I don't take their advice." Andrew went on to note, "I'm trying to do more writing stuff in class, but it is difficult because people are at such different levels." Additionally, Andrew said, "I read some people's papers, and I'm like, 'This person knows how to write, they're good. They're going to do well in

this class.' Whereas other people are struggling with just simple sentence-level stuff; I mean, not that extreme, but just even putting a good body paragraph together, with a topic statement and having good flow. I find that really difficult to teach writing in class because everyone's at such different levels." To help students at multiple writing levels, Andrew said, he uses strategies like sharing exceptional student work so that the class will see, "This is someone in class who's writing really well." He said that he also used practices like having students respond to a series of questions, beginning with a difficult question like, "What's the ethics of equating love to drug use when this stuff is really happening in the world? Is this good or bad?" and moving from there to questions that would help students think about their paper topics. Having identified a teaching problem—a need to have students write more often while uncertain about how to work with different levels of writing ability—Andrew experimented with adjusting his pedagogy to be more directive in class and provide more opportunities for writing and sharing writing, having entered a state of flexibility.

John also experienced a teaching problem associated with students' skills, this time with their ability to use the library's databases to locate appropriate articles for their research projects. He explained that he had developed a "spiel" about doing library research for the classes he'd taught as a mentor and that he had also used in English 101in which he demonstrated how to use the databases; however, he said, the students didn't learn what he had expected them to: "I did this whole presentation with them, that they asked for, and then they were still like, 'We don't know what to do.' And I was like, 'I gave you, I told you where exactly to go.'" Frustrated that students were still confused by this process, John said that he tried to change his approach in English 102, saying, "I tried to do some of that and tried to do more sort of like the teach a man to fish, you know, rather than give him the fish." This time, John said, he gave students an article

about one of the texts they'd been reading but then "tried to take them through kind of teaching them to fish, teaching them to do the search all around, so we had it displayed on the board … showed okay, very intentional, here's the links you need to go to, here's the things to remember, write this down, this is good, write this down." John reported that he introduced students to several databases and showed them one article from each, asking students to follow along on their own computers. After this lesson, he felt that students were more successful finding relevant sources for their projects, saying, "I feel like on the whole, the kids that are putting in the time seem to be finding the stuff." In this case, John experienced a teaching problem that caused him to reflect upon and experiment with his teaching practices: students struggled to find their own sources after his library presentation in English 101 and so he tried to involve them more in the search process in English 102. This adjustment of incorporating a more active learning strategy also helped to better support student learning, if unevenly.

Instructors also identified student performance on writing assignments as a teaching challenge that led them to reflect upon and adjust their practices. According to his report, John had originally decided to minimize his attention to writing in English 102, saying, "At the beginning I was like, okay, I can't stand all this crap, like turning in this and turning in that, evaluating that … I was like, okay, we're gonna simplify it. We've got three papers, two conferences… and we're gonna read shit, and we're gonna talk about it." However, John said he came to realize this approach was not working as effectively as he had hoped. He explained that he had expected to be able to judge the success of his lessons and class activity by students' papers, saying, "I think another way to evaluate whether a lesson was successful is to see is it, is it transferring into their writing? So far, I've seen in the writing is kind of a mixed bag of that. And I'm not really sure how much is related to teaching or how much is previous preparation."

He went on to say that he didn't feel "there was as much of a clarity about" the assignments as he had hoped for, noting "I don't know if that's sort of like me still learning how to communicate these things, or again, I do feel, sometimes I feel like it's not so complicated." He added, "I have sensed with this first unit, regardless what the cause, I feel like there isn't, there isn't as much of an awareness here."

Prompted to reflect on his approach to incorporating writing instruction into the English 102 classes by students' performance on papers, John said that he came to understand "that we do need to be intentional about [writing] in the classroom … I think I understand the need to make this kind of a consistent thing we're intentional about. Being attentive to the writing." For instance, John said that near the end of the second unit, he brought in sample student papers and had his class grade them using the rubric for their paper. He had borrowed this idea from a peer and said he was impressed that "it seemed to work" and that he "saw a lot more consistency in their papers." According to John, that experience helped him see "how certain things work—or how just having specificity and examples really works; people need that to get it. And I tend to, to try to like teach the concept rather than the example. And I think the example's really helpful. So just the need for, for that concretization." Here, John's experiences reviewing student work over a period of time caused him to reflect upon and adjust his approach to teaching writing in class. Having experimented with an activity that involved direct writing instruction, John came to realize he needed to be more consistent about providing students with practice and models; he entered a state of flexibility that allowed him to question his instructional practices to better support students' learning about writing.

Aaron also experienced a sense of dismay after receiving student papers that did not meet his expectations; this problem prompted him to rethink and adjust his classroom practices. After

grading the qualitative research assignment, Aaron said that he was disappointed that he hadn't "read too many that get to that point of kind of synthesizing the results into an actual argument, and kind of not getting bogged down and just rehashing results and not just focusing on personal opinion." After finding that students struggled to develop arguments from their data, Aaron explained that he felt inspired to make more explicit connections between what students did in class and what they were expected to do in their papers. Prompted by this sense of a disconnect between his intentions and results to reflect on his practices, Aaron adjusted his approach and began to implement activities like revising research questions as a class, saying, "I felt really, you know, inspired to, to make those connections seeing as, seeing the kind of struggles that they seemed to have formulating their qualitative research papers." However, he said, he remained perplexed about how to better equip students to write their papers and felt that his class activities and students' ability to apply those activities to their writing were "hit or miss." Aaron explained that he wanted to include more interactive learning but fell back on lecture and "softball questions" to generate class discussion. Again, prompted to reflect upon his teaching practices after encountering a problem—students' poor performance on a written assignment—Aaron entered a state of flexibility and began to experiment with ways to make more explicit connections between in-class activities and writing projects.

Bart was prompted to reflect upon and adjust his teaching strategies after receiving a set of student papers in which a number of students had inadvertently plagiarized, misattributing or non-attributing sources. Bart described the situation, saying, "The first paper wouldn't have been terrible except, I think, the second paper I graded was so obviously plagiarized, and so I just went in and put in a sentence and found where he'd stolen that from. Then I thought, 'Maybe this is me. Maybe I didn't teach them well enough,' so I was checking some of the other papers and I

found that they must not have gathered how to do citations very well." Bart said that this problem prompted him to re-teach MLA citation, explaining,

> We didn't have a movie at the end of the second unit. What we did was revisions of the first paper, which I had no plans of letting them revise papers, but because it was such a widespread-seeming problem with citation, I taught them citation somewhat, just going over it again but specifically talking about how to do citation when you're doing summary and things of that sort. … Once we did that, and I gave them a handout that was very specific—I just went to a lot of different writing websites and looked at stuff about plagiarism—and not trying to find a particular way of telling them what plagiarism was, but trying to find particular ways of showing them how to avoid it. I gave them a handout that cited those sources, which I hope helped. I showed them how, in class again, just making up sources, picking a source we'd already read and citing it. I didn't give them a huge turnaround for their revisions, which honestly—I didn't know how to respond to this when they were like—some of them said that they didn't learn citation in 101, and I thought, "What? That's your fault because somebody was teaching it. I guarantee it." I felt bad that I guess I didn't stress it enough, but at the same time, I didn't want to give them extra credit for being slackers. … I didn't want to give everyone a gift, but at the same time, I felt, "Well, maybe we could have gone over this a bit more."

Having encountered the teaching problem of widespread plagiarism, Bart, in a state of flexibility, reflected on his instruction and decided to experiment with activities help students better learn MLA citation style, something he had not originally planned to do. These changes allowed Bart to better support student learning, in that he approached misuse of sources as a teaching opportunity and encouraged students to revise.

These GTAs also identified students' lack of engagement with coursework or in-class activities as a teaching challenge that caused them to adjust their practices. For example, Aaron said that he felt frustrated by students' tendency to sleep during class in the first half of English 101, particularly during the lectures he relied on to begin each unit. He explained,

> I think the challenging thing is when I'm starting a new unit or new concept, and so I have to kind of do a lot of lecturing to set that up. Trying to keep a portion of the students awake and attentive and really just focused on class. You know, making sure that they're—a lot of them do kind of nod off if we're not, you know, discussing a whole lot or moving the conversation around. So it's been a little bit of a struggle trying to inject enough interesting anecdotal stuff or whatever. You know, pictures, and just kind of changing it up. And then just managing a classroom, to keep everybody focused.

About halfway through his English 101 class, Aaron was surprised by the results of a problem-solving activity that asked students to work together as a class to convince him to see a particular film, a task he hoped would help them better understand the concepts of audience and rhetorical situation. Aaron reported that students seemed energized by this activity, and he was impressed by their ability to cooperate with each other and to craft convincing arguments. Aaron explained the activity had been:

> [S]omething I definitely wouldn't have done at the beginning of the semester, partly because I wasn't as familiar with the students, didn't know how that would go over, or whether they would understand that there is a lesson behind all this. So yeah, I think when I feel like I can introduce the topic or the concept to them and they can get it fairly quickly then I feel more comfortable doing stuff like that, it's kind of out of the ordinary. So yeah, like with the rhetorical analysis, it was a lot of discussion and lecture and, you

> know, breaking down all the terms. So, I didn't want to do stuff like that, where the risk is that they might not actually be comprehending any of it and they just see it as a game and whatever, so. Yeah, I think my teaching style kind of changed based on the material and how receptive they were to the material.

By the end of the semester, Aaron felt that this had been his most successful lesson, though he did provide a caveat about how much this had changed his class dynamic, saying, "I still don't get the response that I think I'm gonna get in my head …. I guess it's just 8 and 9 in the morning and they're just not really receptive and want to engage with all the material, regardless of what it is." In this case, Aaron was prompted to reflect on his teaching strategies by his frustration that students seemed disengaged with the class; in a state of flexibility, he experimented with his teaching practices to include more active, problem-based learning, even though he felt the results were uneven.

Lizzy also experienced a teaching problem—lack of student engagement with course reading and discussion—that caused her to experiment with her instructional strategies. According to her report, in the beginning of her first semester teaching Lizzy spent a large portion of time in each class period presenting materials through PowerPoint. However, Lizzy said:

> By the end of the semester, I was getting aggravated with them not reading and so I would begin the discussion and then try to get them to engage with a text. A lot of times, and I don't know if I like that I did this, but I know they weren't doing the reading and I felt like it was beyond the point of me really enforcing it by the end of semester. I was just having them … A lot of this stuff in [the course textbooks] are just a page or a few pages. I would just make them get in groups and present on it. Not formally but like okay,

> you all need to look at this section and then tell us about it … Then I would end with another set of questions or another activity that would follow up on the lesson. With [this] system, you give the lesson and then you try to follow it up with an application. I would try to integrate some kind of activity or whatever it needs to be in the course.

In Lizzy's words, she felt "aggravated" that students were not engaging completely with the course material; this feeling prompted her to reflect on her instructional approach and, in a state of flexibility, to experiment with her teaching strategies so that students would be more involved with the class and more responsible for their own learning.

Betty described a teaching challenge in which students demonstrated lack of engagement in a particular lesson. She explained that she had decided to include a lesson on rhetorical grammar in English 101, saying:

> I like the idea of, you know, grammar is not, it's fluid, that kind of thing. And they just had no interest in the different ways to do grammar. What they had an interest in was "That's fine. How do I do this?" And I thought it was interesting, because I thought it actually made for a more interesting lecture, personally. But they, what they wanted—and I understand—what they wanted was, "Yeah, I know a grammar lecture'd be boring, but I want to know when do I use commas? When can I use a semi-colon?" They didn't want any of the, "Well is it okay if you're just sending an email?" They took that as, "Yeah, of course; that's fine. But I want to know how to do this" … But they did want that and they did not at all dig what I was—I mean they kept asking questions like, "But how do I do this?" and I said, "Well you can look that up; we're talking about this." But they didn't care.

Betty went on to describe her reaction to students' lack of engagement with the topic of

rhetorical grammar:

> Thinking about it, it makes total sense. Why do they care the different ways grammar can be used? I think that's interesting. What they want to know is, "Why can't I use this tense at this time" or, you know, that kind of thing … It's too bad; I thought it was interesting. But they totally didn't. And I did give it up. I mean, you can't keep running into a wall, so 15 minutes in, I said "All right." They had all brought their *Harbrace* and I just told them to find things they didn't know. I mean it was very, very spur of the moment. But they seemed a little happier with that, of, you know, "Look these things up. Share with the group next door." And, on a really pragmatic, like I said, I can understand it; what do they care. I'd love for them to be like, "Oh, that's so interesting. Look at that, grammar's fluid!" No, no, no, they don't want it. And the thing is, too, it's true, I don't want them to be overly fluid with their grammar. I want them to not use contractions … I'd still like to come up with something that was vaguely interesting, and it might be just because I am not that fascinated with grammar and all of its rules, so I can see why for me, I thought rhetorical grammar was really interesting. They didn't dig on it at all. They didn't. So that one was … That one, I just stopped.

Here, Betty describes a moment of reflection-in-action: noticing that students seemed disinterested in the concept of rhetorical grammar, Betty reflected on the problem and realized she had a created a teacher-centered rather than student-centered lesson; in a state of flexibility, she adjusted her lesson midway through the class period so that the activity would be more productive for students.

A teaching challenge that some of these instructors encountered was the sense that a class as a whole was in some way not working as intended or out of control. For instance, Lizzy

explained, “What happened mid-semester is I just felt like I had a disconnect with the students in some ways or I wasn’t giving them what they needed. It was just it was an intuitive thing.” This sense of disconnect prompted Lizzy to reflect on her teaching strategies and to seek advice from the Director of Composition, who helped Lizzy revise some aspects of her syllabus. According to her account, following this conversation Lizzy changed the way she had been grading, began to break down tasks into more discrete steps, provided students with more examples, and taught skills like proofreading. For example, Lizzy said that she started to use a department-sanctioned grading rubric for her last two papers, which she felt helped her “start being more specific in what I’m looking for and standardize my grading a lot more than the rubric I had that I made myself.” She also realized that she needed to slow down and teach some concepts more deliberately, saying, “I always forget how much you have to break down things to students. I feel like I was just driving by certain things because I’m like ‘oh you got, this is not’ … They really do, things that I’m like, ‘That’s simple.’ I need to break things down more. They really need to talk about things that I might think are simple.” One example of that, according to Lizzy’s account, was how to make an argument or teach “little things” like MLA. Here, Lizzy recognized a teaching problem—her class didn’t seem to be fulfilling students’ needs—and, in a state of flexibility, she reflected upon this challenge and discussed it with the Director of Composition, experimenting with course activities to better support student learning.

A teaching problem that Paige encountered in both English 101 and 102 was a sense that her class was out of control. Halfway through her first semester teaching, Paige explained that she “hit kind of a really, really low point” in one of her classes. She felt that this experience provided her with “the impetus for something’s gotta change. I just felt like things were out of control; I felt like I wasn’t doing anything right; I was frustrated; I felt the students were

frustrated. And I think hitting that point was part of what helped me be able to step back." Paige explained that she was surprised by the problems she had encountered:

> I did not expect to have trouble with managing my classroom. I did not expect to have to fight to make myself heard. I didn't expect for them to need to be so explicit in things; I mean, there's still a breakdown between if I say something verbally and if I write it down … I find that frustrating … And I didn't really, I didn't expect to have so much trouble with them hearing me. And on several levels … And the other thing I think that I didn't really expect is [deep breath] I am not the most organized person, so I didn't expect, troubles keeping track and keeping up and keeping—you know, I knew that it would take me a while to respond to things, but I wish I had had a better, like, fail-proof system set up, like just check these boxes. You know? So I didn't really expect that kind of administrative challenge.

After this feeling of frustration began to peak, Paige said that she started "expressing, you know, I'm having trouble, I'm having trouble, and I wasn't hearing like any positive feedback. What I got when I asked for help, which makes sense, but, and from more than one direction, was all kind of like—not mean, but here's what's going wrong. And I needed—I needed somebody to say there's something going right here. And I actually got some of that from reflections from students." In particular, Paige said, "Hearing even a student say explicitly … if you don't keep us to these guidelines, that hurts your ethos." Paige went on to say, "Having that kind of click, seeing that it, it wasn't caring for them in the way that I wanted to care for them to allow that kind of slippage to happen. And since I've stopped that, it's hard, but there's been almost a fundamental change. So. Setting boundaries and keeping boundaries."

Though Paige felt this adjustment of setting and keeping boundaries was successful in her

English 101 classes, she again experienced a sense of being out of control in English 102. According to her account, Paige was prompted to reflect on her feeling that her class was not working as intended after having "anxiety dreams about it, because it felt so out of control." Paige explained that she began having these dreams after one class that was "sort of chaotic" and a second that she characterized as "a horrible disaster." In the first class, she had given students the task of forming the groups they would work in to complete a collaborative class website. Paige said:

> It took forever. Forever. And I really wanted them to try to do it and figure it out. So, you know, all the things that I think can go wrong when you try to make 24 people do anything—nobody listened, people would just stand up and say, "Let's do this!" and then no one did, and so what eventually happened was they just went around the table and whoever they were sitting closest to is the group that they chose.

Paige felt the second class period was even less successful than the first; she described it as follows:

> They had read each other's stuff—or, had the assignment to read each other's stuff—and they were going to discuss that. And their research questions for the next project coming up. And that for me was a horrible disaster … Trying to bring them around to, like, "I need to give you instructions so that you can break into your groups and do this work." Combined with the fact that I—we—decided to go outside, and I said this at the beginning of class—which is stupid! I know better than to do that. So, you know, within the like 20 minutes of instruction that I needed to give them, ahead of that they were just all over the place. I had to stop more than once because people were just talking all over everyone. At one point I did the, you just get quiet, and it took a good two minutes for the

> room to get quiet, and then the one student—who you may have seen me tell put away his other books in class, just kind of looked around, was like, "Gosh, it got quiet all of a sudden."

Frustrated by these two class periods, Paige said that she asked her students to write about their experiences in those class meetings; she summarized their responses, saying, "They were like, 'It was crazy! Nobody listened to anybody!'" Paige used those responses to generate discussion about strategies they thought would help them achieve this collaborative work in the future and about the "things that they really, really felt didn't work." However, Paige explained that she still had not lost those feelings of anxiety; she felt that the experience of trying to teach a class based on principles of cooperative education "is stressful, because—partly because I'm invested in it; I want to believe that it works. Part of me has decided that, yes, it works if people have a legitimate reason to cooperate. And maybe just, 'We have to do this for a grade' is not the most legitimate. Although, it's a reason … I think that they do want to accomplish that goal. But I don't know."

Though Paige felt this conversation helped to resolve some issues with the class, she still commented at the end of the semester on her realization that she needs to be more direct and explicit and more organized. Paige said, "I've learned a lot through doing this. I would think I would foreground it a lot more with just, not just signposting of 'Here's what we're going to do,' but more of 'Not only this is what we're going to do, but here's why. Here is why I want you to do this.'" She went on to note, "My philosophy is the same; I still think it's important for people to learn that way. But I think, especially with first-years, who have a certain set of expectations, that it just needs to be much more transparent for them. Rather than this battle of like, 'Okay some days you'd better listen to me, and some days it's kind of like a party.' It was—I think we

had a disconnect with that." In this case, Paige confronted similar problems repeatedly, especially a feeling that her class was out of control because of a lack of boundaries, explicitness, and organization. Both semesters, she was prompted to reflect on and, in some cases, seek additional feedback by these feelings of frustration and anxiety. Inhabiting a state of flexibility, Paige made an adjustment to her teaching style in the first semester that seemed to work for that class; she had to make another adjustment to her pedagogy the second semester. Each time, this experimentation brought her closer to her vision for the class, even if these problems continued to resurface.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

> I think I am often puzzled by what has actually happened. Like, here's what I thought I was gonna do—which isn't always exactly what comes out of my mouth or what happens. And then, even if what comes out of my mouth is what I thought was going to, I'm never always completely sure what has happened. Just the sort of feeling later of, what did—what happened in there? What did we really accomplish? That sort of not being able to know for sure, like measurably, if I'm actually teaching them anything. I would like to know what it is they're actually learning, which I'm puzzled by that; I don't know how to tell what they're actually learning. And probably, you know, worried sometimes that they're not getting everything that they need; hopeful that they're getting some of the things that they need. But "What's happening?" is probably the most sort of puzzling thing.
>
> —Paige, interview 6

The purpose of this study was to learn about the processes by which novice writing teachers develop pedagogical thinking, including how GTAs' understanding of writing pedagogy changes over time, how they teach writing to undergraduate students, and how they respond to teaching challenges. Contemporary higher education reform discourse has drawn attention to undergraduate students' writing instruction and raised concerns about the institutional practice of staffing first-year composition with new and non-tenured teachers. However, little research has been done to investigate GTAs' perceptions of the first-year writing course, their experiences teaching it, or the knowledge and habits of mind they bring to bear on their teaching of writing. While previous composition studies research has emphasized the influence of prior writing and classroom experience on GTAs' attitudes toward and teaching of FYC, we still have gaps in our knowledge about novice instructors' learning and development, especially about the role of reflective practice in shaping their pedagogical thinking and classroom instruction. This study sought to construct an account of the processes by which GTAs react to and reflect upon teaching challenges. It was informed by a social constructivist theoretical framework and used

qualitative research methods to investigate processes of GTA development. Data were collected in two phases, with six novice GTA instructors participating in each phase of the study. In the first phase, six semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, and in the second, two were conducted with each participant; the interviews averaged 60-90 minutes. Additional data were collected from classroom observations, participant observation of the required composition pedagogy course, reflective writing from participants in the second phase of the study, and teaching materials.

The data revealed that the ways in which these GTAs framed and responded to teaching challenges were shaped by their existing interpretive frameworks. These interpretative frameworks were composed of their prior experience; teaching knowledge; beliefs about teaching, learners, and writing; and self-defense mechanisms. The data also indicated that when faced with a teaching challenge, these GTAs typically reflected on the problem in a limited, fleeting way and made no or few changes or changes that only rarely resolved the problem. Following their awareness of disconnect and limited process of reflection, one of four outcomes was likely: inertia, where the instructors recognized some adjustment was needed but made no change in their actions because uncertain of what to modify or how to implement a change; self-approbation, where the instructors made no change in their actions because of a sense that students or the writing program were at fault rather than their practices; rejection/replacement, where the instructors made a change despite an awareness that it contradicted the FYC program guidelines; and flexibility/experimentation, where the instructors experimented with teaching practices that would better support student learning, if unevenly. In this chapter, I first discuss the findings in relation to existing research, theories, and practices concerning GTA education and development. I next consider relevant methodological issues that may have influenced the

study's findings. I also raise implications for writing pedagogy education and ongoing professional development, and make recommendations for future research.

Discussion of the Findings

The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter voices a concern that seemed to be shared among many of the teachers who participated in this study. A sense of disconnect between intentions and actions, anxiety about student learning, and puzzlement about how to tell what happened in class represent common challenges to reflective practice for this group of GTAs. These instructors' accounts indicate that when they experienced a sense of dissonance in their teaching—a sense that something hadn't gone right in class, often prompted by a feeling of frustration with their students' writing performance or with the FYC program's expectations that they teach "new" knowledge within a particular curriculum—they usually reflected on that problem in superficial ways that rarely prompted beneficial changes to their instruction. While the GTAs in this study did spend time thinking about the classroom problems they encountered, few engaged in the kind of deliberate, critical questioning of values, assumptions, and practices recommended by teacher educators. By confronting classroom problems with an insufficiently theorized framework for thinking through difficulties, these GTAs made choices that for the most part were not likely to prevent the problem they faced from recurring.

The interpretive framework revealed through these GTAs' accounts is in some ways similar to previous research about the effects of prior experience, knowledge, and beliefs on teachers' actions. While some of the components that comprise this interpretive framework are discussed in other studies of teacher education and development, such as prior experience and teacher beliefs about teaching and learning, the framework presented here is unique in bringing together the influences of not only novice instructors' prior experience, knowledge, and beliefs,

but also their defense mechanisms. The stories presented by these GTAs highlight the ways in which their responses to classroom challenges were filtered through their individual interpretive frameworks in a process similar to the ways in which GTAs' personal constructs filtered their ability to take up new knowledge in Bishop's and Farris's studies. In each case, GTAs' thinking about new events or knowledge is "channelized" (Farris, *Subject*, 33) by existing structures; a process of recombination and modification is necessary for people to make sense of a new experience (Farris, *Subject*, 31). Likewise, the components of these GTAs' interpretive frameworks acted together to exert pressure on the ways in which they set and responded to teaching problems. Though these components are interactive and interrelational, I will attempt to tease apart separate influences in the discussion below.

As discussed in Chapter Two, much research already exists about the importance of prior experience on teacher learning and decision making. The findings here about the role of novice instructors' apprenticeship of observation (Lortie) correspond to other studies that highlight the influence of teachers' K-12 education, undergraduate and graduate disciplinary training, and practitioner experience. For example, Estrem and Reid's analysis of 41 interview accounts led them to conclude that prior experience as students and teachers had more influence on GTAs' thinking and, especially, classroom practice than their formal training ("What" 460; Reid and Estrem, "Effects," 33-34). More specifically, this study concurs with other research that suggests more attention should be paid to teachers' post-high school apprenticeship of observation to identify influences on teacher thinking. Not only did the GTAs in this study refer to particularly memorable college professors, but they also described how their experiences in those classrooms and mentoring relationships shaped their own expectations about learning. These experiences seemed similar to those documented in other studies, such as Grossman's research with novice

middle school teachers, whom she found "all drew upon their college courses as sources of ideas about teaching" (145). The undergraduate and graduate classroom experiences of the GTAs in this study seem to echo those Marshall and Smith discovered their English education students routinely encountered, where "[s]tudents read, write, and discuss—almost always in that order—with the assumption that the 'teaching' is in the discussion, in the exchange of ideas with the instructor and the other students in the class" (256). These courses were characterized by "large-group discussions of specific texts" (256) in which faculty voices dominated those of students (257). The writing for these courses was thesis-driven argumentative essays about texts in which "students represented their understanding of what they had read" (259). As with Marshall and Smith's students, such experiences seemed to shape these GTAs' classroom approaches, as many relied on teacher-directed discussion of texts or ideas as the primary focus of the writing classroom.

The findings from this study also correspond to previous research about the role of prior writing experience in GTAs' understanding of writing pedagogy and classroom activities. These GTAs spoke about drawing on prior professional or disciplinary writing experiences to help them conceptualize purposes for writing beyond FYC. Teachers with limited prior writing experience, such as Aaron, who had primarily written close readings of texts as an English undergraduate, expressed greater difficulty reconciling his beliefs about writing and teaching with his enacted pedagogy than did teachers like Edward or Betty, who had greater repertoires of writing experiences to draw upon. While these findings are similar to those Ebest presented in her account of teacher resistance toward composition pedagogy—David, for instance, resembles Ebest's "inexperienced teachers and experienced but superstitious writers" who believed "that good writing was the result of inspiration" (101)—these teachers did not necessarily resist

composition theory about active and collaborative learning, but had difficulty putting it into practice. Instead, their prior writing experiences served as a source of ideas about how people learn to write and what writing can do in and beyond the classroom, seemingly much like the experience of Maggie, the only self-identified participant in Reid and Estrem's study, who indicated that she "value[d] her *own writing experience*" most highly for solving problems as a first-year TA ("Effects" 52, original emphasis).

The accounts presented by GTAs in this study who felt overwhelmed by their new relationship to academic writing through their simultaneous roles as novice FYC teachers and novice graduate students were also similar to Dryer's report of GTAs who "find their writing confidence and competence undermined in one set of classrooms and faculty offices while being positioned (and positioning themselves) as writing experts in another set of classrooms and in their own offices" (425). Like Dryer's participants, many of these GTAs struggled with that dual student-teacher/novice-expert position, yet their responses to this challenge and its effects on their construction of their student writers differed in some ways from those Dryer found among his participants, who were commenting on anonymous writing samples. John, for example, came to understand writing as a mode of thinking; although he applied this new understanding most often to his own graduate writing, he also found it a helpful concept for appreciating and addressing problematic student writing. Though this process resembles projection (Dryer 434)—John writes his way into an argument, and he sees his students doing so as well—it seems less an act of universalizing and normalizing relationships with writing (Dryer 441) and more like development of an understanding about how writers work. In other words, John drew together his own difficult experiences with academic writing and new knowledge about writing he had learned in the pedagogy class to ascribe agency to—rather than remove it from—his students.

The accounts of these GTAs indicated that entering a state of flexibility and experimentation was most closely associated with accumulated practitioner experience, as it usually occurred late in the first or during the second semester of teaching or with more experienced teachers. James, the only teacher in this study with prior high school teaching experience, was more likely to enter a state of flexibility and experimentation even in the first few months of teaching FYC than was any other instructor in this study. This finding resonates with research on GTAs across disciplines, such as Shannon, Twale, and Moore's survey of 129 TAs which found that "the only type of training that produced a significant effect on teaching effectiveness ratings was an undergraduate degree in education" (447). Much as the accounts of the GTAs in this study revealed, Shannon, Twale, and Moore found that TAs who had taught K-12 prior to college teaching may have perceived themselves as being less effective than peers without prior teaching experience, perhaps in part to having received more feedback on their practices; however, teachers without prior training in education and with greater confidence—like Andrew—were less likely to question their practices and therefore more likely to "repeat the same or less effective behaviors," without extensive supervision (456). These behaviors are unsurprising given Berliner's findings that less experienced teachers have more difficulty interpreting classroom events and evaluating their own performance; they tend to see their lessons as being more successful than a more experienced teacher would (*Development*).

Though the relationship between prior experience and teaching knowledge is difficult to separate, the interpretive framework presented here highlights three categories of knowledge or resources that recurred in these teachers' accounts of their classroom practices. These GTAs discussed using multiple sources of knowledge to guide their pedagogical thinking: theoretical-technical knowledge encountered in the pedagogy class and in FYC textbooks; practical-social

knowledge—similar to North's "lore"—accumulated through program handouts and talking with peers, more experienced teachers, and Composition Office representatives; and experiential knowledge, acquired through classroom experience as a FYC teacher. In some ways, their accounts of knowledge-seeking and knowledge-making correspond to findings from other studies, especially Hillocks's two-year study of twenty community college teachers, in which he found that most of these teachers relied on "practical learning theory," a theory that rests on an "if/then" conception of teaching: "if I explicate the rules, and if students do appropriate exercises in applying the rules, then students should be able to use the convention appropriately in their writing" (113).The teachers in this study made decisions that rested on similar, often tacit, theories of learning.

The experiences of the GTAs in this study raise questions about the types of knowledge that might be beneficial in a composition pedagogy course. Many of them mentioned theoretical-technical knowledge encountered in that course, such as theories of learning transfer and scaffolding; however, few sought out or drew upon those resources after leaving the pedagogy class, and others, such as Edward, did not actually read the scholars they believed themselves to be influenced by. On the one hand, this finding concurs with prior scholarship on GTA resistance to composition theory; these GTAs, like those in Rankin's study, feel conflicted about theory in the pedagogy class, preferring practice-oriented rather than theory- or praxis-oriented model (49). On the other hand, these GTAs do see a need for composition theory to inform their practice, and they make an effort to utilize some of that knowledge. While few GTAs in this study openly resisted composition and/or rhetorical theory, this theoretical material was more likely to be a source of inertia or rejection than it was a resource for problem solving. The experiences of these GTAs seem to correspond to those in Reid and Estrem's study, who

similarly did not appear to actively resist composition theory but instead ranked these "least familiar and most abstract factors lowest among things they can rely on in helping them feel and act like confident teachers" ("Effects" 55).

When faced with teaching unfamiliar material, these GTAs were more likely to turn to their FYC textbooks than to other sources from the field of rhetoric and composition. This practice is widely represented in research on novice K-12 teachers; for instance, Calderhead and Shorrock found that "teachers who are insecure in their subject knowledge tend to adopt a slavish adherence to textbooks" (13). While Reid hypothesizes the widespread influence of "mass-market composition textbooks" on college writing teachers' professionalization ("Preparing" 697), composition studies research has not yet documented how or to what extent GTAs rely on these resources. Though this study can offer only limited insight into GTAs' use of textbooks, the data does reveal that these instructors relied upon textbooks to help them understand the content they would be teaching and to generate ideas for discussion or activity. Only rarely did GTAs reference turning to other sources of authorized knowledge from the field of rhetoric and composition, such as scholarly books or articles, to help them better understand the content they would be teaching and effective methods for teaching it. Furthermore, though some of the GTAs in this study appeared to struggle to understand and resolve tensions between their prior learning and assumptions about writing, rhetoric, and teaching and the new knowledge presented in textbooks, few engaged in this activity of resolving differences—what Farris contends "lay at the center of [GTAs'] development as first-year college writing teachers" (*Subject*, 161)— especially those whose prior experiences, beliefs, or self-defense mechanisms seemed to constrain them from considering new theories and practices.

These teachers frequently spoke of turning to practical-social forms of knowledge when faced with a teaching challenge, indicating that they most often sought knowledge from their peer group to help them resolve problems and more rarely turned to representatives of the writing program. This desire for program materials to support and scaffold their first semester teaching and for a strong peer cohort echoes the experiences of GTAs in Rupiper Taggart and Lowry's multi-institutional survey, who were most concerned about developing peer cohorts (100) and who also valued not having to develop all of their own materials in the first year of teaching (95). The need some of these GTAs voiced for practical materials like syllabi and lesson plans to support their day-to-day instruction also seems to coincide with Restaino's finding that novice GTAs in her study embraced process pedagogy as a survival tactic, "as 'process-as-practice,' the 'stuff' to do to make the class really happen" (28). To some extent, the ways in which these GTAs sought social knowledge also seems to correspond to the "bitch and moan" sessions that Restaino chronicled, in which novice GTAs, as "beings in process," succumb to peer pressure when "pushed to act before they are ready" (67). The effects of turning to peers for support appeared mixed; in some cases, these GTAs found others who were willing to work through problems and share successful practices; in others, the peer cohort perpetuated ineffective teaching practices, like the *Jeopardy*-style citation game. A desire for teacher lore—practical, what-to-do-when advice—as perhaps the most pervasive source of beginning teacher knowledge also corresponds to Wulff, Austin, Nyquist, and Spague's finding that lore is the most commonly cited source of information about teaching among TAs in different disciplines (56).

Experiential knowledge was also valued by these GTAs, who drew upon what they learned experientially about teaching as much or more than other sources of knowledge. Both Bart and Andrew, for example, were more likely to face problems without seeking any

knowledge outside of themselves and their own accumulating classroom experience; others, like Paige, spoke about seeking multiple sources of knowledge but experiencing the greatest learning about teaching through "trial-and-error troubleshooting" to see what worked. These findings reinforce those of prior research, such as Reid and Estrem's survey results that indicated GTAs most valued teaching, tutoring, and writing experience for building skills, confidence, and problem solving than they did any other sources of knowledge ("Effects" 43). The stories told by these GTAs also suggest that greater consideration should be given to Berliner's assertions about experience in the development of teaching expertise. He writes:

> The point of beginning teaching is the accumulation of experience. That is all beginning teaching is for and that is all we should expect of it. From that experience comes the ability to understand what individual differences look and feel like in the classroom, how creative lessons interact with other instructional goals, and how level of processing can be inferred from classroom cues. (*Development*, 21)

For the GTAs in this study who had no prior teaching experience (Aaron, Andrew, Betty, David, Edward, Lizzy, Paige, and Victoria), simply being in the classroom and learning how to process environmental cues was an important element of their development of pedagogical thinking.

These GTAs' described beliefs about teaching, learners, and writing that shaped both how they framed and responded to teaching challenges, and the beliefs they express largely correspond to those documented in other studies. Many of these GTAs, like those in Estrem and Reid's study, espoused broadly construed beliefs about teaching such as "the importance of student 'engagement' and building a sense of classroom community" or "teaching writing as a complicated, messy, social process" ("What" 454), using "generalized language" that seemed to suggest these beliefs did not come entirely, or even primarily, from their composition pedagogy

education (457-58). The role of these beliefs in shaping teacher thinking and practice has been well-documented, especially in scholarship on K-12 teacher education (e.g., Pajares), and the experiences of these GTAs are consistent with patterns established by prior research, particularly in how their ability or inability to reconcile new knowledge and experience with existing beliefs affects novice teachers' likelihood of "assimilat[ing] theoretical considerations and research findings into their instructional decision making" (Berson and Breault 36).

The accounts of these GTAs revealed that their beliefs about learners often worked interactively with their self-defense mechanism to create a tendency to blame students for problems. Although teachers' representations of their beliefs about students were unstable, with GTAs such as Andrew characterizing his students as "super-smart" and "lazy" within the same interview, those who expressed negative beliefs about students' work ethic or capabilities were more likely to blame students for teaching problems. In this case, the experiences of these GTAs depart from those who participated in Reid and Estrem's study, who "*weren't* blaming students" but felt frustrated when they did not feel "successful with a particular student" ("What" 468, original emphasis). However, the findings of this study correspond to other research; Grossman, for example, raised concerns about teachers' tendency to base their expectations for students on their own experiences, cautioning:

> If people are attracted to teaching by their expectations of teaching students more or less like themselves … or of dealing with the subject matter in ways that will be intellectually challenging for themselves, they may presume a fairly elite group of potential students. As new teachers, however, they are unlikely to encounter these elite students. Without help, teachers may learn to blame the students for not learning … rather than to rethink their own assumptions about a teacher's responsibility to teach a wide range of students.

> This potential mismatch between teachers' implicit assumptions about students and the realities of their own students' abilities and interests may lead not only to instances of mislearning but to quick disenchantment with teaching. (142)

For teachers in this study who chose to pursue graduate coursework in textual studies, students who failed to engage with assigned reading or ostensibly entertaining texts, whose writing abilities or study habits failed to meet instructor expectations, or who were unable to process new knowledge quickly became sources of anger and disillusionment.

These GTAs' stories indicated that teachers' self-defense mechanisms seemed to come into play not only in relation to particular beliefs about students, but also as a way to protect themselves from feeling insecure about their teaching knowledge and authority or at fault for students' lack of learning. These self-defense mechanisms have not been well-documented in existing composition studies scholarship, although Farris warns that when novice teachers' classroom experiences fail to go well, they may resort to blaming the writing program—along with its required textbook, syllabus, curriculum, and so on—and blaming students ("Too," 101). However, Rankin's interviews with Mike showed that he, like John, Andrew, and Bart, became angry and defensive when he felt his authority slipping in the classroom, blaming students for leaving class on a day he came ten minutes late (25-27). As Rankin rightly points out, what was at stake for Mike here was "his professional authority, an authority that feels so fragile, so tenuous in his young career, that he must reinforce it with strong moral language" (27). While Mike may have resorted only to strong language, participants in this study also sometimes took some form of deliberate action when they came to blame the institution or their students for a teaching problem, at times rejecting some aspect of the writing program's curriculum and replacing it with something more familiar, such as Bart's decision to reject the rhetorical

terminology in English 101 and replace it with literary criticism or John's resolve to teach "content"—close reading of philosophical texts—rather than research methods or writing in his English 102 course. Of note here is the fact that, while both women and men at times blamed students or the institution for teaching problems, only male participants from the first phase of this study adopted a stance of rejection/replacement. Little research exists about gendered attitudes of male GTAs in composition studies; although Ebest's study set out to examine gendered differences in resistance to collaborative learning, she found that both women and men resisted the pedagogy; Rankin also included gender differences in her observation, but emphasized women's difficulties adopting authority in the classroom (9-11, 107-10). The gendered experiences of male participants that she documents includes one man's decision to openly identify as gay (7-9)—an area of GTA experience not well-documented in the literature—and the influence of gender on men's perceptions of and responses to students (11-14).

The ways in which these instructors described their process of problem identification, reflection, and action made it clear that, most often, they engaged in limited, superficial reflection that rarely involved the critical examination of their assumptions, values, or goals for teaching and that infrequently led them to resolve a problem in a way that would prevent it from happening again. By examining the evidence of these GTAs' accounts about how they worked through teaching challenges, this study took a step toward clarifying the processes by which GTAs employ reflective practice, and in doing so departed from much previous commentary in composition studies about the efficacy of reflective practice in writing pedagogy education and ongoing professional development. Rather than using reflective practice to move toward a more explicit and flexible theory of writing pedagogy in which they "retained what they found to be

successful strategies" and "sought explanations for what they felt to be their failures" (Farris, *Subject*, 165), the GTAs in this study generally struggled to identify the source of disconnect between their intentions and actions. This analysis supports the position taken by some, though not many, previous commentators on the efficacy of reflective practice for first-year GTAs, most powerfully voiced by Restaino, who found that teachers in the first semester occupy a "middle place between theory and practice, between staying alive—laboring—and holding one's head above the water for any length of time" that prevents them from engaging in sustained reflection (24-25).

Restaino's perception that GTAs have little time for reflection in the day-to-day struggle of "figuring out how to be teachers while, of course, teaching their first class(es)"(25) is borne out by the larger body of K-12 teacher education research, as well as by the experiences of GTAs in this study. Though the pedagogy courses these GTAs took were informed by reflective practice activities, such as writing reflective journal entries (Bamberg; Bishop; Ebest; Farris, *Subject*), reading responses (Hesse; Stygall), teaching philosophies (Bamberg), and, in the case of the second cohort of participants, engaging in classroom research (Ebest; Miller Cleary), they did not take a robust model of reflection with them into the first year of teaching. When these teachers did find time to reflect on their teaching challenges, their accounts indicated that they most often did so in snatched moments—on the way to the gym or driving home from class—typically resembling Eraut's "instant/reflex" and "rapid/intuitive" modes of cognition (407) or Zeichner and Liston's rapid reflection, repair, or review (45-46). Only a few of these teachers, such as Paige, Aaron, and James, seemed to approach lengthier temporal dimensions of reflection like research or retheorizing and reformulating (Zeichner and Liston 46).

Furthermore, the findings from this study are consistent with Hillocks's concern that "reflection is necessarily limited by the nature of teacher knowledge" (129). Without seeking additional resources, such as talking with representatives of the Composition Office or locating theoretical-technical knowledge about a teaching challenge, these instructors were most likely to enter a state of inertia, self-approbation, or rejection and replacement. The interactive components of their interpretive frameworks constrained their ability to think through a problem and address it. Hillocks discusses the effects of this closed cycle on teachers' reflection using the example of one participant, Professor James, whom Hillocks hypothesizes might reason as follows:

> If I explain how to evaluate in detail, and if I show students models of successful evaluations, then my students will be able to write their own evaluations. Such practical theories appear to interact with optimistic or nonoptimistic beliefs about students. That is, if a teacher believes that students are able and likely to learn, students' failure is likely to be a surprise to the teacher and to trigger questions about the teaching. If, on the other hand, teachers believe that students are unlikely to do well, there will be little surprise if they fail and little reason to question the effectiveness of teaching. Whether reflection takes place in preteaching, teaching, or postteaching, the same strictures hold. (129)

The problem-setting and subsequent actions of these GTAs seemed similarly channeled by their existing interpretive frameworks; though some struggled to incorporate new knowledge into those prior frameworks, that new understanding was more often grounded in experiential or social knowledge than in the theoretical-technical knowledge shared within the pedagogy course or writing program. Additionally, the experiences of some GTAs in this study, such as Andrew, point to the additional challenge of retheorizing and reformulating teaching practices by making

sense of and incorporating new teaching knowledge when that new knowledge rests upon a misperception or factual inaccuracy. Andrew believed that he was taught to include direct grammar instruction in each class period, despite the fact that his pedagogy professor never made such a statement. Still, he saw himself as reacting against this knowledge, which led him to feel frustrated with the writing program, question other advice and knowledge that he received from program representatives (including scholarly work in the field of rhetoric and composition), and define his own agenda for the class.

Although much research suggests that the transformation from learner to teacher is neither automatic nor linear (e.g., Berliner, *Development*; Bishop; Farris, *Subject*; Smagorinsky, Wilson, and Moore; Wulff, Austin, Nyquist, and Sprague), many still suggest that effective reflective practice can aid teacher growth and development (e.g., Bishop; Farris, *Subject*; Reid and Estrem, "Effects"; Steffy et al.). In fact, Steffy et al. argue that if the process of reflection, renewal, and growth is broken or fails to occur, then teachers will be more likely to experience withdrawal, the physical, emotional, and mental process by which educators disengage from the teaching profession; if teachers begin to withdraw, they are less likely to be effective in the classroom (15-16). The findings from this study suggest that such a concern is real and needs to be accounted for in GTA development: While some teachers, like Lizzy, Betty, or Aaron, were more likely to move into a state of flexibility and experimentation over time and after experiencing positive outcomes following an instance of reflection and change, others, like John or Bart, were more likely to adopt a stance of rejection and replacement, seeming to withdraw from the writing program, if not the composition classroom, after limited reflection on a problem that did not lead to effective resolution. Taken together, the stories these GTAs told about problem identification, reflection, and change suggest that, on the whole, even after a year of

robust preservice teacher education, these instructors struggle to make sense of their teaching. Though all engage in some form of reflective practice—they are all thoughtful teachers who care about their students and want to help them succeed—few engage in effective reflection that leads to changes supporting student learning and teacher development.

Methodological Considerations

Any methodology acts as a lens, drawing some things nearer and into greater focus while cutting others from the field of vision, and this study raised a number of methodological considerations relevant to the interpretation of the findings. First, collecting data by means of qualitative, naturalistic methods offered a fuller picture of how GTAs interpret their teaching experiences and how they think about and respond to those experiences than has usually been presented in the literature about them, especially in the body of composition studies scholarship that has largely relied on lore and anecdotal evidence about the efficacy of GTA education and reflective practice in instructor development. This method led to one of the major findings of the study, that GTAs did reflect upon teaching challenges, but typically in a superficial way that rarely resolved the problem or better supported student learning. These habits of mind could not have been ascertained through a survey, nor would a single source of data, like classroom observations or reflective writing, fully situate these GTAs' accounts within their complex social and institutional context. Using a combination of interviews, classroom observations, and teaching documents, this study was able to locate the meaning-making activities of FYC teachers within the context of preservice preparation and teaching composition for the first time. Additionally, the two-phase design of this study allowed for comparison of GTAs who had experienced different pedagogy courses; though few substantial differences emerged, the

similarities between these cohorts suggest that novice GTAs face similar challenges in the classroom and respond in similar ways.

The ways in which these GTAs thought about teaching challenges correspond to other studies that highlight the role of prior experience, knowledge, and beliefs in GTA learning, such as Reid and Estrem's multi-institutional mixed-method study and Farris's qualitative study. What was different in this study was the examination not only of what factors GTAs brought to bear on their thinking about teaching, but also what actions teachers took after reflection. Few teachers either straightforwardly resisted or embraced the theories presented to them by the writing program, as in Ebest's or Rankin's work; instead, teachers either made no change to their practices because they were unsure about what or how to change (inertia), or because they believed that the practice should work, whether or not it did (self-approbation); they made a change in which they deliberately rejected some aspect of the writing program's curriculum and replaced it with something they found more familiar or persuasive; or, in some cases, they began to experiment with new practices that might better support student learning (flexibility/experimentation). In other words, the qualitative methods used in this project allowed some insight into the relationship between *thinking about* and *doing* that has not often been captured in composition studies research about GTA learning and development.

The multiple sources of data used in this study and the open-ended nature of the interview questions lend credibility and dependability to these findings. As discussed in Chapter Three, qualitative research seeks "useful interpretations" (Crotty 47) that are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Denzin and Lincoln 32-33). The data that informed this study were drawn from repeated observations and interviews with two cohorts of novice instructors; I believe this "rich data" should impart some measure of dependability to the

findings I have presented here (Maxwell 110). Furthermore, triangulation from multiple sources of data and perspectives should offer a more in-depth understanding of the processes by which novice GTAs develop pedagogical thinking (Denzin and Lincoln 7). The interview protocols included questions such as: "Tell me a story about a challenge you faced in the classroom," "What changes did you make to your teaching after encountering that problem?", "What do you know now about teaching writing that you didn't know at the beginning of the semester?", and so on. These questions, while directing the participants toward a particular avenue of inquiry, left the nature of the response up to them, thereby imparting greater credibility to the findings.

While the qualitative methodology was effective in gathering data that yielded substantial findings regarding the teaching experiences of these novice GTAs, some aspects of the data collection and analysis process influenced and in some ways limited the study and the findings that emerged. One limitation of this study is that its focus on pedagogical challenges does not lend specific insight into the processes of how novice GTAs reflect upon successful teaching experiences. Although these GTAs did talk about particularly successful lessons or classroom experiences of which they felt proud, more of their interview accounts were given over to discussing problems. Similarly, this study cannot tell us much about what happens when GTAs fail to identify something problematic as a problem (e.g., with blanket statements like, "I think pretty much everything went great."). At times, these GTAs spoke about classroom events that a more experienced composition instructor might identify as troublesome, such as teaching rhetoric exclusively as a method of textual analysis, yet they did not seem prompted to reflect on the issue because they were unable to detect a problem, not experiencing a disconnect between their intentions or values and their practices. As scholars like Berliner (*Development*), Farris (*Subject*), and Hillocks have pointed out, novice teachers may be less likely to see classroom

problems, partly due to inexperience and partly because their prior personal constructs—what this study refers to as individual interpretive frameworks—preclude the teacher from noticing the problem .

Another limitation of this study results from my positionality as a researcher, which I described in Chapter Three. As I mentioned in the discussion above, the cases of rejection/replacement occurred only among male participants in this study; additionally, they occurred only within the first phase of the study. During that phase, I believe, based on exchanges in the exit interviews, that my participants saw me as more of a friend or peer, whereas those in the second phase of the study, during which I had a more active role in the composition pedagogy class and in the Composition Office, saw me as more of a teacher or authority figure. Although I believe that participants in the second phase of the study were generally forthcoming about their challenges, I suspect that my closer position to that of participants in the first phase led to more frank discussions of the challenges they faced and decisions they made, including their rationalization for those decisions. Furthermore, I suspect that self-selection bias also influenced this difference between the two cohorts; those in the first elected to participate to "do me a solid" as a friend, while those in the second wanted to continue working with and gaining feedback from a teacher/representative of the Composition Office. Beginning with that desire for reflective teaching dialogues, participants in the second cohort may have simply been self-selected for greater openness to questioning and experimentation than those in the first. However, beyond what is presented in the interview accounts of the participants who chose to reject and replace some aspect of the curriculum, this study cannot make any strong claims about what might or might not lead a teacher toward that decision.

A similar consideration arises from the fact that all of the participants who experienced rejection/replacement were men. As mentioned before, the first cohort of participants consisted of five men and one woman. This skewed gender dynamic is representative of the MA cohort that year, though accidentally so. Because this research project did not set out to examine gendered responses to teaching problems, I am unable to comment on the extent to which these responses may have been grounded in gendered attitudes toward authority and decision-making, nor can I account for gender differences in the interpretive framework teachers bring with them to the classroom; I can only point out that this pattern exists in the data.

The local context of the study site provides an additional methodological consideration for this study, as the writing program's first-semester focus on rhetoric and argumentation and second-semester focus on disciplinary forms of inquiry are not representative of all FYC curricula. Indeed, many of the challenges these teachers encountered in coming to terms with understanding and teaching rhetoric or unfamiliar forms of research may be specific to this program and therefore not widely generalizable. However, the processes by which these GTAs think about and react to new or difficult curricular concepts may have resonance beyond the immediate challenges of "I don't understand rhetoric and therefore will not teach it" or "Qualitative research is confusing and I don't know what to do to teach it." I hope that the findings from this study, though particular to this small group of GTAs, will shed some light on the ways in which novice graduate instructors of writing try to understand and implement—or not—a FYC curriculum.

Implications for Writing Pedagogy Education

The findings from this study were relevant to the context and setting of the writing program in which the study was conducted. Although the findings are not considered to be

generalizable to all GTA instructors of composition, the stories they shared about troublesome pedagogical situations raised issues that have been raised elsewhere in the literature, and their perspectives may offer some suggestions for practices in other writing pedagogy education programs like this one.

Over the last twenty years or so, writing pedagogy education has come to gain greater institutional and departmental support, and few GTA instructors of composition these days are simply handed a textbook and syllabus and let loose into the classroom (Fulkerson xi-xii). As institutions have come to adopt more robust models of teacher preparation, many pedagogy educators have advocated the inclusion of reflective practice as a significant component of GTA education and ongoing professional development. However, as others like Estrem and Reid have noted, support for these curricular models rest more upon anecdotal evidence and lore than on data-driven investigations of the efficacy of such practices ("What," 237-39; see also Reid "Preparing," 692). This study of the processes by which GTAs develop pedagogical thinking and expertise in teaching writing as they confront and reflect upon troublesome teaching situations, conducted within a writing program that had been nationally recognized for its preservice teacher training, demonstrated that, even though these GTAs had been exposed to various forms of reflection in the composition pedagogy class, few used reflection as a way to solve problems during their first year teaching.

Conceptions of reflective practice in composition studies literature seem most often to fall into Zeichner and Liston's category of "generic" reflective practice, which they define as advocacy for reflective "teaching in general," without establishing criteria to guide how teachers should reflect or what the reflection should be about. Estrem and Reid point to the need for additional attention to the processes of reflection, as they call for "added spaces for guided

discussions of teaching" ("What," 476). They explain what these guided discussions of teaching might include:

> We can ask [TAs], at various points over several semesters, to identify teaching challenges and tricky situations from their classrooms and then help them reflect on and work to understand those challenges in light of multiple scholarly and communal resources. Such approaches will help TAs broaden their repertoire of possible approaches as well as sharpen their skills at creating reasonable responses to challenging pedagogical situations. (476)

The findings from this study similarly make evident the need for writing pedagogy educators to more strategically intervene with robust applications of reflective practice strategies at certain key moments in novice instructors' classroom experiences during the first year. I believe that the model of teacher problem identification, reflection, and action presented in Chapter Four can be used not only to understand the factors that influence GTAs' pedagogical thinking and the actions they take, but can also be adapted as a model of guided critical reflection.

Guided reflective practice at regular intervals and about troubling classroom problems might help novice instructors develop a set of strategies that they could apply to different situations. Eventually, with practice, GTAs might internalize such a process, thereby engaging in more informed and effective reflection-in-action. This study has identified key moments that GTA instructors confront and the frameworks they draw upon when considering what action to take in response to those teaching challenges. Teacher educators can encourage novice instructors to build a more effective reflective practice by meeting at regular intervals over the first year of teaching and engaging in a process of guided reflection. At those meetings, teacher educators could ask instructors to identify a moment in their course that hasn't gone as expected,

using questions such as: “Have you been surprised by an activity or assignment that turned out differently than you expected?” “What has frustrated you about teaching so far?” “Tell me about a problem you’ve experienced in class.” Taking one of those moments, the teacher educator could help the GTA examine his or her response to that problem (“What did you do in that situation?” “What did students do?”) and identify possibilities for change. Such guided reflection might help GTAs move toward a model of critical reflective practice such as that proposed by Zeichner and Liston. Rather than reflecting on a classroom problem in a limited or fleeting way, in moments similar to Zeichner and Liston’s “quick pause for thought” (45), GTAs could practice approaching problems in ways that help them move toward multiple dimensions of reflection, including “retheorizing and reformulating” their practices (46) by questioning their existing interpretive frameworks—their goals, values, and assumptions about teaching—and by identifying possible ways to change what they are doing in class.

For instance, when the GTAs in this study paused to consider what to do at certain moments, they struggled with what they felt was their lack of prior experience with a particular subject matter and inexperience with certain pedagogical strategies. When John was faced with the challenge of teaching a robust version of rhetorical strategies, he engaged in limited reflection on the problem, yet the result was a state of inertia where he felt he could not draw on prior experience or teaching knowledge to direct his actions, not even knowledge gained in his pedagogy course. Had John been guided through a different, more intentional reflection when faced with that problem, he might have been able to more productively connect the strands of what he’d learned in the pedagogy class about rhetoric to his teaching. For example, he might have been asked to revisit resources he’d been given in that class, such as James Herrick’s *History and Theory of Rhetoric*, and to read with the intention of incorporating that information

into his lesson planning and assignment design, perhaps even preparing a response paper articulating these connections (e.g., Reid, "Teaching"; Hesse).

Similarly, GTAs might be guided to critically reflect upon the way in which their prior classroom experiences as students shaped their understanding of particular pedagogical activities and to explore multiple possibilities for teaching a concept. For example, Aaron's positive associations with the whole-class workshop blinded him from seeing the problem as connected to something he was doing in class and critically questioning his own assumptions about the workshop pedagogy. Had Aaron been guided in a more critical reflective process in which he could question the extent to which *his* understanding of the workshop pedagogy may have actually contributed to the problem, he might have been able to rethink his approach. One strategy for helping Aaron question his own method of implementing a well-known, effective approach to teaching writing would be to offer multiple models of this pedagogy and engage in a process of comparing his approach with others to determine what he's doing that aligns with and departs from these models.

Some instructors in this study did use a somewhat richer model of reflective practice. Prompted by her sense that class was not working as intended, Paige engaged in a process of reflection that lasted for months, in which she sought additional resources like feedback from members of the Composition Office, and which caused her to question her assumptions about teaching and learning. However, though Paige was engaging in more than quick or superficial reflection, she did not use a fully critical model of reflective practice, failing to examine some of her assumptions about the development of students' writing abilities and effective pedagogies for first-year students. A teacher educator might have might have directed Paige to additional resources to help him become more informed about concepts such as class management and

collaborative learning or steered her through a process of comparing her beliefs about how people learn to write to what her students were actually doing when writing—perhaps creating a situated role-playing activity (Finders and Rose) or helping Paige conduct teacher research on students' writing processes (Ebest).

Such a model of guided critical reflection might be adapted for preservice teacher education through the incorporation of case-based scenarios that students could use to practice thinking through teaching dilemmas. Such scenarios could take a narrative form, but video of a real or staged class might better scaffold novice instructors toward seeing and thinking like experts. Since, as Berliner points out in his study of teacher expertise and as the findings of this study confirmed, novices need experience to effectively read classroom situations, early GTA education might focus less on theoretical knowledge and more on what Berliner calls "perceptual training," the practice of "teaching the novice to see what teacher educators believe is important for later development," as well as on "identifying instances of concepts," where teacher educators help "the novice to classify things … important for understanding what occurs when one is a classroom teacher" (*Development*, 21). In addition to helping GTAs see like teachers, activities in which teachers practice applying the model of guided critical reflection here might also help them begin to think like teachers.

That GTAs in this study sought out and relied upon shared program resources, such as tried-and-true lesson plans and assignments, also points to the need to provide novice instructors with some manner of prepared materials. While institutional contexts will dictate to what extent the use of common materials should be recommended or required, the findings from this study concur with those of Rupiper Taggart and Lowry, who suggest that GTAs value having resources they can turn to in the daily planning of teaching. Again, Berliner's work on teacher expertise

supports such conclusions, as he proposed that providing new teachers with standard lesson forms and even scripts would help offset their "inexperience in a complex environment" (22). Berliner contends that offering beginning teachers a script "designed by someone who knows better how to teach a particular lesson" would allow them to gain experience; he does caution, of course, that asking an experienced teacher to use such a scripted lesson would be "a terrible idea" (*Development,* 22). Berson and Breault similarly emphasize this need for beginning teachers "to learn to act and talk as classroom teachers" (qtg. Bird et al. 33), and offering prepared materials would seem like one way to support novices in that endeavor. As Berliner (*Development*), Eraut, and other researchers of professional expertise maintain, experts rely upon routines to help offset cognitive overload; for novices—especially novice instructors in the writing classroom, who may have little prior experience with the course content or with teaching itself, or who may not even want to teach—any additional structure a program could provide, ranging from pre-fabricated lesson plans to a common syllabus, might serve as a lifeline, helping them survive the first-semester battle of making a class seem "real" (Restaino 25).

Finally, I believe this study points to the need for writing pedagogy educators in composition studies to explore and make use of the large body of research on teacher development and reflective practice that exists in the field of K-12 teacher education. Though connections between these fields are repeatedly called for and cross-disciplinary forays and collaborations regularly occur, too little of the knowledge that already exists about teacher learning and expertise has been integrated in a systematic, sustained way into theories of writing pedagogy education.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to address a gap in the scholarship about GTA education and development by investigating the processes by which novice composition instructors develop pedagogical thinking and expertise in teaching writing. This study has attempted to present a model of the ways in which some GTAs identify, reflect upon, and act on teaching challenges in an effort to capture how they think about and respond to troublesome pedagogical situations. Future research should continue to investigate GTA learning and development, especially the role of reflective practice in ongoing development, so as to add to the body of empirical literature that may help writing pedagogy educators make data-based decisions about effective models of teacher preparation.

While this study was specifically intended to discover the ways in which novice GTA instructors of composition make sense of teaching challenges, it was unable to draw conclusions about GTAs' responses to successful classroom experiences or about when GTAs failed to identify problematic teaching situations. As discussed earlier, methodological considerations affected the ability of the study to fully investigate these elements of novice instructors' reflective thinking and development. This issue deserves further attention and research that would expand the knowledge base on this subject and further clarify the ways in which teachers frame and think through pedagogical activities. In particular, findings from this study suggest that some beginning teachers may not be able to identify a classroom problem, such as when Lizzy explained her sense of dissonance when teaching English 101: "What happened mid-semester is I just felt like I had a disconnect with the students in some ways or I wasn't giving them what they needed. It was just it was an intuitive thing." While Lizzy sought feedback from the Composition Office to help her identify the source of the problem, not all teachers take such

initiative. These findings are congruent with prior research about the relationship between expertise and problem setting (Berliner, *Development*; Eraut; Hillocks; Schön; Zeichner and Liston), and point toward the limitations of reflective practice for novice teachers. Conducting additional research to help writing pedagogy educators better understand how GTAs read and process classroom cues would enhance our knowledge about their perspective and the ways in which we could intervene to better scaffold their entrance into the classroom.

An additional area of needed research is the role of gendered attitudes in reflection and decision-making. This study found that the decision to reject some aspect of the curriculum and replace it with something more familiar occurred only in the accounts of male participants. While women's difficulties with classroom management and embodying positions of authority in the classroom have been fairly well-documented, much less attention has been given to males' gendered responses. In each case of rejection/replacement, the participant seemed to hold an attitude of skepticism toward the writing program that allowed him to direct his own course of action when he disagreed with something he was asked to do—such as teach a particular curriculum. Researchers should further explore the ways in which gender influences decision-making, as such information might help writing pedagogy educators modify their tactics when helping male and female GTAs work through troublesome pedagogical situations.

This study found that GTAs framed a number of the problems they encountered through the curriculum they were asked to teach. In a writing program that emphasized rhetoric and argumentation in the first semester and different modes of disciplinary inquiry in the second, some of these GTAs expressed frustration at being asked to take on so many new things: teaching for the first time, teaching writing and rhetoric, and teaching research methods they had not used before. Without prior experience or knowledge to draw upon, these GTAs were more

likely to enter states of inertia or rejection/replacement. The role of FYC curricula deserves more attention in research about GTA learning and development. Though some multi-institutional comparative studies have been conducted (Estrem and Reid, "What"; Reid and Estrem, "Effects"; Rupiper Taggart and Lowry), no significant differences have been detected in GTAs' thinking about teaching based on their writing pedagogy education (Reid and Estrem, "Effects"). However, these studies have not explored the effects of different approaches to teaching FYC on teacher thinking. Future research needs to look into various models of FYC to better determine the relationship between curriculum, writing pedagogy education, and GTA learning and development.

One finding of this study had to do with the role of prior practitioner experience and accumulated classroom experience on GTAs' likelihood of adopting a stance of flexibility/experimentation. Instances of flexibility/experimentation as a course of action occurred later in the first semester or during the second semester of teaching for GTAs with no prior classroom experience; it occurred earlier with GTAs like James or Betty, who had accumulated some professional experience before joining the master's program. This finding is consistent with other studies of teacher growth and expertise (Berliner, *Development*; Shannon, Twale, and Moore; Steffy et al.). Future research needs to extend beyond the first semester or first year of GTA teaching to better capture the mechanisms by which accumulated teaching experience leads to development of instructors' expertise in teaching writing. A focus on GTAs' initial teaching experiences is in line with much prior research about GTA development in composition studies; Ebest's remains the only longitudinal research, spanning five years of data collection. However, studies that are longitudinal in design may yield better information on the long- rather than short-term effects of writing pedagogy education and reflective practice on

teacher development. Additionally, such a longitudinal design might also offer insight into the influence that graduate training *outside of* composition pedagogy exerts on teacher development, as GTAs enter advanced graduate coursework and go on to PhD programs, adjunct work, or professorial careers.

Finally, one of the implications of this study had to do with the need for a model of guided critical reflective practice that writing pedagogy educators could use to help novice GTAs develop more productive reflective strategies. Such a model should be implemented and studied to determine the effects, if any, upon teachers' problem-solving strategies. The findings from this study point to some of the limitations of reflective practice for novice teachers; while some scholars, like Estrem and Reid ("What") and Farris, argue that reflective practice is integral to GTA growth and the development of a personal theory about teaching, others, like Berliner and Hillocks, question the effectiveness of reflective practice in teacher development and suggest that the goal of "develop[ing] reflective practitioners, sensible decision makers, and proficient problem solvers" may be more appropriate for advanced beginners than novices (Berliner, *Development,* 26). Investigations of such models of guided reflective practice as the one outlined above would provide some insight into the activities that support novice GTA learning, how that learning is best supported, and when such interventions might be most effective.

Conclusion

This study was intended to add data-driven research to the growing body of rhetoric and composition scholarship on the preparation and development of novice graduate instructors of FYC. This study attempted to gain insight into GTAs' decision-making processes in course planning and actual classroom teaching as well as to increase our understanding of how GTAs respond to challenging teaching situations. In many ways, this study highlights the limitations of

reflective practice for novice teachers, suggesting that without intervention from writing pedagogy educators, reflection may be ineffective and lead to inertia or entrenchment rather than growth or change. I hope that the recommendations offered here will offer some small steps in helping writing pedagogy educators improve teacher preparation and ongoing professionalization, thereby also supporting first-year writing instruction.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that the stories these GTAs told about their initial year in the classroom highlight the fact that learning to teach is a process, one that mirrors in many respects the process by which novice writers become experts. As Sommers and Saltz found in their study of Harvard freshmen—a study that several of these GTAs found to have resonance with their own lives—"Freshmen are required to become master builders while they are still apprentices – to build as they become familiar with the materials and methods of construction. They are asked to develop expertise in new subjects and methodologies, while still learning how to handle the tools of these disciplines and decipher their user's manuals" (131-32). This statement would ring true as well if "freshmen" was replaced with "new teachers," for we similarly require novice teachers to become masters of their classrooms, building units, assignments, and lesson plans, and becoming familiar with the subject and methodology of a field with which few have much familiarity. Like Sommers and Saltz's freshmen, new teachers "often don't know what information is important or how different pieces of information relate to each other" (132); "they are pulled by the familiarity of their high school model" (133); they "feel shaken by the idea of becoming a novice because it involves so much uncertainty" (134); and personal connection with a topic often provides the motivation and interest to keep going (143). Finally, and most importantly, as freshmen writers tend to show a "gap between what a student knows about writing and what the student can actually do," particularly when asked to

perform new tasks or adopt new methods (144), so do novice GTAs show this gap between what they may understand about teaching writing and what occurs in classroom practice.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT, STUDY PHASE I

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Negotiating Identities: Literature Specialists/Composition Instructors Teaching First-Year Composition

INTRODUCTION

Participants are invited to participate in a research study that seeks to determine how graduate students in literature learn to become composition instructors in order to gain a stronger understanding of how first-year composition classes are taught as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of current instructor training. The results of this project will help to increase our knowledge of how teachers take theory into the classroom. By increasing this knowledge, composition programs will be able to improve the training of composition instructors and thus improve the instruction of first-year composition.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Participants will be interviewed twice during the spring semester of 2010. Additionally, participants will be interviewed twice during the fall semester of 2010 and observed in the classroom twice during the same semester.

Each interview session will last approximately one hour. Interviews will be audiotaped and then transcribed. The researcher will videotape the class sessions that she observes.

RISKS

Risks associated with this project are minimal.

BENEFITS

By participating in this project, participants will benefit future teachers and students of composition by increasing the body of knowledge related to teaching practices.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information collected for this study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No references will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

_____ Participant's Initials

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact the researcher, Carolyn Wisniewski, at 334 South Stadium Hall and 865-974-3626 or 865-414-2778. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at 865-974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature_____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT, STUDY PHASE II

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

From Practice to Praxis: A Study of First-Year Composition Writing Teacher Preparation

INTRODUCTION

Participants are invited to take part in a research study that seeks to investigate the effects of a teacher preparation curriculum that focuses on hands-on learning and practice and seeks to describe the processes by which new teachers develop their pedagogical practices. This study will compare its findings with previous studies of first-year writing and teacher preparation at UTK as well as with national studies. The data will also be used as part of co-PI Carolyn Wisniewski's dissertation study.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

During spring semester of 2012, student participants will complete two surveys and will be interviewed once. Some documents from English 505 will be collected via Blackboard: reflective blogs and 101 course-planning documents. Carolyn Wisniewski will be a participant observer in English 505, documenting in field notes descriptions of daily class activities and topics raised in discussion. The instructor of English 505 agrees to provide course materials such as the syllabus and any course handouts.

In the fall semester of 2012, student participants will be interviewed once. Twice during the semester, one of the researchers will observe a 101 class. The researchers will collect course documents such as the syllabus and unit assignments, lesson plan for the class that is observed, and sample graded student papers (with all student identification removed).

All interviews will last 60-90 minutes and will be audio-recorded and then transcribed.

INFORMATION ABOUT INSTRUCTOR PARTICIPANT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

The participation of the English 505 instructor consists of providing English 505 course documents, including the syllabus, course assignments, and access to the course Blackboard site. As with the student participants, the instructor participant's daily class activities and topics raised in discussion will be documented in field-notes.

RISKS

This study presents minimal risks, if any, to participants. The identity of all participants will be kept confidential in any published or presented accounts of the research findings. Information you offer or that is observed in your teaching will not affect your employment in the English Department. Specific procedures to ensure that you are not adversely affected by this study are described as follows.

- First, the purpose of the study is descriptive rather than evaluative.
- The instructor of English 505 will not know which students are participating in this study; student participation in this study will have no effect on English 505 evaluation or grading.

Participant's Initials: _____

- At this time, one of the researchers, Dr. Benson, is serving as the interim director of First Year Writing and may remain in that role in Fall 2012; in this role, she directly supervises and reviews the performance of all Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Teaching Associates. Since the study aims to collect information that would be collected in the usual course of the teacher evaluation process, no risks are foreseen due to her involvement in the study. In addition, several procedures are in place to ensure that participating in the study leads to no adverse effects:
    - Following the composition program's normal evaluation procedures, classroom observations and information offered in interview discussions will be responded to constructively, just as they are in the usual teaching evaluation process. Should any concerns arise, those will be discussed and you will have the program's usual opportunity to address them, again in keeping with the ordinary evaluative process.
    - Each participant will be observed by two different members of the research team, thus ensuring that there are two perspectives on what is being done in each teacher's class.
    - An effort will be made to have each participant interviewed by a member of the research team who did not observe him or her, again to ensure that multiple perspectives are gained regarding teachers' classroom activities and interview accounts.
    - If you prefer, you may request to be observed and/or interviewed by someone other than Dr. Benson.

If at any point in the study you have any concerns about how your participation in this study is affecting your evaluation as a teacher, please contact Dr. Stan Garner, Head of the English Department, sgarner@utk.edu.

BENEFITS

Benefits for the student participants include additional support through the first year of teaching; the opportunity to talk about teaching plans and experiences is presumed to be of value to novice teachers. A less tangible benefit to all participants is knowing you are contributing to advancement of scholarly knowledge in the area of teacher preparation. Professional benefits of the study include contribution to scholarship, including increased evidence-based knowledge about how particular teacher preparation activities affect the subsequent teaching practices of novice teachers. This knowledge will be used to inform the teacher preparation curriculum at UTK and may also influence how programs nationally construct their teacher preparation courses.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The identity of the participants in this study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No references will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

Participant's Initials: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact any of the researchers: Kirsten Benson, at 301 McClung Tower, kbenson@utk.edu, 974-6936; Emily Cope, at 301 McClung Tower, ecope2@utk.edu, 974-2594; and Carolyn Wisniewski, at 301 McClung Tower, cwisnie1@utk.edu, 974-3626. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at 865-974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. The interview today should last about 60-90 minutes, and its main purpose is to get a sense of what you think about writing, teaching, and student learning, and to learn a little bit about your background and experiences with writing and teaching.

What is your program area?
How far along in the program are you?
What do you plan to do after you get your degree?

I'm interested in what you think about how people learn to write. Would you tell me your thoughts about how people become good writers?
In the Writing Center and/or the 101 class you sat in on (or taught), have you observed students develop as writers?

Did you take a FYC equivalent?
Tell me about that class.

Tell me briefly about the other writing you did in undergraduate classes.
What types of writing did you do?
What types of writing were you most comfortable with?
What was most difficult?

I'd also like to know a little bit more about how you were taught to write. Would you tell me about one of your writing teachers?
Describe her/his teaching style and approaches.
What did you like/dislike about that teaching style?
Can you think of a particular interaction with a teacher that changed your writing/changed you as a writer?

Would you tell me a little bit about your understanding of rhetoric?

Tell me about your experience in the mentoring program here.
What are your impressions of how writing was taught in the 101 you were part of?
Tell me about any class periods you taught last semester: what did you do?
How did you feel about those lesson(s)?
How do you plan on teaching your 101 course next fall?

Imagine that you're talking to a prospective graduate student; how would you describe UTK's first-year composition program?

Would you tell me how you're feeling about teaching 101 next fall?
What do you feel about the requirement here that GTAs teach FYC?

I wonder what you think about taking English 505 this semester?
Would you tell me more about:
What you would like to get out of 505?

Your concerns about 505?

VITA

Carolyn A. Wisniewski was born on November 12, 1981, in Saginaw, Michigan. Her family moved to Grand Haven, Michigan, shortly after, and she graduated from Grand Haven High School in 2000. She received the Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Western Michigan University in 2003.

In 2005, she began coursework in the Department of English at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and received the Master of Arts degree in 2007.

She entered the Department of English at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 2009 to pursue the Doctor of Philosophy degree. Her major field of study was Rhetoric, Writing, and Linguistics, and she received additional certification in Statistics, Evaluation, and Measurement from UTK's Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling . She received the Doctor of Philosophy degree in August, 2014.