

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Lucile Faulkner Maples entitled "Selected Perceptions of Second Career Novice Teachers." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Teacher Education.

Lester Knight
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Thomas Turner

Bethany Dumas

Jinx Watson

Accepted for the Council:

Anne Mayhew
Vice Chancellor and Dean of
Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**SELECTED PERCEPTIONS OF SECOND CAREER
NOVICE TEACHERS**

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Education

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Lucile Faulkner Maples

December 2004

Copyright © 2004 by Lucile Faulkner Maples

All rights reserved.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the memory of my parents,

Joe T. and Rosalind Faulkner,

and in honor of my husband, Larry Maples,

and my sons, Evan and Matt Crass.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee for guiding me through the process of writing this dissertation. I am especially indebted to Dr. Lester Knight, the chair of my committee, who has gently led me through this long and difficult journey. Appreciation also goes to Dr. Thomas Turner who gave me the opportunity to work with the Second Career Alternative Program, to Dr. Bethany Dumas who introduced me to qualitative research through interviewing, and to Dr. Jinx Watson who urged me to strive for excellence.

I am grateful to Alex, Diana, Judith, and Kasey, the participants in this qualitative study, who graciously gave of their time to this project. Thank you for your willingness to share with me your personal journeys into your novice year of teaching.

Many friends and colleagues helped me through this process by giving suggestions and encouragement. I am especially indebted to Nancy Baldwin and Wanda Grooms who assisted me in the data analysis and to Margaret Eskew who helped me with the organization of this dissertation. Finally, my heartfelt appreciation goes to the many friends and family members who have prayed for me through this process.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight into the perceptions that second career novice teachers have about their preservice training and their preparedness for taking on the challenges of teaching during their first semester as “real” teachers. Through an increased understanding of novice teachers’ perceptions and experiences, teacher educators may be better equipped to structure preservice learning that is both relevant and meaningful for teacher education candidates.

Four second career novice teachers were involved in this study that spanned the first semester of teaching after their graduation from a fifteen-month alternative program. Qualitative methods of data collection included individual interviews, journal entries, and paired interviews. Constant comparative and analytic induction designs were used for the analysis of data collected in this research study. Research questions addressed included: 1) Why did these second career novice teachers choose to change directions in their career paths and pursue teaching? 2) What experiences did they find were the most beneficial (or most obstructive) in preparing them to become teachers? 3) What challenges did they face in their first six months of teaching? 4) In what ways did they learn to define themselves as teachers? 5) What can be learned from this research that will inform the way potential teachers are recruited and trained?

Findings from the data analysis revealed the following similarities across research participants: 1) Teaching was selected as a career choice because participants wanted to “make a difference” in other people’s lives. 2) Prior life and work experiences positively impacted the ability of participants to transition into teaching as a career. 3) Challenges in their first six months of teaching included working conditions,

mentoring, and preconceptions versus the realities of teaching. 4) Novice teachers moved rapidly toward teacher identity and in identifying teaching concerns from self to task and impact. 5) Implications for teacher education programs include choosing appropriate grade-level placements for interns, establishing mentoring relationships with cooperating teachers, and creating a forum for ongoing dialogue among teacher educators, novice teachers, and school system administrators and teachers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Need for the Study	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Theoretical Framework	7
Social Identity Theory	8
Identity Versus Role Confusion	10
Teaching Concerns	11
Research Procedures	12
Organization of the Study	14
Chapter Summary	15
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	17
History of Teacher Education in America	17
Colonial Times	17
Public Schools for All	18
Professional Training for Teachers in Normal Schools	19
Traditional Teacher Education Programs	21
Holmes Group	24
Alternative Programs	26
Conclusions	30
Causes of Novice Teacher Attrition	31
Salaries	32
Working Conditions	33
Teacher Preparation for the Realities of Teaching	34
Mentoring	35
Assumption of Teacher Identity by Novice Teachers	36
Social Identity Theory	37
Socialization Through Learning to Teach	37
Loneliness in Teaching	38
Teacher Stories	40
Teacher Reflections	41
Chapter Summary	43
3. METHODOLOGY	45
Definitions	48
Procedure	49
Participant Selection	50
Alex	52
Diana	52
Judith	52
Kasey	53
Data Collection	53

Data Analysis	55
Assurance of Trustworthiness	57
Chapter Summary	59
4. DATA PRESENTATION	60
Why Did These Second Career Novice Teachers Choose to Change Directions in Their Career Paths and Pursue Teaching?	62
Alex	62
Diana	64
Judith	65
Kasey	65
Summary	66
What Experiences Did They Find Were the Most Beneficial (Or Most Obstructive) in Preparing Them To Become Teachers?	67
Alex	67
Diana	68
Judith	71
Kasey	73
Summary	74
What Challenges Did They Face in Their First Six Months Of Teaching?	75
Alex	75
Diana	78
Judith	80
Kasey	83
Summary	87
In What Ways Did They Learn to Define Themselves As Teachers?	88
Alex	88
Diana	91
Judith	92
Kasey	95
Summary	97
Chapter Summary	98
5. DATA ANALYSIS	99
Why Did These Second Career Novice Teachers Choose to Change Directions in Their Career Paths and Pursue Teaching?	101
Question One: Summary	103
What Experiences Did They Find Were the Most Beneficial (Or Most Obstructive) in Preparing Them to Become Teachers?	104
Prior Experiences	104
Second Career Alternative Program	105
Question Two: Summary	108

What Challenges Did They Face in Their First Six Months Of Teaching?	109
Working Conditions	109
Mentoring	114
Realities of Teaching	117
Question Three: Summary	119
In What Ways Did They Learn to Define Themselves As Teachers?	123
“I Am the Teacher”	125
Teaching Concerns: Self, Task, Impact	127
Why Teach?	131
Question Four: Summary	133
What Can Be Learned From This Research That Will Inform The Way Potential Teachers Are Recruited and Trained?	135
Grade-Level Placements for Interns	136
Mentoring During Preservice Training	137
Assimilation of Novice Teachers	139
Areas for Further Research	141
Chapter Summary	142
Question 1	142
Question 2	143
Question 3	143
Question 4	145
Question 5	146
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 148
 APPENDICES	 160
 VITA	 187

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Schools in America employ more K-12 teachers than hospitals and universities combined employ registered nurses, doctors, and professors (US Bureau of Census, 1998, in Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This points to the critical importance of teachers in American society. Since American children of today are required to attend school from age 7 through 17 (US Dept of Education, 1997), this dramatically increases the segment of the population directly comprising our education system. Addressing problems connected to such a large proportion of our society should constitute a national priority. Identifying and solving these problems require a multiplicity of studies and efforts, including the incorporation of novice teachers into the system. This study seeks to identify some of the factors contributing to the success of novice teachers in the classroom. In particular, this study documents and analyzes the perceptions of second career novice teachers, especially how novice teachers see themselves becoming a part of the culture of the teaching profession and identify themselves as “real” teachers rather than students or interns.

For decades, new teachers have been prepared by marching them through philosophy of education courses and then isolated methods courses in each area of discipline. In many teacher education programs, only after three-and-a-half years of academic learning are future teachers allowed to actually work with students, and then only for approximately eight to twelve weeks as student teachers in a classroom. Darling-Hammond (1999) expresses legitimate concerns about this traditional form of teacher preparation:

Recent critiques have highlighted the separation of theory and practice in many teacher education programs. Shoehorning unintegrated courses into the four-year undergraduate program has created unhappy trade-offs between deep learning in a disciplinary field and serious understanding of teaching and learning. Teachers have often been taught to teach in lecture halls from professors who have not themselves ever practiced what they teach. Courses on subject matter topics have been disconnected from courses on teaching methods, which have in turn been disconnected from courses on learning and development.

Most students have completed this coursework before beginning student teaching—usually an eight to twelve week bout in the classroom of a teacher chosen as often for reasons of convenience or local politics as for demonstrated expertise. This brief clinical experience, appended to the end of the program, has offered few connections with what came before. (p. 19)

Darling-Hammond is not alone in her assessment of teacher education. In its 1996 report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future identifies teacher education as an important element in their goal of providing “every student in America with what should be his or her educational birthright: access to competent, caring, qualified teaching in schools organized for success” (1996, p. vi).

The report lists five major flaws in traditional, four-year undergraduate teacher education programs:

1. Inadequate time for learning subject matter, child development, learning theory, and teaching strategies
2. Fragmentation of key elements of teacher education so that course work does not relate to practice teaching, and separate courses often do not relate to one another
3. Uninspired teaching methods of traditional lecture format by faculty who do not practice what they preach

4. Superficial curriculum where candidates do not have opportunities for in-depth understanding of how to apply theory or methods to the real problems of practice
5. Traditional view of schooling where prospective teachers work in isolation to teach in schools as they are (1996, p. 32).

Many novice teachers seem to agree with these assessments of this traditional preparatory track. Unfortunately, this has translated into short-term careers in teaching as novice teachers feel unprepared for what faces them in their classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In fact, research indicates that one out of five teachers drops out of the teaching profession by the end of his/her first year (Chase & Gross, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

That problems exist in today's classrooms is not in dispute. Disparate causes and solutions have been proffered by politicians, school boards, teachers, parents, and students. The teacher exodus continues to gain momentum (Darling-Hammond, 2003) and points to a potential problem in the preparation of teachers for the job. More effective and realistic preparation and socialization of teachers require the identification of factors leading to success or failure in the classroom. Part of the research into these factors involves obtaining the measured reflections of new teachers on the adequacy of their preparation for their tasks and their assumption of the teacher identity.

Preservice teachers do not come to teacher education programs as "blank slates." They develop knowledge and beliefs about teaching, learning, and subject matter long before participating in formal teacher preparation programs (Lortie, 2002). For many, their own experiences revolve around traditional, skills-based, transmission models of

teaching and learning in elementary, middle, and high schools. Though current research calls for more interactive, constructive models of teaching and learning, preservice teachers often fail to make this transition and hold tightly to the practices from their own experiences in elementary, middle, and high school and their implicit beliefs related to those experiences (Craig, Bright, & Smith, 1994; Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Anderson, et al., 1990). This position is often exacerbated by professors who also teach using the transmission model while expecting their preservice teachers to use interactive, constructivist methods when they move into their own classrooms (Craig, Bright, & Smith, 1994).

Controversy also exists among educators as to the length of time needed in a teacher education program to equip students to become teachers (Olson, 2000). Coupled with this is the concern that fieldwork and student teaching experiences do not offer preservice teachers adequate or timely experience in actual classrooms. Alternative programs only intensify controversy as attempts are made to fill our classrooms with certified teachers. The conclusion of the National Commission of Teaching and America's Future that "teacher expertise is the single most important determinant of student achievement" (Darling-Hammond, 1997) mandates the need for continued research into the factors that combine to produce good teachers.

Until recent years, university teacher education programs and public schools have rarely collaborated on how best to prepare new teachers. The voices of preservice and beginning teachers have often been left out, despite the high stakes they hold. They are committing large amounts of time and money to prepare themselves for what they must assume will be a fulfilling and long-term career. Since the next generation of

children depends upon today's beginning educators, we need to listen to what preservice and beginning teachers have to say about their preparation for teaching and how it relates to their successful induction as teaching professionals.

This study looks at second career teachers who were enrolled in a fifteen-month program that included a year long internship within public school classrooms. The study listens to the voices of second career novice teachers after they have completed their preservice training and during their first months of teaching.

Need for the Study

Despite four years of coursework, novice teachers often enter the classroom ill prepared for its many challenges. Twenty per cent of first-year teachers drop out by the end of the year (Chase & Gross, 1999); nearly one-third leave the profession within four years of graduation (Wilgoren, 2000), and almost half of them (between 40 and 50 per cent) have exited by the end of five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Since 1990, over 300 colleges and universities with teacher education programs have begun changing the ways they prepare novice teachers. Five-year models require an extended program of preparation for undergraduates with the fifth year consisting of a year long internship and rigorous coursework on teaching and learning. (Weissenfels, 1991, Allexsaht-Snider, 1995, White, 1997, Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997, NEA Today, 2000).

In "Keeping Good Teachers: Why It Matters, What Leaders Can Do" (2003), Darling-Hammond affirms the crucial importance of good teachers and identifies four factors which contribute significantly to the departure of teachers from the profession:

In all schools, regardless of school wealth, student demographics, or staffing patterns, the most important resource for continuing improvement is the knowledge and skill of the school's best-prepared

and most committed teachers. Four major factors strongly influence whether and when teachers leave specific schools or the education profession entirely: *salaries, working conditions, preparation, and mentoring support in the early years*. (p. 9, emphasis added)

Teacher educators exert essentially no control over salaries or working conditions, and few are given the opportunity to provide mentoring support in the early years. However, professionals in teacher education programs at colleges and universities throughout America do hold the responsibility for adequately preparing novice teachers for the challenges they will face in their classrooms. As assessment standards and accountability measurements of both students and teachers increase, those in higher education need to take the lead in evaluating the impact of successful integration into the teaching profession for our preservice and novice teachers. A better fit between practice and reality must be achieved in this arena. Data are required from recent education graduates regarding what has worked or hasn't worked in their preparation, what experiences both in and out of the classroom impeded or accelerated their acclimation to teaching, and how both teacher educators and schools can help to reduce the attrition rate of novice teachers. This study may provide some of the data necessary for strengthening programs in education.

Purpose of the Study

This study attempts to identify the perceptions that second career novice teachers, who have completed a fifteen-month program, have about their personal experiences and journeys toward becoming classroom teachers. This research proposes to document these novice teachers' initial perceptions about teaching and their experiences in finding their identities as teachers. How and when do they see

themselves as “belonging,” as actively contributing to both the classroom and school community, and fully assuming the role of teacher? How do their perceptions change and develop after they start teaching in their own classrooms? Specifically, this study explores the following research questions:

1. Why did these second career novice teachers choose to change directions in their career paths and pursue teaching?
2. What experiences did they find were the most beneficial in preparing them to become teachers?
3. In what ways did they learn to define themselves as teachers?
4. What experiences did they find most obstructive in preparing them to become teachers?
5. What can be learned from this research that will inform the way potential teachers are recruited and trained?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study includes the social identity theory initially developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, James Marcia’s adaptation of Eric Erikson’s concept of identity versus role confusion, and Fuller and Borich’s division of teacher development into three distinct stages. Together these works form the foundation for eliciting, documenting, analyzing, and interpreting information from second career novice teachers with regard to their preparation for teaching, their assumption of their roles as teachers, and their decisions to continue as teachers.

Social Identity Theory

The foundational belief underlying the social identity theory is in the individual's self-definition in a social context, that "an individual strives to achieve a satisfactory concept or image of himself" (Tajfel, 1978). Social identity theory involves three central ideas: categorization, identification, and social comparison.

1. *Categorization* occurs when we categorize objects, or people, in order to understand them. We categorize people into groups such as black, white, Christian, Muslim, student, or doctor because we believe these categories are useful and they tell us something about the individual within each group. We also define ourselves and what our appropriate behavior should be by the groups in which we belong.
2. *Identification* carries two meanings. Part of who we are is made up of our group memberships. Another aspect of who we are is when we think of ourselves as unique individuals, unlike anyone else. Our self-concept includes both types of identification; our group memberships make up our social identity while our uniqueness is referred to as personal identity.
3. *Social comparison* occurs when we compare ourselves with others in our group or when we see our group memberships in relation to other groups. We gain self-esteem when we compare favorably with others within the same membership. Likewise, we choose to define our group memberships in positive ways in relation to other groups (McGarty, et. al, 1994).

Tajfel (1997) further defines social identity to be "a *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or

groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 63). He also lists three major consequences regarding group membership:

- An individual will tend to remain a member of a group if the group contributes some positive aspect to his social identity; i.e. from which he derives some satisfaction.
- If the group does not satisfy this requirement, the individual will leave the group unless
 - ◆ Leaving is impossible for some “objective” reason, or
 - ◆ Leaving conflicts with important personal values integral to the individual’s self image.
- If leaving presents difficulties, then
 - ◆ The individual must change his interpretations of the attributes of the group to make them justified or acceptable through a reinterpretation, or
 - ◆ The individual must accept the situation and engage in social action leading to desirable changes in the situation. (Tajfel, 1997, p. 64)

This research study documents and analyzes the perceptions of second career novice teachers. As second career teachers, the subjects in this study have already faced dissatisfaction with at least one group membership within their previous career choices. It is, therefore, quite likely that the subjects in this study have already grappled with

social identity and will be highly attuned to establishing their “new” social identity in the education profession.

Identity Versus Role Confusion

James Marcia’s (1993) analysis of Eric Erikson’s concept of *identity versus role confusion* also constitutes part of the theoretical framework of this study. Marcia identifies four identity statuses based upon an individual’s exploration and commitment to an occupational or ideological choice:

1. *Identity diffusion* involves uncenteredness and confusion. It occurs when individuals have not yet made choices or experienced a crisis of exploration where choices must be made.
2. *Identity foreclosure* occurs when individuals have made choices, but have not yet experienced a crisis resulting from their choices. This usually happens when choices are made for individuals and self-exploration has not occurred.
3. *Identity moratorium* occurs when individuals are in the midst of an identity crisis. They are struggling with making commitments that are only vaguely defined.
4. Finally, *identity achievement* occurs when individuals have undergone a crisis, have explored alternative choices, and have made a strong personal commitment to a particular life choice (Santrock, 2004, Woolfolk, 2001).

The subjects in this study have all experienced identity diffusion and/or identity moratorium within their previous occupational choices. It is assumed that their participation in the second career program is a result of identity achievement. This

study pursues that assumption and attempts to verify or disprove each subject's response to identity achievement.

Teaching Concerns

In addition, Fuller (1969) and Borich's (2004) explorations on *teaching concerns* inform the theoretical framework of this study. Fuller and Borich divide teacher development into three progressive stages: self, task, and impact. Borich observes that the first stage of teacher development, sometimes called the "survival stage," is distinguished by teaching concerns focusing upon the individual teacher's well-being more than the teaching task or the learners. Concerns typically include questions about the students, parents, and other teachers liking the individual, while behavior management is a major focus in planning. This is called the *self* stage. The next stage focuses on improving one's teaching skills and achieving greater content mastery. Typical concerns address where to find good instructional materials, ways to teach certain skills, and how to cover all the content. This stage revolves around *task*. The third and highest level focuses less on management and lesson delivery and more on one's impact on the learners. Major concerns include how to meet students' needs, how to challenge unmotivated learners, and how to best prepare students for the next grade. Borich and Fuller call this the *impact* stage.

Fuller (1969) speculates that concerns for *self*, *task*, and *impact* are natural developmental stages that most teachers go through. Beginning teachers are more likely to concentrate on *self* concerns, but will gradually move through the other stages as they feel more confident in their teaching. Also, teachers may repeat stages, moving back to *self* concerns when changing grades or subject areas. All teachers will probably

have some concerns in each of the three areas, but the levels of intensity will vary depending upon the circumstances of the individual teacher.

Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, Marcia's four identity statuses, and Fuller and Borich's three stages of teacher concerns comprise the theoretical framework of this study. Taken together, they inform the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from four second career novice teachers concerning their perceptions about teaching and their experiences in finding their identities as teachers.

Research Procedures

This research gathered information from four beginning teachers in the form of interviews and weekly journals detailing their reflections on teaching. Each novice teacher participated in three interviews with a total of ten interviews occurring with the four teachers over the course of a semester. The interviews were conducted at three points in their first semester of teaching: 1) after graduation and prior to the beginning of the school year, 2) midway through the first semester, and 3) after the completion of the first semester. Two of the interviews were individual interviews; one interview occurred in pairs. Each of the interviews was taped, transcribed, and checked for accuracy and completion by the interviewees and myself. The interviewees were permitted to make changes and additions. The data from the interviews and the journals were then charted and analyzed according to recurring themes and words.

Eighteen interview prompts were created and then divided into three categories: 1) choosing teaching as a career, 2) the role of the intern as a student, and 3) the role of the intern as a teacher. The prompts were devised in collaboration with four university professors of education, including an expert in qualitative research. The prompts were

designed to elicit from students their perceptions with regard to their initial motivation for becoming teachers, their assessment of their preparation, and their interpretation of their experiences of teaching. A list of the prompts used in the interviews is appended to this document (Appendix A).

Interviewees were selected from a group of twelve teacher education graduate students in an alternative program called SCA at a major university in the southeastern United States. The SCA (Second Career Alternative) Program was created and designed for second career teachers. Four students were selected from eleven volunteers to achieve diversity in gender, age, background, and teaching placement. Because I served as the supervisor for these students in a required year long teaching internship, the research was scheduled to begin after all students had completed the requirements of the internship. Short biographical sketches of each interviewee are appended to this document (Appendix B).

An interpretivist or constructivist paradigm that portrays the world as socially constructed, complex, and ever changing was used throughout this study. This contrasts with the positivist assumption of a fixed, measurable reality external to people. This qualitative research project was *phenomenological* with the goal being to understand subjects from their own point of view. Van Manen defines phenomenological research as “the study of lived experience” (1990, p. 9). Bogdan & Biklen explain:

The data collected [is] *soft*, that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Research questions . . . are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity, in context. (1992, p. 2)

From the beginning of the research process, tentative assumptions and the categorization of data occurred in response to emerging themes. Data was analyzed using a combination of *analytic induction* and *constant comparative* research designs. *Analytic induction* describes an approach for collecting and analyzing data whereby a specific problem or issue becomes the focus of research. Participants are purposefully selected to explore the specified issue and theories are developed and modified throughout the process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). *Constant comparative* describes a research design where the initial topic may be somewhat broad, but observations and data collection cause the topic to be narrowed. Analysis occurs throughout data collection, and examination of the data directs the focus of the final categories analyzed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

The generation of theory was recursive in form. As Bogdan & Biklen (1992) explain: “Analysis and data collection occur in a pulsating fashion—first the interview, then the analysis and theory development, another interview, and then more analysis, and so on—until the research is completed” (p. 72).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters, followed by a list of references and appendices. Chapter One includes an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem, the need for the study, the purpose of the study including five specific research questions, the theoretical framework that guided all aspects of the research, and the procedures used during research. Finally, the organization of the study is explained.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature and research related to this study. It provides: 1) an overview of the history of teacher education in America, 2) an

examination of important studies related to the causes of novice teacher attrition, and 3) a study of current research treating the assumption of teacher identity by novice teachers.

Chapter Three explains the methods and procedures for conducting all aspects of this research. It begins with an introduction of the research design including definitions of specific terms, explains the procedure for selecting participants with a brief description of each, and reviews the process of collecting and analyzing data. It concludes with an assurance of trustworthiness.

Chapter Four describes the context and the participants. It begins with a general description of learning experiences provided within the SCA Program common to all participants. It is followed with the list of research questions. Next, each question is taken individually and data are presented for each participant. Vignettes for each novice teacher are included in the data presentation. After each question, a brief summary is given of the data categories.

Chapter Five is an analysis and interpretation of the data and a summary of the findings. It presents similarities among the four novice teachers and describes some of the differences among them. It also offers reflections, further questions, and implications of the study.

Chapter Summary

Controversy exists among educators as to the length of time needed in a teacher education program to equip students to become teachers. Coupled with this is the concern that fieldwork and student teaching experiences do not offer preservice teachers adequate or timely experience in actual classrooms. Alternative programs only intensify

controversy as attempts are made to fill our classrooms with certified teachers. The conclusion of the National Commission of Teaching and America's Future that "teacher expertise is the single most important determinant of student achievement" mandates the need for continued research into the factors that combine to produce good teachers.

This study attempts to identify the perceptions that second career novice teachers, who have completed a fifteen-month program, have about their personal experiences and journeys toward becoming classroom teachers. Research questions were designed to document these novice teachers' initial perceptions about teaching and their experiences in finding their identities as teachers, how and when they see themselves as "belonging," as actively contributing to both the classroom and school community, and fully assuming the role of teacher, and how their perceptions change and develop after they start teaching in their own classrooms.

Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, Marcia's four identity statuses, and Fuller and Borich's three stages of teacher concerns comprise the theoretical framework of this study. Taken together, they inform the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from four second career novice teachers concerning their perceptions about teaching and their experiences in teachers concerning their perceptions about teaching and their experiences in finding their identities as teachers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature for this study is threefold. It provides: 1) an overview of the history of teacher education in America, 2) an examination of important studies related to the causes of novice teacher attrition, and 3) a study of current research treating the assumption of teacher identity by novice teachers.

History of Teacher Education in America

Since American children of today are required to attend school from age seven through seventeen (U.S. Department of Education, 1997), envisioning our culture without schools and teachers seems almost incomprehensible. Nevertheless, the modern idea of public education led by qualified teachers has not existed for much longer than 150 years in America.

Colonial Times

During colonial times, only a small percentage of children attended school at all. Most education was conducted privately in what were called dame schools, where groups of parents would pay widows or spinsters to teach in their homes. Many of these teachers possessed skills barely above what they were teaching their own pupils (Wortham, 2002).

In towns where public schools were established, teacher licensure was non-existent. Lucas (1997) tells of the diversity of 17th and 18th century teachers:

Young divinity students, for example, frequently taught school for short intervals to support their studies while in seminary . . . Otherwise, itinerant adventurers, drifters, young men seeking to avoid physical labor, chronic malcontents, and perhaps misfits who had failed at other enterprises most typically were claimants on teaching posts. (pp. 4,5)

Religious groups or local town officials hired or fired teachers based upon such requirements as political orientation, good moral character, or the ability to maintain classroom order. Borich (2004) explains:

At that time, teachers were judged primarily on their goodness as people and only secondarily on their behavior in the classroom. They were expected to be honest, hardworking, generous, friendly, and considerate, and to demonstrate these qualities in their classrooms by being organized, disciplined, insightful, and committed . . . [however] this definition of an ideal teacher lacked clear, objective standards of performance that could be consistently applied to all teachers . . . [or] used to train future teachers. (pp. 3-4)

In fact, academic qualifications were assessed by informal oral questioning, if they were assessed at all (Lucas, 1997).

Public Schools for All

As our nation moved into the 19th century, more and more public schools opened their doors. The number of students multiplied as men like Horace Mann, first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, advocated “a universal system of free public schools open to all” (Lucas, 1997, p.11). By the 1850s, nearly 81,000 public elementary schools were enrolling hundreds of thousands of new pupils in what were called *common schools* where “children of all religions and social classes were to share in a common education” (Spring, 1994, p. 12). However, schools full of students meant a greatly increased need for teachers. A solution to this shortage of teachers had to be found immediately.

As the need for more elementary school teachers increased, more and more women entered the teaching field. Men traditionally were expected to work on farms doing hard physical labor or to enter a trade. Those who didn’t choose these

occupations headed for the western frontier in search of adventure. As a result, it became commonplace for an exemplary female student to be appointed to a classroom she had just left (Lucas, 1997).

Professional Training for Teachers in Normal Schools

As early as 1824, many people felt that teachers needed to have some sort of training other than having successfully completed common school themselves. Eventually, one-year and then two-year publicly supported schools were established in many states to prepare men and women to teach. These institutions were called *normal schools*. Instruction typically included

a thorough review of the ‘common branches’ of learning taught in primary schools—spelling, reading, writing, geography, and arithmetic; a limited number of secondary-level academic subjects—geometry, algebra, natural and moral philosophy (that is, elementary physical science and ethics); studies devoted to the physical, mental, and psychological development of children; one or more methods courses; a course in classroom management; and a period of practice teaching in a model school. (Lucas, 1997, p.25)

Two problems plagued normal schools from their inception. First, skepticism abounded as to whether normal schools satisfied any real need. Since instruction of young children had never before required special training, what could be its purpose now? Proponents of normal schools argued that

Teaching subject matter to young children . . . was neither an easy nor an uncomplicated task . . . Success in the classroom . . . required, first, that a teacher command knowledge of sound techniques for teaching, and second, that he or she have acquired a high degree of proficiency in their use. Familiarity with what was to be taught was not enough by itself. Learning how to make good use of teaching methodologies . . . was not necessarily an intuitively obvious process at all; and it could not be assumed that acquiring the skills necessary on a hit-or-miss basis was assured. Hence prospective teachers needed to be *taught* appropriate pedagogical principles and rules, using a combination of didactic instruction and guided practice. (Lucas, 1997, p. 29)

The second problem raised the issue of the real purpose of normal schools. Many students seemed to attend normal schools as a cheaper and easier way to acquire the equivalent of a secondary-school education. Entrance requirements were lax and costs were considerably less than private institutions (Lucas, 1997).

Howey and Gardner (1983) give a somewhat different perspective of normal schools. They agree that normal schools were really high schools “with an infusion of pedagogy.” At the same time, normal schools offered some distinct advantages:

For all its inadequacies . . . there was greater relevance in the teacher education of 1900 than there is now since almost all the subject matter content which teachers learned was the same or a slightly advanced version of what they were supposed to teach children. In terms of connections, linkage, and relevance, we have deteriorated in the last 80 years. (p. 101)

In an attempt to professionalize and strengthen the training of teachers, normal schools and their curricula were slowly incorporated into the state colleges and universities. These changes were not met unchallenged. Many college faculties felt that teacher education departments were “a kind of secondary-level encroachment on collegiate education” (Lucas, 1997, p. 40). Most academic traditionalists believed pedagogy would never deserve the status of “a true college discipline” (p. 41).

As the 20th century was ushered in, increased enrollment in public schools (especially at the secondary level) escalated the ever-present teacher shortage. Although some sort of teacher training was gaining greater acceptance, teacher certification standards or licensing were slow to develop. Lucas states:

As late as the 1920s, one in every 20 elementary teachers in the United States still had no schooling beyond the high-school level. One-fifth of all elementary teachers who had completed high school reported having attended college for one year or less; and more than one-fourth of that same group had finished less than two years of college . . . Even as late as 1952, not even a majority of

elementary teachers had graduated from college, although by then the percentage of teachers with fewer than two years of college had fallen overall from 25 percent in 1931 to around 8 percent. (p. 50)

When states did begin to issue teaching licenses, they were usually undifferentiated. No special categories designated teaching levels or particular teaching fields. These were to come much later.

Because normal schools were considered to be glorified secondary schools and colleges and universities were hesitant to include teacher training in their academic disciplines, the Department of Normal Schools of the National Education Association decided in 1908 that the word *normal* should be dropped from all school names and they should be called instead *Teacher Colleges* (Lucas, 1997). Only the better public normal schools were able to successfully transform themselves into four-year colleges. The rest sank quietly into oblivion. For several years, both types of institutions co-existed, so some teachers might graduate with a one-year course of study while others could have studied and completed a two-, three- or four-year program.

Traditional Teacher Education Programs

Once established as a part of the college community, teacher education programs continued to elicit vigorous criticism and controversy. Arguments raged as to whether teachers needed a strong background in theory and philosophy or if more time should be devoted to the academic disciplines found in the typical liberal arts curriculum. Criticism focused on these areas: the quality of students entering education based on low entrance standards, the duration or sequencing of teacher preparation including whether this should occur at the undergraduate or graduate level, and the structure of the programs in relation to breadth or depth of study (Lucas, 1997).

Although research findings confirm the perception that standards for admission to teacher education programs were lax during most of the 20th century, this trend started to reverse itself in the 1980s. Colleges and universities accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) listed lengthy entry criteria. Even so, fewer than 10% of those applying were denied admission. By the mid-1980s, however, standards were being raised, in part because of a teacher oversupply in many areas. Since that time, surveys of teacher education students in 1985, the early 1990s, and 1995 have consistently shown teacher education students' scores on national exams to compare favorably with students in arts, sciences, or business administration programs (Lucas, 1997).

The idea of extending the preparation of preservice teachers beyond a baccalaureate degree has been discussed since early in the 20th century. It was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s, however, that the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) programs were initiated. These programs were designed to offer liberal arts graduates entry into the field of education by an alternate route. Generally, students received intensive instruction in education in combination with supervised practice teaching during their first summer of enrollment. Coursework continued during the academic year while students were also employed part-time as salaried teachers in public schools. A final summer of coursework completed requirements for graduation and licensure. Although MAT programs were considered to be successful, they were costly to operate, so most disappeared because of lack of funding.

Except for the brief appearance of MAT programs, Howey and Gardner (1983) state that teacher preparation programs across the country have continued to be quite

similar for several decades. Courses are designed as three or five credits “where faculty and students meet largely in college classrooms for brief but regular intervals throughout a quarter or semester” (p.11). Just under 40% of class coursework for prospective elementary teachers is spent on professional training while less than 15% involves supervised practice with elementary students.

Linda Darling-Hammond (1999) describes this traditional form of teacher preparation and expresses concerns about its format:

Recent critiques have highlighted the separation of theory and practice in many teacher education programs. Shoehorning unintegrated courses into the four-year undergraduate program has created unhappy trade-offs between deep learning in a disciplinary field and serious understanding of teaching and learning. Teachers have often been taught to teach in lecture halls from professors who have not themselves ever practiced what they teach. Courses on subject matter topics have been disconnected from courses on teaching methods, which have in turn been disconnected from courses on learning and development.

Most students have completed this coursework before beginning student teaching—usually an eight to twelve week bout in the classroom of a teacher chosen as often for reasons of convenience or local politics as for demonstrated expertise. This brief clinical experience, appended to the end of the program, has offered few connections with what came before. (p. 19)

Gloria Ladson Billings (2001) agrees. She argues that “the road to teaching is a long, boring highway of sameness, and far too many likely teachers . . . want to turn around and go back wherever they came from . . . [T]eacher education continues to languish in the practices of a bygone era” (pp. 2-3).

Despite four years of coursework, novice teachers often enter the classroom ill prepared for its many challenges. Twenty per cent of first-year teachers drop out by the end of the year (Chase & Gross, 1999), and nearly one-third leave the profession within four years of graduation (Wilgoren, 2000). The need for reform seems evident.

Holmes Group

In 1986, the Holmes Group (a network of education deans that evolved into a formal consortium of nearly 100 teacher education units within research-oriented universities) issued the first of three publications about teacher education reform.

“Tomorrow’s Teachers” set forth five goals:

1. to make the preparation of teachers more intellectually solid,
2. to acknowledge and institutionalize differences in teachers’ skills, knowledge, and career commitments,
3. to create entry standards for teaching that would be “professionally relevant and intellectually defensible,”
4. to link institutions of higher education more closely with schools,
5. to make schools better places for teachers to work and learn (Lucas, 1997, p. 149).

Their second publication described professional development schools where public schools would work in partnership with universities to train and mentor preservice teachers (Barrett & Baker, 1994). The goal of the Holmes Group was, and continues to be, the raising of teaching to the level of a true profession.

Since 1990, over 300 colleges and universities with teacher education programs have begun changing the ways they prepare novice teachers. Five-year models give an extended program of preparation for undergraduates with the fifth year consisting of a year long internship and rigorous coursework on teaching and learning. (Weissenfels, 1991, Alleksaht-Snider, 1995, White, 1997, Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997, NEA Today, 2000). This allows interns to develop close relationships with the mentoring teacher to

which they are assigned. The interns also are able to see a school year through from start to finish, develop relationships with both the students and their parents, more fully participate as full members of the school's community, and have extended opportunities to practice strategies in teaching. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future states that schools and universities who have successfully implemented this paradigm shift share certain distinctive features:

1. A common, clear vision of good teaching that is apparent in all coursework and clinical experiences,
2. Well-defined standards of practice and performance that are used to guide and evaluate courses and clinical work,
3. A rigorous core curriculum,
4. Extensive use of problem based methods, including case studies, research on teaching issues, performance assessments, and portfolio evaluation,
5. Strong relationships with reform-minded local schools that support development of common knowledge and shared beliefs among school- and university-based faculty (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Million and Vare (1997) state, "The challenge for professional development schools is to create an exemplary learning environment capable of transforming both teacher preparation and the schooling of children" (p. 710). Middleton (2000) further explains:

The professional development school's mission is to offer opportunities for simultaneous renewal in which educators share ideas and work and learn together. [This includes] preservice teacher preparation, inquiry into educational practices, professional development for practicing professionals, [and] exemplary education for all students. (p. 52)

Alternative Programs

While the Holmes Group has looked at extending and revamping undergraduate programs, alternative teacher education programs have focused on drawing on a previously untapped group of potential educators. These programs accept students who already hold bachelor's degrees in concentrations other than education (Faulkner, 1992, Littleton & Holcomb, 1994, Popkewitz, 1998). During the 1980s and 1990s, literally hundreds of alternative programs have been initiated (Dill & Stafford, 1996). Why has this phenomenon occurred? The reasons vary including: lack of teachers, lack of teachers equipped to work in urban schools with at-risk students, and professional and military people with bachelor's degrees who want to teach.

Programs also vary in their focus according to the perceived needs they are trying to meet. New Jersey led the way in starting alternative teacher education programs with Texas and California quickly following. Two programs that have gained national attention include Teach for America, the brainchild of Princeton University graduate student Wendy Kopp, and Troops to Teachers, a federally subsidized program to transition military personnel into public school classrooms.

Teach for America

Rather than extending the amount of preparation required for becoming a teacher, Wendy Kopp's Teach for America takes recent college graduates through an intensive five-week summer course in teaching before sending them to their own classrooms in the fall. Kopp's nonprofit organization has placed 6,424 teachers into some of the poorest classrooms in America for two-year stints (Wilgoren, 2000).

When Kopp first envisioned a national teacher corps, she was a student at Princeton University writing her thesis. Her two goals for the program were “to get bright young missionaries into some of the nation’s neediest classrooms and to create a cadre of civic leaders conscious of the challenges of education and poverty” (Wilgoren, 2000). She selects her recruits from outstanding college graduates who “have demonstrated leadership and achievement” (Kopp, 2000). The competition is fierce. Only one in five applicants is accepted into the program.

Kopp states that good teachers are good leaders, so management and ability are what she looks for. Abigail Smith, director of the summer institute, explains that she and Ms. Kopp don’t pretend that five weeks is enough. Instead, the institute is supposed to persuade recruits to take responsibility for their own professional development, to seek out mentor teachers, to find and implement appropriate curriculum resources, to lean on corps alumni for support and to take classes at local universities (Wilgoren, 2000).

In discussing how corps members handle their first year of teaching, Kopp states:

Corps members today . . . receive more effective ongoing support than they did 10 years ago, thanks to our efforts to cluster them within schools, to foster a culture of constant learning through newsletters and meetings, and to provide access to the best available profession-development resources through relationships with local schools of education. (Kopp, 2000)

She also says that TFA was never created to be a competing alternative to more traditional models. Instead, it “provides a less-than-ideal answer to an emergency situation” (Archer, 1997).

Troops to Teachers

In 1993, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia proposed an innovative program. The program, Troops to Teachers (TTT), addressed two trends: the downsizing of the military and the estimated need of 2.2 million new teachers in the next ten years (Hewitt & Siew, 1998). Five years later, TTT had placed 3,000 veterans in teaching positions. The program has been funded under two federal grants totaling \$65 million (VFW, 1998).

John Gantz, program manager for TTT, explains that the overall goal of the program is to improve American education:

You have people in the military who were instructors with a dynamic background in a vocational area. To be able to bring those people into our schools is exactly what we want and what we need. Most military personnel retire when they're 40 to 45 years old. They're ready for another full career. (Techniques, 1998)

Applicants for TTT must have served in the military for at least six years and have either a bachelor's degree or military documentation of a vocational expertise. They are then placed in a database that school districts can access. When a school district offers an applicant a job, TTT assists with relocating expenses and tuition-free training to meet requirements for teaching. Then, TTT pays 50% of the new teacher's salary for the first year with the amount decreasing by 10% for five years.

Proponents of TTT see the program as a win-win situation. Not only does it help military personnel move into public education, it also provides role models for public school students and helps relieve teacher shortages (Techniques, 1998). In addition, 90% of those going through TTT are male, and nearly 30% come from minority groups (Hewitt & Siew, 1998).

Troops to Teachers was recently extended and modified. The control of the program has shifted from the Defense Department to the Department of Education. Service members seeking teaching credentials receive a \$5,000 stipend, and a \$10,000 bonus is given to those who teach in high need areas (Dyhouse, 1999). Openings are also restricted to 20-year retirees, disabled retirees, or those directly impacted by downsizing (VFW, 1999).

Second Career Alternative (SCA) Program

The participants in this research study were enrolled in yet another alternative certification program. The SCA Program receives applications from college graduates who are willing to commit fifteen months of study for teacher certification and a Master's Degree in Elementary Education. Selection is rigorous. Students must have a 3.0 average in their undergraduate work, some type of work experience, and go through two screening processes—initial screening of written applications and final screening by interviews with a panel of teachers, professors and current students (Turner, personal e-mail on 2/29/2000). Classes begin each summer with a cohort of students learning both theory and practice from a wide variety of professors. In the fall, each student interns in a public school classroom under the guidance of a mentoring teacher for the entire school year. Students continue to meet university classes on one day of each week while also participating in all the activities required of their cooperating teachers, such as parent conferences, building duty, and in-service both before and after the school terms. Interns are also required to spend a 6-week pullout time in another school with students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Once the school year concludes, students return to their university classrooms for coursework throughout the summer.

They graduate from the SCA Program at the end of the second summer in time to accept teaching assignments for the fall.

Conclusions

With our nation already experiencing a teacher shortage and the expected retirement of thousands of teachers in the next five years, we have no choice but to seek a variety of avenues for finding teachers to teach our students. The question that is being debated is what makes a good teacher. Do preservice teachers need extended coursework and/or time in the classroom? Do life experiences substitute for training? Are teachers born or bred? Ultimately, how well are teachers performing after going through these different routes to teaching?

The answers are not clear-cut. Some of these programs have existed for such a short time that adequate data is not available. Sometimes, the data collected yields ambiguous results because of the method of study or the sample size. Nevertheless, I found these statistics:

1. Nationwide, more than one in four newly hired teachers does not have proper certification. 20% of first-year teachers drop out by the end of the first year (Chase & Gross, 1999).
2. Graduates of extended programs are found to be generally more satisfied with their preparation. Their colleagues and principals view them as better prepared. They are seen to be as effective with students as are much more experienced teachers. They are also much more likely to enter and stay in teaching than their peers graduating from a traditional four-year program (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

3. 40% of Teach for America alumni are still teaching. This compares to 68% of all new teachers lasting at least four years in the classroom (Wilgoren, 2000).
4. Several studies compare traditional versus fast-track alternative certification (AC). In general, traditionally certified (TC) teachers perform better than AC; however, no discernable difference exists after three years (Turley & Nakai, 2000).
5. AC programs may attract individuals with greater classroom effectiveness than TC programs (Miller, McKenna & McKenna, 1998).
6. AC populations are demonstrably more diverse than TC populations (Miller, McKenna & McKenna, 1998).
7. 70% of school administrators rank Troops to Teachers employees “among the best” teachers or “well above average” (VFW, 1998).

Research evidence indicates that each of these programs contains both strengths and weaknesses. Many studies are inconclusive, and some studies are even contradictory. As educators, we need to look closely at our expectations of and preparation programs for novice teachers. The future of our nation’s children depends upon our answers.

Causes of Novice Teacher Attrition

Politicians, school board members, parents, teachers, and teacher educators are all concerned about the future of public school education in the United States. The current focus seems to be on the number and quality of teachers within our classrooms. The No Child Left Behind Act requires that all classrooms be staffed with “highly qualified teachers”; yet the problem lies not in the numbers of teachers available, but in how we can keep the teachers that we prepare (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Steep attrition in the beginning years of teaching constitutes a long-standing problem that continues to grow and have serious effects on the quality and costs of education. Twenty per cent of first-year teachers drop out by the end of the year (Chase & Gross, 1999); nearly one-third leave the profession within four years of graduation (Wilgoren, 2000), and almost half of them (between 40 and 50 per cent) have exited by the end of five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In order to stem the tide of exiting novice teachers, it is imperative that we look at the causes of these departures so soon after their preparation and induction into teaching.

Numerous studies have been conducted on teacher attrition, and the reasons given for leaving the teaching profession are just as numerous. Darling-Hammond (2003) groups these reasons into four categories: salaries, working conditions, preparation, and mentoring support for novice teachers. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) admit that salary remains an issue for many of those teachers quitting, but state that even more exiting teachers gave their reasons for leaving as poor working conditions which include student discipline problems, lack of support from school administration, poor student motivation, and lack of teacher influence over schoolwide and classroom decision making. ASCD Executive Director, Gene Carter (2002), states that “teachers who leave low-performing schools cite a lack of professional support, inadequate resources, and low salaries as reasons for leaving” (p. 1). Clearly, there are areas where improvements need to be made.

Salaries

Historically, teacher salaries have always been behind those of other professionals with comparable education and training (Spring, 1994). Ingersoll &

Smith (2003) found that 39% of first-year teachers claimed that salary was a major factor in choosing to change careers. Certainly, improving teacher salaries would be one way to encourage teachers to stay in education; however, data indicates that for those who choose to stay in teaching, working conditions have a higher priority than salary (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Working Conditions

Working conditions cover a wide range of concerns for teachers. *Adequate resources* may not be available in poor rural or inner-city schools. It is difficult to teach children when one is coping with problems such as appropriate physical facilities for teachers and students, adequate classrooms, timely textbooks and library supplies, and consumable resources.

Administrative support varies considerably from school to school. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that “voluntary movers,” those teachers that chose to stay in teaching but transferred from their original schools

. . .sought basic conditions that would allow them to practice their craft day to day: appropriate course assignments; sufficient curriculum guidelines; and efficient systems for discipline, communication with parents, and smooth transitions between classes. They also looked for schools where they could feel like professionals—sharing ideas and resources with colleagues and receiving respect and guidance from the principal. (p. 21)

Novice teachers are especially susceptible to the whims of administrators. They are often hired late, arrive a week before school starts to set up their classrooms, receive the least desirable classrooms and courses, and are assigned the most difficult and challenging students. They also begin their teaching career as novices who are expected to meet the same requirements as their experienced colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Discipline ranks as the number one concern for novice teachers. Donna Moffett, a novice teacher from an alternative program, found that she often spends more time on classroom management than on lessons—and she teaches first graders (Goodnough, 2000). Fernandez-Balboa (1990) suggests that teacher education programs need to devote more attention to helping novice teachers prevent and solve discipline problems. He further explains that novice teachers see keeping classroom control and being liked by their students as being opposite principles, and they need to learn assertiveness for dealing with and preventing disciplinary problems. Jones-Totten (2003) admits that co-teachers taught her to have a “thick skin” so that she would not take professional issues personally. She says she is learning “to approach these situations with a keen professional eye and not overreact with volatile emotions” (p. 4).

Teacher Preparation for the Realities of Teaching

Merseth (1992) tells us that “accounts of the trials and traumas of first-year teachers are numerous and legendary. A first-year teacher’s job is often challenging, frequently discouraging, and sometimes devastating. Attrition rates for newly minted teachers speak to the degree of stress that these novices undergo” (p. 678). Jones-Totten, a novice teacher herself, explains, “There were no major hurdles, just minor hindrances. Within the first two weeks, my emotional barometer had swung from ‘Are you ready?’ to ‘Are you in the right career?’ Simply surviving the first few months proved to be a milestone” (2003, p. 3). Time after time, novice teachers decry the difference between what they perceive teaching to be and the realities once they are in their own classrooms (Gursky, 2001, Goodnough, 2000, Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

No teacher preparation program can perfectly duplicate the experience of having your very own classroom. However, the more students have the opportunity to be in classrooms for extended periods of time, the more likely they are to have realistic expectations of their teaching careers (Livingston & Borko, 1989). Nevertheless, there are many issues related to operating a classroom that novice teachers may not anticipate, especially those who go through accelerated alternative programs. Novice teachers who have had no student teaching experience may not know how to use a grade book, fill out progress reports for parents, create classroom policies and procedures, or conduct parent conferences. These managerial routines must be in place before novice teachers can focus on instructional content (Chesley, Wood, & Zepeda, 1997).

Rozycki (1999) argues that the politics of education also receives short shrift in many teacher preparation programs because

thinking about politics, so I have been told, only muddies the waters and undermines the dedication of future teachers. Organizational studies make their appearance only when educators begin to undertake certification in administration. The complex environment in which teaching occurs is almost universally misrepresented to future teachers as one that will be mostly, if not entirely, under their control. (p. 13)

It is no wonder that Jones-Totten (2003) acknowledges, “The problem is that teaching wasn’t as simple as I had imagined. Any new teacher will quickly stumble across a great chasm between educational expectations and the harsh realities of school life” (p. 3).

Mentoring

Schools must be organized to ensure that novice teachers are supported and evaluated as they learn to teach. This calls for well-matched mentors, release

time to observe skilled colleagues, curricula that offer guidance about what and how to teach, and attentive peers and administrators who watch them teach offer advice, and assess their performance. (Johnson, 2000, p. 2)

Mentoring has received much attention of late in the educational community.

Unfortunately, as with many programs, it is talked about far more than it is actually implemented. Novice teachers go into teaching without a grace period. They are expected to perform the same duties as their experienced colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 2003), and while most school administrators and teachers agree that direct and immediate access to advice and assistance is most helpful in becoming a more effective teacher, many barriers stand in the way of providing any meaningful aid or support to novice teachers (Merseeth, 1992). In order to establish supportive environments for new teachers, schools must provide novice teachers with an appropriate induction program. Having experienced teachers mentor novice teachers on both an individual and group basis creates a win-win situation. Veteran teachers who are trained as mentors experience professional replenishment and advance as teacher leaders (Moir & Bloom, 2003) while novice teachers are supported emotionally and professionally as they become acculturated in their particular school community (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, Sargent, 2003).

Assumption of Teacher Identity by Novice Teachers

“The road to becoming an experienced teacher is a lengthy and arduous trip,” state Williams & Williamson (1996, p. 366). Heck and Williams (1984) elaborate: “An individual does not suddenly become a teacher; rather, becoming a teacher is not a matter of learning how to teach but of personal discovery—of learning how to use one’s self well” (pp. 2-3). How does a person become a teacher? What is it that makes

someone define himself as a teacher? Is it the completion of a course of study, or does “becoming a teacher” involve more than coursework and hoops that one must jump through in order to get a certificate? This section looks at the study of teacher identity and how prospective teachers may travel that road toward professional fulfillment in education.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory states that an individual strives to achieve a satisfactory concept or image of himself in a specific social context (Tajfel, 1978). It involves three ideas: categorization, identification, and social comparison. Categorization occurs when we put ourselves and others in groups such as teachers, doctors, or students. Identification occurs when we identify ourselves as members of a specific group (teachers), and social comparison occurs when we compare ourselves with others in our group (the teacher across the hall) or when we see our group memberships in relation to other groups (the teachers at another school or the members of another profession). Tajfel explains that social identity makes up a part of an individual’s self-concept.

Socialization Through Learning to Teach

Lortie (2002) states that occupations shape people, and this shaping occurs through formal schooling, mediated entry, and learning-while-doing. Formal schooling involves both general schooling and special schooling. For the teaching profession, general schooling includes all formal learning until specific education courses are taken and field experiences are embarked upon. This special schooling often does not occur until the preservice teacher attains his third year of college course work. Mediated entry takes place when “the neophyte takes small steps from simple to more demanding

tasks and from small to greater responsibility under the supervision of persons who have attained recognized position within the occupation” (Lortie, p. 59). For teaching, this would mean the student teaching phase. Finally, learning-while-doing is a practice that has often been used in business and industry. It involves a person entering an occupation at a low level and working up “through the ranks” based upon what he learns while at the workplace. Lortie states that learning-while-doing has historically been the primary way that teachers have learned their profession.

Unique to the teaching profession are the years that each preservice teacher has spent as a student observing teachers at work. No other occupation automatically includes such extended hours of observation. However, Lortie (2002) argues that the student sees the teacher from a specific vantage point and is “not privy to the teacher’s private intentions . . . rarely participate[s] in selecting goals, making preparations . . . [and is] not pressed to place the teacher’s actions in a pedagogically oriented framework” (p. 62). Nevertheless, novice teachers enter the teaching profession with many preconceived notions about teaching that ultimately affect their ability to transition smoothly into their new identities. Research studies indicate that novice teachers are not surprised at most of the tasks required of them; however, almost all found teaching to be more difficult than expected with surprisingly heavy demands on their time and energy (Lortie, 2002, Ogden, 1999, Kincheloe, 2004, Ross, 2002).

Loneliness in Teaching

An interesting element of teaching revolves around how teachers step into their own private worlds when they walk into their classrooms and close the doors. Lortie (2002) explains: “Teachers attach great meaning to the boundaries which separate their

classrooms from the rest of the school . . . Walls are perceived as beneficial; they protect and enhance the course of instruction. All but teacher and students are outsiders” (p. 169). Jersild (1955) also speaks of the barriers that arise between teachers:

There is much in the school situation that cuts teachers off from one another . . . faculty meetings, committee meetings, and the like often does not bring people emotionally together but keeps them emotionally apart. Everything may be discussed solely on an intellectual and logical level. Even though there are individual teachers who try to break the ice, seeking to reach out to others and others to reach out to them, there usually are many who keep a nice distance. (p. 71)

At the same time, this deliberate decision to isolate oneself from one’s colleagues creates problems for novice teachers as they try to assimilate into the culture of teaching. “The norm of isolation means that many skilled veteran teachers have had little experience communicating with other teachers about their practice,” explains Gratch. “The conservative norms for teacher interaction make it difficult for mentors to critique the work of beginning teachers and beginning teachers to request help with problems in their classrooms” (1998, p. 220). Williams and Williamson (1996) elaborate:

The first year of teaching is a critical period in developing the teaching culture. It is one of assimilation, experimentation, and continued growth. During this time the novice teacher looks to experienced teachers as an influential agent . . . unfortunately, the influential effects of socialization by experienced teachers are limited due to the isolation experienced by beginning teachers. (p. 366)

Combs (1965) agrees. He further states:

Teacher education must be deeply concerned about the developing self of the fledgling teacher. How a teacher behaves after he leaves the portals of his college will be very largely determined by how he has learned to see himself and his relationships to his students, his subject matter, and to the profession of

teaching itself . . . Whether an individual will be an effective teacher depends upon the nature of his private world of perceptions. (pp. 15, 19)

Obviously, change needs to occur in the ways and frequency of communicating among teachers: novice, mid-career, and veteran teachers alike. Little & Robinson (1997) explain: “The lack of change [in teaching practices] may stem from the somewhat isolated culture in which many teachers find themselves” (p. 433).

Teacher Stories

In *Composing a Teaching Life*, Ruth Vinz (1996) discusses how teachers’ voices have been kept silent, and it is time that we listen to each other:

I believe that teachers’ voices need to be valued in discussions on teaching and learning; teachers need to become active participants and shapers . . . of schooling. We were socialized to keep our mouths shut about what we did or didn’t do in classes. Nobody wanted to hear. The idea was to sit back and let someone else tell us how we should act and think and what we should value . . . we have devalued and constrained our own knowledge. (p. xi)

White (1991) says that teacher discussions involve more complex ideas than we might initially realize. She explains:

Teachers’ narratives, or ‘war stories’ as they are often called, encode both their specific experiences and go beyond them . . . when teachers tell stories, they make claims about the premises of teaching, theoretically argue about priorities, inculcate those moving into the profession and cause others to reflect on their own practice. (p. 226)

Sharing stories of teaching also helps teachers overcome fears and legitimize their problems in their classrooms. Huber & Whelan (1999) explain that we negotiate ourselves as we relive our life stories; our “storied compositions” help us to define who and what we are, and why. White adds that the give and take of discussions with other teachers “helps beginning teachers gain access to alternative understandings of their situations (1991, p. 249). If we truly want to help novice teachers move forward in their

identities as teachers, we need to encourage open discussion with other teaching professionals. Vinz (1996) sums it up in this manner:

What we saw, heard, appreciated, or resisted in our own school experiences with teachers must have an effect on our beliefs and practices . . . recounting the experiences we've had with [other] teachers . . . is a good way to begin examining who we are as teachers. (p. 5)

Teacher Reflections

Discussions with other professionals in our field encourage us to become reflective practitioners. Featherstone (1993) says, "Self-knowledge is one of the major fruits of the beginning teacher's experience" (p. 101). She goes on to state that the most powerful stories that novice teachers share "are those that involve learning, or verifying, some truth about the self." Other writers agree. Vinz (1996) describes her own teaching experience:

I didn't understand until I began teaching that what happened each day was a construction that resulted from an interaction between many competing and often contradictory forces. Very different outcomes resulted between what I intended to put into practice day after day, hour after hour, and year after year and what actually occurred in the classroom situation. (p. 167)

She explains, "The classroom is a complex cultural setting in which [teachers] must take some responsibility for shaping as well as being shaped" (p. 209). White (1991) further elaborates:

Student teachers begin reflecting when events in the classroom force them to confront that certain teaching strategies or beliefs about children have become suspect. As they leave the security of their previous knowledge base, student teachers often feel angry or overwhelmed by the ambiguity, complexity and interconnectedness of problems ranging from the mundane to the insolvable. (p. 238)

In order to become reflective practitioners, preservice and novice teachers must see reflection going on among their colleagues, and this reflection must sometimes result in changed behaviors in our teaching strategies and beliefs. Franzak (2002) explains:

We live in a world of negotiated identity, one where we continually construct and revise our visions of self. Those of us who create “teacher” as part of our identity must negotiate the particular implications of our professional identity in relation to students, peers, the general public, our intimates, and ourselves. (p. 258)

Weber and Mitchell (1996) state that the gradual and life-long nature of socialization into teaching includes “understanding the childhood memories and indelible social stereotypes [that] silently colour the voices beginning teachers use to speak their emerging identity.” They also ask an interesting question: “What images of ‘teacher’ lurk deep in the shadows of their automatic responses, texturing their identity and the way they teach and think?” (p. 303). Ross (2002) points out, “The teaching style of the cooperating teacher, including the level of reflection practiced, strongly influences the development and future teaching of the novice student teacher. The level of skill in reflective practice is, however, rarely a consideration in the selection of cooperating teachers” (p. 683).

Rodriguez & Sjostrom (1998) found that nontraditional teacher candidates responded differently from traditional teacher candidates in their assumption of teacher identity. Nontraditional teacher candidates’ beliefs and operational theories tended to be more ingrained. Their use of learning methods were “highly colored by the lens through which they view themselves, their work and the world. The worldviews of nontraditional adult teacher candidates embody basic beliefs and assumptions about the human condition” (p. 177). They also found that nontraditional students focused on

learner needs and development rather than personal performance. They viewed mistakes as part of becoming a professional and saw themselves as practitioners “needing time on task and practice to perfect their training” (p. 182). Nontraditional students seemed to fit in to the politics and culture of their schools more readily than traditional students. They also seemed to understand their roles and the importance of their professional behavior better than the traditional group and focused on “reaching all children and enhancing their learning . . . over their own teaching from the very beginning or early in the student teaching experience” (p. 182).

Franzak (2002) concludes: “Multiple influences . . . shape teacher identity, ranging from personal experience to media images to pedagogical beliefs supported by preservice instruction” (p. 258). Hatch (1999) sums up novice teacher socialization in this way: “A strong thread that runs through my beliefs about teacher education is that new teachers should experience socialization into the profession *by design*, as opposed to *by default*” (p. 229).

Chapter Summary

The review of literature for this study began with a historical perspective of teacher education in America. This included the recent phenomena of alternative routes to teacher certification such as five-year PDS programs and post-baccalaureate programs including, among others, Wendy Kopp’s Teach for America and the federal government’s Troops to Teachers.

Next, the steep rate of attrition was explored and discussed. Attrition, a growing problem in education, affects beginning teachers more than any other group of teachers. Some of the specific causes of novice teacher attrition include low salaries, difficult

working conditions, a mismatch between beliefs about teaching and reality, and the need for mentoring of novice teachers.

Finally, how novice teachers find their identity was examined. This included Lortie's explanation of socialization in teaching, loneliness inherent in the teaching profession, teacher stories, and teacher reflections. The difference in traditional and nontraditional students and their assumption of teacher identity was also explored.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to identify the perceptions that second career novice teachers, who have completed a fifteen-month program, have about their personal experiences and journeys toward becoming classroom teachers. This research proposes to document these novice teachers' initial perceptions about teaching and their experiences in finding their identities as teachers. How and when do they see themselves as "belonging," as actively contributing to both the classroom and school community, and fully assuming the role of teacher? How do their perceptions change and develop after they start teaching in their own classrooms?

An interpretivist or constructivist paradigm that portrays the world as socially constructed, complex, and ever changing was selected as the most appropriate research method for understanding novice teachers' perceptions throughout this study. This is in contrast to the positivist assumption of a fixed, measurable reality external to people. This qualitative research project was *phenomenological* with the goal being to understand subjects, in this case, second career novice teachers, from their own points of view. Van Manen defines phenomenological research as "the study of lived experience" (1990, p. 9). Bogdan & Biklen (1992) explain:

The data collected [is] *soft*, that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Research questions . . . are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity, in context. (p. 2)

The five axioms posited by Lincoln & Guba (1985) inform and guide *naturalistic research*. They are consistent with the theoretical assumptions underlying this investigation:

1. There are multiple constructed realities that are individually and socially constructed and are ever changing. Interviewing participants several times, both individually and in pairs, and participants' recording of reflections in journals contributed to a better understanding of the multiple realities facing each participant. The paired interviews allow participants to further probe their own perceptions in relation to each other's experiences. Bogdan & Biklen (1992) maintain that group interviews "bring the researcher into the world of the subjects . . . [and] when reflecting together on some topic, subjects often can stimulate each other to talk about topics that you can explore later" (p. 100).
2. The researcher and researched interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable. In the role of graduate assistant in the SCA Program in which these students were enrolled, I supervised each of these participants during their internship year. This included unannounced informal observations, planned formal observations, and conversations with cooperating teachers. I also taught the entire group of SCA interns during two days of seminars and interacted with them informally on numerous occasions before this study began. A spirit of mutual trust and friendship based upon these interactions developed. This was in keeping with Woolcott's (1995) suggestion that building close relationships with participants helps to establish trust and rapport. Because of these interactions and feelings of mutual trust, it is assumed the participants felt

free to share their perceptions of their first year as teachers. At the same time, my relationship to each of the participants impacted the study in ways that cannot be completely understood or separated from the study.

3. The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of “working hypotheses” that describe the individual case. This study looked at four individual cases and used a recursive process of inductive analysis to find similarities related to common themes. The likelihood of applying findings across contexts depends on the closeness of fit between contexts.
4. All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. Multiple sources of data collection were utilized to understand the complex experiences of novice teachers. Findings were descriptive in nature and derived from *rich data* and *thick description* of participants’ interviews and journal entries.
5. Researchers’ values influence the choice of research questions, theoretical framework, methodology, and findings. Past experiences of my work as a classroom teacher, a cooperating teacher with student teachers, a supervisor, and an instructor of interns all affected the selection and interpretation of the data collected for this study. The value of this study will be determined by the reader based upon its contribution to the field of teacher education and its applicability to similar contexts.

This research study was also based on the premise that finding one’s identity as teacher is necessary for successfully navigating a career in teaching. In *The Complex Roles of the Teacher* (1984), Heck and Williams explain: “People who feel they

‘belong’ to a particular group, whether it is formal or informal, are in a far stronger position to deal with life than those who do not” (p. 3). Novice teachers who feel they “belong” to their group of grade-level colleagues, the formal staff of their assigned school, or the larger entity of professional educators are more likely to feel confident in their role as teacher than those who do not have this sense of belonging.

Definitions

Because of the variety of labels given to qualitative research, the following terms and their definitions were used throughout this study on second career novice teachers:

1. *Purposeful sampling*—when particular subjects are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Maxwell, 1996).
2. *“Rich” data*—data that is detailed and complete enough to provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on, generally achieved from verbatim transcripts of interviews and detailed, descriptive note taking about specific, concrete events observed (Maxwell, 1996).
3. *Thick description*—description that goes beyond the bare reporting of an act, but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of action (Glesne, 1999).
4. *Member checking*—when data is checked by the participants to verify both information and interpretation (Erlandson, et. al, 1993).
5. *Analytic induction*—an approach for collecting and analyzing data whereby a specific problem or issue becomes the focus of research. Participants are

purposefully selected to explore the specified issue and theories are developed and modified throughout the process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

6. *Constant comparative*—a research design where the initial topic may be somewhat broad, but observations and data collection cause the topic to be narrowed. Analysis occurs throughout data collection, and examination of the data directs the focus of the final categories analyzed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

Procedure

This research gathered information from four beginning teachers in the form of interviews and weekly journals detailing their reflections on teaching. (See Appendix F for IRB Approval Form B.) Each of the four teachers participated in three interviews over the course of a semester. The interviews were conducted at three points in their first semester of teaching: 1) after graduation and prior to the beginning of the school year, 2) midway through the first semester, and 3) after the completion of the first semester. Two of the interviews were individual interviews; one interview occurred in pairs. Each of the interviews was taped, transcribed, and checked for accuracy and completion by the interviewees and myself. The interviewees were permitted to make changes and additions. The data from the interviews and the journals were then charted and analyzed according to recurring themes and words.

There were 18 interview prompts divided into three categories: 1) choosing teaching as a career, 2) the role of the intern as a student, and 3) the role of the intern as a teacher. The prompts were devised in collaboration with four university professors of

education, including an expert in qualitative research. The prompts were designed to elicit from students their perceptions with regard to their initial motivation for becoming teachers, their assessment of their preparation, and their interpretation of their experiences of teaching. A list of the prompts used in the interviews is appended to this document (Appendix A).

From the beginning of the research process, tentative assumptions and the categorization of data occurred in response to emerging themes. This was in keeping with the definitions of *analytic induction* and *constant comparison* as described above. The generation of theory was recursive in form. As Bogdan & Biklen (1992) explain: “Analysis and data collection occur in a pulsating fashion—first the interview, then the analysis and theory development, another interview, and then more analysis, and so on—until the research is completed” (p. 72).

Participant Selection

Interviewees were selected from a group of twelve teacher education graduate students in the SCA Program, an alternative program designed for second career teachers. They all lived in the southeastern United States and were employed in public schools during the research time period. They also graduated from the same Master’s program in elementary education from a major university in the southeastern United States.

All students were informed of my research plans concerning their first semester of teaching after graduation and were invited to participate. Participation was entirely voluntary and carried no penalties or rewards with it. Four students were selected from eleven volunteers to achieve diversity in gender, age, background, and teaching

placement. The first criterion for selection of participants centered upon the relationship that I had been able to build with each intern during the year before the research study. I chose participants that had already connected with me on a personal level and were open in their observations about their teaching situations. The second criterion was diversity. I chose Alex because he was the only male in my group of interns. I also knew that his background and previous work experiences were quite different from most of my interns. Diana was the oldest intern in my group. She was married and had two sons in middle school. Both Judith and Kasey were in their twenties. Judith was married, and Kasey was single. They had both encountered challenges early in their internships; yet, both had successfully completed the SCA Program and received high praise from teachers and principals who worked with them. Finally, it was important that participants' home and work settings were situated in relatively close proximity to my work place so that we could meet with each other as needed throughout the study.

Because I served as the supervisor for these students in a required year long teaching internship, I was concerned about the issues of power and authority. In order to minimize this, the research was scheduled to begin after all students had completed the requirements of the internship and acquired teaching positions in area public schools. All participants and their schools and locations have been given pseudonyms. A general description of each participant and his/her teaching placement during research follows.

Alex

Alex, the only male participant, was also the only novice teacher to take a position that was not in a regular self-contained classroom. He was hired as a TAG (Talented and Gifted Program) teacher for three different elementary schools. The TAG Program serves students in grades 3-5 who score in the gifted range on the PIAT test. Alex's assignments included Middletown Elementary School (a middle SES school), Charleston Elementary School (a low to middle SES school), and Rocky Hill Elementary School (a middle to high SES school).

Diana

Diana was excited to accept a position at the school where she interned. It was an interim position, but Diana hoped that a permanent position would become available the next year so she could stay at the same school. She interned in a kindergarten classroom, so her move to a third-grade classroom created some anxiety on her ability to make the transition from 5-year olds to 8-year olds.

Judith

Judith accepted a fifth-grade teaching position at Charleston Elementary School, one of the schools where Alex also worked with TAG. Charleston serves primarily low to middle SES students. Judith's internship was also in fifth grade, so she was already familiar with the county curriculum and the general developmental levels of fifth graders. She was not, however, accustomed to working with lower SES students, as her former school was predominantly upper-middle SES students.

Kasey

Kasey was hired right before school began in a rural county school system. Sixty per cent of the students enrolled in her school qualified for free or reduced lunches. Kasey was initially hired in an interim position, but a week before school began she was moved to a permanent second grade position. Kasey is from Rogers County where she was hired to teach.

Data Collection

I chose to collect data through individual interviews, paired interviews, and journal entries by the participants. Eighteen interview prompts were created and then divided into three categories: 1) choosing teaching as a career, 2) the role of the intern as a student, and 3) the role of the intern as a teacher. The prompts were devised in collaboration with four university professors of education, including an expert in qualitative research. They were designed to elicit from students their perceptions with regard to their initial motivation for becoming teachers, their assessment of their preparation, and their interpretation of their experiences of teaching. A list of the prompts used in the interviews is appended to this document (Appendix A).

All interviews occurred in a neutral location and away from the novice teachers' schools. Locations varied depending upon the participants' needs and included: the home of one participant, conference rooms within the university, and an available private conference room near one participant's work and home location. The settings were intended to encourage openness on the parts of the participants while also showing respect for their personal experiences and privacy. Questions were semi-structured in format to enable participants to share similar experiences while, at the same time, to

give them the opportunity to move in directions of their choosing. Participants were also asked to share any additional information that they felt had importance and had not been addressed during the questions.

Initial interviews occurred during late summer after participants had completed all course work and also had received and accepted a job offer. These individual interviews allowed me the opportunity to discuss with each participant his/her decision to go into teaching after initially training for another field, experiences during coursework and internships, and expectations for the first year of teaching.

Participants agreed to keep a journal on their experiences in their classrooms during the research time frame. Each participant was to reflect upon both positive and negative situations as they happened and their responses (physical, emotional, or mental) to each situation. They also brought copies of their journals to the second and third interviews. Alex made twenty-three journal entries; Judith wrote entries forty-five times, and Kasey turned in thirty-two journal entries. Although Diana kept saying that she wanted to keep a journal of her first year of teaching, she never did write any entries. The dates of all journal entries are appended at the end of this document (Appendix C).

The second interviews occurred in early October 2000. Diana and Alex met together, while Kasey and Judith met with me individually when no time could be found that worked for them both. Questions were semi-structured and focused on problems and triumphs in the first six to eight weeks of teaching. There was significant interaction between Alex and Diana. They had gone through the same program together

and were glad to see each other, but more significantly, they frequently interrupted one another to reaffirm what one was saying with an example of his or her own.

The final interviews took place in early January 2001. Kasey and Judith met together and, like Alex and Diana, interaction was significant with one novice teacher's responses building upon the other. Alex and Diana talked with me individually. Alex, Judith, and Kasey all delivered journal entries from October to January. Semi-structured questions focused on each teacher's personal journey toward identifying himself/herself as a teacher, the rewards and frustrations of teaching, and in what direction each participant was continuing.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using analytic induction. This involved "scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories, developing working typologies and hypotheses upon an examination of initial cases, then modifying and refining them on the basis of subsequent cases" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, pp. 179-180).

Data analysis began with the initial interviews. After each interview was transcribed, I read over the raw data and highlighted areas of interest. Particular areas interested me if: 1) they seemed to answer one of my original research questions, 2) they seemed to occur frequently, or 3) they "jumped out" at me as points that surprised or interested me and I might want to pursue further. As I highlighted these areas, I also made notes in the margins and added post-it notes with key terms to help me create categories. I then reread the transcriptions with my notes and clarified possible categories and the data that seemed to fit within each category. (See Appendices D and

E for examples of raw data and categories.) Subsequent interviews and journal entries were compared to the original categories, and additional categories were created while existing categories were sometimes modified to take into account the new information (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

As data was received, I also compared it across all categories. This includes aspects of the constant comparison research design, and enabled the discovery of relationships and continuous refinement of both data collection and analysis (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Evolving theories were informed by the data or “grounded”; they followed the data rather than preceding it (Erlandson, et. al, 1993). I discovered that my original research questions did not adequately represent the depth or breadth of information I was receiving from the participants of this study. I then decided to restructure my questions and add a new question addressing the challenges these novice teachers faced in their first semester of teaching. The changes to my research questions are listed in Chapter Four. Glaser and Strauss (1967), originators of constant comparison, describe this research design as an inductive procedure whereby categories are constructed as relationships are defined objectively, yet flexibly.

As I reviewed each set of interview transcriptions and journal entries, I set up possible categories of meaning. These were referred to again and again as I looked for recurring patterns. Van Manen (1990) states that “the purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something” (p. 77). He further explains that there is “a difference between our pre-reflective lived understanding . . . [and] our reflective grasp of the phenomenological structure of the lived meaning” (p. 77). I attempted to access both types of understanding from my research participants

by including both face-to-face interviews (pre-reflective understanding) and written journal entries (reflective understanding).

As analysis continued, I constructed charts of categories based upon the data.. I copied highlighted sections from transcripts and journal entries and listed evidence under each of the category headings. Ongoing analysis continued by inductively looking for recurring patterns in new data, identifying additional categories for organizing data, and then deductively reading through the data to confirm or disconfirm the category. As data sets increased in size, I reorganized and reduced them and then analyzed them once more to look for similarities and differences and to discover overarching themes.

Because my selection of data that was significant to this research study was based upon my own experiences and beliefs, I also chose to have the data analyzed by two “outsiders” who did not know any of the participants. They each read the transcripts and journal entries from the four participants and categorized the information they read. I compared their categories with my own for verification and trustworthiness.

Assurance of Trustworthiness

Concerning issues of validity or trustworthiness in qualitative research, Maxwell (1990) explains:

It depends on the relationship of your conclusions to the real world, and there are no methods that can assure you that you have adequately grasped those aspects of the world that you are studying . . . validity is a goal rather than a product; it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted. Validity is also relative; it has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research. (p. 86)

Validity refers to the correctness or credibility of one's research findings. I used several techniques for research validity or trustworthiness, which included: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, member checking, and rich, thick description (Glesne, 1999).

I was involved in prolonged engagement with my four participants for an entire year before the beginning of this research. I supervised them during their nine-month internship, which included both formal and informal observations, discussions with their cooperating teachers, and informal conversations with each participant. I was able to develop a relationship of trust and respect with each participant prior to his or her involvement in the research study. Research data was also collected over a period of six months with at least three meetings with each participant in a neutral location.

Triangulation occurred with multiple data-collection methods, which included individual in-depth interviews, paired interviews, and journal entries of the participants. Peer review and debriefing were accomplished in several ways. I received feedback from three different sources concerning the interpretation of data. Maxwell (1996) suggests that feedback should be received from a variety of people and should include "both those familiar with the phenomena or settings you're studying and those who are strangers to this situation"(p. 94). These sources included a veteran high school English teacher, an engineer familiar with research analysis, and a class of graduate-level students learning to analyze qualitative data. I also received input and reflection from colleagues in teacher education.

Member checking included sharing interview transcripts with participants for checking and correcting of meanings and interpretations. Rich, thick description of data

is shown in Chapter Four so the reader is able to enter into the research context and make his own conclusions based upon the data.

Chapter Summary

A qualitative research design was selected to better understand the perceptions that second-career novice teachers ascribed to their experiences in the SCA Program, an alternative graduate certification program, and in their first six months as novice teachers. I conducted individual interviews, paired interviews, and received journal entries from participants as data collection for this research study. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Analytic induction and constant comparative designs were used to analyze data. Prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, member checking, and rich, thick description were used to establish trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

The participants in this research study were enrolled in an alternative certification program called Second Career Alternative (SCA) Program. The SCA Program receives applications from college graduates who are willing to commit fifteen months of study for teacher certification. Classes begin each summer with a cohort of students learning both theory and practice from a wide variety of professors. In the fall, each student interns in a public school classroom under the guidance of a mentoring teacher for the entire school year. Students continue to meet university classes on one day of each week while also participating in all the activities required of their cooperating teachers, such as parent conferences, building duty, and in-service, both before and after the school term. Interns are also required to spend a 6-week pullout time in another school with students of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Once the school year concludes, students return to their university classrooms for coursework throughout the summer. They graduate from the SCA Program at the end of the second summer in time to accept teaching assignments for the fall. This study listened to the voices of four participants in the SCA Program as they navigated their first semester as novice teachers using the following paradigm: 1) individual interviews, 2) journal entries, and 3) paired interviews.

The organization of this chapter presents a reorganization of the five research questions, which includes rewording and combining two questions, reordering questions and adding another question. This was done because it more closely reflects the

direction and depth of analysis of the research data. The five original research questions as presented in Chapter 1 of this study are as follow:

1. Why did these second career novice teachers choose to change directions in their career paths and pursue teaching?
2. What experiences did they find were the most beneficial in preparing them to become teachers?
3. In what ways did they learn to define themselves as teachers?
4. What experiences did they find most obstructive in preparing them to become teachers?
5. What can be learned from this research that will inform the way potential teachers are recruited and trained?

The reorganized questions as they are presented in this chapter are as follow:

1. Why did these second career novice teachers choose to change directions in their career paths and pursue teaching?
2. What experiences did they find were the most beneficial (or most obstructive) in preparing them to become teachers?
3. What challenges did they face in their first six months of teaching?
4. In what ways did they learn to define themselves as teachers?
5. What can be learned from this research that will inform the way potential teachers are recruited and trained?

Questions 1-4 are presented in order in this chapter with comments by each of the four participants in this research study. Question 5 will be addressed in Chapter 5 along with an analysis of the data presented in Chapter 4.

It is important to point out that the purpose of this study was to better understand the *perceptions* that four novice teachers had of preparation for teaching through participation in the SCA Program, their experiences adjusting to their first teaching jobs, and their evolving personal identities as teachers. *The Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* (2004) defines *perception* as the “process of registering sensory stimuli as meaningful experience . . . Perceptions may be influenced by expectations, needs, unconscious ideas, values, and conflicts.” Perceptions of these novice teachers included personal meaning making. There was no attempt to include alternative perceptions of other people who shared the experiences of the four novice teachers who agreed to participate in this study.

Data are presented in the exact words of the four novice teachers, but have been edited in some cases with ellipses to eliminate repetitive phrases that do not contribute to the novice teachers’ meanings. Brackets indicate words I have added to help the reader better understand when research participants used pronoun referents instead of the subject.

Why Did These Second Career Novice Teachers Choose to Change Directions in Their Career Paths and Pursue Teaching?

Alex

Alex, age 30, entered teaching by a circuitous route. Upon graduation from high school he applied to several prestigious universities and received acceptances and scholarships, but he decided not to accept any of them. He explained, “[G]rowing up in high school I actually took a year off. It’s sort of [a] pattern with me, not exactly knowing exactly where I’m going to go next. In fact, I’m the first person in my family

who's actually [gone] to a university.” He eventually decided to enroll in an Architecture program at a large southern university. By the third year of his undergraduate studies, he was sensing that this was not something he was going to do for the rest of his life. He “didn’t really enjoy it.” Upon graduation, he worked with an architectural firm on projects that ranged from HUD funded apartments to million dollar mansions. “Just the contradiction between those two parties . . . and the amount of time, I just didn’t enjoy, so I decided to leave,” he explained during his initial interview.

Next, Alex worked in a coffee shop: “I was working at this job and it was relatively easy, not a lot of thought involved and I enjoyed the people that came in . . . and they offered me a position as a manager. It was a learning experience . . . I think working in a corporation, being responsible for hiring, firing, that kind of daily managerial position was interesting.”

This experience led Alex into a new direction, that of project manager for a national bookstore franchise. Alex stated, “It seems once people know that you have a certain talent, even if you don’t want to use it, you’re bound to be pushed in that direction.” After working as project manager with responsibilities that involved constant travel, Alex decided that he was headed in the wrong direction once again. “I was literally out of town working in different cities. I was only home for, I think, a week and a half in a year, and I decided, ‘Okay, It’s time to make another decision. This is not a healthy thing, living in hotel rooms. This is definitely not what I want to do for the rest of my life.’”

Even then, he wasn’t sure that elementary school teaching was what he wanted until he completed an independent project that involved working with students in an

inner-city school for one semester. “[Ms. Rogers] was my base class, so I started in her classroom and I would do two or three day pullouts into all these different classrooms . . . to sort of see the whole spectrum of what a child’s development is like. At the same time, I got to have that intense, well . . . that real or developed experience with her children in that class. I . . . left the classroom thinking that not only will I be a teacher, but I was only going to be a 3rd grade teacher.” At that point, he applied for acceptance into the SCA Program for a master’s degree in elementary education.

Alex describes himself as a hard worker; “I started my first job when I was 13.” He also does not consider himself to be a quitter. Concerning his disillusionment with his work on an architectural degree, he said, “Well, it’s something I’ve started. I’m not going to quit . . . So I pushed myself through the program.” He also seems to be able to learn quickly and handle a variety of responsibilities: “Almost everything I’ve decided that I want to do, I’ve been able to do well and it became hard to make the decision . . . ‘I can do that well, but I just don’t think I can do that.’” This study follows Alex to see how he assesses his immersion into his new career of teaching.

Diana

Diana, age 43, received her undergraduate degree in psychology in 1979. She has worked as a computer operator for the State and as a technical support person for a computer store. After her children were born, (two boys—now ages 12 and 14), she started helping in a preschool part-time. She later became the financial director for a non-profit day care center. It was during these experiences in preschool and day care that she “learned that I loved the kids and liked working with them . . . I just enjoyed watching them learn and seeing them interact with one another and I just knew that was

something I wanted to do. I knew I didn't want to sit behind a computer for the rest of my life." As an older student, Diana says she decided to pursue teaching through the SCA Program because "if I had gone the traditional route, I'd be 45 before I got out and that's just three whole years that I could have been teaching. This is just a quicker avenue for me and I felt like it was the best avenue. Fifteen months of anything is achievable."

Judith

Judith, age 29, received her undergraduate degree in social work. Upon graduation, she accepted a position in a nursing home because of her desire to work with the elderly. Finding that not really to her liking, she became a case manager for the severely persistently mentally ill. That was when she discovered her love for teaching as she "did daily things with them, how they use the phone and how they cook food." Still, she explained in her initial interview, she discovered "the fixing of people's lives day in and day out . . . that got old, too." At the same time, she missed working with kids as she had done during summer vacations while in college. Although she knew she wanted to work with young people, she knew that social work involved "dealing with their problems a whole lot more than you're dealing with the kids." It was then that she decided to research alternative teacher education programs. After learning about the SCA Program, she applied and was accepted.

Kasey

Kasey, age 25, began her college studies in business. When she didn't like that, she turned to sociology and social work. In her final semester before college graduation, she worked with juveniles. She stated, "They were teenagers . . . it was

very frustrating for me—I felt like at that age there was not much I could do. They were very depressed and very down. They didn't think I could help.” Upon learning about the SCA Program, she decided to apply because “I always knew I wanted to work with children, I just didn't know how.” When her application arrived too late for acceptance that summer, she substitute taught for a year “to make sure that's what I wanted to do, and I loved it.” Her experiences as a substitute included working in grades one through eight in several different schools in her home county. “I loved it,” she reiterated. “All the teachers told me if you can substitute, you can teach.”

Kasey revealed that her friends could not believe that she wanted to go into teaching. She replied, “Well, I get to go have fun every day. You have to go sit in an office, but I get to have fun.” Kasey learned that teaching was not all fun and games, but she was still glad about her decision to go into elementary education.

Summary

All four participants entered the SCA Program after successfully completing undergraduate programs of study that were not in education. They then actively pursued their chosen career. However, they all expressed dissatisfaction of various kinds with their jobs related to their degrees. Alex had worked in areas from architecture to business management; Diana had explored business finance and computers; Judith had found employment in a nursing home and later as a case manager, and Kasey had been involved in social work with juveniles. All had taken the opportunity to observe or work with children in some capacity, often in a volunteer status. These included Alex's involvement with inner-city children through a university-led independent project, Diana's experience with preschoolers in her role as

financial director for a non-profit day care center, Judith's summer experiences working with children at camp, and Kasey's year of substitute teaching. As a result, all had decided to pursue teaching through the SCA Program believing that teaching children would be a fulfilling vocation for each of them.

**What Experiences Did They Find Were the Most Beneficial (or Most Obstructive)
in Preparing Them to Become Teachers?**

Alex

Alex felt that his prior experiences in business were applicable to his teaching career. In his August interview, he explained, "The managerial perspective [of] being part of a corporation . . . gave me a lot of skills as far as organization, planning, being able to set objectives and set goals." The greatest asset of the SCA Program was being able to participate in a public school classroom and environment for an entire school year. "We were in the classroom for so long, knowing what—how the school works—who the people are. What they do. Understanding the relationships that exist between—because there is a lot of politics at schools . . . who do you need to go to when you need certain kinds of things . . ." He also learned to "recognize different types of personalities . . . that were helpful, people you could go to with a question."

Once he started teaching, Alex established an informal mentoring relationship with another Talented and Gifted (TAG) teacher. He explained that "we are actually given a partner teacher, and while she is not my partner I find myself turning to her for advice and for feedback on my selection process, and lesson planning." He also continued his professional development by reading professional books, specifically *Teaching the Reggio Way*, whose methods he implemented within his TAG classrooms.

One thing Alex learned that he was sorry to discover was why some of his classmates were in the SCA Program. In his first interview, he related:

I didn't take into account the number of different motivations that people would have for being in an education program . . . I expected that people would be very excited about learning about being a teacher as opposed to—I found a lot of people that were more excited about getting through a program to get a job, which I was sort of disappointed in . . . I learned a lot about the kind of people that I'll be working with.

After being at his new school for over two months, he continued his assertion that “not everyone is in education because they care about children.”

When asked if he could change anything about the program, Alex responded:

I think it would be the school . . . there's things that made me uncomfortable about the environment . . . religion was not talked about in the classroom [where I grew up]. It was a matter of not offending others that held different views . . . I didn't really think it should be something that would affect my behavior in the classroom or what we were able to discuss in the classroom, but in some respects, it did, in that classroom and at that school.

He also stated that he would have liked more feedback from his cooperating teacher.

“Maybe some simple form that mentoring teachers have to fill out,” he explained because “sometimes it would have been good to know . . . more than ‘You're doing great’ . . . I would have appreciated a lot more feedback.”

Overall, Alex was pleased with his participation in the SCA Program. He reflected, “It was a very good experience and I think you do take out of it what you will.”

Diana

For Diana, her age and life experiences were her greatest assets entering the SCA Program. In her initial interview she explained, “Looking at it from a different

outlook in the classroom than if I were 25 years old is probably the main difference.”

Although she earned her undergraduate degree in psychology, she believed her prior work in computers related better to her new career in teaching: “Of course, the psychology helps just as far as dealing with everybody . . . but the computer background, I definitely have used that a lot in the class work.” She further stated, “Everybody [in the SCA cohort group] has brought something different to the program and it’s been a good group. . . . we do support each other . . . everybody is really good to share their information of what they have.”

Diana expressed strong feelings concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the SCA Program. She felt that learning from a variety of teachers enhanced the program, especially in the areas of reading and special education. At the same time, some teaching revolved around middle school and high school students rather than the elementary level so, while interesting, was less applicable.

Although Diana had resisted changing grades and schools for a 6-week pullout to an inner city school setting, she admitted that the pullout time “probably needs to be longer than six weeks . . . you’re just starting to get to know the kids and I hadn’t really felt comfortable with teaching because I wasn’t there long enough to get into a . . . routine [so] you just don’t feel part of the class.” She also stated that “inner city pullout was good. It opened my eyes to a lot of things . . . I was just so naive.” Diana struggled with feeling equipped to work with many of her inner city students: “I think you need to have something to help with the kids’ baggage . . . I mean, they’ve gone through more in the morning than I do in a whole day.” She also shared the horror of a student showing Diana lice attached to the student’s hair. After this incident, Diana decided

prospective teachers need the opportunity to discuss health issues they might encounter in their schools. “I think they could talk about some day-to-day situations, scenarios that you’re going to come up against and give suggestions on how to handle them,” she stated.

Diana was delighted with her mentoring teacher. She described her as very flexible:

She is always looking for new ideas to teach a different way . . . she’s very organized and the things I’ve learned from her I can take to any grade. . . classroom management skills that I’ve got from her—they’ll carry over, the organization, and just the way she deals with the kids . . . just her open mind.

At the same time, Diana felt her pullout teacher was given little direction in what was expected. “She didn’t feel like she was really informed as to what my requirements were and she kept asking me, ‘What do you have to do?’” related Diana. “I didn’t feel like she was informed enough as to how to use me and what to teach me . . . I didn’t get to teach as much as I would have liked.” Nevertheless, Diana was able to draw from her experiences with her pullout teacher: “She had a lot of good ideas and I really enjoyed how she praised the kids. She always told them something positive, even though she was very strict and could wring their neck. She was just a big praiser and I think in an inner city situation that was really good for them.”

Overall, Diana learned much from the SCA Program and has recommended it to others. Probably her most difficult adjustment was trying to balance all of her responsibilities in both her personal and professional life. She explained:

What I didn’t expect and didn’t know how to anticipate was how to balance the coursework and your responsibilities at the school that you’re interning at . . . when you’re soloing and you have the responsibility of coursework, it’s just a lot and then there’s your family on top of that. It’s really kind of a juggling

match. . . the work is not difficult, it's just that you have to stay organized and on top of it.

Judith

Judith believed her experiences in social work helped her to understand and relate to her students. She explained:

I think it was an understanding of different kinds of people . . . that people are more than just what you see. There's everything else around them . . . that helps me look at students in a different way. To kind of see them as full entire people and not just someone who's squirming in their seat, or . . . doesn't pay attention . . . or someone who seems happy . . . in social work they tell us to do a whole person. You look at every aspect. No person is just a person. [Everyone is] a person in their family . . . in their school . . . in how well they slept, what they eat, everything. Everything affects who you are.

During her exit interview in January, she again referred to how her social work background aided in her teaching: "Day to day, I think I deal with conflict a lot better. I think I find ways around the situations that make it easier for me and easier for them. I think that I find ways that I don't make kids feel worse; I make them feel better, at least I hope so."

How she interacted with her students was important to Judith, and the hardest part of her internship revolved around how she and her mentoring teacher responded differently to students. Judith related, "I felt that some of the things that she said were very harsh, were attacking a person . . . and that went on all year . . . the personal attacks [on students] were really hard for me." She also struggled with the seeming lack of organization skills shown by her mentoring teacher and the difficulty the teacher had in relinquishing the classroom to Judith. "The easiest part was being with the kids," said Judith. "If I had them one on one, that was the easiest part . . . It was hard when

[the mentoring teacher] was there, even if I was teaching. But if I was with them one on one, easy. It just kind of flowed for me.”

Like Alex, Judith believed that the year long internship was the most beneficial part of the SCA Program. This included “just being there . . . starting and closing of a room . . . making sure you know how to transition, making sure you’ve prepared and planned all the time . . . just observing other people working in the classroom all the time . . . [and] seeing different styles [of teaching].” She stated that she “loved Dr. T teaching and Dr. B. But I also like other people coming in. Kinda mixed them up and gave different perspectives.” Sometimes, however, there seemed to be a breakdown in communication. Judith explained, “I think there are a lot of times teachers came in that didn’t know what we would want . . . there are people who duplicated things.”

She enjoyed the pullout time, and once again felt that her experiences in social work helped her to work with her lower SES (socioeconomic status) students. One afternoon when she was keeping study hall, Judith related how one of her 2nd grade students drew and labeled a germ similar to how they had done in class earlier. “You know, I didn’t think the kid was paying half attention to what he was supposed to . . . [but] he learned something, and I didn’t even know it . . . You think you don’t reach them half the time, and then, lo and behold, he knew what white blood cells were, and he knew what a germ was.”

Judith expressed great respect for the SCA Program. She reflected, “I really didn’t realize how much they were going to teach me and how much I was going to do.”

Kasey

Kasey believed that her degree in sociology benefited her in her teaching career.

It helps me dealing with conflict, you know, learning why they're behaving this way . . . what's making them do this and how can I make it better because they are—they're human. They have bad days, just like we do. And it's helped me a lot to deal with just their behaviors and how to deal with them, how to communicate

she stated as we talked together in August. She praised the SCA Program, although she explained that it wasn't easy:

It was a lot of work. The first summer was very overwhelming for me . . . I was at the library hours and hours and hours . . . it was a test of endurance, really. And then when we got into the school, I love that . . . it got better. But it was exhausting. And there was a couple of times I didn't know if I would make it or not.

Kasey felt the SCA program prepared her in many areas. "We talked about the law . . . Teachers have a big responsibility. They need to know the legal aspects of their profession . . . [and] we had a lot of special education . . . and since I know that [with] inclusion . . . we're going to have special ed students in our classrooms, I felt that was helpful," she explained. She was also impressed with the variety of teachers. "[We] never did the same thing twice in a day or two," she stated, "and we had a lot of information . . . I thought that the way they gave it to us was good."

During her internship, Kasey struggled with how to discipline students, especially when she knew they were facing problems at home. "[T]hey have their whole life, personal life, and not being able to help them, you know something is going on and there's not much you can do, that's probably the hardest thing for me, knowing that there's something wrong and I can't help them," she said. Assessment was also a concern for her: "It scared me to death because all these teachers were talking about was

we've got to have this test, they've got to know all this. And I was constantly looking for ways to assess."

Kasey believed that her varied placements better prepared her for the world of teaching: "I went from . . . upper middle class, had everything in the school I could want to a very rural county. You could only use the laminator so many times a week . . . plus I went to [an] inner city rural school . . . I saw . . . a lot of different situations, and I know I'm going to be able to use that." She continued, "I think the multi-age classrooms that I was in helped me a lot because . . . they did a lot of thematic teaching . . . I found that it works better for me when we're reading a story to tie things with that . . . It makes the day go smoother and they get it more when it's tied all together." She was also impressed with the teachers in whose classrooms she worked. "I had great mentoring teachers," stated Kasey. "Most of them practically just gave me their classroom . . . [they said] when you're ready, you can have all the time you want." She felt that the best part of the SCA Program was solo teaching. "What really helped me was definitely solo teaching those six weeks," she explained. "It's hard to plan that stuff out but that just gives you a very, very small idea of what [teaching] is like." Overall, Kasey said, "It was a great experience definitely."

Summary

Alex, Diana, Judith, and Kasey all believed that their former jobs or life experiences enhanced their ability to work successfully in the SCA Program. Alex spoke of the managerial skills he learned; Diana referred to her computer skills, and both Judith and Kasey felt their understanding of people and ability to deal with conflict made adjusting to teaching an easier transition. They all spoke highly of the SCA

Program, pointing out that the year long internship along with a six-week pullout in an inner city classroom were the most beneficial components of the program because they received extended classroom time with multiple age levels and schools. Another plus included learning from a variety of speakers. Some problems different participants encountered including a mismatch with the school environment or the mentoring teacher, the need for more feedback from the mentoring teacher, knowing how to handle discipline (especially with students who were facing serious home situations), and the difficulty balancing the program with personal commitments.

What Challenges Did They Face in Their First Six Months of Teaching?

Alex

Alex's primary concerns and challenges revolved around the position he accepted as TAG teacher for three elementary schools. TAG (Talented and Gifted) serves students from 2nd through 5th grade. Students enter TAG through teacher recommendations in 2nd and 3rd grades. In order to continue TAG services in 4th and 5th grades, students must score in the gifted range on a specified test. At this point, teachers or parents can request testing for the students. Because Alex divided his teaching time among three schools, he did not have the opportunity to develop close relationships with either faculty or students at any location. In his second interview which included Diana, a third grade novice teacher, he stated, "You have a lot more contact . . . with people on your staff and I've got three different schools. I mean, none of them I'm really a part of the staff." This became a real issue for him.

Alex felt "different" from the very beginning of the school term. He revealed this concern in his journal during the first week of school: "While I watch my fellow

graduates teaching their classes . . . I have begun feeling a bit jealous or guilty I'm not sure while I have all this time to prepare they had to or were able to jump right into it."

He also expressed surprise at the inconsistencies in expectations and requirements of the TAG program:

As a TAG teacher I have a lot of freedom as far as what I can teach I was given a framework of objectives for the program or skills we are to teach but how I do it, the method and content are up to me . . . [and] while TAG has been in the schools for a long time many teachers have misconceptions about how the program works.

In talking with other TAG teachers, he learned that they interpreted admission into TAG differently from each other. Some accepted any student recommended without testing, and Alex had difficulty accepting this as appropriate. He explained, "If not all TAG teachers are doing the necessary testing this inconsistency confuses parents and classroom teachers alike."

As the semester progressed, it was clear from Alex's journal and interviews that he was having second thoughts about being a TAG teacher. In October, he wrote in his journal, "I still find myself confused at times of what the objective or goal of the TAG program is . . . I don't believe there is a shared understanding of what it is the program is supposed to be about." During his exit interview, he elaborated upon his concerns and frustrations as he shared, "As a TAG teacher, I literally was given no direction . . . [and] I have a hard time believing in the program that I'm working in." He also referred back to his relationship with other teachers: "I love teaching, I really do . . . and I think [lack of respect] is part of it too, because as a TAG teacher, you're not seen as being a full faculty member . . . not a real teacher."

Time constituted another concern for Alex. His time concerns focused around the limited interaction that he had with his students. At the beginning of the school year, his concerns revolved around “getting through” the lessons he had planned in the designated amount of time. “I found myself focusing on the fact we only had forty-five minutes and we need to be at point A at the end of the lesson rather than the process of learning or the dialogue,” he stated.

He also discovered that his students felt this same time pressure:

I’m not sure if it is because my day is so segmented but the time seems to disappear . . . I had a discussions with the children . . . their comments were quite interesting. (1)[T]hey don’t feel we have enough time, and (2) they found it hard to continue what we were doing from the week before . . . these are two concerns I had been thinking about as I reflected on how the classes are going.

Even one of his principals agreed. Alex shared in an interview, “It’s a talented and gifted program and we only get them 45 minutes a week . . . what can you do? The principal even said to me, ‘Forty-five minutes a week, that’s nothing.’”

Later in the semester, Alex’s time concerns turned in a different direction. Not only was he frustrated that he had so little time with his students, he actually had “time on his hands.” In an interview he compared himself once again with Diana, the third grade novice teacher, “It’s a lot less work than I thought it would be. . . I don’t have the same demands that you have . . . I don’t have that paperwork. I mean I really don’t.” Later, in his journal, he wrote, “I literally have so much time during the day, I can get everything done that I need to during the day.” He reiterated his frustration in January during his exit interview:

I come to school in the morning—you know, I’ve always been a really hard worker. When I went to work in the morning, I went to work. I didn’t go to work and then want a two and a half hour break so I could think about what I’m

going to do the next day at work . . . I don't like those dead times . . . it really comes down to just not having enough contact with students.

Diana

Diana's challenges centered around three areas: time, assistance (or lack of) from colleagues, and grading. From Diana's internship experiences, she had already discovered that elementary school teachers do not have much planning time built into their days. She revealed, "Thirty minutes while the kids are at music is not enough . . . the planning time and the amount of paperwork they have to do on each child . . . [filling out] the cumulative record . . . they just have a lot more work than I ever dreamed." As she moved into her own classroom, time continued to be an issue. She stated, "There's so much to teach and cover, I don't know how you do it all in a day. It doesn't get done . . . and science and social studies unfortunately go to the wayside, which is sad because that's the fun stuff to me." She also acknowledged "all the other interruptions" including special classes, assemblies, and coupon book collections. Like most teachers nowadays with the heavy emphasis on testing scores, Diana was also frustrated about "making sure that . . . I have given them all the information they need for that ridiculous achievement test in the spring." She continued, "I think that puts a lot of pressure on teachers."

Probably Diana's greatest concern revolved around her move from kindergarten during her internship year to being hired as a 3rd grade interim teacher for her first year of teaching. "The curriculum . . . seven things to plan for, where in kindergarten, it was 'whole language' and if you did this unit, you touched on all those things," she explained. In addition, she found no curriculum guide in her classroom for 3rd grade

and, in fact, did not receive one until some time in October. Diana felt that she received essentially no assistance from other teachers. When asked about a grade level leader, she responded, “Well, we do, but she’s so swamped with her work in her class that she has no concern regardless of what I’m doing.” Diana was assigned a mentoring teacher, but that arrangement was less than what she anticipated. “If I go to her and say, ‘I need such-and-such,’ she’ll give me the shirt off her back,” stated Diana, “but she won’t come to me and say, ‘Let me help you find your reading materials, your math materials.’ No one has ever done that with me.” Other teachers acted in the same manner:

They’re just busy with their class and they don’t have time for other teachers. They stay within their classroom and occasionally someone will say, ‘Diana, you doing okay?’ And it’s more like a phrase, ‘Well, how are ya? I hope you’re fine. Bye’ . . . but now if I went to them and said, ‘Do you have a unit on place value in math?’ they’d say, ‘Oh, yeah, sure.’ But they would never come and offer it to me. Never.

Although Diana’s first week of school “was hell . . . I didn’t have a clue as to what I was doing,” by the end of her first semester of teaching she had learned to ask for help when she needed it. She had also paired up with another new 3rd grade teacher for planning and pacing of units, which Diana stated had worked out well.

Diana’s final concern, grading, resulted from the first two. When the first grading period was coming to an end, Diana stated, “I was kind of sweating it at the end because nobody came up and said, ‘This is how you set up a grade book. This is what you should keep grades on.’” She also found that she was drowning in an ocean of papers that needed grading. Finally, she realized:

I decided I don’t have to take a grade on everything they do, just the main things . . . I was killing myself and I was becoming very frustrated and somebody said,

“Throw them away . . . if it’s over three weeks old, throw it away” . . . I still have not figured out how these teachers can get all their papers graded during the day . . . but I’m getting better at it.

Judith

Judith’s greatest challenges revolved around time and meeting the various needs of her students. Her internship placement occurred in an upper SES school where most of her students worked on grade level and parent participation was high. Her student population at Charleston Elementary was more diverse. She described her classroom of students:

What I have in my class that I didn’t have last year, of course, different socioeconomic background obviously. . . I’ve got a CDC child who leaves for all day, everything except for special areas . . . I’ve got a couple of students who are reading on like the 3rd grade level in the 5th grade. I’ve got two different math classes . . . [and] three different reading groups.

As a result of the diverse population she was serving, Judith frequently mentioned feeling tired or overwhelmed. When reflecting back on the first of the year, she stated, “I really felt prepared overall because of last year. But still there’s so much to do . . . I just thought . . . I’ve got so much to do . . . I just felt really, really lost. I had to ask the other teachers this or that. But it’s not like I’ve never done this before, so that was good.” Two weeks into the year, Judith was already feeling behind. “I stayed until 5:30 planning and preparing for next week and took a huge pile of papers home to grade,” she revealed. Then, after having a small “breakdown” at home, she realized, “If I’m not rested then my kids won’t get a good teacher tomorrow. I have to take care of myself FIRST.” Judith seemed to recognize how hard she was working herself, but she also seemed to find it very difficult to slow down. One week later, she wrote in her journal, “This was one long, tiring day. I find myself pushing myself to do more, get

better every day. I am glad I care enough to want more for my class, but I hope I don't push myself too far."

Although Judith stated that classroom management was the easiest part of her teaching, it was clear from her journal entries that she encountered numerous situations that she had to resolve. Part of becoming a good teacher includes figuring out what strategies work best for you and your students. Judith was aware of this and explained, "It was getting used to behaviors, getting used to how I deal with behaviors. Dealing with behaviors, getting used to how the school runs and deals with behaviors." In her October interview, she stated:

It took me a while to get it . . . But now my expectations are very clear. They don't sharpen their pencils when I'm in reading group, they don't ask me questions when I'm in reading group, and they don't get up and run around and talk . . . they're getting to where they're really good at it. I can usually have a peaceful reading group. So at the very beginning it was kind of crazy . . . It took me, what, seven or eight weeks? But they know exactly what is expected . . . what I always heard, over and over, from everybody, everywhere, rooms I observed, my teacher last year, everybody. You've got to make it clear. They've got to know exactly what they're supposed to do . . . so it's their responsibility . . . you just keep honing it in until they remember it.

Judith and her students participated in a three-day environmental camp at the end of September. She wrote in her journal after the trip, "What an incredible trip! I had a blast! The kids had a blast! I got to know them all so much better." She was also surprised and pleased when she read her own journal entries to see how much her students had already changed. She stated, "I'm very tired most of the time, but my kids are great . . . things have changed since the very beginning for some of them [students with behavior problems] . . . everything's just very, very smooth."

She also shared some techniques she has successfully implemented with her students: “I found that if I want them to be quiet, it’s easier to find them something to do than to say be quiet . . . like walking into a cafeteria. ‘Okay. You’re a robot, but you’re a silent robot. I’ll give a prize to the two best robots on the way to the cafeteria.’”

Unlike Diana, Judith felt surrounded by colleagues eager to help her. When asked if she was assigned a mentor, she replied:

No, not technically, I don’t have a mentoring teacher . . . A fifth grade teacher who is retiring this year is very helpful. She’s always wanting to help me and get information for me, lets me use books to copy out of . . . Mr. L helps me out a lot . . . we’re both as flexible as can be. We share recess and study hall, you know, and it’s just wonderful to have somebody to depend on . . . although it’s pretty much any teacher that you want to go to and ask a question, they’ll help you . . . so I don’t feel like I’m alone.

When she felt stressed or overwhelmed, Judith also turned to fellow teachers. She described one in this manner:

She is so laid back, you know, do the best you can do. It’s all you can do, you know, and don’t worry about your evaluation. That puts things in perspective very quickly . . . plus I’ve got friends that aren’t in my grade level . . . [and] there are other people that I can just go to and hang out and not worry about stuff.

Overall, she valued her relationships with her colleagues and felt they often made the difference in her responses to her first year of teaching:

I think having an outlet to talk to people helps me put it in perspective because it’s not just this big build up from this ride from school to home to where everything is much bigger than it ever was when you were at school. You talk to someone else and they’re like, “Oh, yeah. Been there, done that.”

When asked about supplies for her classroom, Judith stated that her only problem was that there were no trade books in her classroom, so “I went to the

McKay's and bought several of my own . . . and I had kids bring them, donate them to the classroom . . . I did a wish list at the beginning of the year of things we would really like to have for the classroom, and that was the old, new, used, didn't matter, paperback books of this level."

By the end of the first semester, Judith's challenges continued to include time along with energy, which were exacerbated by expectations of herself. She explained, "I am just trying my best to keep my head above water . . . to be a day or two ahead would be wonderful, but I'm spending tons of time right now, and I'm not [ahead] . . . I want my kids to have the best teacher and education possible."

Kasey

Kasey faced challenges in her first six months of teaching in three specific areas: preparing her classroom, caring for her students, and working with parents. In her October interview, she related her situation just one day before classes began:

I couldn't get into my classroom until the day before school . . . I had no desks . . . a second grade teacher said, "She has no desks, she has no chairs, we've got to help her." And I went to central office to fill out some paperwork and when I came back I had 18 desks and 18 chairs and my teacher's desk and books in my room. I didn't think I would ever get ready—ever—because I had one day. One day to do it all . . . my first year and I walk in a room and it is completely empty . . . I thought, what have I got myself in to? I'm never going to be able to teach these kids. I don't even have a book in my room. It was very, very frustrating.

Kasey's journal entry also showed her sense of panic when she wrote, "How will I ever have this classroom ready on Thursday morning? I just want everything to be perfect for them when they first walk in."

Once school began, Kasey spent a lot of time worrying about her students and their home life situations. Two weeks into the school, a student was pulled out of class

to move to another school because her father had just gotten custody of her. Two days later, the student was back in class after her grandmother went to court to get the child back. “I cried thinking about what this poor girl has been through and it just breaks my heart,” wrote Kasey. Another child revealed that her mother had killed herself by overdosing on drugs, while a third student told Kasey that her dad and mom were fighting because her dad had just found out that he may not be the daddy of her little sister. Kasey reflected, “I’m trying hard to show . . . these students that I care for them, I’m there for them, and I want to be a positive role model for them . . . Teaching is such a huge responsibility—I’m trying my best to live up to it.” She also worried about her own abilities. “I know I’m going to make mistakes, and I don’t want to . . . I want to be a good teacher,” she stated. In addition, she struggled with exhaustion. In late August, she wrote in her journal, “I’m still SOOO tired! I’m wondering if I’m suffering from that extreme fatigue syndrome! I am completely exhausted at the end of every day . . . Don’t get me wrong, I love to teach but I need a social and personal life, too!”

Probably Kasey’s greatest challenge concerned the parents of her students. In an interview, she stated:

[The] hardest thing to do for me is dealing with parents . . . they’re second graders but their parents are so overbearing and they want everything to be perfect and they believe everything their—I mean, ridiculous things—their child tells them and they believe it . . . I can deal with the kids much better than I can the parents. Definitely.

She struggled with several instances where parents interrupted her teaching because they wanted to talk with Kasey during class time. Finally, she sent a newsletter home spelling out when parents should and should not come to the classroom. She described it in her journal dated October 11:

How dare these parents take away *my* time and rudely interrupt my class. Well, I decided I had to do something about it . . . I typed up a newsletter and . . . in bold letters I wrote that I was a professional and I worked with their children from 8:10 until 3:10 Monday through Friday. I said that it was appreciated if parents do *not* interrupt my classroom atmosphere during these hours. I included that if parents do need to talk with me, they should send in a note with their child or call the school to set up an appointment with me. I cannot stand for these parents to just show up and expect me to drop everything for them . . . I don't know how much longer I can stand dealing with these rude parents!

The newsletter seemed to get results. Only one parent interrupted her classroom after that, but it was not a pleasant situation. Kasey wrote:

Today was without a doubt my worst day of teaching so far. I had a parent come in and started arguing with me in front of my entire class . . . I told her that her and her child knew my rules and as long as she was in my classroom, they both had to follow them . . . [the mother] was completely out of line and I wasn't going to let her get away with acting that way in my room.

Evidently, this behavior was typical for this particular parent. When Kasey discussed the situation with the administration at her school, she stated, "They said that I did the right thing . . . [and] they were behind me no matter what. and they said not to talk [to her] alone." A few weeks after that, Kasey called the mother to inquire about her child who had had surgery:

I told her how concerned I was and that I had thought about [Karen] all week. The next thing I know, her mother was very nicely explaining . . . since I made the first step toward something like a peace offering, her mother realized that we both have nothing but the best intentions as far as [Karen] is concerned. I realized that I don't have to necessarily like a parent in order to work with them to help their child.

Two positive areas in teaching for Kasey included classroom management and collegial support. She had expressed concern about discipline during her internship and explained that part of her problems stemmed from her own lack of consistency, which

she intended to work on once she had her own classroom. Evidently, she took her own advice to heart:

At the beginning of the year we took three days to go over rules . . . I really made sure that they knew exactly what I expected because I knew from all these other teachers . . . if you don't get it right at the first of the year, you might as well forget it. And I wanted to be really sure that they understood . . . I guess it worked because they're good. They raise their hands. They're quiet in the hall. When a visitor comes in . . . they know—do not talk . . . that was probably one of my biggest fears.

Kasey expressed excitement about how often her students were complimented upon their behavior in the halls. She shared this with me, “My attendant always tells me that it's not because I have the best students but instead it's because I have good discipline. She says that I let my students know when I mean business and I stop any disruptive behavior as soon as it starts.” During her final interview, she reiterated, “I let them know from the beginning, these are our rules. [These are] my expectations and you will do this . . . I have no kids that are behavior problems . . . they know when it's time to work, it's time to work . . . so that's probably my best thing this year . . . discipline.”

Kasey also received lots of support from her fellow teachers from the very beginning of the year. Before classes even began, she wrote:

All of the 2nd grade teachers (6 of us) went to eat lunch today. They wanted to know all about me and my student teaching. I really like being one of them—a teacher, not a student—and being part of the conversation . . . I know I'm working with great people who are going to help me get through this year.

This continued throughout the semester. In October, she described some of the ways she had received help:

All the other second grade teachers, all of them help me. I have one that's my mentor by the principal but I have all of them that help me . . . we do a story every week and my mentor teacher, she has a folder for every story and she's like, “Here's what I'm doing. See what you'd like to do. Make a copy if you'd

like”. . . and then, other teachers, if they have something that they think is a really neat lesson, they’ll come around and say, “Would you like a copy of this?” . . . I don’t feel any competitiveness at all between any of us . . . I think they feel like they want me to succeed because they know it’s my first year. So, I feel lucky.

Later in the semester, a substitute started “bad mouthing” teaching. Kasey was outraged. “I was especially offended because this person knows that I am a first-year teacher,” she explained. “I don’t expect anyone to sugar-coat things for me but *please* don’t be so negative! My eyes are still bright and my hopes are high about teaching.” She also believed that the support she received benefited her in numerous ways:

[I]t’s helped with my lessons, helped with my planning. It’s helped me feel more confident because I’m not clueless. I’m not lost . . . even if I’ve had a bad day and I go in there and say I need to talk, I can do that. And I don’t have to go home and feel, you know, alone and not have anyone to talk to because they’ve been there, they’ve done that. They know what I’m going through . They’ve been wonderful.

Although Kasey’s first year had a rocky beginning, the support of the faculty and her own determination seem to have her moving forward in the right direction.

Summary

The four participants in this study faced a variety of challenges in their first semester of teaching. Alex struggled with believing in the TAG program and having too much time on his hands and not enough time with the students. Diana had trouble adjusting to third grade after interning in kindergarten. She did not feel supported by her colleagues, and struggled with accomplishing all the tasks involved in teaching while also having a family. Judith also struggled with time and energy as she tried to meet the needs of her diverse students, while Kasey was faced with an empty classroom

at the beginning of the year, students with many difficult home situations, and rude or disruptive parents.

In What Ways Did They Learn to Define Themselves As Teachers?

Alex

Numerous research studies indicate that our backgrounds affect the way we view the world (Borich, 2004). Alex described his view of the “world of school” in this way:

I still think that my experience in the school system was a lot different than most teachers. And so I think that’s really helped me out . . . Most teachers I’ve had—most people in our program were very successful students . . . I moved 12 times before I graduated from high school . . . I went to a school in Florida . . . and I was the only white person in the school. Principals, teachers, students, I was the only white person in the school. That was really interesting . . . I had various struggles in junior high school. I was expelled for swearing at a teacher . . . I never did homework, I mean, never. Literally did not do homework . . . I was a horrible student, horrible. The worst. My mother never went—not once in my life did my mother go to a parent/teacher conference, not once . . . I was literally a horrible student. I was horrible. I never—didn’t care about school at all. The only thing that got me into any college was my SATs. Everything else was horrible . .

Surprisingly, despite Alex’s unhappy school experiences, he said this about the teaching profession: “I always had a sense that most teachers were very altruistic . . . and I would attribute almost different goals and different motivations to teachers than to any other profession.” He also felt that teachers should be as close to perfect as possible. He stated, “You know, you should strive for it—perfection, knowing that, chances are, you might not get there all the time.”

When asked when he first thought of himself as being a teacher (rather than a student or an intern), he shared that he was terrified of not getting a teaching job. It wasn’t until he was actually hired that he said, “I really didn’t think of myself as a

teacher until I really, I mean, I'm riding down the road, and, you know, I'm just like, 'For once, I've got a job' . . . actually after I went to a conference . . . riding home from that; that was when I was like, 'I'm a teacher.'"

At the beginning of the school year, Alex's concerns revolved around balancing his expectations with the students' expectations and best interests:

The hardest thing about being a teacher . . . you really have to separate yourself out in the sense that you are not there as an emotional being; you're there as a teacher. You're there to give these children what they need to do well in their lives given certain areas or certain skills and certain areas of curriculum . . . To do that most effectively, the children have to feel safe and secure and that you care about them and that this is a place where they can make mistakes and it's all right. I think that's the hardest thing there is to—is that balance, where you're putting yourself out there and at the same time, you're not letting yourself be affected by the negative things that kids are going to put out there towards you and let it affect your judgment about them.

As he moved into the school year, he started paying attention to what his students were saying and why they needed to have the opportunity to talk:

I did see an area I need to work on and that is my ability to listen and allow children in my classroom to direct more of the dialogue. I realized I spent too much time talking to them rather than with them. I was very wary of allowing the discussions to go off on tangents, which I realize if the child initiates can allow the learning to become more meaningful for them. I mean here they are trying to make connections to what we are doing and their preexisting knowledge base and I am shutting that off.

Ultimately, Alex struggled with why he was teaching, and especially why he was teaching in the TAG program. In his second interview, he explained:

I do enjoy this. I enjoy my class time with the children. But see this is my big thing; I don't have enough class time with the children . . . I just feel like I'm being—I'm wasting it . . . I want to teach children. I want to make a difference . . . One of the reasons I wanted to go into teaching, I wanted to make a difference and I mean, let's face it, the kids [TAG students] are going to do all right no matter what.

Alex decided to volunteer teaching adult learners with the Friends of Literacy Program during his free time. He described his experiences through his journaling in this way: “Sometimes I feel that the tutoring [for Friends of Literacy] that I do is the most effective teaching all week not just because it is one on one but we both know exactly what we are working towards and everything we do is working towards that I am not wasting his time and the student feels he is an important part of this process.” In contrast, Alex described his TAG students in this manner: “I sometimes feel that the students think the class is just a art class . . . but that’s really just my problem the doubts I have sometimes about the importance of what I am doing. I find myself thinking more and more lately is this what I went back to school to do. To be just a forty-five minute break in a student’s week.”

During the exit interview in January, Alex explained his continuing struggle with his personal role of teaching:

I really got into teaching because I did want to make a big difference in a kid’s life. I have 162 students right now. I’m like, you know, 162 times diluted, you know. Is that better than 25 or 20 concentrated? . . . I got into it because I wanted to make a big change. I wanted to be able to make a big change in somebody’s life. I just think the way the program is set up, it’s not—you can’t do it.

At the same time, Alex found joy in connecting with students and helping them to see their potential:

I think the greatest is when a kid does something that you would just never have thought for a million years that they were capable of or that—and they show you part of them that just totally turns . . . who and what you thought they were on its head. It makes you realize how incredible it is to have the opportunity to spend with these students when they’re still changing and developing.

Diana

In describing preconceived notions that she had about teaching, Diana said, “I didn’t realize how much planning and preparation time they had to put into it as an elementary teacher.” She soon learned that planning, preparation, and organization are key: “You have to be organized . . . you have to stay on top of everything and meet your deadlines. And that hold true in the classroom. You have to . . . learn that the plan book is your friend and get in those teacher editions and figure them out.” She also found that teaching is not limited to the hours spent in the classroom with students. Diana explained, “It does not stop at 3:30. It doesn’t stop at 4:30. I mean, there are many nights I take lots of work home with me and when my boys are at baseball, I’ll sit and I’ll do this . . . Your time is not your own unless you say, ‘Okay, at 5:00 I’m not doing any more schoolwork.’”

In October, when asked if she was glad that she was in teaching, she responded, “I’m not sorry. I wish I was in a different grade . . . I wish I had younger ones . . . [because] the mouth is starting, the attitudes, they’re mean to each other.” Later, in January, she stated, “I guess the only thing I’m questioning is if I really want to stay in 3rd grade or do I want to go back to kindergarten.”

As the semester progressed, Diana was able to focus on areas other than just “making it through the day.” During her exit interview in January, Diana described her own transition from concerns about self to concerns about task and impact. She explained:

I enjoy seeing the progress that the kids have developed . . . When I first started giving a unit math test, at first it was like, ‘Oh, they did horrible’ [but] it’s not a reflection of them, it’s a reflection of me not teaching them the information they

need to pass this test and the skills. So I would reflect on that and try to, you know, revamp my teaching methods and with each math test it got a little bit better and a little bit better.

She also experienced successes with several of her “difficult” students including the child with fetal alcohol syndrome who became the class spelling bee representative “so he’s been a real success,” another student who “has just driven me absolutely crazy the first part of the year with her blurting out and not wanting to be touched, that kind of stuff, [but] she’s coming around too. I’ve learned how to deal with her.” With another difficult child, she stated, “I just have to tell myself everyday that he is someone’s baby. I don’t have to like him. I love him, but I do not have to like him. I have finally accepted that . . . you have to give them respect and so they’ll, in turn, give you respect.”

Diana stated that one of the perks of teaching is “the kids, you know, that respond to you . . . the hugs in the halls and that kind of stuff.” Despite the fact that Diana’s position is temporary, she does define herself as a teacher. She sums it up in this manner: “The responsibility is totally on my shoulders as a teacher . . . I do feel like I’m a teacher because I do have all the responsibility . . . and we’re getting through all the curriculum and the discipline and all that.” So far, she said, “It’s been fun. It’s been . . . a roller coaster.”

Judith

Judith stated that she never thought that teaching would be easy, but she did think that all teachers were patient. They should also “be considerate and kind and intelligent.” Then she discovered that teachers, even those who “really love their job,” would sometimes have bad days where they had real trouble dealing with their students.

“I just assumed that somehow that teachers were elevated to this moral level that no one else was on because they taught children. I realize that that’s not the case,” revealed Judith.

When asked when she first considered herself to be a teacher rather than a student or intern, Judith replied:

When I was doing my soloing, I never really saw my teacher. She wasn’t hanging around and I felt kind of the teacher. And when she was gone [because of illness], I did because the kids looked to me for answers because I was there before . . . And near the end of the school year, I did, but I still knew I was an intern. I knew the difference. Like they were making plans for next year. It’s like I’m not going to be in here [next school year].

Once she became a teacher with her own classroom, she said:

It’s nice to get paid finally . . . I feel more powerful . . . if I change something, I don’t have to answer to anybody . . . In terms of how I’m running my day, that’s my deal. I don’t have to worry about somebody jumping down my throat because they want to do it this way . . . I do it anyway I want . . . I can teach the way I want, you know, have them do creative writing if I want to . . . or I can have my stuff where I know I can find it . . . it’s more my space, my kids.

She also enjoyed when students in lower grades would call her by name in the hallways at school. She explained, “Eventually they may have you [as their teacher]. And it’s just a different feeling . . . It’s good.”

Judith’s concerns about teaching started with establishing her classroom routines and management system; however, the responsibility of teaching her students how and what they needed to know was also ever present in her thoughts. She reflected, “Everyone said that first year is survival . . . but I don’t want to just survive. I want my kids to have something better than the teacher who is just surviving.”

Her concerns about task revolved around providing her students with interesting classes in which they could become involved. She moved away from always using the

textbook to activities she created on her own. “They did better working in pairs, writing it down, checking each other, putting it on the board, doing sheets that I made up based on what they really need to know, and not all of that ‘blah’ that they put in [math textbooks],” she explained. Once a week, she engaged her students in creative writing activities. “They loved that assignment,” she stated, “I mean, they put their hearts and souls into it . . . and I’ve got them doing a newsletter . . . when I get to see them being themselves, that’s when I really have fun.” To inspire her students to complete their AR (Accelerated Reader) requirements, she challenged them by agreeing to dress up as the character of their choice if everyone met their 6-week goals. “The first time I dressed up as a hippie girl . . . Last six weeks we voted again. I had to be a nerd . . . and this time I have to be a rapper . . . and I’m as white bread as it comes and I’ve got to be a rapper,” she explained. “They loved it and they read.”

Judith was also concerned about the impact she had on her students. She considered her greatest challenge in teaching to be reaching her more difficult students: “Some of these kids don’t have anyone, anybody to help them at all. Some of them have great family support . . . but the ones that don’t, it’s just real, real hard . . . because you want to give them extra time, extra support, extra patience, and they do well when you are able to do that.” With one ADHD student who was going back on his “meds” after trying to work without them, she stated, “He tries so hard to listen but can’t . . . he is sad about having to go back on them but is open to talking to me and to listening to me about his strengths and how it will help him concentrate so he can learn more and eventually become a safety patrol.” Another student with whom Judith had problems at the beginning of year made a complete turnaround. Judith wrote in her journal, “Betsy

has become my after school helper. This has made a big difference in her classroom behavior . . . She shows unbelievable respect towards me and her manners are impeccable when we are alone. Nice to have her feel good about herself.”

When asked if she was glad that she chose to go into teaching, Judith replied, “I’m glad I’m a teacher. I have yet to say I’m not, even on days when I come home . . . [and] I start crying . . . I’m tired, [but] I never once thought, ‘I don’t want to teach.’” During her exit interview, Judith concluded, “I love my kids . . . I love them to death . . . there’s no one I want to part with. Even the most troublesome, they’ve got to have somebody that they know wants them. I’m not about to ditch them.”

Kasey

“I had no idea there was so much paperwork,” exclaimed Kasey, when asked about her preconceived notions about teaching. Kasey knew she wanted to work with kids, but she thought it would be more like playing than working:

I’ll be a teacher, and I’ll just go in and we’ll just have fun, and I’ll teach a few things and obviously when I got in there, I thought oh, my goodness, what have I gotten myself into. There [were] so many books that you had to plan from, and so many lessons you had to plan from, and all the records you had to get and all the information from the kids you had to get, all the paperwork was just . . . overwhelming to me. And it’s hard work . . . I was exhausted the first—probably month . . . and I had no idea it was going to take that much out of me . . . I thought it was going to be more fun and games, and it’s not. It’s real work.

“Real” teaching was an eye-opening experience for Kasey. She never realized she would have to work so hard. Nevertheless, once she got into the “swing” of things, she seemed to thrive on her experiences in each of the schools and classrooms where she interned. When asked when she first felt like a “real” teacher, Kasey referred back to her first full week of teaching solo during her internship. She stated:

I had the whole last week before Christmas vacation to solo teach . . . [the kids] would come to me. And if [the regular teacher] would be in the room, they would come to me. And I had them all week. And that's when it hit me, oh my goodness, I think this is it. And after that, I wanted to teach all the time. Because I got that respect. I got that feedback that I loved. But after that I thought, "I can do this."

With only a brief period of "stage fright" before her first day as a novice teacher, ("I'm afraid they're going to eat me alive. Then I remember, they're only eight," she wrote in her journal), Kasey reveled in her new position as teacher. Again and again, she expressed surprise and joy as it continued to dawn upon her that her dream of being a teacher was actually a reality. Two days after school started, she wrote, "It hit me several times throughout the day, Oh, my gosh, this is *my* class, these are *my* students—it was overwhelming and yet exhilarating!" After parent orientation night, she wrote, "It was the first time that *I* was in charge of the rules and procedures set in *my* classroom. That felt wonderful." However, reality really hit when a fifth grader called out to her, "Hello, Ms. M." She recalled, "Even though I had never talked to or seen this student, he knew who I was . . . that simple thing made me feel *so* good. It was the first time I truly felt like I was a *part* of my school, and like I belonged there and people knew who I was." She reflected later, "I'm a *teacher* with a class *full* of students who turn to me for *everything*."

Kasey's concerns about self seemed to move quickly to concerns about task and impact. She began the year worried about setting up her classroom. She moved to concerns about teaching content as shown when she explained how she taught math: "I made it as simple as I could possibly make it. At any mistakes I thought they might take, I showed them not to do it. And they got it and I felt so good. And I've bragged

on them for the past two weeks because they're doing really good at it." In her journal, she described handling her first crisis, a potentially dangerous stray dog on the school playground. She wrote, "Even this tiny little situation was enough to get my heart racing . . . I know now just how important my job can really be." Each time a new situation arose, she stated, "Every time I achieve a hurdle . . . not necessarily the lessons or activities, but the extra things that go along with being a teacher, the more it sinks in to me that I'm *here*, I'm a teacher, this is *my* classroom and *my* students."

When asked if she was glad that she became a teacher, Kasey responded, "Yes, I am. I love it . . . It makes me feel good when they get something . . . well they figure out a math problem and they want to come show me." She wrote in her journal, "I truly feel that some people are called to teach and that is where they need to be. I think I am one of those people. I also feel that other people go into teaching for selfish or naive reasons and can never feel satisfied . . . I know that I can and will make a difference in a child's life and that's worth it to me."

Kasey concluded with her reasons for teaching: "It's going to be hard, but you do it for the kids. You do it because you want to teach kids and you want them to learn . . . If you don't love kids, what's the point? . . . it takes a certain kind of person. Not everybody can do it."

Summary

All four participants came to the SCA Program with preconceived notions about teaching. Most expressed ideas that teachers operate on a higher moral plane than other humans. None were prepared for the amount of work involved in teaching. All found defining moments where they accepted themselves as teachers; however, these varied

considerably. All seemed to be involved in all three levels of teacher concerns as defined by Borich and Fuller: self, task, and impact.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the requirements of the SCA Program in which the participants of this study were enrolled. It listed the five original research questions and then the five modified research questions used in the study. The five modified questions include:

1. Why did these second career novice teachers choose to change directions in their career paths and pursue teaching?
2. What experiences did they find were the most beneficial (or most obstructive) in preparing them to become teachers?
3. What challenges did they face in their first six months of teaching?
4. In what ways did they learn to define themselves as teachers?
5. What can be learned from this research that will inform the way potential teachers are recruited and trained?

Data were then presented for each of the first four questions with comments and vignettes from each participant gleaned from their interviews and journal entries. Each research question included a brief summary of the findings of the four participants.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

This research study followed four novice teachers through their first semester of teaching following completion of a Master's in Education in the Second Career Alternative (SCA) Program at a large southeastern university. The SCA Program encompasses fifteen months of study beginning in June of one year and finishing in August of the second year. Classes are conducted during both summers. Students are assigned to public school classrooms during the traditional school year where they are able to observe and participate in all school activities from the first day of class to the closing of school for summer vacation. During that time, classes continue for the SCA students. In addition, a six-week pullout to another school setting and grade level is implemented for breadth of experiences for the SCA participants.

This chapter reviews the analysis of the four students' responses to the questions whose data were presented in Chapter Four. The analysis compares participants' responses and relates these responses to current research. Question five, which addresses implications for action and future research, is also addressed. Analysis procedures included the use of analytic induction. This involved "scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories, developing working typologies and hypotheses upon an examination of initial cases, then modifying and refining them on the basis of subsequent cases" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, pp. 179-180). Data analysis began immediately with the initial interviews. Categories were created and data organized within the categories. Subsequent interviews and journal entries were compared to the original categories, and additional

categories were created while existing categories were sometimes modified to take into account the new information (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

As data was received, it was also compared across all categories. This includes aspects of the constant comparison research design, and enabled the discovery of relationships and continuous refinement of both data collection and analysis (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Evolving theories were informed by the data or “grounded”; they followed the data rather than preceding it (Erlandson, et. al, 1993). Glaser and Strauss (1967), originators of constant comparison, describe this research design as an inductive procedure whereby categories are constructed as relationships are defined objectively, yet flexibly.

As I reviewed each set of interview transcriptions and journal entries, I set up possible categories of meaning. These were referred to again and again as I looked for recurring patterns. Van Manen (1990) states that “the purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something” (p. 77). He further explains that there is “a difference between our pre-reflective lived understanding . . . [and] our reflective grasp of the phenomenological structure of the lived meaning” (p. 77). I attempted to access both types of understanding from my research participants by including both face-to-face interviews (pre-reflective understanding) and written journal entries (reflective understanding).

As analysis continued, I constructed charts of categories based upon the data.. I copied highlighted sections from transcripts and journal entries and listed evidence under each of the category headings. Ongoing analysis continued by inductively looking for recurring patterns in new data, identifying additional categories for

organizing data, and then deductively reading through the data to confirm or disconfirm the category. As data sets increased in size, I reorganized and reduced them and then analyzed them once more to look for similarities and differences and to discover overarching themes.

The research questions used in this research study are as follow:

1. Why did these second career novice teachers choose to change directions in their career paths and pursue teaching?
2. What experiences did they find were the most beneficial (or most obstructive) in preparing them to become teachers?
3. What challenges did they face in their first six months of teaching?
4. In what ways did they learn to define themselves as teachers?
5. What can be learned from this research that will inform the way potential teachers are recruited and trained?

Why Did These Second Career Novice Teachers Choose to Change Directions in Their Career Paths and Pursue Teaching?

Admission to the SCA Program presupposes that all participants have successfully completed an undergraduate degree in a field other than education and have spent time working, usually, although not always, in an occupation related to their original field of study. This proved to be the case for the four participants of this study. Alex earned his degree in architecture; Diana received hers in psychology; Judith's degree was in social work, while Kasey earned hers in sociology.

Alex's family background seemed to significantly impact his dissatisfaction with his original career choice and his ultimate decision to turn to teaching. Although

he showed talent in his field of architecture, he felt a mismatch in his work experiences when he worked one week on HUD projects for low-income families and then the next week was designing million dollar mansions. His school experiences as a child were not typical of most people pursuing a teaching degree. He had moved twelve times before graduating from high school, and he “never did homework, I mean, never.” His parents did not seem to be involved in helping him to succeed in school. Yet, his SAT scores and evident ability to learn quickly helped him to be successful in almost anything he chose. Later, during his teaching experiences, he continually spoke of making a difference in children’s lives. He explained, “I really got into teaching because I did want to make a big difference . . . in a kid’s life . . . I got into it because I wanted to make a big change . . . in somebody’s life.”

Although Diana received her undergraduate degree in psychology, her work experiences revolved around computers. It was only when her computer expertise led her to work as financial advisor for a non-profit day care center that she considered teaching. “I learned that I loved the kids and liked working with them . . . watching them learn and seeing them interact,” she stated. She also “didn’t want to sit behind a computer for the rest of [her] life.” Diana seemed to recognize that, for her, she could find more purpose in life working with children rather than working behind a desk with computers.

Judith’s initial work experiences in social work involved helping elderly patients in a nursing home and, later, working with severely persistently mentally ill patients as a caseworker. Her frustrations with her chosen field arose out of the “fixing of people’s lives day in and day out.” While she discovered that she loved teaching her patients

such skills as using the telephone, she missed working with students as she had done during her summers while in college. Teaching seemed to present a perfect fit of teaching and working with kids. It also would involve dealing with less intense problems than in her position working with mentally ill patients.

Kasey's experiences were similar to those of Judith. She worked with juveniles in her final semester of her sociology degree and discovered that "they were depressed and very down. They didn't think I could help." Although, Kasey "always knew I wanted to work with children, I just didn't know how," she decided to test her resolve to enter the teaching profession by working as a substitute teacher for a year in her home county.

Question One: Summary

All four participants found that their original job choices did not bring them lasting satisfaction. Alex seemed to struggle with the diversity of clients he served while working in architecture. He also expressed strong connections to his own less than successful experiences in school and felt the need "to make a difference . . . in a kid's life." Diana found success working with computers, but discovered that she preferred working with children and "watching them learn." She indicated that sitting behind a computer was not what she wanted to be doing for the rest of her life. Judith wanted to work in an area where she was helping others, but she discovered that her opportunities while working with the elderly or severely mentally ill created more frustrations than solutions. Kasey found that her work with juveniles at risk brought her a sense of helplessness rather than a feeling of empowerment helping those with whom

she was working. When she turned to substitute teaching, Kasey found an arena where she could work with children and also feel like she was making a difference.

For some of the participants, turning to teaching resulted in less pay than before. However, because of incidences that occurred or choices that each made to explore working with children, they each determined that teaching could be a field where they would receive more personal job satisfaction.

What Experiences Did They Find Were the Most Beneficial (or Most Obstructive) in Preparing Them to Become Teachers?

Participants in this research study discussed two areas of impact on preparing them to become teachers. The first area discussed was how their prior experiences affected their preparation. The second area included the positive and negative aspects of the SCA Program in which they all participated.

Prior Experiences

Alex believed that his prior experiences in business (when he worked at a coffee shop and later as a project manager for a national bookstore franchise) gave him “the managerial perspective [of] being part of a corporation . . . skills as far as organization, planning, [and] being able to set objectives and set goals.” Diana felt that her age (43) and her life experiences helped her more than her work experiences. She did find that her prior work in computers aided her in using technology in the classroom. She also stated that “the psychology helps just as far as dealing with everybody.” Judith also believed that her ability to understand and relate to her students was a result of her social work background, especially the understanding that “people are more than just what you see . . . in social work they tell us to do a whole person.” She also sensed that

her social work experiences had enabled her to deal with conflict easier. She stated, “I find ways around the situations that make it easier for me and easier for them . . . I find ways that I don’t make the kids feel worse; I make them feel better.” Kasey also felt that her background in sociology aided her in dealing with conflict or “learning why they’re behaving this way . . . what’s making them do this and how can I make it better.”

Overall, each participant felt he or she brought skills into the SCA Program. These included organization, computer skills, and, above all, communication or “people” skills. Research studies indicate that alternative track certification programs may attract individuals with greater classroom effectiveness than traditional track programs (Miller, McKenna & McKenna, 1998). All the skills the participants in this study attributed to their prior experiences (organizing and prioritizing, computer skills, and “people” skills) would likely improve both their understanding of students and their ability to work in complex situations such as an elementary classroom.

Second Career Alternative Program

The SCA Program worked for these participants in part because it was available in the area where they lived, and it was a faster track than beginning over again in an undergraduate program. Although the SCA Program is considered to be a fast-track program, it does involve a year long internship like many extended undergraduate programs. When asked about the SCA Program in which they were enrolled, all participants stated that the year long internship was the most beneficial part of the program. “We were in the classroom for so long, knowing . . . how the school works—who the people are . . . understanding the relationships that exist,” explained Alex.

Judith agreed: “[It helped] just being there . . . starting and closing a room . . . just observing other people working in the classroom all the time . . . [and] seeing different styles [of teaching].” It is not surprising that these novice teachers saw their in-school experiences in this light. Colleagues and principals view participants involved in programs with longer access to elementary classrooms to be better prepared than those with the traditional one semester of student teaching. They also see them as being as effective with students as much more experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Participants were eager to share their experiences in their internship classrooms. Interestingly, only one of the participants, Diana, was delighted with her mentoring teacher. Diana described her mentoring teacher as very flexible, very organized, and with great classroom management skills. The other participants had varying responses to their “fit” with their mentoring teachers.

Alex indicated that he felt uncomfortable with the environment of the school. He stated, “[R]eligion was not talked about in the classroom [where I grew up] . . . I didn’t really think it should be something that would affect my behavior in the classroom or what we were able to discuss in the classroom, but . . . it did, in that classroom and at that school.” He also expressed concern about the lack of specific feedback that he received from his mentoring teacher and suggested the SCA Program create “some simple form that mentoring teachers have to fill out.”

Judith had difficulty relating to her mentoring teacher. The ways the two interacted with students varied widely. Judith stated, “I felt that some of the things that she said were very harsh . . . the personal attacks [on students] were really hard for me.” Judith also sensed that her mentoring teacher had real difficulty relinquishing control of

her classroom to an intern. Interestingly, Judith ended up spending several weeks doing almost all the teaching because her mentoring teacher had an extended illness.

Kasey ended up teaching in three different schools during her internship and working with several different mentoring teachers. Although she moved from her first school because of a mismatch with her mentoring teacher, she still felt that she learned from every experience. “Most of them practically just gave me their classroom,” she said, “[They said] when you’re ready, you can have all the time you want.”

Each intern moved to a different classroom for a six-week pullout. Usually this involved a change in both grade-level and school placement. Alex’s placement went from fifth grade down to third grade. Because he had worked in a lower SES school for the entire previous year, his school placement did not change. Alex loved working with third graders and decided that grade level would be his preferred age to teach. Diana experienced culture shock when she moved to a lower SES school for her pullout time. Even so, she decided by the end of the six weeks that “it probably needs to be longer . . . you’re just starting to get to know the kids.” Diana did feel that her mentoring teacher was not informed enough about what Diana was to do while in her classroom. “She kept asking me, ‘What do you have to do?’” stated Diana. “I didn’t get to teach as much as I would have liked,” she continued.

Like Alex, Judith moved from fifth grade to third grade for her pullout assignment. Her move took to her to a lower SES school where she once again felt that her social work experiences helped her to understand her students better. Kasey went from a multi-age classroom of third and fourth graders to a second grade classroom.

Although some participants resisted leaving their original classroom placements, all believed their diverse experiences helped them to better understand teaching.

Other statements made concerning the SCA Program included how the use of numerous speakers during the summer sessions enhanced the program. The variety of information was also applauded including learning about special education with inclusion and learning about some of the legal aspects of the teaching profession.

Although there were a few comments concerning speakers overlapping information and some lack of communication, overall, the participants were well pleased with their experiences in the SCA Program. Probably the greatest concern came from Alex when he expressed his disappointment in some of his fellow classmates. He reflected, “I expected that people would be very excited about learning about being a teacher as opposed to . . . getting through a program to get a job . . . not everyone is in education because they care about children.”

Question Two: Summary

All participants felt that their prior life and work experiences aided them as they progressed through the SCA Program. These experiences ranged from being able to organize or work with equipment such as computers to understanding the many sides of individuals and knowing how to handle conflict effectively.

Their positive experiences revolved around the extended time period in actual classrooms and the variety of placements. Also mentioned was the content knowledge gained from having diverse speakers as part of the SCA Program.

I believe the most significant aspect of the internship had to do with how well the interns meshed with their mentoring teachers. Teaching is a complex and often

stressful profession under the best of circumstances. That three out of four of these interns experienced real concerns with their placements bears further inspection into the ways that schools and mentoring teachers are selected and how interns are paired with specific teachers and classrooms.

What Challenges Did They Face in Their First Six Months of Teaching?

Although the novice teachers who were involved in this research study faced diverse challenges in their first six months of teaching, their concerns all focused on three broad categories: working conditions, mentoring, and preconceptions versus the realities of teaching.

Working Conditions

Concerns about working conditions included having adequate resources in the classroom, working with diverse students, and dealing with parents. Classroom management, usually a major concern of novice teachers, was also discussed by the participants of this research study.

Adequate Resources

Kasey's immediate problem when she accepted a second grade teaching position was that she had no classroom. The previous teacher had just moved her materials out and, before Kasey could move in, the school maintenance team was required to clean and repair everything including the walls and floors. As a novice teacher, Kasey was distraught as to how to prepare a room that she could not enter until one day before classes began—a room that had absolutely nothing inside, not even desks or chairs. Fortunately, Kasey's co-workers came to the rescue and helped her to find adequate desks and chairs. They also offered her some supplies from their own rooms.

Kasey continued to struggle with receiving her grade-level curriculum guide even though she requested it from her principal numerous times. Her classroom also failed to heat or cool adequately. Only after the principal conducted an observation in Kasey's room did the physical conditions of the room become a priority.

Diana moved into a classroom where the teacher had left no files of materials. This was a real problem for Diana since her primary assignment during her internship year was in kindergarten. She also had no state curriculum guide. Diana stated, "I didn't have a clue as to what I was doing." Only after pairing up with another new third grade teacher did Diana feel like she had a grasp on what was expected of her.

Judith's concern with resources revolved around the complete absence of any trade books in her classroom. She solved that problem by purchasing used paperback books herself and accepting donations of books from her students for use in the classroom.

Lack of adequate resources elevated the stress for three of the novice teachers in this research study. With the new school year just ahead, they did not have available to them basics for teaching ranging from grade-level curriculum guides to desks and chairs for their students. Some expectations were probably unrealistic. Most teachers take their files of lesson plans and materials with them when they move. Collections of trade books usually have been collected by individual teachers, so they were likely to take them as well. However, having no supplies whatsoever cripples a new teacher. Kasey's coworkers alleviated her situation, which may have been what the principal expected. Certainly, the maintenance team would have eventually supplied Kasey with desks and chairs, but the question remains as to when that would have happened. Also,

the lack of grade-level curriculum guides available for novice teachers constitutes a serious obstacle for teachers trying to teach what is expected within each grade. School systems and principals should take note and be sure that there are an adequate number of grade-level curriculum guides for all new teachers.

Diverse Students

Diana had felt very comfortable during her internship teaching kindergartners; however, her move to third grade tested her in new ways. She worried about the curriculum: “Seven things to plan for,” she bemoaned, “where in kindergarten, it was ‘whole language’ and if you did this unit, you touched on all those things.” She was surprised to discover that she could not begin teaching math with new learning, but instead had to go back and reteach math concepts that the students were supposed to have learned in second grade. Judith also had to adjust to a different type of student. Even though she was teaching the same grade level as the previous year, the student population differed. Not only were most of them from a lower SES background, she also had “a couple of students who are reading on like the third grade level in the fifth grade . . . two different math classes . . . [and] three different reading groups.” Even Alex struggled with his students’ academic diversity since many of his students were accepted in the TAG program without being tested. “You know, it was totally different . . . the two groups,” he stated. “Kids who are in fifth grade that really didn’t need to be there were giving me answers that were below some of the third grade students who tested into the program.” As a result, the higher-level thinking activities that he introduced had mixed results.

Kasey worried about her second graders for reasons other than academics. Many of her students were facing difficult home situations. Three students had parents who had committed suicide; at least one had parents going through a divorce, and another was being moved back and forth because of a custody battle.

These four novice teachers discovered that every teaching situation brings a new group of concerns. It is rare that all students are on grade-level. Research has also shown that students from different SES categories often require different strategies for teaching and exhibit different needs and behaviors (Borich, 2004). In addition, the makeup of families is no longer the traditional two-parent home. Many students will live in non-traditional families including single-parent homes with either the mother or father, homes with grandparents acting as parents, or homes with teenage parents.

Parents

Kasey found that her greatest challenge concerned the parents of her students. Several of them interrupted her classroom throughout the day, while others “believe everything . . . I mean, ridiculous things—their child tells them,” she stated. One parent even argued with Kasey in front of her class. Kasey didn’t take these behaviors “sitting down.” She wrote a newsletter detailing appropriate times for conferences and confronted the argumentative parent with the rules of her classroom.

Kasey’s principal supported her in her decisions. Johnson and Birkland (2003) found that teachers who transferred from one school to another chose schools where there was “communication with parents . . . [and] respect and guidance from the principal” (p. 21).

Classroom Management

While discipline is a major concern for novice teachers, I was surprised to discover that none of the four participants in this research study felt that classroom management was an area where they struggled. This does not mean that all of their students behaved all the time. In fact, Judith faced a number of difficult situations with students early in the school year, and all three of the others mentioned times they had to discipline one or more students. Nevertheless, both Judith and Kasey stated that classroom management was probably the *easiest* part of their first year of teaching. Kasey attributed her success in this area to how she began the school year. “We took three days to go over rules . . . I really made sure that they knew exactly what I expected,” she said. She also praised her students when they were complimented by other teachers for their behavior in the halls. Judith described her classroom in this manner: “It took me a while to get it . . . but now my expectations are very clear . . . it took me . . . seven or eight weeks . . . they’ve got to know exactly what they’re supposed to do . . . you just keep honing it in until they remember it.” Diana used a variety of methods including a rain stick that makes gentle sounds. She informed her students that they were to stop talking, get to their seats and be ready to transition to another subject when she used the rain stick. “I flip it over now five times or six, depending on how busy they are . . . I don’t set them up to fail,” explained Diana. Alex also revealed, “They know what’s coming. They know what to expect. They know what your objectives are. They know what your expectations are and they’re going to do fine . . . I have no problems, none at all.”

As stated previously, novice teachers who have already spent extended periods of time in the classroom are viewed by both colleagues and principals as better prepared than those with the traditional one-semester of student teaching. They are also seen as being as effective with students as much more experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Miller, McKenna & McKenna (1998) concur that alternative track certification programs may attract individuals with greater classroom effectiveness than traditional track programs. I submit that the participants in this research study felt that classroom management was not a major concern for two reasons: 1) their experiences as interns gave them opportunities to view and implement many different classroom management strategies, and 2) their prior life and work experiences equipped them with managerial and/or “people” skills that traditional students often have not had the opportunity to learn. Ultimately, they were more confident in their expectations of their students than traditional novice teachers, which carried over in their consistency with their classroom management plans.

Mentoring

Teaching is unlike any other profession. Doctors go through intensive residencies in teaching hospitals to ensure that they become competent in their field. Lawyers are supported by their colleagues as they research cases, prepare documents, and present testimonies in court. Teachers, however, receive no such assistance. Novice teachers enter their first classroom alone and are expected to teach with the same competence as veteran teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). It is no wonder that almost half of them have exited the teaching profession by the end of five years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Johnson (2000) states that “schools must be organized to ensure that novice teachers are supported and evaluated as they learn to teach” (p. 2). Pairing of novice teachers with veteran teachers gives the novice teacher the opportunity to receive both emotional and professional support as he moves into his initial classroom and school community (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, Sargent, 2003).

When asked if they had been given a mentoring teacher as they began their first year of teaching, three of the four participants in this research study answered in the affirmative. However, their experiences with their mentors were not always positive.

Although Alex was given a “partner teacher” within the TAG program, he never mentioned working with his partner. Instead, he established an informal mentoring relationship with a different TAG teacher. He explained, “I find myself turning to her for advice and for feedback on my selection process and lesson planning.” At the same time, neither Alex’s informal mentor nor his assigned partner worked in the same schools where he did. As a result, he had no one to turn in at his three schools. He stated that he felt “different” from the other faculty members from the very beginning because his colleagues started teaching from Day One while the TAG program was not established until several days later. He also had little opportunity to develop close relationships with any faculty members because he divided his time among three schools. He was, in essence, an outsider wherever he went.

Diana felt that she received essentially no assistance from other teachers. She was assigned a mentoring teacher, but that arrangement was less than what she anticipated. There was also a grade level leader to whom she could turn for questions or assistance. The problem seemed to stem from the fact that no one gave Diana

specific advice or information. If she asked for something in particular, her mentor would “give me the shirt off her back,” stated Diana, “but they would never come and offer [specific teaching units] to me.”

Judith was not assigned a mentor; however, she was not shy about asking for help. Although she stated that at the beginning of the year, she “just felt really, really lost,” she asked questions when she needed to and eventually partnered with another fifth grade teacher for planning, recess and study hall, and exchanging classes for social studies and science. She also explained that another fifth grade teacher was “always wanting to help me and get information for me, [and] lets me use books to copy out of.” She could also turn to fellow teachers when she felt stressed or overwhelmed. As a result, she stated, “I don’t feel like I’m alone.”

Kasey also received lots of support from her fellow teachers. She explained that the principal assigned her a mentor, but “all the other second grade teachers, all of them help me.” From helping her to set up her empty classroom to planning units together or offering a “really neat lesson,” Kasey observed, “They want me to succeed because they know it’s my first year. So, I feel lucky.”

It was obvious from journal entries and interviews that Judith and Kasey seemed more content in their placements by the end of January than did either Diana or Alex. At first this was surprising to me because Kasey seemed to have the most difficult beginning because of her late hiring and her empty classroom. From information I received, Judith also seemed to be working with the most difficult group of students of the four participants. Certainly, Alex and Diana both had concerns with which they were dealing, but Diana was working in the same school as she had during her

internship, and Alex's concerns related more to the program in which he was involved. I submit that the primary difference between the two pairs of novice teachers revolved around the amount of collegial support they received. Judith and Kasey both felt a part of their school community early on. Kasey was surrounded by caring and helpful teachers. Judith asked for specific help and then received it in abundance. On the other hand, Diana expected her colleagues to offer specific help, and she seemed to resent the fact that it was not forthcoming unless she asked for it. Alex's assignment as a TAG teacher for three schools rather than as a classroom teacher in one specific school became a major hurdle for him to develop close relationships with other faculty.

Realities of Teaching

The challenges in this section centered around politics and programs, time constraints, and idealizing the teaching profession.

Alex's concerns during his first semester of teaching revolved around the TAG program in which he was working. As a teacher for three different elementary schools, Alex was continually moving from one location to another and one group of students to another. This did not constitute a problem for him, but the way the program was set up and implemented did concern him. He worried about "the fact we only had forty-five minutes and we need to be at point A at the end of the lesson" and whether such a short time frame could really impact his students. He also felt that his time was being wasted. "I literally have so much time during the day, I can get everything done that I need to during the day," he stated. He did not enjoy or even appreciate the (what he considered to be) excessive amount of time he was given for planning. "I didn't go to work and then want a two and a half hour break so I could think about what I'm going to do the

next day,” he explained. “[I]t really comes down to just not having enough contact with students.” Time and again, Alex railed against how the TAG program was set up and implemented and the inconsistency in the selection of students being served in TAG. His concerns seem to bear out Rozycski (1999) who stated, “The complex environment in which teaching occurs is almost universally misrepresented to future teachers as one that will be mostly, if not entirely, under their control”(p. 13).

Diana, Judith, and Kasey also expressed concerns about time. However, their concerns revolved around the limited amount of time they were given to accomplish too many different things, including teaching subject matter, recording grades, and attending to the myriad other tasks that teachers are required to do (such as bus duty). Diana said, “I . . . have not figured out how these teachers can get all their papers graded during the day,” while Kasey commented, “I’m . . . SOOO tired! I’m wondering if I’m suffering from that extreme fatigue syndrome! I am completely exhausted at the end of every day.” They also all expressed the need for personal time once they left school. Kasey explained, “I love to teach, but I need a social and personal life, too!” Instead, they found themselves continuing to grade papers or plan lessons for the next day or week. Judith stated, “If I’m not rested then my kids won’t get a good teacher tomorrow. I have to take care of myself FIRST.”

All four novice teachers expressed frustration between where they saw themselves as teachers and where they wanted to be. They had previously stated their high esteem for the teaching profession. Alex described teachers as “altruistic . . . [with] almost different goals and different motivations . . . than any other profession.” As a teacher himself, he believed that “you should strive for . . . perfection, knowing

that, chances are, you might not get there all the time.” Judith assumed that “teachers were elevated to this moral level that no one else was on because they taught children.” She later reflected, “Everyone said that first year is survival . . . but I don’t want to just survive. I want my kids to have something better than the teacher who is just surviving.” Both Diana and Kasey were surprised at the amount of paperwork and planning involved in teaching. Diana explained, “There’s so much to teach and cover, I don’t know how you do it all in a day.” Kasey reflected, “Teaching is such a huge responsibility---I’m trying my best to live up to it.” Even though all the participants had worked in an elementary classroom for an entire year as interns, they still operated under preconceptions that they discovered were untrue or unrealistic. This directly impacted their assessments of themselves as teachers.

Question Three: Summary

When asked what challenges they faced during their first six months of teaching, the four participants all focused their concerns on three broad categories: working conditions, mentoring, and preconceptions versus the realities of teaching. Concerns about working conditions included having adequate resources in the classroom, working with diverse students, and dealing with parents. Classroom management, usually a major concern of novice teachers, was also discussed by the participants of this research study.

Lack of adequate resources elevated the stress for three of the novice teachers in this research study. With the new school year just ahead, they did not have available to them basics for teaching ranging from grade-level curriculum guides to desks and chairs for their students. Some expectations were probably unrealistic. Most teachers take

their files of lesson plans and materials with them when they move. Collections of trade books usually have been collected by individual teachers, so they were likely to take them as well. However, having no supplies whatsoever cripples a new teacher.

Kasey's coworkers alleviated her situation, which may have been what the principal expected. Certainly, the maintenance team would have eventually supplied Kasey with desks and chairs, but the question remains as to when that would have happened. Also, the lack of grade-level curriculum guides available for novice teachers constitutes a serious obstacle for teachers trying to teach what is expected within each grade. School systems and principals should take note and be sure that there are an adequate number of grade-level curriculum guides for all new teachers.

Working with diverse students constituted another challenge for the participants of this study. These four novice teachers discovered that every teaching situation brings a new group of concerns. It is rare that all students are on grade-level. Research has also shown that students from different SES categories often require different strategies for teaching and exhibit different needs and behaviors (Borich, 2004). In addition, Diana found that her experience with a specific grade level and curriculum greatly affected her confidence and ability to adapt to a new group of students. Finally, the makeup of families is no longer the traditional two-parent home. Many students will live in non-traditional families including single-parent homes with either the mother or father, families with grandparents acting as parents, or families with teenage parents.

Kasey also faced difficulties related to parents of her students. Fortunately, she responded with a newsletter outlining expectations of parents which was well-received

by most parents of her students. When she did have a confrontation with one parent, she was supported by her administration.

Classroom management, the primary concern for most novice teachers, did not seem to overwhelm the four participants of this study. Novice teachers who have already spent extended periods of time in the classroom are viewed by both colleagues and principals as better prepared than those with the traditional one-semester of student teaching. They are also seen as being as effective with students as much more experienced teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Also, Miller, McKenna & McKenna (1998) concur that alternative track certification programs may attract individuals with greater classroom effectiveness than traditional track programs. I submit that the participants in this research study felt that classroom management was not a major concern for two reasons: 1) their experiences as interns gave them opportunities to view and implement many different classroom management strategies, and 2) their prior life and work experiences equipped them with managerial and/or “people” skills that traditional students often have not had the opportunity to learn. Ultimately, they were more confident in their expectations of their students than traditional novice teachers, which carried over in their consistency with their classroom management plans.

Mentoring was the second broad category discussed as being an area of concern for these novice teachers. It was obvious from journal entries and interviews that Judith and Kasey seemed more content in their placements by the end of January than did either Diana or Alex. At first this was surprising to me because Kasey seemed to have the most difficult beginning because of her late hiring and her empty classroom. From information I received, Judith also seemed to be working with the most difficult group

of students of the four participants. Certainly, Alex and Diana both had concerns with which they were dealing, but Diana was working in the same school as she had during her internship, and Alex's concerns related more to the program in which he was involved. I submit that the primary difference between the two pairs of novice teachers revolved around the amount of collegial support they received. Judith and Kasey both felt a part of their school community early on. Kasey was surrounded by caring and helpful teachers. Judith asked for specific help and then received it in abundance. On the other hand, Diana expected her colleagues to offer specific help, and she seemed to resent the fact that it was not forthcoming unless she asked for it. Alex's assignment as a TAG teacher for three schools rather than as a classroom teacher in one specific school became a major hurdle for him to develop close relationships with other faculty.

The third broad concern revolved around expectations versus reality. All four novice teachers expressed frustration between where they saw themselves as teachers and where they wanted to be. They had previously stated their high esteem for the teaching profession. Alex described teachers as "altruistic . . . [with] almost different goals and different motivations . . . than any other profession." As a teacher himself, he believed that "you should strive for . . . perfection, knowing that, chances are, you might not get there all the time." Judith assumed that "teachers were elevated to this moral level that no one else was on because they taught children." She later reflected, "Everyone said that first year is survival . . . but I don't want to just survive. I want my kids to have something better than the teacher who is just surviving." Both Diana and Kasey were surprised at the amount of paperwork and planning involved in teaching. Diana explained, "There's so much to teach and cover, I don't know how you do it all

in a day.” Kasey reflected, “Teaching is such a huge responsibility---I’m trying my best to live up to it.” Even though all the participants had worked in an elementary classroom for an entire year as interns, they still operated under preconceptions that they discovered were untrue or unrealistic. This directly impacted their assessments of themselves as teachers.

In What Ways Did They Learn to Define Themselves As Teachers?

The four participants in this research study chose to enroll in the SCA Program, a fifteen-month alternative certification program that also resulted in a Master’s Degree in Education. All four had previously received undergraduate degrees in areas other than education and had earned their livings working in jobs related to their fields of study. However, they all chose to leave those jobs in order to pursue a new career in education.

Lortie (2002) states that prospective teachers have had the unique opportunity to observe teachers at work for sixteen years or longer before actually having their own classrooms. Any student sitting in class, whether age six, sixteen, or twenty-six, observes his teacher in action and develops a good understanding of certain aspects of the teaching profession. However, he continually sees only what is visible and responds to this knowledge from the perspective of being a student rather than a teacher. The previous section on realities of teaching discusses the preconceived notions that the four participants had concerning teaching.

James Marcia (1993) identifies four identity statuses based upon an individual’s exploration and commitment to an occupational or ideological choice. They include: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium and identity achievement.

Because all the participants in this study chose to switch careers, it is believed that they all experienced identity moratorium in their previous careers. They found themselves in an identity crisis related to those careers and chose to pursue identity achievement in the teaching profession.

Fuller (1969) introduced the concept that teacher development progresses in three stages: *self*, *task*, and *impact*. Borich (2004) elaborated on this exploration of teaching concerns. He observes that the first stage of teacher development, sometimes called the “survival stage,” is distinguished by teaching concerns focusing upon the individual teacher’s well being more than the teaching task or the learners. Concerns typically include questions about the students, parents, and other teachers liking the individual, while behavior management is a major focus in planning. This is called the *self* stage. The next stage focuses on improving one’s teaching skills and achieving greater content mastery. Typical concerns address where to find good instructional materials, ways to teach certain skills, and how to cover all the content. This stage revolves around *task*. The third and highest level focuses less on management and lesson delivery and more on one’s impact on the learners. Major concerns include how to meet students’ needs, how to challenge unmotivated learners, and how to best prepare students for the next grade. Borich and Fuller call this the *impact* stage.

Fuller (1969) speculates that concerns for *self*, *task*, and *impact* are natural developmental stages that most teachers go through. Beginning teachers are more likely to concentrate on *self* concerns, but will gradually move through the other stages as they feel more confident in their teaching. Also, teachers may repeat stages, moving back to *self* concerns when changing grades or subject areas. All teachers will probably

have some concerns in each of the three areas, but the levels of intensity will vary depending upon the circumstances of the individual teacher.

This section looks at when participants first saw themselves as teachers and also gives examples of teaching concerns for each participant according to Borich and Fuller's categories: *self*, *task*, and *impact*. It concludes with remarks by each of the novice teachers on their decisions to become teachers.

"I Am the Teacher"

When asked when he first thought of himself as being a teacher (rather than a student or an intern), Alex shared that he was terrified of not getting a teaching job. It wasn't until he was actually hired that he said, "I really didn't think of myself as a teacher until I really, I mean, I'm riding down the road, and, you know, I'm just like, 'For once, I've got a job' . . . actually after I went to a conference . . . riding home from that; that was when I was like, 'I'm a teacher.'"

Diana seemed to have more difficulty defining herself as a teacher. It wasn't until her interview in January that she stated with conviction, "The responsibility is totally on my shoulders as a teacher . . . I do feel like I'm a teacher because I do have all the responsibility . . . and we're getting through all the curriculum and the discipline and all that."

Judith sensed a change in her identity to teacher earlier than Diana and Alex. Even as an intern, she stated, "When I was doing my soloing, I never really saw my teacher. She wasn't hanging around and I felt kind of the teacher. And when she was gone [because of illness], I did because the kids looked to me for answers because I was there before." Once she became a teacher with her own classroom, she said:

It's nice to get paid finally . . . I feel more powerful . . . if I change something, I don't have to answer to anybody . . . In terms of how I'm running my day, that's my deal. I don't have to worry about somebody jumping down my throat because they want to do it this way . . . I do it anyway I want . . . I can teach the way I want, you know, have them do creative writing if I want to . . . or I can have my stuff where I know I can find it . . . it's more my space, my kids.

She also enjoyed when students in lower grades would call her by name in the hallways at school. She explained, "Eventually they may have you [as their teacher]. And it's just a different feeling . . . It's good."

Kasey also referred back to her internship when she really began to identify herself as a teacher:

I had the whole last week before Christmas vacation to solo teach . . . [the kids] would come to me. And if [the regular teacher] would be in the room, they would come to me. And I had them all week. And that's when it hit me, oh my goodness, I think this is it . . . I got that respect. I got that feedback that I loved . . . I thought, "I can do this."

Again and again, she expressed surprise and joy as it continued to dawn upon her that her dream of being a teacher was actually a reality. Two days after school started, she wrote, "It hit me several times throughout the day, Oh, my gosh, this is *my* class, these are *my* students—it was overwhelming and yet exhilarating!" After parent orientation night, she wrote, "It was the first time that *I* was in charge of the rules and procedures set in *my* classroom. That felt wonderful." However, reality really hit when a fifth grader called out to her, "Hello, Ms. M." She recalled, "Even though I had never talked to or seen this student, he knew who I was . . . that simple thing made me feel *so* good. It was the first time I truly felt like I was a *part* of my school, and like I belonged there and people knew who I was." She reflected later, "I'm a *teacher* with a class *full* of students who turn to me for *everything*."

Judith and Kasey expressed excitement at being seen by others as teachers. They also enjoyed being in charge of their classrooms and felt tremendous responsibility for meeting the needs of their students. Diana also spoke of the responsibility of her job. However, I sensed that because her position was an interim that she lacked the confidence that Judith and Kasey shared in their placements. That she was also uncomfortable with the switch from kindergarten to third grade seemed to affect her sense of belonging. Alex seemed to jump into the role of teacher once he was hired for a specific job. However, the fact that he divided his time among three schools and he didn't start teaching from the first day like his colleagues made him feel "different" from the other teachers.

Teaching Concerns: Self, Task, Impact

Rodriguez & Sjostrom (1998) found that nontraditional teacher candidates (those 25 or older with previous job experiences) responded differently from traditional teacher candidates in their assumption of teacher identity. They found that nontraditional students focused on learner needs and development rather than personal performance, viewed mistakes as part of becoming a professional, and saw themselves as practitioners "needing time on task and practice to perfect their training" (p. 182). Nontraditional students seemed to fit in to the politics and culture of their schools more readily than traditional students. They also focused on "reaching all children and enhancing their learning . . . over their own teaching from the very beginning or early in the student teaching experience" (p. 182).

The participants in this research study fit the definition for nontraditional students discussed by Rodriguez & Sjostrom. Their behaviors and attitudes expressed

in the interviews and journal entries also bear out similar conclusions. In fact, only rarely were comments made that would fit into Fuller and Borich's *self* stage. They enjoyed when students, parents, and teachers liked them, and they worked hard to establish a consistent classroom management plan early in the year, but their focus tended to be more on *task* and *impact*. The *task* stage of teaching concerns focuses on improving one's teaching skills and achieving greater content mastery, while the *impact* stage addresses how to meet students' needs, how to challenge unmotivated learners, and how to best prepare students for the next grade.

At the beginning of the school year, Alex's concerns revolved around balancing his expectations with the students' expectations and best interests. He explained:

The hardest thing about being a teacher . . . you really have to separate yourself out in the sense that you are not there as an emotional being; you're there as a teacher. You're there to give these children what they need to do well in their lives given certain areas or certain skills and certain areas of curriculum . . . you're not letting yourself be affected by the negative things that kids are going to put out there towards you and let it affect your judgment about them.

As he moved into the school year, he started paying attention to what his students were saying and why they needed to have the opportunity to talk. He stated, "I did see an area I need to work on and that is my ability to listen and allow children in my classroom to direct more of the dialogue . . . here they are trying to make connections to what we are doing and their preexisting knowledge base and I am shutting that off."

As the semester progressed, Diana was able to focus on areas other than just "making it through the day." During her exit interview in January, Diana described her own transition from concerns about self to concerns about task and impact. She explained:

I enjoy seeing the progress that the kids have developed . . . When I first started giving a unit math test, at first it was like, ‘Oh, they did horrible’ [but] it’s not a reflection of them, it’s a reflection of me . . . So I would reflect on that and try to, you know, revamp my teaching methods and with each math test it got a little bit better and a little bit better.

She also experienced successes with several of her “difficult” students including the child with fetal alcohol syndrome who became the class spelling bee representative “so he’s been a real success,” another student who “has just driven me absolutely crazy the first part of the year with her blurting out and not wanting to be touched, that kind of stuff, [but] she’s coming around too. I’ve learned how to deal with her.” With another difficult child, she stated, “I just have to tell myself everyday that he is someone’s baby. I don’t have to like him. I love him, but I do not have to like him. I have finally accepted that . . . you have to give them respect and so they’ll, in turn, give you respect.”

Judith’s concerns about teaching started with establishing her classroom routines and management system; however, the responsibility of teaching her students how and what they needed to know was also ever present in her thoughts. She reflected, “Everyone said that first year is survival . . . but I don’t want to just survive. I want my kids to have something better than the teacher who is just surviving.”

Her concerns about task revolved around providing her students with interesting classes in which they could become involved. She moved away from always using the textbook to activities she created on her own. Once a week, she engaged her students in creative writing activities. “They loved that assignment,” she stated, “I mean, they put their hearts and souls into it . . . when I get to see them being themselves, that’s when I really have fun.” To inspire her students to complete their AR (Accelerated Reader)

requirements, she challenged them by agreeing to dress up as the character of their choice if everyone met their 6-week goals. “The first time I dressed up as a hippie girl . . . Last six weeks we voted again. I had to be a nerd . . . and this time I have to be a rapper,” she explained. “They loved it and they read.”

Judith was also concerned about the impact she had on her students. She considered her greatest challenge in teaching to be reaching her more difficult students: “Some of these kids don’t have anyone; anybody to help them at all . . . you want to give them extra time, extra support, extra patience, and they do well when you are able to do that.” With one ADHD student who was going back on his “meds” after trying to work without them, she stated, “He tries so hard to listen but can’t . . . he is sad about having to go back on them but is open to talking to me and to listening to me about his strengths and how it will help him concentrate so he can learn more and eventually become a safety patrol.” Another student with whom Judith had problems at the beginning of year made a complete turnaround. Judith wrote in her journal, “Betsy has become my after school helper. This has made a big difference in her classroom behavior . . . She shows unbelievable respect towards me and her manners are impeccable when we are alone. Nice to have her feel good about herself.”

Kasey’s concerns about self seemed to move quickly to concerns about task and impact. She began the year worried about setting up her classroom. She moved to concerns about teaching content as shown when she explained how she taught math: “I made it as simple as I could possibly make it. At any mistakes I thought they might take, I showed them not to do it. And they got it and I felt so good. And I’ve bragged on them for the past two weeks because they’re doing really good at it.” In her journal,

she described handling her first crisis, a potentially dangerous stray dog on the school playground. She wrote, “Even this tiny little situation was enough to get my heart racing . . . I know now just how important my job can really be.” Each time a new situation arose, she stated, “Every time I achieve a hurdle . . . not necessarily the lessons or activities, but the extra things that go along with being a teacher, the more it sinks in to me that I’m *here*, I’m a teacher, this is *my* classroom and *my* students.” Kasey also worried a lot about her students and their home life situations. She reflected, “I’m trying hard to show . . . these students that I care for them, I’m there for them, and I want to be a positive role model for them . . . Teaching is such a huge responsibility—I’m trying my best to live up to it.”

Why Teach?

During the exit interview in January, Alex explained his continuing struggle with his personal role of teaching:

I really got into teaching because I did want to make a big difference in a kid’s life. I have 162 students right now. I’m like, you know, 162 times diluted, you know. Is that better than 25 or 20 concentrated? . . . I got into it because I wanted to make a big change. I wanted to be able to make a big change in somebody’s life. I just think the way the program is set up, it’s not—you can’t do it.

At the same time, Alex found joy in connecting with students and helping them to see their potential:

I think the greatest is when a kid does something that you would just never have thought for a million years that they were capable of or that—and they show you part of them that just totally turns . . . who and what you thought they were on its head. It makes you realize how incredible it is to have the opportunity to spend with these students when they’re still changing and developing.

In October, when asked if she was glad that she was in teaching, Diana responded, “I’m not sorry. I wish I was in a different grade . . . I wish I had younger ones . . . [because] the mouth is starting, the attitudes, they’re mean to each other.” Later, in January, she stated, “I guess the only thing I’m questioning is if I really want to stay in 3rd grade or do I want to go back to kindergarten.” Diana stated that one of the perks of teaching is “the kids, you know, that respond to you . . . the hugs in the halls and that kind of stuff.” So far, she said, “It’s been fun. It’s been . . . a roller coaster.”

Like Alex and Diana, Judith experienced both good and bad days in teaching. She explained, “I’m glad I’m a teacher. I have yet to say I’m not, even on days when I come home . . . [and] I start crying . . . I’m tired, [but] I never once thought, ‘I don’t want to teach.’” During her exit interview, Judith concluded, “I love my kids . . . I love them to death . . . there’s no one I want to part with. Even the most troublesome, they’ve got to have somebody that they know wants them. I’m not about to ditch them.”

Kasey responded in a similar manner, “I love it . . . It makes me feel good when they get something . . . well they figure out a math problem and they want to come show me.” She wrote in her journal, “I truly feel that some people are called to teach and that is where they need to be. I think I am one of those people. I also feel that other people go into teaching for selfish or naive reasons and can never feel satisfied . . . I know that I can and will make a difference in a child’s life and that’s worth it to me.”

Kasey concluded with her reasons for teaching: “It’s going to be hard, but you do it for the kids. You do it because you want to teach kids and you want them to learn

. . . If you don't love kids, what's the point? . . . it takes a certain kind of person. Not everybody can do it."

Question Four: Summary

When asked about when and how it felt to be "real" teachers, Judith and Kasey expressed excitement at being seen by others as teachers. They also enjoyed being in charge of their classrooms and felt tremendous responsibility for meeting the needs of their students. Diana also spoke of the responsibility of her job. However, I sensed that because her position was interim that she lacked the confidence that Judith and Kasey shared in their placements. That she was also uncomfortable with the switch from kindergarten to third grade seemed to affect her sense of belonging. Alex seemed to jump into the role of teacher once he was hired for a specific job. However, the fact that he divided his time among three schools and he didn't start teaching from the first day as was the case with his colleagues made him feel "different" from the other teachers.

When discussing teaching concerns, only rarely were comments made by any of the novice teachers that would fit into Fuller and Borich's *self* stage. They enjoyed when students, parents, and teachers liked them, and they worked hard to establish a consistent classroom management plan early in the year, but their focus tended to be more on *task* and *impact*. The *task* stage of teaching concerns focuses on improving one's teaching skills and achieving greater content mastery while the *impact* stage addresses how to meet students' needs, how to challenge unmotivated learners, and how to best prepare students for the next grade.

Alex worked on listening to his students and allowing them to help guide discussions based on the students' prior knowledge. Diana explained how her students' initial poor performance in math reflected upon her teaching more than their abilities. Judith loved engaging her students in creative writing activities and challenged her students to read by dressing up as the character of their choice when the entire class met their goals. Kasey worked on breaking down math into manageable pieces for her students to learn and worked on making every aspect of teaching productive for her students.

Alex, Diana, Judith, and Kasey all expressed their continued desire to be in teaching; however, their levels of satisfaction and identification with teaching varied. These variations were evident within each participant given certain situations as well as across the participants given their placements during their first year. At the close of this research, Alex was continuing to struggle with his position as TAG teacher and his potential impact on his students. "I got into [teaching] because I wanted to make a big change," he reiterated. "I wanted to be able to make a big change in somebody's life. I just think the way [TAG] is set up, it's not—you can't do it." Diana was also unsure about her future plans. She explained, "I guess the only thing I'm questioning is if I really want to stay in 3rd grade or do I want to go back to kindergarten." Judith was continuing to struggle with the desire to do more and be more than time and energy would allow. She explained her concern for her students in this way: "Even the most troublesome, they've got to have somebody that they know wants them. I'm not about to ditch them." Kasey seemed to have the greatest confidence about her ability to teach and to make a difference. She explained, "I truly feel that some people are called to

teach and that is where they need to be. I think I am one of those people . . . I know that I can and will make a difference in a child's life and that's worth it to me."

What Can Be Learned from This Research That Will Inform the Way Potential Teachers Are Recruited and Trained?

Van Manen (1990) states that "the purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something" (p. 77). The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions that second career novice teachers, who have completed a fifteen-month program, have about their personal experiences and journeys toward becoming classroom teachers. This research proposed to document these novice teachers' initial perceptions about teaching and their experiences in finding their identities as teachers.

This research study was also based on the premise that finding one's identity as teacher is necessary for successfully navigating a career in teaching. In *The Complex Roles of the Teacher* (1984), Heck and Williams explain: "People who feel they 'belong' to a particular group, whether it is formal or informal, are in a far stronger position to deal with life than those who do not" (p. 3). Novice teachers who feel they "belong" to their group of grade-level colleagues, the formal staff of their assigned school, or the larger entity of professional educators are more likely to feel confident in their role as teacher than those who do not have this sense of belonging.

As assessment standards and accountability measurements of both students and teachers increase, those in higher education need to take the lead in evaluating the impact of successful integration into the teaching profession for our preservice and novice teachers. A better fit between practice and reality must be achieved in this

arena. Data are required from recent education graduates regarding what has worked or hasn't worked in their preparation, what experiences both in and out of the classroom impeded or accelerated their acclimation to teaching, and how both teacher educators and schools can help to reduce the attrition rate of novice teachers. This study may provide some of the data necessary for strengthening programs in education.

There are at least three major implications for teacher education emanating from this study. The first concerns in what grade levels interns are placed for long-term assignments. The second addresses how we can better match mentoring teachers and schools with interns, and the third looks at ways to communicate with both interns and school systems on novice teacher assimilation.

Grade-Level Placements for Interns

Findings from this research indicate that participants believe that the Second Career Alternative Program in which they were enrolled provided them an opportunity to pursue careers in education on a "fast track." At the same time, the requirement of a year long internship in the public schools enabled them to more fully understand and appreciate the inner workings of teaching in an elementary school setting. The 6-week pullout assignment in a different school setting also provided them with a broader experience base for both age and diversity of students. Even with these experiences, one intern, Diana, expressed concern over her ability to teach in a third grade classroom after interning most of the year in a kindergarten classroom. Borich (2004) states, "A teacher's experience with a specific grade level, curriculum, and type of learner has been more predictive of actual classroom performance than general biographical data . . . of a teacher's qualifications for a particular teaching assignment" (p. 5). Despite

Diana's year long internship in kindergarten and her 6-week pullout experience in fourth grade, she did not feel adequately prepared to handle either the curriculum requirements of third grade or the organizational responsibilities such as setting up a grade book or establishing criteria for report card grades. Because the set-up of kindergarten varies considerably from that in grades 1-5, perhaps it would be wise to recommend that kindergarten placements occur only during the brief 6-week pullout time period rather than for the primary year long placement.

Classroom management ranks at the top on the list of concerns of novice teachers. One component of classroom management includes classroom organization. Few teacher education programs consider teaching such basics as how to set up a grade book or how grading criteria may differ from kindergarten to first grade to fifth grade. Preservice teachers may acquire some of this information during their student teaching placements; however, the information would be specific to the grade in which they are teaching at that time. How much better prepared novice teachers would feel if they were already comfortable with the organizational issues related to teaching! At some specific point, we need to help preservice teachers acquire this knowledge. At the very least, we need to help them understand the types of decisions that they will need to make in these areas and how their decision making will be affected by the grade level in which they are placed.

Mentoring During Preservice Training

Three of the four participants in this research related some degree of discomfort with their mentoring teachers or school environment during their internships. As teacher educators, we are often at the mercy of the school system or principal as to

where interns are placed and with whom. The concept of the Professional Development School partnership strives to place student teachers or interns in “exemplary” schools and classrooms. Over the years, these partnerships can be refined as teacher educators, principals, and teachers learn what is expected by all parties. I would recommend that the SCA Program partner with specific schools so that a seamless transition from college classroom to internship classroom is more likely to occur. In the ideal world, this partnership could be established at the outset and all problems addressed and resolved early in the partnership. Reality, however, rarely meets the ideal, and it is understood that when working with many people and personalities that there is no perfect answer for matching up interns with mentoring teachers and their schools.

Nevertheless, further research needs to be undertaken that addresses the matching of student teachers or interns with their mentoring teachers. As the push for testing for the “disposition of teaching” gains momentum in many states, the pairing of interns with veteran teachers who have the “disposition” and training to excel as mentors also needs to be explored. NCATE (2002) defines disposition as “the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own professional growth.” How a mentoring teacher perceives an intern’s placement in his/her classroom, whether it is an additional responsibility and inconvenience or an opportunity for growth for all parties concerned, greatly affects the climate of the mentoring relationship. An intern’s immersion into one teacher’s classroom for an extended period of time should indicate that the mentoring teacher exhibits specific qualities that will enable the intern to better learn in

that given situation. These should include both flexibility and a continued desire to reflect and improve upon one's own teaching on the part of the mentoring teacher. Unless we closely examine the ways we select mentoring teachers and pair them with interns, we are involving our interns in classroom situations that are little better than a game of Russian roulette.

Assimilation of Novice Teachers

The third implication from the research concerns how novice teachers are assimilated into their new schools and classrooms. Once the participants in this research study were hired for teaching jobs, they no longer received assistance from the university or the SCA Program. This is not unusual, but instead is "status quo" for most novice teachers in programs throughout America. It was hoped that what the participants had learned during the fifteen months of training would carry them through whatever they might face in their first year of teaching. This research indicated, however, that despite their year long internship and the advantages of being nontraditional students (Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998), three of the novice teachers felt like they were struggling to survive during the first several weeks or even months of teaching. This raises the question of what, if anything, could have been done differently to enable these novice teachers to have an easier transition to their first job. The critical areas that were noted in this research study centered on how the school system or principal integrated the novice teacher into the school settings and whether collegial support, formal or informal, was established for the novice teacher.

The university cannot mandate to school systems how they should ease the initiation of novice teachers, but discussions can take place with interns that address

what they can and should do to make their first year easier. This should include finding out what resources are available and where, getting to know your colleagues and asking for specific help, and not having unrealistic expectations of oneself. The establishment of Professional Development Schools can also help to improve the atmosphere for novice teachers as public school teachers and teacher educators work together. This could be one way both groups learn to value and trust each other's concerns and together create possible solutions to problems in education. In addition, how mentoring programs within school systems are created and implemented needs further research. The ideal or vision of mentoring programs for novice teachers and teachers new to the school community or system does not always mesh with the realities of implementation that require time, training, and principals' support in order to be successful (Gratch, 1998, Moir & Bloom, 2003).

It is vital for the health and growth of the teaching profession that we engage in conversations with one another—within and across grade levels and schools, and also across school systems and universities. Only through these conversations can our novice teachers really be supported. Vinz (1996) discusses how teachers' voices have been kept silent, and it is time that we listen to each other:

I believe that teachers' voices need to be valued in discussions on teaching and learning; teachers need to become active participants and shapers . . . of schooling . . . we have devalued and constrained our own knowledge. (p. xi)

Franzak (2002) concludes: "Multiple influences . . . shape teacher identity, ranging from personal experience to media images to pedagogical beliefs supported by preservice instruction" (p. 258). I agree with Hatch (1999) who sums up novice teacher socialization in this way: "A strong thread that runs through my beliefs about teacher

education is that new teachers should experience socialization into the profession *by design*, as opposed to *by default*” (p. 229).

Areas for Further Research

This research study focused on how novice teachers see themselves becoming a part of the culture of the teaching profession and identifying themselves as “real” teachers. Even though the four participants of this study believed they had been adequately prepared for their new professions, they all met with significant challenges during their first semester of teaching. If these four novice teachers are indicative of recent research in novice teacher attrition, one will have left teaching by the end of the first year and another will have left within the first five years (Chase & Gross, 1999, Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). In order to halt, or at least slow, the quick exit from teaching that is continuing to occur, further research needs to occur in at least three areas:

- 1) We need to listen to preservice and novice teachers as they begin their careers in education. Experienced teachers all too quickly forget what it was like to be a novice teacher. It is imperative that we understand the pressures that face novice teachers and strive to assist our new colleagues in successfully identifying themselves as teachers and members of their own school community.
- 2) We need better ways of selecting classroom situations and mentoring teachers for student teachers and interns. Research needs to look further into the concept of dispositions of teaching for both the preservice teacher and the mentoring teacher.
- 3) We must work at helping to assimilate novice teachers into their new teaching situations. Much discussion has occurred on the idea of pairing up a novice

teacher with an experienced teacher. However, the evidence in this study indicates that simply assigning a mentor to a novice teacher has little positive effect. Research needs to explore what specific things mentors can do to help novice teachers. Then, mentors must be trained in what is expected of them and given time outside their own classroom responsibilities to assist and work with novice teachers.

Chapter Summary

This chapter analyzed the data presented in Chapter Four and also discussed both the implications for changes in teacher education practices and the need for further research.

Question 1

When asked why they chose to change directions in their career paths and pursue teaching, all four participants found that their original job choices did not bring them lasting satisfaction. Each participant seemed to be looking for a career where he or she could feel successful, but, more importantly, where he or she could “make a difference” in other people’s lives. Alex’s and Diana’s original career choices did not include the intensely personal connections that go with teaching. Judith’s and Kasey’s original career choices in social work did involve personal connections, but they both seemed to feel frustrated and inadequate to make any kind of lasting difference with their clients. After working with children in various situations, all four participants believed that teaching could meet the criteria that they were seeking: a fulfilling, “doable” job that would make a difference in children’s lives. For some of the participants, turning to teaching resulted in less pay than before. However, they each

determined that teaching could be a field where they would receive more personal job satisfaction.

Question 2

Alex, Diana, Judith, and Kasey believed that their prior life and work experiences aided them as they progressed through the SCA Program. These experiences ranged from being able to organize or work with equipment such as computers to understanding the many sides of individuals and knowing how to handle conflict effectively. They also felt that their experiences in the SCA Program adequately equipped them for their first year of teaching in most areas. Their positive experiences revolved around the extended time period in actual classrooms and the variety of placements. Also mentioned was the content knowledge gained from having diverse speakers as part of the SCA Program. It also became evident that three out of four of these interns experienced real concerns with their placements within particular schools or with individual mentoring teachers. This bears further inspection into the ways that schools and mentoring teachers are selected and how interns are paired with specific teachers and classrooms.

Question 3

When asked what challenges they faced during their first six months of teaching, the four participants all focused their concerns on three broad categories: working conditions, mentoring, and preconceptions versus the realities of teaching. Concerns about working conditions included having adequate resources in the classroom, working with diverse students, and dealing with parents. Classroom management, usually a

major concern of novice teachers, was also discussed by the participants of this research study.

Lack of adequate resources elevated the stress for three of the novice teachers in this research study. This included such basics as desks and chairs for students to grade-level curriculum guides. Working with diverse students constituted another challenge for the participants of this study. These four novice teachers discovered that every teaching situation brings a new group of concerns as one teacher is expected to meet the widely varying needs of a classroom of students. One novice teacher, Kasey, also had to deal with problems with parents. Surprisingly, classroom management, the primary concern for most novice teachers, did not seem to overwhelm the four participants of this study. Novice teachers who have already spent extended periods of time in the classroom are viewed by both colleagues and principals as better prepared than those with the traditional one-semester of student teaching. I submit that the participants in this research study felt that classroom management was not a major concern for two reasons: 1) their experiences as interns gave them opportunities to view and implement many different classroom management strategies, and 2) their prior life and work experiences equipped them with managerial and/or “people” skills that traditional students often have not had the opportunity to learn.

Mentoring was the second broad category discussed as being an area of concern for these novice teachers. It was obvious from journal entries and interviews that Judith and Kasey seemed more content in their placements by the end of January than did either Diana or Alex. The findings of this research study indicate that the primary difference between the two pairs of novice teachers revolved around the amount of

collegial support they received. Judith and Kasey both felt a part of their school community early on. Kasey was surrounded by caring and helpful teachers. Judith asked for specific help and then received it in abundance. On the other hand, Diana did not receive help from her colleagues unless she asked for it specifically. Meanwhile, Alex's assignment as a TAG teacher for three schools rather than as a classroom teacher in one specific school became a major hurdle for him to develop close relationships with other faculty.

The third broad concern revolved around expectations versus reality. All four novice teachers expressed frustration between where they saw themselves as teachers and where they wanted to be. Even though all the participants had worked in an elementary classroom for an entire year as interns, they still operated under preconceptions that they discovered were untrue or unrealistic, particularly the amount of paperwork involved and the expenditure of both time and energy that sometimes totally depleted these novice teachers. This directly impacted their assessments of themselves as teachers.

Question 4

When asked in what ways they learned to define themselves as teachers, all participants talked about students looking to them for answers and the responsibility they felt for meeting students' needs. All four novice teachers moved quickly through Borich and Fuller's teacher concerns for self, and focused on concerns of task and impact. They enjoyed when students, parents, and teachers liked them, and they worked hard to establish a consistent classroom management plan early in the year. However, their focus tended to be more on improving their teaching skills and

achieving greater content mastery (task) while also addressing how to meet students' needs, how to challenge unmotivated learners, and how to best prepare students for the next grade (impact).

Alex, Diana, Judith, and Kasey all expressed their continued desire to be in teaching; however, their levels of satisfaction and identification with teaching varied. How close a match the participants' teaching situations were to their perceived areas of ability and their likelihood of positively affecting their students were strong indicators of the participants' satisfaction.

Question 5

There are at least three major implications for teacher education emanating from this study. The first concerns where and in what grade levels interns are placed for long-term assignments. Borich (2004) states, "A teacher's experience with a specific grade level, curriculum, and type of learner has been more predictive of actual classroom performance than general biographical data . . . of a teacher's qualifications for a particular teaching assignment" (p. 5). This indicates that care should be taken in placing interns in long-term placements where they are most likely to observe and have the opportunity to practice skills and procedures that they will need no matter where their first "real" teaching assignments occur. The second addresses how we can better match mentoring teachers and schools with interns. Possible suggestions include establishing a Professional Development School partnership and researching "disposition of teaching" for both interns and mentoring teachers. The third major implication of this study looks at ways to communicate with both interns and school systems on novice teacher assimilation. This includes teaching interns to be proactive

as they move into their first jobs by asking questions and seeking help from appropriate sources. It also addresses the mentoring programs provided by school systems for novice teachers and how effective or well-planned they may be. Finally, this research suggests that teacher education programs in universities need to be involved in ongoing dialogue with teachers, principals, and school systems.

Suggestions for future research include conducting additional qualitative studies on novice teachers, defining “dispositions of teaching” for mentoring teachers, and putting into place mentoring programs for novice teachers that help ease the transition into full-time teaching. Only through the active participation of all parties can we effectively initiate and encourage change in how we educate and acclimate novice teachers in teaching. Perhaps then we will have a real impact on training and retaining novice teachers in our public schools.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alleksaht-Snider, M. (1995). Educational renewal in an alternative teacher education program: Evolution of a school-university partnership. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 11, 5*, 519-530.

Anderson, R., Armbruster, B. & Roe, M. (1990). Improving the education of reading teachers. *Daedalus, 119*, 187-209.

Angelle, P. S. (2002). Beginning teachers take flight: A qualitative study of socialization. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (Austin, TX, February 14-16, 2002).

Archer, J. (Aug. 6, 1997). Teacher corps' tough regimen tasks recruits. *Education Week on the Web* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/vol-16/41tfa.h16>

Bogdon, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education*, 2nd edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Borich, B. (2004). *Effective teaching methods*, 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Calderhead, J. Y. & Shorrock, S. B. (1997). *Understanding teacher education: Case studies in the professional development of beginning teachers*. London: Falmer Press.

Carter, G. (2002). Content knowledge without pedagogy shortchanges student learning. *ASCD* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.ascd.org/educationnews/speech/ConcernsonTeacherQualityReport.html>.

Chase, B. & Gross, M. L. (Nov. 15, 1999). Are America's teachers well-qualified to teach our children? *Insight on the News, 15, 42*, 40-43.

Combs, A. W. (1965). *The professional education of teachers*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Craig, M., Bright, R., & Smith, S. (1994). Preservice teachers' reactions to an interactive constructive approach to English language arts coursework. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 42, 96-103.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 6-13.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). America's future: Educating teachers. *The Education Digest*, 64, 9, 18-23.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Educational Leadership*, 55, 5, 6-11.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). What matters most: 21st-century teaching. *The Education Digest*, 63, 3, 4-9.

Darling-Hammond, L., Griffin, G. A., & Wise, A. E. (1992). *Excellence in teacher education: Helping teachers develop learner-centered schools*. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

Dill, V. S. , Hayes, M. J., & Johnson, D. S. (1999). Finding teachers with mature life experiences. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 36, 1, 12-15.

Dill, V. S. & Stafford, D. (1996). *Alternative teacher certification: History, handbook & how-to*. Houston, TX: The Haberman Educational Foundation.

Dyhouse, T. (1999). DoE to administer troops-to-teachers. VFW, *Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine*, 87, 1, 11-.

- Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L. & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Faulkner, G. (1992). In search of alternatives in teacher education. Paper presented at the Annual International Seminar of Teacher Education, Armidale, Australia. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 343 868)
- Featherstone, H. (1993). Learning from the first years of classroom teaching: The journey in, the journey out. *Teachers College Record*, 95, 1, 93-113.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2003). What new teachers need to learn. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 25-19.
- Franzak, J. K. (2002). Developing a teacher identity: The impact of Critical Friends Practice on the student teacher. *English Education*, 34, 4, 258-280.
- Fuller, F. (1969). Concerns of teachers: A developmental conceptualization. *American Educational Research Journal*, 6, 207-226.
- From troops to teachers. (1998). *Techniques*, 73, 2, 32-.
- Glasser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*, 2nd edition. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Goetz, J. P. & LeCompte, M. D. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, Inc.
- Goodlad, J. I. (1994). *Educational renewal*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

- Goodnough, A. (2000). A novice's hard lesson: Bringing order to a class. *The New York Times*, Sept. 28, 2000.
- Gratch, A. (1998). Beginning teacher and mentor relationships. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49, 3, 220-227.
- Gursky, D. (2001). Career changers find teaching tougher than it looks. *American Teacher*, 85, 8.
- Hatch, J. A. (1999). What preservice teachers can learn from studies of teachers' work. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15, 229-242.
- Heck, S. F. & Williams, C. R. (1984). *The complex roles of the teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hewitt, B. & Siew, W. (Nov. 23, 1998). In the trenches. *People Weekly*, 50, 19, 143-144.
- Holt-Reynolds, D. (1991). Practicing what we teach (Research Report 91-5). National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI (ED 337 460).
- Howey, K. R. & Gardner, W. E. (1983). *The education of teachers: A look ahead*. New York: Longman Inc.
- Huber, J. & Whelan, K. (1999). A marginal story as a place of possibility: Negotiating self on the professional knowledge landscape. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15, 381-396.
- Ingersoll, R. M. & Smith, T. M. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 30-33.

- Jersild, A. T. (1955). *When teachers face themselves*. New York: Teachers College.
- Jersild, A. T. (1952). *In search of self*. New York: Teachers College.
- Jersild, A. T., Lazar, E. A., & Brodtkin, A. M. (1962). *The meaning of psychotherapy in the teacher's life and work*. New York: Bureau of Publications Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Johnson, S. M. & Birkeland, S. E. (2003). The schools that teachers choose. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 20-24.
- Jones-Totten, Y. (2003). What I learned my first year. *Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE): New Teacher Guide*, Fall 2003, 3-4.
- Kelchtermans, G. & Ballet, K. (2002). The micropolitics of teacher induction: A narrative-biographical study on teacher socialisation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 1, 105-120.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2004). The knowledges of teacher education: Developing a critical complex epistemology. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 31, 1, 49-66.
- Kopp, W. (June 21, 2000). Ten years of Teach for America. *Education Week on the Web* [On-line]. Available:
http://www.edweek.org/ew/ew_printstory.cfm?slug=41kopp.h19
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Lindsey, J. (2004). Culture's role in teacher identity: Prompting teachers to explore their cultural background. *Action in Teacher Education*, 25, 4, 9-13.
- Little, M. E. & Robinson, S. M. (1997). Renovating and refurbishing the field experience structures for novice teachers. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 30, 4, 433-.
- Littleton, M. & Holcomb, J. (1994). New routes to the classroom. *American School Board Journal*, 181, 5, 37-39.
- Lortie, D. C. (2002). *Schoolteacher*, 2nd edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lucas, C. A. (1999). Developing competent practitioners. *Educational Leadership*, 56, 8, 45-48.
- Lucas, C. J. (1997). *Teacher education in America*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Marcia, J. E., Matteson, D. R., Orlofsky, J. L., Waterman, A. S., & Archer, S. L. (1993). *Ego identity: A handbook for psychosocial research*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Megay-Nespoli, K. (2001). Beliefs and attitudes of novice teachers regarding instruction of academically talented learners. *Roeper Review*, 23, 3, 178-182.
- Merseth, K. K. (1992). First aid for first-year teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73, 9, 678-.
- McGarty, C., Haslam, S. A., Hutchinson, K. J. & Turner, J. C. (1994). The effects of salient group memberships on persuasion. *Small Group Research*, 25, 267-293.

Miller, J. W., McKenna, M. C. & McKenna, B. A. (1998). A comparison of alternatively and traditionally prepared teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49, 3, 167-176.

Million, S. K. & Vare, J. W. (1997). The collaborative school. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78, 9, 710-.

Moir, E. & Bloom, G. (2003). Fostering leadership through mentoring. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 58-60.

National Commission on teaching and America's future. (1996). *What matters most: Teaching for America's future*, 1st edition. New York: Teachers College.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2002). *NCATE Unit Standards* [On-line]. Available: http://www.ncate.org/2000/unit_stnds_2002.pdf

Nieto, S. M. (2003). What keeps teachers going? *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 15-18.

Ogden, L. (1999). Understanding teacher education: Case studies in the professional development of beginning teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 25, 1, 77-78.

Olson, L. (2000). Taking a different road to teaching. *Education Week on the Web* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.edweek.org/sreports/qc00/templates/article.cfm?slug=different.htm>

perception. *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*. Retrieved September 14, 2004, from Encyclopaedia Britannica Premium Service. <http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article?tocid=9374885>

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). "Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis." In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.). *Life history and narrative*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.

Popkewitz, T. S. (1998). *Struggling for the soul: The politics of schooling and the construction of the teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pultorak, E. G. (1996). Following the developmental process of reflection in novice teachers: Three years of investigation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 47, 4, 283-.

Renard, L. (2003). Setting new teachers up for failure . . . or success. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 62-64.

Roberts, L. (2000). Shifting identities: An investigation into student and novice teachers' evolving professional identity. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 26, 3, 185-

. Rodriguez, Y. G. & Sjostrom, B. R. (1998). Critical reflection for professional development: A comparative study of nontraditional adult and traditional student teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49, 3, 177-186.

Ross, D. L. (2002). Cooperating teachers facilitating reflective practice for student teachers in a professional development school. *Education*, 122, 4, 682-687.

Rozycki, E. G. (1999). The dynamics of teacher certification: Mythologies of competition. *Educational Horizons*, 78, 1, 11-13.

Rx for teacher isolation: The professional development school. (2000). *NEA Today*, Mar 2000.

Santrock, J. W. (2004). *Educational Psychology*, 2nd edition. Boston: McGraw Hill.

- Sargent, B. (2003). Finding good teachers—and keeping them. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 44-47.
- Spring, J. (1994). *American education*, 6th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- Staton, A. Q. & Hunt, S. L. (1992). Teacher socialization: Review and conceptualization. *Communication Education*, 41.
- Table 155—Ages for compulsory school attendance, special education services for students, policies for year-round schools and kindergarten programs, by state: 1997 and 1995. (May 1997). *The Eighteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1996*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups*. London: Academic Press, Inc.
- Troops-to-teachers a success. (1998). *VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine*, 86, 4, 6.
- Troops-to-teachers bill proposed. (1999). *VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine*, 86, 8, 8.
- Turley, S. & Nakai, K. (2000). Two routes to certification: What do student teachers think? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51, 2, 122-134.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience*. USA: State University of New York Press.
- Vinz, R. (1996). *Composing a teaching life*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Weber, S. & Mitchell, C. (1996). Drawing ourselves into teaching: Studying the images that shape and distort teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 12, 3, 303-313.

Weissenfels, H. (1991). Beginning teacher internship programs: What are the basics? *National Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP Bulletin*. Mar. 1991.

White, C. S. (1997). Changes in roles and relationships in a school-university partnership. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24, 1, 53-66.

White, J. J. "War stories: Invitations to reflect on practice." (1991). In B. R. Tabachnick & K. Zeichner, (Eds.). *Issues and practices in inquiry-oriented teacher education*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.

Wilgoren, J. (Nov. 12, 2000). Wendy Kopp, leader of Teach for America. *The New York Times on the Web*.

Williams, J. S. (2003). Why great teachers stay. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 71-74.

Williams, J. & Williamson, K. M. (1996). University support for novice teachers: Successes, struggles and limitations. *Education*, 116, 3, 336-.

Wolcott, H. (1995). *The art of fieldwork*. Walnut Creek, CA: Sage Publications.

Woolfolk, A. (2001). *Educational psychology*, 8th edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Wortham, S. C. (2002). *Early childhood curriculum*, 3rd edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Zimmerman, S. (2003). Stubbornness and the kindness of strangers. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 8, 76-77.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROMPTS

Choosing Teaching as a Career

1. What made you decide that you wanted to become a teacher?
2. What do you feel you brought to teaching from your past experiences and/or academic background?
3. We have all been students, so we all have initial perceptions about what it is to be a teacher. What were some of your initial perceptions about teaching? Have these changed or remained the same?

Role of Intern as Student

1. What were your expectations of the program? How do these compare with what you have experienced in the program?
2. What specific experiences helped you most during the course of this program?
3. What did you think about the yearlong internship? What changes would you make?
4. Tell me about your mentoring teacher. How did he or she help you? What suggestions would you make to improve this part of the program?

Role of Intern as Teacher

1. What is the hardest part of teaching for you? The easiest?
2. What is the most joyful or rewarding?
3. Describe your best day so far in teaching. Describe your worst day.
4. Describe a time you feel like you really connected with a child.
5. Describe your most difficult discipline situation.
6. Do you have any plans for what else you want to learn about teaching? How do you plan to go about doing this?
7. What kinds of responses from others help you most as a teacher?

8. At what point did you define yourself as a teacher rather than a student or even an intern?
9. Describe your first day/week of school.
10. What could have been done differently to better equip you to be a teacher?
11. What could be done at any level (family, coworkers, students, parents, administrators, yourself) to help this year be more successful?

APPENDIX B

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF PARTICIPANTS

Alex, age 30, entered teaching after completing his degree in architecture. By the third year of his undergraduate program, he was sensing that this was not something he was going to do for the rest of his life. He “didn’t really enjoy it.” Upon graduation, he worked with an architectural firm on projects that ranged from HUD funded apartments to million dollar mansions. Struggling with the contradiction between those two extremes, he left his architectural job and became an assistant coffee shop manager. In his spare time, he became involved with the Architects in Schools Program where “architects actually go into schools and do programs with students about . . . the big environment.” After working as project manager for a national bookstore franchise that involved constant travel that “wasn’t healthy living,” he decided to go back to school. Even then, he wasn’t sure that elementary school teaching was what he wanted until he completed an independent project that involved working with students in an inner-city school for one semester. At that point, he applied for acceptance into a fifteen-month program for a master’s degree in elementary education. (This program will henceforth be called the Second Career Alternative Program.)

Diana, age 43, received her undergraduate degree in psychology in 1979. She has worked as a computer operator for the State and as a technical support person for a computer store. After her children were born, (two boys—now ages 12 and 14), she started helping in a preschool part-time. She later became the financial director for a non-profit day care center. It was during these experiences in preschool and day care

that she “learned that I loved the kids and liked working with them . . . I just enjoyed watching them learn and seeing them interact with one another and I just knew that was something I wanted to do. I knew I didn’t want to sit behind a computer for the rest of my life.” She also decided to pursue teaching through the Second Career Alternative Program.

Judith, age 29, received her undergraduate degree in social work. Upon graduation, she accepted a position in a nursing home because of her desire to work with the elderly. Finding that not really to her liking, she became a case manager for the severely persistently mentally ill. That was when she discovered her love for teaching as she “did daily things with them, how they use the phone and how they cook food.” Still, she missed working with kids as she had done during summer vacations while in college. She also discovered that working with mentally ill patients involved “dealing with their problems a whole lot more than you’re dealing with the kids.” It was then that she learned about the Second Career Alternative Program, applied, and was accepted.

Kasey, age 25, began her college studies in business. When she didn’t like that, she turned to sociology and social work. In her final semester before college graduation, she worked with juveniles. She states, “They were teenagers . . . it was very frustrating for me—I felt like at that age there was not much I could do. They were very depressed and very down. They didn’t think I could help.” Upon learning about the Second Career Alternative Program, she decided to apply because “I always knew I wanted to work with children, I just didn’t know how.” When her application arrived

too late for acceptance that summer, she substitute taught for a year “to make sure that’s what I wanted to do, and I loved it.”

APPENDIX C

JOURNAL ENTRIES AND INTERVIEW DATES

J=Journal entry

I=Interview

Week of	Alex	Diana	Judith	Kasey
July 23- July 29		I-#1		
July 30- Aug. 5				
Aug. 6- Aug. 12	I-#1		I-#1	I-#1
Aug. 13- Aug. 19	J-#1		J-#1-5	J-#1, 2
Aug. 20- Aug. 26	J-#2, 3		J-#6-8	J-#3, 4
Aug. 27- Sept. 1	J-#4, 5		J-#9-12	J-#5, 6
Sept. 2- Sept. 8	J-#6		J-#13, 14	J-#7, 8
Sept. 9- Sept. 15	J-#7, 8		J-#15, 16	J-#9, 10
Sept. 16- Sept. 22	J-#9		J-#17, 18	J-#11, 12
Sept. 23- Sept. 29	J-#10,11		J-#19	J-#13, 14
Sept. 30- Oct. 6	J-#12 I-#2	I-#2	J-#20	J-#15, 16
Oct. 7- Oct. 13	J-#13		J-#21, 22 I-#2	I-#2
Oct. 14- Oct. 20	J-#14		J-#23, 24	J-#17-19

	Alex	Diana	Judith	Kasey
Oct. 21- Oct. 27	J-#15		J-#25, 26	J-#20
Oct. 28- Nov. 3	J-#16		J-#27, 28	J-#21
Nov. 4- Nov. 10	J-#17		J-#29, 30	J-#22
Nov. 11- Nov. 17	J-#18		J-#31, 32	J-#23
Nov. 18- Nov. 24	J-#19		J-#33	J-#24
Nov. 25- Dec. 1	J-#20		J-#34, 35	J-#25
Dec. 2- Dec. 8	J-#21		J-#36, 37	J-#26
Dec. 9- Dec. 15	J-#22		J-#38, 39	J-#27
Dec. 16- Dec. 22	J-#23		J-#40	J-#28, 29
Dec. 23- Dec. 29				
Dec. 30- Jan. 5			J-#41	J-#30
Jan. 6- Jan. 12			J-#42	J-#31
Jan. 13- Jan. 19			J-#44, 45	J-#32
Jan. 20- Jan. 26		I-#3	I-#3	I-#3
Jan. 27- Feb.2	I-#3			

APPENDIX D

RAW DATA FROM TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

Words shown in italics indicate where I highlighted information. I then made notes at the side or with post-its to identify possible categories for the data.

Kasey – Second Interview 10/9/00

Q. Lucy Maples

A. Kasey

Q. Just tell me – tell me about your day.

A. It was terrible. Oh, my evaluation was good. It was at 8:30, first thing this morning. I did a spelling lesson and some teachers that I work with went to a spelling workshop and I saw a new method they use for spelling and it's word sorts. They have the words on a sheet of paper and they cut the words apart and you can have them – we're working on clusters so I could have them – I had them sort them by categories – an L cluster, an R cluster. I had a sentence and they had to show me what word would fit in the sentence. Then we alphabetized the words. They use the word in a sentence so I knew they knew how to use it in context. Then we created – it's just a folder with each letter of the alphabet on a page and they just wrote the word - that's their spelling dictionary - and they wrote each word under the correct letter of the alphabet. So it went really good. The kids were wonderful for the lesson and the principal said I did a good job but I'm going to do my reflecting tonight and meet with her tomorrow. So I felt great about my evaluation.

Q. Good.

A. It was just everything after that.

Q. That's too bad. *So you had an irate parent.*

A. Oh yes. Her - She's an only child, a little girl. Straight A student, I mean, I couldn't ask for a better student, work wise. But she's the only one I have in class that talks back and argues over everything. She had gotten upset Friday because one of her - another child in the class said that she had gotten mud all over her pants - that she had wiped mud all over her pants. I asked her about it and she began screaming at me, "I did not do it. I don't like being lied about." Just screaming. So I made them both go sit down, told them to calm down. And she started to cry and she quit crying and when they went to P.E. I could tell she was still very mad, you know, she was really upset about it. And I said, "K-----, you need to calm down." Well, she starts screaming again. I said, okay we need to talk. I almost took her to the office but it was almost - maybe 30 minutes before school got out so I thought, well I'll just handle it. So me and my teaching assistant - the rest of the kids left, they went out of the room - and she screamed so loud that she scared the rest of the kids in class. And they were like, "Ahh!" You know, they couldn't understand it. So she continued to yell again for the third time after we were alone. She said she didn't like being yelled at, she didn't like being told what to do. I was not going to tell her what to do. She wanted to go home and she wanted to go home now and just on and on and on and on.

Q. This is what grade?

A. The second.

Q. Goodness.

A. A little girl. Straight A student. *So anyway, I wrote her mom a note and told her that I'd like to have a conference, but she was a real good student, but she had a problem with respect in the classroom and not really listening and following directions.* So her mother showed up. I thought her mother would come this morning and I just did not want that, for my evaluation. She had actually called me this weekend but I wasn't home and I didn't call back 'cause I didn't want to do it over the phone. And she called my teaching assistant but she wasn't home either. So I knew she wanted to talk. She showed up about 25 minutes before lunch and came into my classroom and sat down at the table and I said, okay she wants to have it now. This is the third time she's came into my classroom and interrupted class and just sat and waited. So I got the kids started on something and I said, "Do you want to talk?" and she said, "Yes. I'm very upset." So, she told me that K---- has said I had gotten her in trouble and this little girl had told lies on her and that she thought I was treating K---- unfair and K----- came home crying everyday. And I said, "I can't understand that." She had an excuse for everything. *She never said anything about her yelling at me, anything about her acting the way she did. And I said, "Well, this is my classroom. You're not in here. You don't know what happened. I would appreciate it if you ask me to hear both sides of the story before you automatically assume, you know, everything she is telling you is correct."* I said, "Because she has been known to tell stories." And she said, "I know she has." But she said that she didn't appreciate the way I talked to her child and -

but she's taken psychology. I said, "Well I have a degree in psychology and education and this is my classroom and as long as she's in here, she'll follow my rules." And I said, "If you want to talk to the principal, you're more than welcome." And so she left. She was very upset and I was upset. I went and talked to the vice-principal and the principal and they said that she did that in kindergarten and in first grade. Same thing. And the parent was in all the time, causing trouble for the teacher. So I have that to look forward to. They said that I did the right thing, you know, that *they were behind me no matter what*; but the next time she came in just to say, "I can't talk right now. You can either wait in the office for me or wait – or eat lunch with your daughter in the cafeteria, but right now I can't talk." And *they said not to talk alone*, to make sure one of the principals – vice principals was there because she has a history of this, evidently. So that was my day. And I'm sick. I have a sinus infection. Not a good day. I knew it would come. I've been having too good – my class is too good and everybody was getting along too well, so I knew it was going to come. I knew I'd have a bad day. Friday and today were probably the worst days I've had all year.

Q. So tell me how the year began and you can stop and chew your –

A. So nervous the first morning. I cried the night before.

Q. I told you I always did that.

A. And I thought about you and I thought, "Lucy did this. It's okay." My boyfriend, bless his heart, I mean, [SCA] was bad enough on him and then I had to start this, and he was like, "Oh my gosh." But he helped me a lot and he said,

“these kids, they never had a second grade teacher and they’re going to look up to you and you’re going to do good, and all this stuff.” But I’ve got 11 girls and seven boys. All competitive but, I mean, completely different. *I have 10 on free or reduced lunch and one special ed – two special ed children, two boys.* Most of the morning, they’re gone so I don’t see them a lot, but *one has an attendant.* She helps me a lot. Little girls, they love to talk. They tell me everything and then some. The first day went good. I had a poster that I had made during my internship at F----- – just all about me and so I shared that with them and then they did something and told about them. It went by so fast, the first day, and it was over and I was exhausted. I thought, “Oh god. I have to do this all week.” But it went good and I have a good class. There are six second-grade classes. And I don’t think I necessarily have the best kids but I think they’re the best class because - *I don’t think I’m very hard on them but I’m strict and I discipline.* I’ve had teachers compliment me on my class – just walking down the hall or a principal saying, you know, my class is good in lunch and that makes me feel good.

Q. Sure.

A. So it’s been wonderful. I mean, my kids are good. They follow directions good. *If we’re having a bad day I’ll say, “Stop.” And we’ll get out our rules and we’ll go over our rules.* They’re great about raising their hand or asking permission before they get up or anything like that. So I really have, I mean, it started out great. I’m still tired every day *but I’ve got a teacher’s assistant in the mornings and then I’ve got an attendant in the classroom with the special ed kid, so I’ve*

got help. I mean, they help me grade papers and put up bulletin boards and run off copies, so that helps a lot.

Q. Yeah, sounds like it.

A. A lot. And it's been good so far.

Q. Good. I'm glad have that.

A. Yes. Thank you.

Q. What has been your best experience?

A. My birthday. It was on a Friday – September 8th – and the attendant had told them it was going to be my birthday. I walked in and they sang Happy Birthday to me. First thing they did was sing Happy Birthday to me and it was just so sweet. They had gotten me presents and made me cards and gave me flowers and one gave me a magnet about a good teacher. I had made cupcakes for them and it was just a good day. The whole day was good. I think they knew I was in a good mood, so they were in a good mood. I wrote about it – they sang Happy Birthday about five times. Every time I would come back from leaving, I would walk in the room and they would start singing it again. I thought, “Okay. That's enough.” But they did it about five times that day. And I guess they just – I mean, I was in a good mood and it was just – the day went by so well *and I thought, “I need to be in a better mood because when I'm in a good mood, they're in a good mood.”* It was just a really good day. Then we had the cupcakes and chips – they loved that of course. That was a good day. It made me feel good because they had given me the cards and picked flowers for me and that made it special. My first one, you know.

Q. Well now, I'm guessing that today and, you said, Friday were probably your worst days. What's been your hardest thing to do?

A. *Hardest thing to do for me is dealing with parents.* It really is. The first two days of school, I had five parents show up before school was over, wanting to talk. First two days of school. I thought, "Oh my goodness. How am I going to stop this?" And I mean, they would just come in. They wouldn't check in the office; they would just walk straight in and come in my room and want to talk then and there and I thought, "I can't handle this." You know, and one was about – one of their necklaces got ripped off and he had a gold chain. Second grade. Had two gold chains and they got ripped off his neck. I don't know how. And she was afraid that another child had ripped it off his neck. I still don't know what happened. That was one. Another one – the hardest situation that I've had to deal with, other than this one is, I have a little girl and her mother is manic-depressive and her father is, we don't know. Her grandmother is raising her and her brother and her father decided to show up – I guess it was the first week of school – and take them out of school. And enroll them in O-----. She hadn't seen him since Easter and he just came. The court gave him custody and that was hard because she had no idea what was going on. She had no idea anyone was coming to get her. He just showed up out of the blue. She had to get her stuff—all of her things and just leave. She had no idea why—or who was going to come get her—and they said—the guidance counselor said, "Well, your Dad's here." And she said, "Well, which one?" And I thought "Wow, how awful," and I cried and her grandmother came and her grandmother cried and

then—I mean, this is the first week of school and I was so overwhelmed I thought, “Oh my goodness. How am I going to deal with this?” And her grandmother said, “She’ll be back. I’m going to go to court tomorrow and she’s going to come back.” And she was back two days later.

Q. Really?

A. Yes. And she’s still there. *She only has certain people that can pick her up, so I have to be very careful.* I have to walk her outside and make sure her grandmother, or an aunt, or a cousin – no one else can come get her. Because her real father and her real mother have been known to just take them and just leave for days and weeks at a time. So that’s been real hard. She’s told me things – she’s seven and she’s told me stories about having to take care of her brother and he’s five. Having to feed him and cook supper and just terrible stories and that’s been real hard to deal with and to deal with the grandmother and not knowing what to do and how to help. But the parents are very hard to deal with. I didn’t imagine it because as an intern, you don’t deal with them as much as you do and now it’s just me. And I sat in on parent conferences but now it is just me. *They’re second graders but their parents are so overbearing and they want everything to be perfect and they believe everything their – I mean, ridiculous things – their child tells them and they believe it. And I think, “Okay. Just stop and think about this. Does it make sense?”* And they’re like, “Well, no.” But that’s been the hardest. *I can deal with the kids much better than I can the parents. Definitely.*

Q. Is there anything that you think the program could have done to make handling parents easier – or working with parents easier?

A. I wish they had. I don't necessarily know what specifically they could do. But it was a shock for me to have these parents come in at 2:30 and want to talk. I didn't know how to handle it. And I'm still working on that. Like today, she came in while I was teaching and it's hard for me to be blunt and say, "You're going to have to leave." I know I have to do that and I know I'm going to have to learn how. That's hard for me because I try to be polite. I know they're there for a reason, but then again, *I consider myself a professional and this is my time with their kids and I think they should respect that.*

Q. And you can be blunt but say it in a nice way.

A. Right.

Q. You can say, "Thank you for coming but I'm busy right now with this student. And if you'll go to the office and set up a time, you know, then I'll be happy to meet with you at that time when the students are not in the classroom."

A. I have to learn how to do that.

Q. Well, it's not an easy something to do.

A. Right. And when it happens and I don't do it, as soon as they leave I thought, "Why didn't I just say, 'You're going to have to wait.'"

And I even wrote after the first week or two when all the parents came in, and I meant to bring it and I didn't. I wrote a newsletter, and in that newsletter I put, "Now I'm a professional teacher and I'm paid to work with your children from these hours to these hours, and I would really appreciate it if you didn't interrupt the classroom

atmosphere during this time.” Because some kids do get upset when they see their parents come in and then leave. The second graders are still little. And I put that if they need to see me that they can reach me at the school or they could send in a note and I would be glad to set up a conference, and that worked for quite a while. And it stopped most of it – there are just two or three. They’re just –

Q. Well, there are always two or three who think that the rules don’t apply to them.

A. Yes. I met her today.

Q. It sounds like you had a great evaluation. You know, your lesson. What are some things that you have felt really good about with your teaching in the classroom?

A. I think using – *I think the multi-age classrooms that I was in helped me a lot because at F-----, they did a lot of thematic teaching.* I do some of that where I’m at. Not a lot. But *I found that it works better for me when we’re reading a story to tie things with that. I think that works. It makes the day go smoother and they get it more when it’s tied all together.* I think – I’ve been comfortable doing that and they seem to like that. So that’s helped a lot. I have a title teacher that comes in for reading and helps me. She’s wonderful. She’s helped – just some extra things that go along with the story, maybe that deals with math or with writing, and we’ve been doing that and that’s worked really well.

APPENDIX E

CATEGORIZING RAW DATA

Possible themes:

Overwhelm:

- Time—how little we have for . . .
- Volume of work—how much we have to decide and cover
- Politics—knowing what to say or NOT to whom and staying out of lounge lizard talk
- Personal energy—I’m exhausted; I went home and cried; I’m hoarse all the time; I go home and crash for 2-3 hours and then get started on something else

Idealization of teaching and teachers:

- Judith—teachers elevated to this moral level
- Frustration at falling short of perfection
- Reassured by coworkers that experienced teachers aren’t perfect either

Organization:

- Strove for it, recognized relationship between how organized a lesson is and how well it goes with students
- Organization of school administrators affected job satisfaction
 - Alex—inaction of requests for evaluation of student
 - Kasey—no curriculum guide still at end of October

Love of students

Overbearing parents

Feedback

- How to fairly give feedback to students (and turn loose of idea that every paper must be graded and recorded every day)
- Specific feedback on own methods and effectiveness

Expectations

- Wanted fellow teachers to confirm if on target with expectations and discipline
- Clear and consistent expectations to students and parents

Professionalism and respect

- “It’s MY class; these are MY kids”
- Things found as a “joy”—having a kid they didn’t know in another grade call them by name, more experienced teachers asking a newbie to share a lesson or self-evaluation document to help them

Alex:

- Time concern—time with kids (has time for planning, unlike others)
- Wants advice/feedback
- Important to balance school/rest of life (not total immersion with no other Activities)
- Administrative aspects draining
- Does not feel good rapport/community with other teachers
- Joy at how much children learned
- Seeing children as *individuals*, not homogenous group
- “I want to make a difference.”
- Carrots for incentive, not punishment
- Always SAW teachers as altruistic
- Organization important
- Must want what’s best for child even if dislike child
- Joy of child accomplishing something extraordinary
- Wants to have impact on children
- Seeing *individuals* is important
- Has excess planning time and not much paperwork!!
- Wants to “meet kids’ needs”
- Behavior problems are kids that don’t understand and are frustrated
- Politics and competitive teachers

Diana:

- Likes ALL kids in class
- Has to ASK other teachers for help—specifically
- Lack of teacher volunteer help
- Lack of time to cover “optionals” (science, social studies) because must cover subjects for T-CAP
- Lack of parent volunteer help
- Wanting best for child’s self-esteem
- Positive when kids have enjoyed the day
- Did not expect to “mother” kids
- Lack of parent involvement/time for their kids
- PLANNING TIME—big issue
- Responsibility as teacher
- Being organized
- Concern about keeping grades and if doing it correctly
- Planning and preparation time too much!!
- Health issues (lice)
- Important to use new ideas and methods—creative teaching
- Learned to ASK for help
- Don’t have to LIKE specific kid to TEACH kid
- Discipline not a problem
- Problem grading all papers (time)
- Concerned about planning for all subjects and transitioning between subjects

Judith:

- Paperwork/report card scheduling
- Happy with student successes
- TIME issue—completing everything on schedule
- Seeing kids as individuals is important
- Had though all teachers would be considerate, kind, concerned (Let down).
- Organization important
- Easy to be with kids
- Having to juggle many lessons and classes to meet all kids' needs
- Using games rather than threats
- PARENT problems—interrupting class
- Other teachers helpful
- TIME issue
- Important to work with other teachers
- Loves kids to be excited
- Transitioning is important
- Importance of planning
- Problem: lack of materials for classroom (trade books)
- Likes autonomy (“MY class”)
- “Loves” kids
- Survival
- Wants best for kids
- Behavior management not a problem (Rules stated and enforced)
- Make kids accountable
- See “total” person
- Lots of teacher support from “Bob”

Kasey:

- Papers stacking up
- TIME for all the work
- Kids' progress makes her happy
- Survival
- Behavior management not a problem (Rules stated and enforced)
- PARENTS BIG PROBLEM (No responsibility/ blame teacher)
- Concern for students
- Make kids accountable or miss positive times
- Proud of kids' accomplishments
- Lots of support from fellow teachers
- Setting limits to work hours
- “My” room—autonomy
- Frustration with focus on TESTING more than anything else
- Sees competition among other teachers but not her grade level
- Overwhelmed at first, but other teachers helped
- One teacher's attitude not helpful

APPENDIX F

FORM B

IRB #: 5852B

Approval Date: 3/14/2000

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

A. Principal Investigator

Ms. Lucy Maples, doctoral student in Theory and Practice in Teacher Education
148 Alger Road
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
(865) 483-0140
imaples2@utk.edu

B. Faculty Advisor

Dr. Lester Knight, Department Head
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education
139 Claxton Addition
974-7931, 974-3034 (secretary)
lknight@utk.edu

C. Project Status

Dissertation

D. Title of Project

Perceptions of Interns in the Elementary Lyndhurst Program

E. Starting Date

Upon IRB Approval

F. Estimated Completion Date

Spring 2001

G. External Funding

N/A

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to investigate, understand, and describe learning, teaching, and learning to teach in the context of the perceptions of interns who are currently a part of the Elementary Lyndhurst Program. The research will particularly focus upon the process of becoming a teacher and the process of perceiving oneself as a teacher.

Specific questions to be pursued might include, but not be limited to:

- Investigating the influence of University classes on interns' teaching,
- Investigating the intern/mentoring teacher relationships,
- Investigating teacher change and interns' identification as teachers,
- Understanding specific teaching practices, or

- Evaluating the ongoing teacher preparation programs built in to the Elementary Lyndhurst Program.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Participants in this research will be UTK interns currently enrolled in the Elementary Lyndhurst Program. Each participant will be graduating in August 2000 and beginning his or her first assignment as an elementary teacher immediately afterward.

The researcher, who supervised these interns during the 1999-2000 school year, has had the opportunity to develop relationships of trust with each participant. Four interns will participate in the study. Each of them has indicated an interest in the study. The investigator's relationship as supervisor of the interns will have ended before the research begins.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research methods will be naturalistic in design, including a series of one-hour interviews with participants (which will be audiotaped) and collections of artifacts related to teaching and/or archival materials occurring naturally at the school site. Participants will communicate with the investigator on a regular basis (at least once every two weeks) through email or phone conversations. Part of the purpose of this research is to encourage the participants to think reflectively upon their experiences as interns, and then as beginning teachers. At least one interview will be in a group format to encourage sharing of ideas about beginning teaching, its problems, and possible solutions. Because of the personal nature of sharing one's feelings and identities as teachers, groups will only be formed by mutual consent of all participants. Since participants have all known each other for over a year, each participant should have a sense of how comfortable and honest he or she can be in the company of the other participants. Data will be collected from August until December 2000. They will then be analyzed inductively to search for patterns and themes that help illuminate the questions being pursued. Final research reports will likely be narratives describing these patterns, and will be presented by the investigator to all participants involved for reflection and feedback.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

Establishing and maintaining trustworthiness is a major concern of the investigator. Confidentiality will be maintained, and pseudonyms will be used for individual participants as well as the school system. Tapes will be erased after they have been transcribed and copies of the transcriptions given to the participants for feedback. Even in transcripts, pseudonyms will be used so that the participants' identifications will be protected. Transcripts, consent forms, and fieldnotes will be stored in a locked storage area in Dr. Lester Knight's office in the Theory and Practice in Teacher Education Department for a period of three years, at which time they will be destroyed.

The investigator does not expect the participants to encounter any risks greater than those ordinarily encountered in the daily life of a teacher or other school staff member. The entire questioning procedure is not intended to be threatening in any way. In no way is it intended to be intrusive or abusive, or to cause the participants to question their abilities as teachers.

VI. BENEFITS VS. RISKS

Benefits to the participants include opportunities for reflection on their teaching, thinking, and decision making, and opportunities to contribute to the professional knowledge bases in teacher education and the content disciplines.

The anticipated risks accompanying participation include sharing one's personal feelings with the investigator and the other participants. Since the participants will have completed internships and evaluations before the beginning of the research project, there should be no concerns of power

regarding the investigator's position as supervisor during the previous school year. Each participant already has a written letter of recommendation in his or her portfolio from the investigator on performance during the internship.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM SUBJECTS

The investigator will meet personally with potential participants and explain the research work and share the consent form with them. After they have had an opportunity to read the consent form, participants will be asked if they have any questions before signing. The signed forms will be stored as stated in section V above, and copies will be returned to the participants to keep. It will be emphasized that participants may choose not to participate or may quit at any time during the research process without any negative results.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR

The principal investigator, Lucy Maples, is a doctoral candidate in the Theory and Practice in Teacher Education Department of the UTK College of Education. She has completed her research requirements in qualitative research for the Ed.D which have included all aspects of qualitative studies. She has worked under both Dr. Larry Coleman and Dr. Colleen Gilrane. She has also completed a qualitative research project under Dr. Amos Hatch as part of her Masters program. Ms. Maples is a licensed elementary school teacher and has taught elementary school children from preschool through sixth grade. She has also taught freshman courses at Roane State Community College and is currently teaching a graduate course at U-T. She is also employed as a graduate assistant for the Elementary Lyndhurst Program as a supervisor of interns in their school assignments.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO SUPPORT THE RESEARCH

Interviews will be conducted at the College of Education. Recording and transcribing equipment belonging to the investigator will be used to support this research, and will be stored and locked in a secure place during the research.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the principal investigator subscribes to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The principal investigator further agrees that:

- a. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.
- b. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to the Compliance Section.
- c. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.
- d. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

XI. SIGNATURES

Lucile F. Maples 7/17/2000
Principal Investigator

Lester Knight 7/17/2000
Faculty Advisor

XII. DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as :

OR ☒ Expedited Review – Category(ies): 6, 7
 ☐ Full IRB Review

Thomas N. Turner 7/17/2000
Chair, DRC

Lester Knight 7/20/2000
Department Leader

(Original signatures are on file with Compliance Office.)

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Perceptions of Interns in the Elementary Lyndhurst Program

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study on your perceptions of your experiences in the Elementary Lyndhurst Program. The purpose of this study is to better understand the process of becoming a teacher and how you begin to perceive yourself as a teacher. The study will be based upon your reflections of the past year and your experiences in the first semester of teaching after graduation from the Lyndhurst Program.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Your participation will extend across six months and will include a series of taped interviews. The first interview will be conducted before you begin your first teaching position. Additional communication with me will occur at least once every two weeks by email or phone conversations. One of the interviews will be in a group format if all the participants are comfortable and in agreement with that format. The final interview will occur approximately 12 weeks into your first year of teaching. Each interview will take one hour. It will be taped and transcribed. You will then be shown the transcriptions. There may be corrections or clarifications that you want to make to the transcription. I value that input as well as the interviews.

RISKS

The risks to you include that you will be sharing with me and the other participants your personal experiences and feelings about teaching. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time.

BENEFITS

There may be benefits to you because of the process of reflecting on your education and teaching experiences of the past year.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information received from the interviews will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used instead of real names so no intern or school can be identified. Data will be stored in the office of Dr. Lester Knight of the Theory and Practice in Teacher Education in the College of Education. No persons other than myself will see original data unless you give permission in writing to do otherwise. This information will not be shared with anyone connected with the Elementary Lyndhurst Program until after Summer term 2000 when you will have graduated.

PARTICIPANT'S INITIALS _____

PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

Perceptions of Interns in the Elementary Lyndhurst Program

I understand that the purpose of this study is to learn about the nature of the internship experience in the Elementary Lyndhurst Program and my first semester of teaching. I also understand that my participation involves being interviewed by the principal investigator, Lucy Maples, on two separate occasions. Each interview will take one hour. In addition, I will communicate by email or phone conversation with Lucy Maples once every two weeks. I will also participate in one group interview along with one or more of the other participants of the study.

I understand that all of my responses and actions will be held in confidence by the investigator, with pseudonyms used instead of real names to identify me or my school. Storage of this consent form and notes from interviews will be locked in the office of Dr. Lester Knight of the Theory and Practice in Teacher Education Department of the College of Education for three years past the completion of this study.

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw from participation at any time and/or refuse to answer any question without incurring penalty. The risks involved are that I may be sharing personal feelings and experiences about my own teaching. The benefits to me may be in the process of reflection and responding to the ongoing research and may also be in the knowledge gained from the project's findings.

I understand that I may contact the investigator, Lucy Maples, at any time if I have further questions about the project or my participation in it.

Name _____

Signature _____

(Date)

Contact information:

Lucy Maples
148 Alger Rd.
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
(865) 483-0140
lmaples2@utk.edu

VITA

Lucy Maples grew up in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. After three years of high school, she began attending the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga as an early admission candidate to college. She later transferred to U-T Knoxville where she was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics Education. She also holds a Master of Science degree in Curriculum and Instruction and is currently completing her Doctor of Education degree in Teacher Education from the University of Tennessee.

Lucy's professional career includes 16 years of elementary school teaching in both public and private schools in Tennessee. She has taught preschool, 2nd grade, 4th grade, and 6th grade, and has been director of a church weekday preschool program. She has also taught orientation classes, as well as developmental reading and writing classes, for Roane State Community College. For the last three years, Lucy has been a full-time instructor at Mercer University in Macon, GA, where she teaches Language Arts and Literacy courses in both the day and evening programs.