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## Perception of GTAs About Their Graduate Teaching Experiences: The Effects of Pedagogical Support/Mentoring

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PERCEPTIONS OF GTAs ABOUT THEIR  
GRADUATE TEACHING EXPERIENCES:  
THE EFFECTS OF PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT/MENTORING

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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December  
2002

This dissertation, submitted by Bruce Henry Emmel in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

Joseph D. Benard  
Dean of the Graduate School

December 5, 2002  
Date

## PERMISSION

Title                      Perceptions of GTAs About Their Graduate Teaching  
Experiences: The Effects of Pedagogical Support/Mentoring

Department            Teaching and Learning

Degree                  Doctor of Philosophy

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Date 4 Dec 02



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I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Henry J. Emmel, who kept asking me, "Is it done yet?" Yes, Dad, it's done!

## ABSTRACT

This study sought to describe the outcome of a semester long course of study presented to graduate teaching assistants in several disciplines. This study was important because many departments offer little or no specific training for their GTAs and, as a result, many of them find themselves confused and frustrated in their duties.

For this research, an experienced professor of long tenure offered a sixteen-week course in "College Teaching" designed specifically for graduate teaching assistants from a variety of disciplines. All of these GTAs volunteered to participate and were offered one graduate credit for their participation.

The research question I sought to answer was, What is the perception of the teaching experience of GTAs who participate in a seminar in pedagogy? Qualitative methods, including personal interviews, participant observations, and reviews of journal entries written by the seminar instructor and by myself were used to study the GTAs' experience. Data were analyzed for commonalities which led to narratives of each of the participant's experiences as they progressed throughout the semester.

One overriding assertion and three sub-assertions emerged from the analysis. The overriding assertion was that all of the GTAs made changes in their attitudes about teaching over the course of the semester. The sub-assertions were:

Sub-assertion #1: Most of the GTAs developed a more positive view and attitude due to the pedagogical training, though, to varying degrees, the impact of the pedagogical training had less positive effect on some GTAs.

Sub-assertion #2: A specific benefit of the pedagogical training was the implementation of various types of effective alternative teaching procedures.

Sub-assertion #3: Desire to improve teaching effectiveness had an impact on most of the GTAs.

The overriding assertion and the three sub-assertions were supported by the data from the interviews and the observations which was placed in summary form in a matrix depicting the progressive change in attitudes and teaching from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester. Recommendations were made for further research and study.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It is a fact of university life--many of the current course offerings, particularly those classes offered to freshmen and sophomores, are taught by graduate teaching assistants (GTAs). GTAs are known to be responsible for everything from merely grading papers and filing to teaching classes to upper classmen. There are GTAs who have taught graduate courses at some universities and there are GTAs who have taught a course they may have just completed as part of a baccalaureate degree. It was a group of six GTAs who were serving as teachers in classrooms that I chose to study and document through my journey into their lives as teachers.

#### The Impetus for the Study

Concerns have surfaced in some colleges and universities regarding the quality of instruction performed by graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) (Fernandez, 1986; Rushin, et al., 1997; Travers, 1989; University of North Carolina, 1996). A review of the literature from 1980 to 2000 has revealed that there have been some studies that have examined this concern (Black & Bonwell, 1991; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990) and a few publications that have documented results of GTA training (Abbott, Wulff, & Szego, 1989; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990; Smith & Kalivoda, 1998; Williams, 1991). There are many colleges and universities that have some training for GTAs in their departments to help them in their teaching responsibilities. (Fernandez, 1986; Mandeville, 1994;



Rushin, et al., 1997; Travers, 1989; University of North Carolina, 1996). Though existing training programs are not defined specifically by pedagogical topics covered, they do list the amount of time devoted to the GTA training. For instance, Spooner and O'Donnell (1987) mention that one program involved a "four-day presemester workshop and a weekly seminar during the semester." (p. 123).

There had been concerns brought by one of the department chairs at one midwestern university regarding the high drop-out and failure rates of undergraduates in some of the classes of GTAs who were hired to teach basic laboratory and introductory classes. This failure prohibited students from applying to programs for which these courses were necessary for admission.

Because many of the GTAs at this same university had not received as much help as they had requested, the program chairs began to request pedagogical help for their GTAs. In addition, the graduate school wanted to see a smoother transition to full teaching responsibilities for GTAs.

It was in light of these concerns that I came to this study. One of the faculty members of this midwestern university suggested that I could follow and document the activities of a few of the GTAs as they went about their teaching duties after receiving instruction in pedagogical issues from a highly qualified professor of education.

I had been a GTA just two years before the study and was quite familiar with many of the duties, responsibilities, and frustrations faced by beginning college teachers. I, however, had advantages that many, if not most, of the other GTAs did not have. I had been teaching in secondary schools and technical colleges for thirty years before receiving

this graduate teaching assistant responsibility. I was quite excited about the prospect of performing this study though, at the time, I felt that I would not be able to do the study as I was currently fully employed by a midwestern high school. My interest in this study was enough to convince me that I should retire from my position, do the research, and complete my education. I feel that this is a topic important enough to put a great amount of energy into examining it closely.

### History and Background Information

It is important to have some frame of reference from which to examine and compare the data of this study to what others have considered qualities of a skillful college teacher. In this vein let us look at what some have concluded.

Several texts that attempt to identify qualities of a “good” teacher can easily be found. One I have found to be particularly useful is by Brookfield (1990) who mentions that, “Anything that helps students learn is good, effective teaching.” (p. 193). He goes on to list the qualities of a skillful teacher: 1) be clear about the purpose of your teaching, 2) reflect on your own learning, 3) be wary of standardized models and approaches, 4) expect ambiguity, 5) remember that perfection is impossible, 6) research your students’ backgrounds, 7) attend to how students experience learning, 8) talk to your colleagues, 9) trust your instincts, 10) create diversity, 11) take risks, 12) recognize the emotionality of learning, 13) acknowledge your personality, 14) don’t evaluate only by students’ satisfaction, 15) balance support and challenge, 16) recognize the significance of your actions, 17) view yourself as a helper of learning, and he ends the list with the admonition, 18) don’t trust what you’ve just read.

During the summer of 1999 a class I attended in college teaching came up with a list of characteristics of an exemplary college instructor: An exemplary college instructor is 1) caring about students and about teaching, 2) competent in the field and in teaching, 3) blessed with an enthusiasm that is contagious, 4) one who encourages students to think critically and beyond their normal range, 5) attentive to students' struggles and to what motivates them, 6) possessing of a love of what they are teaching, 7) using good communication skills, and 8) a facilitator of active learning.

In order to devise a means for evaluating some of these key characteristics of quality teaching, teacher rating scales were studied. Some studies have been undertaken to examine the quality of teaching. The following are a few of those studies that examine what transpires in classes taught by graduate teaching assistants.

Williams (1991), in her study of English department GTAs, used control and experimental groups. Both groups participated in a one-week workshop and a sixteen-week theory and pedagogy course during a fall semester. GTAs in the experimental group also participated in a consultant observation program and peer mentoring activities. Williams found that anxiety was reduced in her experimental group and that teaching effectiveness in composition was greater in the experimental group than in the control group as rated by the students in the GTAs' classes. Generally, student ratings favored neither group, though posttest means indicated that there was a significantly higher effectiveness rating for the experimental group. Williams' (1991) study indicated that, though a quantitative comparison of experimental and control groups had been attempted,



it was not fully carried out. It seems to me that she did not go far enough in her efforts to show that the one group was superior to the other.

Other studies have not considered the experimental/control comparison/contrast. In all but one (Williams, 1991) of the studies of GTAs I reviewed, other methods of determination of effectiveness or success were used (Abbott, Wulff, & Szego, 1989; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990; Smith & Kalivoda, 1998; and Travers, 1989). Smith and Kalivoda's (1998) study made specific mention of the use of Glasser and Strauss's (1967) "constant comparative method to develop grounded theory." Their research began with the questions, "How do highly successful (G)TAs take advantage of their graduate experience to prepare for a faculty position? How do their graduate experiences help them through the job search process and the first year as a faculty member?" (p. 87). One of the important findings was, "During their graduate program, (second-year) (G)TA Mentors actively think about their personal goals and ways to maintain enthusiasm and reward themselves. These (G)TAs appeared to benefit from the strategies they had developed as (G)TAs to maintain vitality" (p. 98).

#### History of My Involvement in the Study

I am a teacher with years of experience in teaching mathematics in grades seven through twelve in Minnesota public schools, mathematics to freshmen and sophomores in a Minnesota technical college, and curriculum development and instruction to college juniors and seniors. I have also had the opportunity on several occasions to supervise student teachers, both as a university supervisor and as a high school cooperating teacher.

One of my most valuable experiences was in the fall of 1997 when I was doing research for a pilot study for a possible dissertation. I was a participant observer in a class in basic mathematics at another midwest university. This class was taught by an experienced professor who was retiring at the end of the school year. He had always taught this class by lecture and student practice and was amused when I suggested that we try something out of the ordinary. To my surprise he agreed to my proposal and we used some cooperative exercises, student response activities, and a final project based on group discussion, group data gathering, and analysis of the findings, followed by a one- to two-page report of possible conclusions. The problem the students were to discuss was this: In my research of the class, I was to pick five students at random to do two interviews each during the Fall Semester. Upon completing my first interview for each student, I discovered that three of the students I had chosen were former students of my brother, who teaches in a senior high school about 200 miles from this university. The students in this math class were to come up with methods they would use to calculate the probability that three students from my brother's classes would be in this class and would be chosen, and then to estimate the probability of this occurrence.

There was no definitive solution to the problem, however, many of the students became more involved in the class than they had been previous to this project. I was asked to grade and respond to the papers which provided me with much evidence as to its success. The papers were used as bonus points on their grades which helped several of the students to increase to a higher grade level. This was evidence for me that the use of

an alternative form of instruction seemed to enhance the experiences in this math class both for the professor and for the students.

I have had a chance encounter with two students since that class who brought up what a positive experience it was. Working with an instructor in changing the teaching methods seemed to enhance learning. It may be reasoned, if guidance in new forms of instruction can assist an experienced instructor, perhaps it can assist a new and inexperienced instructor. This led me to the project that involved graduate teaching assistants at a midwestern university.

### Description of Recent Trends

A review of the literature indicates that not enough is done for training GTAs anywhere in the U. S. (Abbott, Wulff, & Szego, 1989; Black & Bonwell, 1991; Fernandez, 1986; Mandeville, 1994; Rushin, et al., 1997). In listening to a graduate teaching assistant at the beginning of a graduate teaching assistant seminar in January, 2000, I noted his words: "The only way to teach (this subject) is by lecture and laboratory practice." This is the way many college teachers teach and this is also how they feel it should be taught (Black & Bonwell, 1991; Fernandez, 1986; Mandeville, 1994; Marting, 1987). That there should be alternative methods of teaching one's discipline has, for many, never been questioned (Fernandez, 1986; Spooner & McDonnell, 1987). The above statements suggest that, whether one is an experienced professor, or a GTA, there is always a way that instruction can be enhanced. Unless instruction is improved through an alternative teaching method that will promote excitement in learning, teaching sometimes becomes stagnant, uninteresting, and often times boring to the students. Good



teaching should instill a need in the students to want to learn more, to want to find the reasons behind what they are learning, and to enable students to relate what they are learning to what they witness and do in their lives.

### Need for the Study

Despite the fact that much headway has been made to make the job as GTA more palatable and successful, there are many improvements that could be made to make teaching more attractive to these beginning teachers of college students. A one- or two-day session at the beginning of the school year is not enough preparation for most of the new GTAs starting at the universities. It remains that many departments at this midwest university still have no continuing program of assistance for their GTAs. Many department chairs do not feel the urgency for such a program. This study will not necessarily point the way to success for GTAs, but what it may do is show that training in pedagogical issues for GTAs may allow more comfortable pathways for both GTAs and their students through their educational journeys.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of GTAs who participate in a pedagogical mentoring program at one midwestern university. Thus, this study seeks to answer the questions: Are there differences in GTAs' perceptions of their teaching before they participate in a semester-long course on pedagogy and after they participate in such a course? Will additional training in the area of alternative teaching methods help GTAs to be more open to effective alternative approaches to teaching, more able to transfer knowledge to their students or help them to discover knowledge? In the majority

of cases at the university where this research was performed, the departments do not offer training on how to develop one's teaching style or on the role of the university instructor in adult student learning. For this research a sixteen-week course in "College Teaching" designed specifically for graduate teaching assistants from a variety of disciplines was offered. All of the GTAs volunteered for enrollment and were offered one graduate credit for their participation.

The existing literature indicates that there is considerable value in training GTAs to prepare them for their teaching duties and to offer support during their tenure so they may work with less stress and become more effective (Abbott, Wulff, & Szego, 1989; Marting, 1987; Travers, 1989; Williams, 1991). For example, in 1989, Buerkel-Rothfuss and Gray (1990) studied questionnaires returned from 69 speech communication department chairs and 270 noncommunication department chairs about training of GTAs. Buerkel-Rothfuss and Gray (1990) relied on student evaluations of GTA teaching as well as their own perceptions as indicators of training success for some of their findings. They concluded that the correlation between breadth of training, supervision, and evaluation and the chairs/heads' perceptions of the quality of GTA teaching suggested that training activities, such as group discussion of problem scenarios or demonstrations and discussions by master teachers, were valuable: "As a whole, speech communication departments appear to be leading the way in the area of GTA teacher training, at least in terms of the percentage of departments offering training, if not in the breadth and scope of that training" (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990, p. 305).

### Delimitations

GTA effectiveness seems to be a difficult item to assess, therefore effectiveness was not one of the parameters I attempted to examine. It appears that Erickson (1986) does not feel that an observational approach can assess effectiveness any better than the respondent's own perspective when he states, "The fundamental problem with the standard (observational) approach to observational research on teacher effectiveness, from an interpretive perspective, is that its evidence base is invalid" (p. 132). The participants, themselves, however did discuss their own feelings about effectiveness. At this point, one of the precautions I had to take was to be careful not to make evaluative judgments about the GTAs when observing. For this reason, I used a list of items to look for when making my second observation. This allowed me to seek out similar items in each second observation and avoid possible bias. Journal notes were also kept where I was able to reflect on my activities throughout the semester.

Since I was not making an attempt at determining GTA effectiveness, determinations of the quality of instruction was not solicited from the GTAs' students, supervisors, advisors, or peers. The GTAs were encouraged to tell their own stories from the beginning of the semester to the end. Observations were made not to evaluate the quality of instruction but to corroborate what the GTAs were telling in the interviews.

### Overview of the Study

As you have seen, Chapter I of this study discussed the impetus for this study, some history and background information for the study, and the history of my involvement in the study. Chapter I also gave a description of recent trends concerning



GTAs teaching in colleges and universities which lead to the need for this study. Finally the purpose of the study was presented and the delimitations to which were attended, ending with the organization of the study.

Chapter II discusses the fundamental basics of qualitative research methods. My rationale for using qualitative research is discussed juxtaposed against my background in teaching. I describe the settings encountered and the participants involved in this study. Detailed information is then provided on research procedures which were used to find participants, collect data, code the data, analyze the collected data, and determine the themes and assertions which came out of this study and are discussed in Chapter IV.

The data takes center stage in Chapter III, but only after a detailed description of the settings involved and discussion of each of the participants. Major themes and assertions are identified in Chapter IV which are supported at various points by verbatim statements from the collected data. Each theme is discussed in light of relevant literature to enhance verification.

Chapter V brings the study to its conclusions after a brief summary. This is followed by my recommendations for further study and some reflections on the work that was accomplished.



## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as, “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” (p. 17). Kvale (1996) admits that, “Qualitative interviews are extensively used in today’s market research to predict and control consumer behavior.” (p. 71). It is quite possible that this is exactly what I was up to when I performed the study I am about to describe. The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of GTAs who participate in a pedagogical mentoring program at one midwestern university. Thus, this study seeks to answer the questions: Are there differences in GTAs’ perceptions of their teaching before they participate in a semester-long course on pedagogy and after they participate in such a course? Will additional training in the area of alternative teaching methods help GTAs to be more open to effective alternative approaches to teaching, more able to transfer knowledge to their students or help them to discover knowledge?

In Chapter II I will discuss some of the basics of qualitative research methods, particularly as these methods pertain to interviews concerning what the participants do in their work and why GTAs do what they do, and to observations of GTAs as they do their work. I will give my rationale for choosing qualitative research methods and contrast that with my educational and teaching history. I will describe procedures which were used to

gain access and find participants for this study, collect data, code the data, and analyze the collected data. Procedures used to determine the themes and assertions which came out of this study are carefully described and are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

### Basics of Qualitative Research Methods

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1996) defines qualitative as "pertaining to or concerned with quality or qualities." (p. 1579). This same dictionary defines research as "diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover or revise facts, theories, applications, etc." (p. 1637). If we are to combine these two definitions to define qualitative research we might get this: diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into human behavior in order to discover their various qualities. Qualitative research requires that we "go into the trenches," so to speak, and that requires us to do field work. Powdermaker (1966) states that, "Field work is a deeply human as well as a scientific experience and a detailed knowledge of both aspects is an important source of data in itself, and necessary for any comparative study of methodology." (p. 9).

I could go into detail as to the differences between quantitative research and qualitative research, however, anyone reading this report probably has a good idea as to the differences between the two. In the leading sentence of this chapter, the definition of qualitative research relates to what qualitative research is not. Rather than discuss what qualitative research is not, I choose to discuss what qualitative research is without being too tedious about it.

Qualitative research involves direct communication with participants who are willing to tell their story. Qualitative research also involves observation of people as they go about their lives. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) assert that, "qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the setting or lives of others, and they use multiple means to gather data." (p. 7). This is frequently referred to as "triangulation" and is said to contribute to the trustworthiness of the data. They go on to say that "the researcher collects data primarily by participant-observation and interviewing." (p. 10). Some data may also be gathered by collecting artifacts that the respondent has produced, such as lecture notes, worksheets, or study guides. Many of the qualities and nuances of a person doing what he/she does can thus be examined and recorded as data.

Glesne & Peshkin (1992) state that, "When most of the data are collected, the time has come to devote attention to analytic coding." (p.132). Coding is the act of assigning certain words or phrases to blocks of recorded data in the hope that some of these words or phrases may be repeated throughout the data which can signal certain trends or patterns in the data. By then mapping the various trends and patterns, themes may then emerge which may eventually lead to conclusions to be gleaned from the findings. There are different types of coding frequently used at different stages of the analysis process. Strauss & Corbin (1990) describe "Open coding (as) like beginning to work on a puzzle." (p. 204). Codes can usually be determined as the data is being collected and sometimes is assigned to blocks of data at that time. Just as often, codes are assigned when all the data have been printed in a form which can be analyzed. Memos written in margins and other places in the data help to assign codes to various parts.



Strauss & Corbin (1990) then use the term “axial coding” as when “we begin to fit the pieces of the puzzle together.” (p. 211). By this point categories and, perhaps subcategories, will have been determined to group codes. Strauss & Corbin (1990) state “The purpose of axial coding ... is to suggest and verify relationships between a category and its subcategories ...” (p. 211). At this point diagrams may be designed to indicate relationships between categories and subcategories of code blocks.

Strauss & Corbin (1990) then assert that “Selective coding denotes the final step in our analysis: The integration of concepts around a core category and the filling in of categories that need further development and refinement.” (p. 217). Diagrams here help to show the picture of what emerges as a final theme or themes and assists us in developing conclusions based on the analysis of the data.

#### Rationale for Choosing Qualitative Research

Choosing the qualitative approach to my research was not an easy choice, though it was a very carefully thought out choice. Early in my education to become a Ph. D. candidate, I examined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. For me a quantitative approach would be a much easier path to follow due to my past education and experience. In my over thirty years as a teacher of mathematics I have nearly always approached analysis of events from a statistical point of view and have taken many courses in statistics to form a framework of statistical analysis. Some of the courses I taught at the junior and senior high school level included a unit on quantitative literacy and basic statistics. I have also taught a freshman level statistics course to students at a midwest technical college.

It would seem natural for me to choose a quantitative approach to analysis, so what led me to this abandonment of my usual analysis tendencies? During the second semester of my Ph. D. education I was given the opportunity to enroll in a course in qualitative research methods which I grabbed with relish with the hope that I would now learn research methods totally unlike that with which I had been familiar.

Becoming familiar with qualitative research methods was not a very comfortable process for me. Fortunately I had good instructors who were willing to work with a neophyte such as I and push me in directions I would not have gone alone. My first assignment in the field was the one to which I referred earlier in the mathematics classroom with the retiring professor. I had a very positive experience in that I felt I learned very much from that first experience and the results of the study further fueled my interest in qualitative research.

At this point I knew that I would do a qualitative study for my dissertation, though I never expected it to take the direction it finally took. After my first year into the Ph. D. program I needed to slow things down a bit due to my return to my full-time position as a teacher of mathematics in a senior high school. The next school year I took only two courses but planned to take a full schedule during the summer after that. It was during that summer that my fate was sealed. One of my professors asked weekly for someone to help her with some research she planned to conduct the following Spring Semester. She frequently directed the question to me and I would respond that I would not be able to assist her since I had my full-time teaching position the next school year. The job, however, sounded very intriguing to me and it was frequently on my mind. By the end of

the summer I agreed to check into the possibility of getting time off without pay in the Spring Semester to help with the research. The school administration would not allow the time off, but I did have another option to explore. In October I would meet the Rule of Ninety in the state in which I was teaching and could retire with full benefits after that date. I still had to get approval from the board of education to retire from my position at the end of the semester in January, but that turned out to be a relatively easy process. Then I needed to make arrangements with the Teachers Retirement Association and that was no problem, though it got a little bit rushed. By the end of December of that year I had jumped in feet first. I was already interviewing participants and was prepared to work full time on the project by the end of January. Perhaps it was just as well that I did not have much time to consider the options as I may not have taken this opportunity so readily.

One might say that the choice of qualitative research was mine, but the choice of topics was certainly influenced by circumstances. I have to admit that I probably would not have chosen the topic I have identified in this work. Yet, I have found it to be an enlightening and exciting project; the results from which I hope will excite others to explore this topic further.

This study could have been accomplished using quantitative methods by using pretests and posttests and by comparing results but I do not think the results would be any more reliable than by using the qualitative methods I have used. This study lends itself to a qualitative analysis due to the nature of what GTAs (and teachers for that matter) do in their daily routine. It was important to be able to follow the participants through the



semester and witness what was happening to them as they progressed through this time. Much was learned by listening to their stories and how they were responding to what was happening around them in their work.

### The Setting

This research was completed at a midwestern research university which enrolls approximately 11,000 students and is situated in the middle of a city of approximately 50,000. Programs are offered at this university in 160 fields through 11 academic units. They offer doctorates in 16 programs, a specialist degree in one program, and the master's degree in 46 programs. The campus itself includes 570 acres, 240 buildings, and 5.4 million square feet of space.

Students selected for the study were from several departments at this university. The departments were scattered throughout the campus, but students were selected from departments that had no ongoing pedagogical programs for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs).

### Procedures

#### Finding Participants

The professor who would offer the seminar in pedagogical issues and I determined we would need a pool of about 24 GTAs from which I could select six for my research. Finding participants from which to select the six who became the focus of this study was done with the help of the professor who taught the seminar during the semester of the study. It began with a discussion between principals of the Graduate School and the department that was responsible for assisting the selected GTAs. At the time of this



meeting, in June 1999, Department A supplied the seminar instructor with names of six graduate students who would be new GTAs the next fall. After that meeting, names of all new GTAs arriving in the Fall Semester of 1999 were provided by the Registrar's Office. It was decided that two of the departments on this campus would be eliminated from the study as they currently had an ongoing training program in place for their GTAs.

Gaining access to GTAs to do this study turned out not to be a problem. Flyers were written and distributed to department chairs requesting help in locating volunteers who would be willing to be part of the study. These flyers were also posted in the many buildings on campus. Department chairs were asked to sign release forms to inform them of the responsibilities and possible hazards to the GTAs (appendix A), and were asked for names of GTAs who might be interested in this study. The department chair release form included a short description of what was asked of the participants, benefits to the department, a statement regarding confidentiality, a statement that participants may withdraw at any time, and notification of clearance by the Institutional Review Board. Certainly, as Kvale (1996) advises, it is the "researchers responsibility to reflect on the possible consequences not only for the persons taking part in the study, but for the larger group as well." (p. 116). This form also included how to contact me. Department chairs then recommended students in their departments who were hired as GTAs and we received a list of them from each chair who was willing to participate.

By the last part of December, we had over 24 names of GTAs who said they would be interested in being a part of our study. A meeting was scheduled with the seminar professor, myself, and the 24 GTAs, pizza was provided, and all the paperwork such as

work schedules and release forms was completed. Permission by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to perform the study was received at about the same time as the pizza meeting with the participants. In the meantime my retirement was being processed.

Through phone and e-mail contacts an adequate pool of prospective participants was identified. On the evening of the meeting at the pizza parlor we had 19 GTAs show up. We were a little disappointed though fully aware that we still had a pool of GTAs that was viable. All GTAs who were at that initial meeting signed release forms (appendix B) and agreed to be a part of the study if they were chosen. The consent form was designed considering suggested requirements by Glesne & Peshkin (1992) and Seidman (1991) which includes a short biography of myself, what they were asked to do, what the risks were, that they may withdraw at any time without penalty, what the benefits were, and that, though anonymity could not be guaranteed, pseudonyms would be used to protect privacy. The risks were minimal and included possible threats to autonomy for the GTAs and their feeling of well-being. Benefits included the opportunity to share concerns with an experienced instructor about teaching and gain feed-back by way of reading through the observation reports after an observation session. The consent form also had information as to how to reach me.

During the getting acquainted session we went over the requirements with all the GTAs which included the seminar, three interviews, and two observations. There were two other GTAs who did not attend the introductory session but who signed release forms and wanted to be included. From the group of 21, 12 were selected to attend the seminar taught by my colleague and the rest would obtain no additional instruction. In

the final cut, only nine GTAs enrolled in the seminar. I randomly chose six of the nine to study. In one case a participant decided to back out of the study, though this was done very early in the selection process and was easily replaced by another willing participant. All of the nine attended the seminar taught by my colleague and received one semester credit for doing so. The seminar instructor did not know which of the 9 of her students I had chosen to study. Participants were followed from the beginning of the semester (in some cases before the semester started) to the end of the semester with three interviews and two observations spaced so that a reasonable flow of data allowed for a semblance of continuity.

I had not yet been released from my teaching position so I had to jockey my full-time job with my research responsibilities. Some of my first interviews were during Christmas break from both schools, so I was able to handle both jobs with little difficulty at the beginning of the study. It became a little more difficult around the middle of January when I was working both jobs and had to schedule around my teaching job with interviews on week-ends and evenings. I was taking courses at the same time. There were times when I felt like a one-armed wallpaper hanger.

### Collecting Data

There were three interviews and two observations accomplished for each of the six participants. The first interview was scheduled before the Spring Semester began. The second interview was near the middle of the semester, and the third interview was near the end of the semester but before the end of classes. Each interview was approximately an hour in length. Observations were started after the first three weeks of



classes but before the middle of the semester so students and GTAs could get settled into a pattern. The first observation for each respondent was a detailed description of what I was seeing with no commentary with regard to their teaching. The second observation was done near the end of the semester. Most of the GTAs were teaching classes that were 50 minutes, which made those observations 50 minutes long or less depending on circumstances. Some GTAs were teaching laboratory courses which were over two hours in length, so I stayed only the first 50 minutes of that laboratory time to be consistent with the amount of time for observations.

After the first interview, which was held in one of the coffee houses near campus, all other interviews were conducted in the GTA's office, a lounge near their office, or an empty classroom in their building. Observations were always done in their classrooms or the laboratory they used. There were times when one observation was in a classroom and the second observation for the same person was in a laboratory.

Interviews. First interviews began in late December. The hope was that all six first interviews would be completed by the time the Spring Semester would start on January 11, 2000. Not all interviews were completed by January 11, though three of them were completed, and the rest were finished by January 26, 2000. I could see by now that scheduling for these interviews would be a bit challenging for some of the participants. I met with GTAs usually at coffee houses in the area around the university and I bought them coffee. This seemed to go a long way toward gaining their confidence and helping them to relax through the interview process. The noise in the coffee houses was a



problem<sup>s</sup> at times but very little data were lost as a result, and the selection of this venue was well worth what little detractors there were.

I had purchased a microcassette recorder to use for this research which I found to be a great improvement over the much larger recorder used in previous interviews. The larger recorder tended to be intimidating to some of the participants I had interviewed for courses I had attended earlier, and a few of them commented about that fact. The smaller size recorder was hardly noticed by these participants and their responses to my questions were much more freely given than in previous sessions. I had very little difficulty getting the participants to speak openly, even in these first interviews. I was able to set nearly all of them at ease with my demeanor and with the fact that I would, from time to time, banter with them about something not related to the research questions.

During the first interviews I used a set of questions and items for response on 3" x 5" cards, selected from my own ideas gained from past experience, with the help of Seidman (1991), Kvale (1996), and a professor of qualitative research of this midwestern university. This was done so that all participants would be presented with the same set of items with which to respond initially. Seidman (1991), however, advises against the use of an "interview guide," which did not include my set of cards, as they were open-ended and allowed for probing. The list of items used to elicit responses can be found in Appendix C. I had a second reason to use these cards--I found that early on in the interviews I was losing my voice to laryngitis and this was a way I could maintain a reasonable amount of consistency in the interviews.

During the first interview sessions I could often determine when the participants felt comfortable with what they were teaching and when they felt not so comfortable about their responsibilities. I made comments in my journal at this time to reflect this. There were times during the first interview, and other interviews as well, when it was difficult to track down participants even after they had agreed to meet with me. There were several times I had to catch one of my participants in the hall and do an interview with him or her right then and there. I quickly learned that the same GTAs would be the ones to skip interview dates. At one point I was afraid I would miss the third interview with one of my participants as he missed an appointment twice and wasn't returning my calls and was to leave for overseas in just a couple of days. I cornered him in the hall on the last day of his GTA responsibility and had that final interview in a hallway lounge just hours before he was to leave.

Second interviews were usually more relaxed than the first interviews, though even the first ones were generally low stress. By this time my participants had gotten used to seeing me around and were becoming comfortable with me. They had been through one interview and an observation with me by this time.

I had help with questions for the second interview from a qualitative research methods class. I used some of them as they were stated in class, some questions were modified, and a couple questions were removed from the list. Those questions are listed in Appendix D. One must keep in mind that the questions listed were not the only questions used in the interview as many questions came to mind during probing for details. I take to heart Glesne & Peshkin's (1992) advice, "Clearly, it is not the form of

your probe that is most critical. It is your intent to probe, supported by your patience to linger and inquire rather than get on with completing the interview.” (p. 86).

Most of the GTAs were becoming comfortable with their teaching responsibilities by the second interview. There was one participant, however, who was still very unsure of her ability to teach effectively. There is more detail on this in Chapter III.

When the third interview came to be, the participants were generally so used to seeing me that they seemed to relate to me more as a colleague than an outsider doing research with them. I would see them in the halls or on campus at times other than interviews or observations and they would address me by my first name and greet me warmly.

Questions for the third interview were designed by me with help from my advisor and another Ph. D. student. I also used a few “response cards” to elicit responses from some participants after probing indicated that I had found a topic that needed something beyond what the questions would bring out. Samples of the questions used in the third interview are found in Appendix E and the response cards from which some were selected are in Appendix F.

Observations. By contrast with the interview sessions, the observation sessions were much easier to schedule. I’m sure this has much to do with the fact that participants could not so easily forget nor skip out on an observation date. I did encounter a few minor glitches where an observation involved a test session that was not expected at that time or a session that ran unexpectedly short. I was forced to deal with some of these just



as they were and not try to reschedule later. In one case I attended an extra observation just because I wanted to see what was happening in that class.

The first observation was a descriptive observation where I took careful note of what was happening in the classroom, I described the room in detail, I made an attempt to describe the students and the GTA, and I described environmental aspects of the setting, including ease of hearing or seeing what was being presented by the GTA. At times I would write a direct quote from either a student or the GTA. I would usually sit at the back of the room to the extreme left of the GTA if it was possible. From there I could see most of the students and witness the interchange, if any, between GTA and students. Frequently the GTA would announce my presence in the class and explain why I was there. In one case, however, the GTA tried to ignore the fact that I was in the room and he admitted later that my being there bothered him just a bit.

In another case I was just as much a participant as an observer. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) like to say about this, "Participant observation in a research setting (is when) the researcher carefully, systematically experiences and consciously records in detail the many aspects of a situation." (pp. 42-43). In one of my observations I not only had to take notes when I could, I had to memorize lines from a scene of a play and take part in a theatrical game.

The second observation was much more structured in that I was looking for specific items the GTA might be doing and saying. I was looking for things such as eye contact with students and where in the room he or she looked as they talked to students. I tried to determine if the GTA was talking to the students or to some object in the room. I



noticed if I could hear the GTA well or see clearly what they were writing on the board. Much of the data I was looking for was guided by student teacher observation guides used by many university supervising teachers.

### Coding

I could not have begun the analysis of the data without help from outside sources in the form of texts, journal articles, and my very helpful professors. Strauss and Corbin (1990), however, seemed to point me in the proper direction that was needed in my work on analyzing what I now had in reams of data. Their discussion on “open coding” and its definition as, “the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data” (p. 62), set me early to coding what I was reading. I began coding as I was reading the data. The down-side of that first attempt was I discovered that I would be dealing with far too many codes to be very useful to me in the final analysis.

I took the advice of Glesne and Peshkin (1992) to “Learn to be content...with your early, simple coding schemes, knowing that with use they will become appropriately complex” (p. 130). So here was an “aha!” moment--I had to come up with a simple coding scheme.

The result was 33 codes that fit into five categories. The codes were not distributed evenly through the five categories. There were eight codes in some categories and only one code in one category. I went back to Strauss and Corbin (1990) and discovered, “Axial Coding (that) puts...data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories” (p. 97). Strauss and Corbin

(1990) also gave me “Action/interactional strategies (which) can be studied in terms of sequences, or in terms of movement, or change over time” (p. 104).

I read farther in Strauss and Corbin (1990), “Change can be the consequence of planned action/interaction or it may occur as a result of *contingency*, an unanticipated and unplanned for happening that brings about change in conditions” (p. 143). Suddenly I had my method. I would use the codes I had and apply them to the data, considering the conditions with which I worked. I had, after all, studied these six GTAs from beginning to end of a semester. Certainly there may be some change over time.

Now I sought advice from Glesne and Peshkin (1992) who said, “Simple frequency counts can help to identify patterns” (p. 140). I had been using Ethnograph v5.0 for the coding and so far had found that to be very useful. Seidel (1998) gave several suggestions as to how frequency counts might be used. I first set up counts for single codes and then for categories to search for changes that were occurring in the data. I compared all the data for one participant using counts from the beginning of the semester to the end and discovered patterns appearing. I began by using just one code to begin with and checked the count from all three interviews and the two observations. The first participant showed a definite trend using this method. Then I used the opposing code and this seemed to verify what I was witnessing. For example, I used the count from the code, “comfortable teaching,” and contrasted that with the count from the code, “not comfortable teaching.” This same method was used with two other codes that were not necessarily opposed and a similar pattern was obtained with the same participant which, again, seemed to confirm that a trend existed. One other participant elicited a similar

pattern of results, though all six of the participants did not indicate the same type of pattern to indicate that all were not experiencing this semester in a similar fashion.

It became apparent to me that, though the counts of codes are important, they can only be an indication of something happening. I was able to identify five categories in which to place the 33 codes which assisted me considerably with interpretation of code counts. This led me to the conclusion that I would need to discuss each participant's story individually in order to fully analyze the data. Using the code counts and condensing the data I was able to develop a matrix (see pages 30-32) which proved very useful in the final analysis. From the matrix I could reformulate the categories I had and settle on one main theme/overriding assertion which resulted in three sub-assertions.



Table 1. Matrix for Attitudes About Teaching

Attitudes About Teaching				
	Early Positive Attitude about Teaching	Early Negative Attitude about Teaching	Late Positive Attitude about Teaching	Late Negative Attitude about Teaching
Barb	May like to continue teaching. Likes the students.	High anxiety. Anxious of large groups. Feels inadequate. Not liking grading. Teaching like cycle.	Good use of practical examples. More comfortable with large groups.	Sometimes like talking to empty room. Prefers small groups.
Gail	Likes teaching college students. Observed to be comfortable teaching.	High anxiety. Feels inadequate. Feels insecure. Feels isolated.	Likes the lecture class more. Relaxed in lecture. Wants to continue teaching.	Still stressed. Feels isolated.
Joe	Likes teaching. Expects to make some impact on students.	Low amount of anxiety.	Expects to continue teaching. Good student attendance. Likes grading.	Low autonomy in classes.
Rick	Cares about students Enjoys seeing students do well. Already comfortable teaching.	Low amount of anxiety. Teaches using lecture.	Loves teaching. High comfort with teaching. Good student attendance.	
Mike	Cares about students. Likes teaching.	Sees moral decline in students. Uncomfortable with some student issues Unexpected amount of pre-class prep. Not concerned with human element.	Comfortable teaching	Low student attendance.
Frank	Enjoys teaching. Teaches by example Having fun.	Not much interaction.	Getting better at lecturing. Plans to continue teaching. Got much better lecturing.	



Table 2. Matrix for Attitudes About the Seminar and Applications of Alternative Teaching Methods

	Attitudes toward Seminar		Alternative Teaching	
	Positive Attitude Toward Seminar	Negative Attitude Toward Seminar	Early Application of Alternative Teaching	Late Application of Alternative Teaching
Barb	Useful ideas. Good topics. Much help with teaching. Recommend to other GTAs.		Short teacher evaluations. Uses good examples	More participation. Teacher evaluations. Used study lab. Encourage feedback. Small group study.
Gail	Likes different views that are presented. Good speakers. Good discussions.	Not as helpful as hoped.	Uses good examples	Much 1-1 time. Quiz with video. Let students explore. Get students to participate in discussions.
Joe	Likes the format in use. Useful ideas. Likes grading tips. Recommends to other GTAs.	Perhaps offered too late in the year.	Uses groups of 4-5 students.	Use small groups. After-class discussions. Rewrites allowed. Short teacher evaluation cards used.
Rick	Plenty of ideas. Began to see self as teacher. Seminar laid out well. Recommend to other GTAs.	Should be earlier in the year.	Used groups of 3. Uses practical applications in demonstrations. Thinks teaching is like coaching.	Evening study group. Depart from only lecture. More group work. Use students as teachers.
Mike	Excellent speakers. Good discussions. Learn about non-traditional learner.	Doesn't agree with seminar instructor's learning philosophy. Disagrees with others in the class. Sometimes a waste of time.	Uses cooperative work on lab.	Explains things more than one way. More group work. Write a pre-lab.
Frank	Class is good. Discuss good points. Good discussions. Really interesting. Was his support. Helpful. Good information. Glad he was in class Should be required of all GTAs.	Still lecturing to the end of the semester.	Playing a role.	

Table 3. Matrix for Desire to Teach Well, Support from Teachers, and Experience

	Desire to Teach Well	Support from Professors	Experience
Barb	High desire to do well. Cares about her ability to teach. Wants her students to learn.	Direct support from the beginning.	None before this semester.
Gail	Mentioned several times that she wants students to do well.	Very little support at first. Some support came later.	Taught one of her classes twice before this semester.
Joe	Wants to keep learning exciting. Wants good rapport with students. Wants students to have critical minds.	Little support expected, but did receive some.	Taught last semester
Rick	Wants students to understand concepts Doesn't want to be boring. Desire to make learning fun.	Good support from the beginning.	Taught same class last semester.
Mike	A desire to teach well came late in the semester.	Received good support from the beginning.	Assisted in labs last semester.
Frank	Desire to be interesting. Desire to get better lecturing. Desire to cover the material. Need more experience lecturing.	Very little support except that he was offered class autonomy.	Taught last semester.

## CHAPTER III

### DATA

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who participated in a pedagogical mentoring program at one midwestern university. Thus, this study sought to answer the questions: Are there differences in GTA's perceptions of their teaching before they participated in a semester-long seminar on pedagogy and after they participated in such a course? Will additional training in the area of teaching methods and effective alternative teaching procedures help GTAs to be more open to alternative approaches to teaching, more able to transfer knowledge to their students or help them to discover knowledge? In Chapter III, I describe the setting of the study and give a general description of the participants involved in the study. Following that I describe, in considerable detail, the semester long experience as it unfolded for each of the six participant's experience in a relatively continuous progression.

Qualified graduate students may be offered one of three types of assistantships at this midwestern university. Positions as graduate research assistant, graduate service assistant, and graduate teaching assistant are granted to many graduate students in masters, specialist, and doctorate programs. Only graduate teaching assistants whose duties included experience teaching in their field were studied for this research.



Academic departments involved in this study are identified by a capital letter from A through F.

Participants' names are identified by pseudonyms not related to their actual names. This was done to maintain anonymity and to keep the data secure and yet to personalize the reporting of the data.

### General Description of Participants

The study involved two women and four men who came from six different departments at this midwestern university. Their ages ranged from 22 to 43. All of them were in a master's program. One of these GTAs had prior experience in teaching people younger than college age, but most had no previous experience. Only one had experience teaching college students before this school year. Most of the GTAs were from an area within 200 miles of this university, though one came from as far as the Virgin Islands. Each GTA's experience from beginning to end of Spring Semester 2000 is expressed in the following pages.

### Barb's Experience

Barb was one of the "older-than-average" participants in this study. The only experience she brought into this job is from work in church youth groups, girl scout activities, and a short time doing home day care. She was originally from this region and has been a homemaker most of her adult life but had decided to return to school to earn her master's degree so she could make up lost income as a result of her husband's retirement. They have three daughters, one in middle school, one in elementary school,



and the other in college out east. Barb admitted freely that the most important thing to her is her family.

I first met with Barb at a coffee house off-campus just before the semester was to begin. She was feeling very apprehensive about her responsibilities. She mentioned that she had just been informed that she would have a class of about 50 students which would include some who had no experience in the fundamentals of Department D and others who could "teach me how to do what I am doing." Barb's anxiety was exemplified in her remarks when she stated, "...some people just have that natural gift for teaching. I don't think I am one of those people." From what Barb told me in that first interview, she wanted very much to be a good teacher and she cared whether the students would learn from her. She did, however, feel overwhelmed by the fact that she would have a large group of students to teach. She stated that she felt much more comfortable working with small groups or one-on-one with students. In addition to the class she would teach, she was doing grading for another class.

Barb was fortunate in that there was another instructor who was teaching another section of the same class at a time that she could attend occasionally. She planned to attend and seek help from that instructor when she needed it. Barb also was expecting assistance from her supervisor and she felt that she would get help when needed from him. One of her most important resources, she admitted, would be from the other CTAs in her department. Barb admitted to being a "night owl" however, so she also was uncomfortable with the fact that the class met at 9:00 AM.

One of the most important things in her favor was brought to light when she expressed, "The thing that delights me about teaching is I very much enjoy being around people and students. The students I work with are wonderful. They are helpful. They are supportive." She was clearly not comfortable with the prospect of teaching, but she was willing to forge ahead and do what she could do.

I observed Barb shortly after she began teaching. She had been able to change her class meeting time to 11:00 AM through some fortunate juggling on her part. She was dressed casually, but not as casual as her students. Her classroom was on the west side of the building that houses Department D and another department. The room was large enough to handle 50 students and was wider than it was deep. Except for a few portable desks stored on the east wall, all the desks were fixed in long rows that extended left to right as the teacher faces them. They reminded me of seats at an older airline terminal. The front of the room had a whiteboard, projection screen, and a computer connected to a video projector for display.

Before Barb got started she whispered to me, "They may get bored with what I will be doing today." This clearly pointed out her feeling of anxiety.

This day there were 27 students out of approximately 50 in the room. Barb had several discussions with students before she actually began the class presentation. Her presentation began at 11:15. She reminded students of her office hours and then began her class discussion using her computer and the video display. Most of her presentation was in lecture form, though she did frequently turn to the class when she used the

whiteboard. She asked questions on occasion, to which she rarely received an answer. Barb did seem to be comfortable in front of this group.

At 11:45 the students became restless as Barb wrapped things up and announced a quiz for the next week. After students began leaving she stayed to answer questions for seven of her students. The class period appeared quite abbreviated to me, though a great amount of material was covered in the time allowed.

The second interview was done toward the end of February. Barb still claimed to be very uncomfortable with her teaching assignment, though she also said she liked being where she was. She stated that one of the most difficult things she did was to have to deal with students' late work. Barb said she was grateful to have the teaching experience as it was helping her to learn more. Yet she showed how she cared for students when she said, "I want my students to learn what they need to. In this (Department D) class I want them prepared to go to the next class and have the necessary skills to continue."

Barb expressed frustration with a student who quit coming to class and quit turning in assignments because he was confused. Fortunately she contacted the student and was able to turn things around. Barb continued to feel she was in education "purgatory" when she complained, "Right now (teaching) is like I never finish anything. Just because as soon as you finish one lecture you need to do it again. I mean I can never just stop and go, 'I got that done!' It's 'What do I need to do to get ready for the next one?'"

Barb felt that the college teaching seminar course she was taking was helping her in her teaching. She had done a short class-evaluation questionnaire in class and, though



not all the comments were positive, the responses were very helpful to her. This form of class-evaluation had been suggested by the seminar instructor. The feedback she received from the students made her feel better about teaching, but she was still concerned that more students did not take advantage of her office hours.

This interview was done the seventh week of the semester and Barb had not yet learned many of her students' names. She felt she was preoccupied with other concerns and did not put a priority on learning the names of her students.

Barb had been getting the help she expected from the instructor in the other section parallel to hers, and she was receiving support from her supervisor. In spite of all her anxiety about teaching she admitted, "As nerve wracking as this is, I still think this is something I would like to do (in the future)." She admitted that she liked to be there and she liked to work with the students.

I asked Barb directly about her feelings about the seminar class on pedagogy she was attending that semester. She was quite excited about the topics that were coming up in the class and was pleased with the progress of the class to that point. She admitted that she had not been very outspoken in class but had been listening carefully and applying some of what she had been learning in the class.

Toward the end of March I had another observation with Barb in the same classroom as the previous observation. The class was quite short as it was a review for a test and Barb wanted some one-on-one time afterward for questions.

The presentation was, again, mainly lecture. Barb presented her lecture quite well, however, and the students who were in attendance were very attentive. Barb was



well-prepared for class and appeared to be very much at ease in front of the class. She appeared to be enthusiastic and knowledgeable about her topic and she was usually easy to understand. Barb fielded questions from her students adeptly and she used clear examples to explain what she was presenting to her students. Student assignments appeared clear and well thought-out.

My last interview was near the end of the Semester. I asked Barb if she felt she was meeting her students' needs to which she responded, "Right now I think I am doing what I can do to meet their needs, but they have to take the responsibility."

I then asked Barb, "What was your greatest accomplishment this semester?" to which she answered, "I would say just progressing as a teacher, getting more comfortable in the classroom, gaining confidence. I guess being willing to try new things at the end of the semester I would never have tried at the beginning of the semester." She felt that she accomplished most of her goals for the semester. Barb went on to say, "I really have to credit the seminar for a lot of help with teaching." I learned that she had begun to use more questioning in class, she used small break-out sessions, and did practical problems in a laboratory that she hadn't considered before the seminar. Barb also made some adjustments as a result of the class-evaluations she learned to do in the seminar class.

Barb still had some frustrations with her teaching, but there were very few of the comments about anxiety that she had early in the semester. At first there were many anxieties and few frustrations and at the end there were some, though not many, frustrations and few anxieties. In fact, Barb said, "Anxious? I'd say I was pretty anxious at the beginning of the semester; I'm less anxious now."

By the end of the semester Barb had 36 students enrolled in class and about 30 regularly attended class. As she compared her attendance to others in her department she felt that this was a reasonable turn-out. Barb's main frustration continued to be dealing with late work and when I left her the day of the interview she was carefully pondering how she could alleviate that problem.

I asked about other help she received from the seminar to which Barb answered, "We got helpful information on how to write a test, how to grade, and suggestions on how to deal with difficult situations with students." Barb also appreciated the help she got from the seminar about finding information for her students about the counseling center and where students could get extra help in other academic areas.

During a follow-up interview in October of 2001, I found that Barb was still teaching two sections of the class she first taught in the spring of 2000, but as an instructor and not a GTA. She offered, "This is my third time teaching the class, and I think it's easier because of the experience, but the feedback from the students is helpful also." She had begun to apply some of the new techniques she had learned in the seminar class for GTAs, such as using small-group cooperative exercises and she added a study component using an open-book format from a higher skill level of her subject to help students learn some of the more difficult activities. Her final comment was, "I am much more comfortable with the large groups now than I ever was to start with."

In summary, Barb was the only GTA in this study who had not had experience teaching before this semester. She began the semester feeling very anxious and, perhaps, apprehensive, which she expressed even before the semester began.

Barb admitted several times that she felt more comfortable working one-on-one with students. As the semester progressed she began to relax and expressed feeling more comfortable with teaching in front of a group.

By the end of the semester Barb's teaching comfort seemed to be improving. She attributed this to three factors: experience, support from professors and peers, and help through the college teaching seminar.

One of the greatest indicators of Barb's comfort with teaching came in October of the next year when I was able to interview her one last time and learned she was still teaching in the same department and enjoying her position. She had also been applying many of the ideas learned in the college teaching seminar.

#### Gail's Experience

Gail is the other "older-than-average" participant in this study. She came to this GTA position with some experience teaching business courses at the junior high school level, but had limited exposure with teaching college students last year. Gail commuted from a small town about 30 miles from this university and was from this region. She was married with two sons; one who was a senior in high school and the other in junior high school. She earned her undergraduate degree from this university and was currently studying for her master's degree in Department B.

For the first interview, which was accomplished a week before classes started, we met in a coffee house off campus. Gail seemed eager to talk which she did freely and clearly as I presented her with response cards and asked questions.



Gail expressed a considerable amount of anxiety when she responded, "I am really looking forward to this semester being over. This is the first time I have taught a lecture class in a big lecture room. I have 47 students that are registered for it now; I just picked up my list." This voiced concern occurred before classes started and was very heightened for her. She was to be teaching two classes that semester--a "large" one and a laboratory class of less than 20 students. She felt intimidated because, of the four sections of the larger class, two instructors had their doctorate and the third had been teaching the class for five years. At one point she admitted that the semester "is just scaring me to death!"

Gail felt that she could make a difference in her students' lives because she was one of them and yet had a considerable amount of experience to relate to. She had noticed last semester that some students sensed that she cared about them so they would come to her for advice. She was hoping that she would be able to develop the confidence this semester to feel comfortable with all her teaching responsibilities.

Gail did not think she would have the support she needed from other professors or her supervisors during the semester. She felt quite isolated and indicated that she found out by chance that she was teaching the larger course. Gail was not invited to the faculty meetings and felt that they would rather she not attend them. Their entire department just went through some major changes and she thought some of the attitudes toward her and the other GTAs were due partly to those changes. Gail felt that the situation was not about to change anytime soon.

Even though she was anxious about the new semester, Gail was pleased about being at this university and to be teaching at the college level. She stated that she liked

what she was doing even though she was anxious, and she hoped she could motivate her students to learn, to try hard, and to want to learn more. Gail thinks learning should be fun and not drudgery. She expected to make mistakes but she felt that she would be able to recover and not lose the pace.

Gail shared with me, "The thing that delights me about teaching is the students. It is so fun when they finally get it, or when they feel like they are improving. (Then) they will act excited about it." I could see that Gail appeared excited about the prospect of her students succeeding as she spoke about it with an elevated tone and increased body movement. She became more expressive and relaxed as the interview progressed.

Gail expressed anxiety a few more times when she talked about the coming semester and the disruptions that sometimes happen during her lab classes. She expressed concern about students who did not appear to be motivated and students who would not show up for class until the last few days.

My first observation of Gail was one month from the day classes started for the semester. I found her in a lecture room on the south end of her building. The room was a truncated wedge shape with fixed desks on risers that rise steeply from front to back. On the narrow end (back) of the room were moveable chalkboards, lectern, TV monitor, overhead projector, motorized projection screen, and a table. Light and projection controls were located on the wall near the chalkboards.

Gail began class at 11:01 AM. She used humor frequently during this class, but some of her humor tended to put herself down, such as when she entered the classroom this day and announced, "The good news is that you're not gonna have the test 'till

Friday. So you can send me flowers for Valentine's Day. I just went to class for three hours and found out how stupid I am."

Gail announced my presence and my purpose in the room. At that time I got a final count of 33 students in class this day. As she presented the lesson Gail used transparencies to make each point. Gail did not go too far before she asked questions of the students. Students responded freely, though I noticed that most of the ones who responded were near the front of the room. Gail was speaking very audibly and clearly. She used many examples from "real life" situations to bolster her discussion. These appeared to be very effective at keeping the students' attention. All the students I could see were taking notes and watching her intently.

The examples Gail used brought some lively discussion at times as there were moral and ethical issues involved that appeared to have many facets to the way they may appear. She appeared comfortable with the way the discussion was heading and attempted to goad some of the quieter students to participate. Gail frequently wrote student responses on the overhead projector as they answered her questions.

At strategic places in her discussion, Gail effectively used cartoons and humor to emphasize the point she was making. I saw no evidence that she was nervous nor did she appear uncomfortable teaching in this situation.

About two weeks after the observation I scheduled the second interview with Gail, this time in her office area. My first question was to ask her what she did as a GTA. She told me that she taught two classes, the one lecture class three times a week and a laboratory class once a week. She preferred the laboratory class because it gave her



closer contact with the students. I noticed in the lecture class that she knew few, if any, of the students' names. She still admitted to being apprehensive in the lecture class, but she had been receiving some assistance from other instructors which she did not anticipate. Yet she continued to feel quite isolated.

Gail indicated that up until the day of this second interview she had been feeling pretty good about her work as a GTA. She had been ill over the weekend and didn't get much preparation done for her lecture class. She said she felt "numb and out of it today. But normally I really have been enjoying it. I like the teaching." Gail was having frustrations in the classes she was taking for her graduate program and this was amplifying her anxiety.

Gail said she would rather be teaching than taking classes. She said that it would be better to take classes for fun and not have to do all the work because she felt she was shortchanging both her teaching and her class participation. As she was talking I could sense the frustration she was experiencing about the classes she was taking.

I asked Gail, "What is the most enjoyable thing you do as a GTA?" to which she answered, "I like the teaching. I like the interacting with the students. I like it when I know the answers to the questions. That is always fun!" She also intimated, "I guess in the lab class I always feel like I am more comfortable, but I am enjoying the lecture quite more than I thought that I would."

When I asked Gail to name a song title describing what she does as a GTA she gave me, "Tip-toe Through the Tulips." Perhaps this described the way her experience

had been going up to that point. This pointed me to the anxiety that continued to be with her as she juggled classes she was taking and classes she was teaching.

Gail had heard from other GTAs that the other faculty had decided to ask her to the faculty meetings, but she had received no actual request to do so. She had also heard that the department would ask her to return to teach during the next school year. She admitted that she had not received official notice about any of this, but that the students and other GTAs had mentioned that this is what they had learned. Gail informed me that a lot of the news heard in the department comes through students and GTAs before official notice is given. She stated that the information was usually accurate.

I was curious about the ease with which Gail presented herself in the classroom so I asked what past experience had prepared her for teaching responsibilities. She answered that she taught junior high school kids for a few years and that she had experience as a Christian education consultant where she was responsible for workshops. Gail thought that one of her advantages was that she obtained her teaching degree and license late in her life and it was not long ago that she was a student herself.

As I began to quiz Gail about her attitude regarding students, her responses made me realize that she cared very much for her students and for their learning. I asked her, "What do you want for your students?" To which she responded, "I am feeling really bad for my students today." I was somewhat startled by this response. Gail continued, "I always want to be better. I want them to learn and to get a good grasp of the knowledge (and) what I am going to instill in them but also, I guess, we talk about philosophy of learning in Department G, and I guess what I would like to do in my classes is to make it

fun and to make them see that learning is a fun, fun thing to do. You and I talked earlier about if we didn't have grades, and I wish we could get away from grades, but I know it will never happen, but it would be nice if we didn't have that."

As Gail talked to me she maintained an air of excitement. She referred often to the college teaching seminar class she was taking that semester and admitted she was obtaining many new ideas for her teaching. The more she talked the faster she seemed to go until finally she had to pause for a breath and slow down a bit.

I asked Gail how she could tell her students were learning. "Well we usually base it on how well they do on the test. But I think it is kind of discouraging and I just gave my first exam in the lecture class and they didn't do very well, and I felt really bad and I take it really personal that I must not be doing my job." Fortunately, she talked this over with other instructors who assured her that the first test is always low and that the students get into the swing of things and do better when they get familiar with the process. Gail informed me that students were really beginning to feel more comfortable with her as she smiled more and became more familiar with her responsibilities. They also came to her more readily for help than at the start of the semester.

When I asked her how she had changed during the semester she gave me this rather confusing picture: "I am overstressed. I came into this mess pretty laid back and now I am pretty stressed. Actually, I think I have relaxed a little bit in the lecture because I was really afraid of that and now I have survived this long. I will probably make it through the semester." My observation of her did not show a hint of the overstressed



attitude she portends. Gail admitted that she was well prepared for the session that I observed, but I still did not get the feeling that she was so very stressed.

Then I asked her what she expected to be doing in one year or in five years, both to which she responded that she expected to be teaching much like she was doing then. She hoped that if she had to move away from the area that she could teach in a smaller college where a doctorate is not required.

Gail's philosophy of teaching and learning agrees with the idea of being a lifelong learner. "I think we should always be learning but I think if I make learning fun, make it an enjoyable thing, that people will always want to learn." She admitted that she had not yet run into a situation where a student did not like her or "had a controversy with" her.

When confronted with teaching problems in the classroom, Gail usually tried to work it out herself. If that did not seem comfortable, she conferred with the other professors teaching the class. She said there are no other GTAs doing what she was doing so she did not feel she could enlist much help from them. This was one of the reasons she wanted to participate in the seminar class associated with this study. She felt she could get some useful advice to help her with her teaching. Gail mentioned several times that the seminar had been very enjoyable and even fun for her.

Because of the changes that had occurred in the department, Gail claimed she did not really know who was her supervisor. This appeared to be one of her stressors and certainly caused her some frustration when she was trying to find out her teaching responsibilities for that semester. Gail told me that the main reason she stayed to teach

these classes was due to the support from one of the professors in the department that she conferred with for help.

I arranged with Gail to do an observation near the end of March. This observation was with the lab class she taught so I had a chance to see her teach in a different atmosphere than before. This classroom was set up with 32 workstations and, though as many as 64 students could use this room at one time, it was nearly always used for fewer than 32. When Gail entered she pushed a cart with a computer and projector that she used in her presentation. There were 10 students in this class and Gail mentioned to me that she enjoyed working with all of them and that they were all very motivated to learn what she had to teach them. She was able to spend considerable one-on-one time with them.

In general Gail appeared very comfortable with her teaching in this class. She used a lot of lecture during the first part of the class but she used it effectively as she moved around the room, varied the pace, and was speaking clearly and audibly. Later, as the students worked on their projects, she moved quickly from station to station to provide assistance and to see if her students were at the place they were expected to be in the work.

My last interview with Gail was at the end of the semester just before finals. I asked her if she thought she was meeting her students needs. Her answer was "no" and that was mainly because of one student and a test that she said was poorly written. Gail had agreed to adjust grades because of the faulty test and also would entertain further adjustments if a student could give a good reason for doing so. One student, however,

was still unsatisfied with the results and left before the situation could be resolved. The student had wanted to discuss her problem in class but Gail did not feel comfortable doing so and had attempted to arrange to meet with her after class.

After explaining the entire situation to me I then said, "Blank that (student) out and think of the rest. Same question." Gail answered, "I hope so." She then went on to explain that other students felt what she had done to adjust the scores was very fair. Gail hoped that students would take away from the class some of the information, but was afraid they may be more apt to remember the tests and how she had to adjust them. She hoped that they would remember that someone cared about them. She wanted very much for them to have a "good learning experience."

During the first part of the interview Gail repeatedly returned to the problem with the student who walked out and wouldn't meet with her. She continued to express her frustration but, as she did, she indicated that the students, in general, liked her and she cared about her students. Some of her students came to her for advice. It appeared that one of Gail's main frustrations had been the lack of preparation time coupled with one of the courses she had been taking that had been taking a great deal of her energy.

When I asked Gail if her students were responding differently to her than at the beginning of the semester, she related how scared they were at first and how they had now loosened up and talked with her freely. Then I asked if she had changed and she answered, "I don't know. I think, yah. I've learned a lot this semester." Gail felt that attendance in her classes was about what she would expect but not what she had hoped.



The lab class had only 11 students in it so she found it easy to tell who was gone at any one time. In that class she knew the students' names.

Gail continued to receive support from other instructors in the department and she said that her husband had been some help to her as well. She felt she was carrying a pretty heavy load for a GTA. Gail expressed her frustrations with classes she was taking, with having to commute, and with some of the problems she says she was having with the classes she was teaching. She stated, "When you have a limited amount of time, what is it that you sacrifice? It's hard for me to sacrifice anything. So then I get stressed because I have to make a decision and I don't know how!"

When I asked Gail what she would like to do when she finished school she answered, "I'd like to teach back here." She went on to explain what she expected her students to bring away from her classes which included a foundation for classes they would need to take in the future. Gail agreed that all students learn differently and she wanted to find a way to accommodate that fact.\*

Gail expressed that she had enjoyed the seminar associated with this study and had learned from it. She "really enjoyed the speakers who came in" and tried a few of the alternative methods, but her purpose in attending was more for the interaction with the other GTAs. She also tried some of the recordkeeping suggestions with good success.

In summary, Gail stated early in our meetings that she, "never wanted to be a teacher." Not only had she gained experience teaching junior high school before this Spring Semester, she taught one of her classes last Spring Semester and the past Fall

Semester. Yet, even before the semester began, she made statements to indicate she was very anxious about the semester.

An evident stressor for Gail was the conflict between what she was studying in classes and what she was teaching for classes. Gail stated often that she sincerely cared about students and that students generally liked her. It was, perhaps, because of her concern for students that the behavior of one student set the tone for Gail's perception of the entire semester later on. She appeared to dwell on individual items rather than look at the "big picture."

Observations of Gail in both the large class and smaller class showed no obvious evidence of discomfort either on her part or on the students' part. Half-way into the semester Gail was still expressing insecurity in the lecture class, though she also stated she was enjoying the teaching. As she stated, the classes she was taking were not enjoyable to her and could well have affected her assessment of the semester.

I continued to obtain conflicting messages from Gail throughout the semester. She would say she was "overstressed" and then mention how she had "relaxed a little bit" in the lecture class. She expressed a desire to continue teaching in Department B.

Gail did not see as much benefit at the beginning of the semester in the college teaching seminar as she had hoped. She had expected more discussion in class. She expressed greater satisfaction in the seminar later and applied some of the lessons learned in it.

Gail admitted at the end of the semester that "one student in this one class" determined her negative response to my question about meeting her students' needs. I

found it interesting to notice the difference in her opinion about the class she had taught before and the one she had not taught before. Her comments about the class she had experience in were much more positive than the comments she made about the class she had not previously taught. Gail once stated, "I can't wait to teach (the lecture) class again because now I'm going to teach it right!"

### Joe's Experience

In his early twenties, Joe was the youngest of the participants in this study. As I talked with Joe, however, he seemed to have an air about him that would place him much older than he was. He was married to another student at this university but they had no children. Joe taught a break-out group for a larger lecture class in Department F. When we talked face-to-face Joe was soft-spoken, but he answered my questions clearly and carefully. He was from the region originally but received his bachelor's degree from a school in the eastern U. S. He and his wife lived in this city.

My first interview with Joe was later than I had wanted, after classes started but very early in the semester. We met in his group GTA office on the third floor of the building in which he taught.

Joe's attitudes about education were brought out early when he stated, "I have strong convictions about education and the way it should be--very egalitarian. I have strong convictions about a number of liberal things, most specifically egalitarianism and socioeconomic and minority issues. I have strong convictions about the way science should be conducted as opposed to the way that it usually is."



As Joe looked to the future he saw himself in an academic position that allowed him to do some research and write articles. He stated he was always anxious about the first time he met a class and whether or not his students would be active participants, although at the first meeting of this class there had been good discussion.

Joe thought he could make a difference in what he does because, "I am so concerned with both sides of an interaction I can be, perhaps, more empathetic than some others might be." As he talked Joe appeared comfortable in his position and he felt he had a certain amount of autonomy in what he did. He expected some help from supervisors if he requested it, though he did not feel that he would want much assistance from them at that time.

Joe eventually hoped to attain an academic position at a university with teaching as a sideline. When he taught he wanted his students to say he always treated them with respect and was considerate of their viewpoints even when he obviously disagreed. Then he told me, "I expect that when I teach I will have a very significant impact on at least a small percentage of the students that I encounter." Joe believed highly in education and found that, "it really delights me when I see someone enjoying learning something and not just remembering the facts but really understanding it."

At the end of the interview I left it open for Joe to talk and received this poignant response: "Well, in my personal experiences as a learner, I have encountered a couple of teachers who really made a profound effect on me with their quality and thoughtfulness of their positions and the way that they were able to argue their positions without being despairing towards the other side and not just a real sense of a debate, but a good-spirited

debate. That is the thing that I would most hope to be able to do with my students some day when I take full responsibility for courses and not just TA'ing. I would like to do it TA'ing too, but there are limited opportunities in the types of courses I have had so far."

About four weeks after the first interview with Joe, I arranged for an observation of one of his classes. The class was held in a fairly small room on the "garden level" of the building in which he regularly worked. This was an extremely narrow room with two large pillars in the middle that blocked the view for some of the students. This was a laboratory class for a larger lecture class. There were 18 students in class on that day.

As students entered the room almost all took the desks at the back of the room first. Tests were returned to the students. Joe announced the range of scores and handed out a readout of the scoring results. He had them break into groups of four or five and handed each group a copy of the test so they could examine their answers compared to the test and the answer key and discuss what the correct answers should be. Joe announced that the scores were lower than the lecture professor had anticipated but that this was the first time she had taught the course and the scores would be adjusted later.

The students, who were mostly freshmen, appeared comfortable with the process and went about the business of discussing the test until they completed their tasks and left 15 minutes after the class started.

My second interview with Joe was done two weeks after the observation and at the beginning of March. We met in his office area as we did the first time.

I asked, "What do you do as a GTA?" Joe answered, "This semester, primarily, my responsibility is to use interesting activities and demonstration which makes the dense



material covered in lecture a bit more graspable and salient. Showing people some of the things that are just talked about in lecture. I run some of the labs.”

Joe felt pretty comfortable with teaching the labs since he had some experience the previous semester. He said, “I think I have a good group of students and they are not afraid to speak up when I ask them questions which makes the class a bit more lively. Almost less work because they are more willing to talk for me.” The most difficult task for Joe was when he had to lecture on material that was not discussed in lecture but students were required to know. He admitted, “giving that for the first time is sometimes a little bit queasy.”

Joe then added, “Without a doubt the most enjoyable is when a student asks a really insightful question that is just beyond the scope of the textbook. I would hope that I would get some of those sorts of hidden curriculum type things across that aren’t explicitly a part of the course.”

I asked Joe about the benefits of being a GTA and he responded, “for me being a GTA is getting my feet wet and teaching and it allows me to do it in a way where the course responsibility isn’t so much mine and in a somewhat fun role of trying to make it exciting as opposed to just giving content across.” Joe added that this position also helped him with speaking in front of groups which had been uncomfortable for him in the past.

Joe wanted his students to be excited about what he was presenting to them and hoped to convince them that there are long-term benefits. He wanted to make his labs exciting and fun so the students would want to come to them. Joe stated, “I think



teaching is like discussing something with a group of friends, but maybe friends who are not so familiar with what it is we are discussing. I can tell if students have learned by the kinds of questions they ask." As the semester progressed Joe became more comfortable and at ease with his teaching responsibilities. He thought that the students were comfortable with him and settled into a discussion by 10 to 15 minutes into the class period, where previously it would take much longer to get a dialog going.

Joe expected that in five years he would have been awarded a Ph.D. and would apply for a teaching position somewhere in the region. "I would like to go to a university where I could interact with graduate students, people who really want to devote their lives to the study. I think when you settle in for life as an academic you are looking at 20 or 30 years in the same place if you are lucky. I think it is important to be happy in that place if you are going to stay there that long."

Joe liked to keep his classes "conversational" and somewhat intimate when he broke the large group into smaller groups of four or five students. He was not yet comfortable with some of the small group dynamics such as discussing a topic and then presenting it to the large group or with selecting small groups randomly or changing groups in the middle of a class period. He was satisfied with the same grouping each time he uses them and thought that it was working for him.

Joe felt that he was getting support from his supervisors, particularly when difficult problems arose. He was confronted with a problem in developing accommodations for a student with a disability and, with assistance, came to a very agreeable solution.

Joe talked favorably about the seminar class he was taking associated with this study and he thought he was getting good advice. He felt that sometimes the information came a bit late when the problem had already been encountered. Joe liked the lively discussions in the class and had some friends to sit with.

In one of his classes, because of a computer tie-up, Joe had to adjust the due date on a major assignment. Then he was afraid the students would expect an adjustment on the next major assignment: "(I'm) sort of queasy that people will think I am a pushover if they just didn't write it yet or didn't bother to do the work so I am a little concerned about that."

My second observation of Joe was in the same room and at the same time as the first one. I was disappointed to discover that this session, as the other, was a review of a test. It was too late to reschedule another time as it was very late in the semester.

Joe called out a few names from the tests he wished to return. When he got no takers after a few he decided to wait a bit. This class had 20 registered for it and 18 eventually arrived for class this day. This was the day he was to have students fill out teacher evaluation forms so he did that first and left the room until that was complete. Then he began the review of the test.

Joe had the students break into study groups, passed out a form of the test to each group, and turned them loose for discussion of the questions. By 35 minutes after the class had started, only three students were left in class who were now into a spirited discussion of a couple of the test questions for which they had evidence that they were



poorly written. Joe was forced to defer these questions to the large-group lecturer, though he fielded their questions as best he could.

Joe did not know his students' names. He had two classes of this type and neither was larger than 20 students. He talked clearly and audibly and maintained eye contact with the students as he discussed items with them. As he answered questions it appeared that he was enthusiastic and excited about what he was teaching. Joe used humor appropriately and kept the discussion lively. His chalkboard writing was large and clear and he moved about the room as he taught.

Joe had very little control over the content of his class, but he seemed to organize the material well that he was given. He encouraged student questions and allowed student discussion to proceed uninterrupted. Throughout his discussion it was apparent to me that Joe cared about his students and that they learned in his classes.

My last interview with Joe was only three days after the second observation. I asked if he thought that he was meeting his students' needs, to which he responded, "I think that I make every effort to try to. I make myself available to everyone and with a number of my students I've been in semi-frequent e-mail contact. I feel if they're asking questions, then they're probably understanding what's being said. I hope that at some point in the semester I've conveyed that some people get really excited about this stuff and that, if you take the time to look at it, you can get excited about it too."

Joe's most memorable moment from the semester occurred shortly after I left his classroom after my last observation of him. He had been reviewing the test with his second class and most had left except for five of his students who wanted to discuss



topics that were not on the test. They stayed late and asked Joe many insightful questions before they all finally left for the day.

Joe's biggest disappointment for the semester was, "The very small hand that I was able to have in deciding what gets done in lab." He felt quite confined in what he could accomplish. The grading scale was also decided for all the GTAs.

As we talked about meeting goals Joe answered, "I hope that they take away the critical thinking that we promoted in evaluating the research that we were reading and evaluating the different theories, and looking at it with a critical eye and not taking it for granted just because it's written in the book. I think the most important goal is imparting the critical skepticism."

I asked, "What helped you to accomplish your goals?" His answer was, "Having known the anecdotal stories to get people to pay attention again. Once they realized that I wasn't trying to put them on, they started interacting with me in a much more genuine way." Joe admitted that he probably went a little too far in trying to be "laid back" in his approach to his teaching, but he felt that he was able to accomplish the department's objectives. He had very few concerns about his teaching that he didn't feel comfortable handling himself. Even the students' attendance exceeded his expectations and Joe mentioned that usually when students were absent they would call him about it. Many of the concerns he did have were worked out through discussion with the other GTAs.

When I asked what he liked best about being a CTA Joe repeated much of what he had told me before about getting students excited about the subject and seeing them want to learn. When I asked what he liked least Joe's answer was, "having to assign bad

grades. When I read a paper and it's just a really bad paper or it really missed the mark of the assignment, I really don't like dealing with that because I don't like telling someone that their work is not good enough." Joe apparently did not generally allow a student to rewrite a paper except on a case-by-case basis, and then it was not for full credit.

I then asked Joe one of my favorite questions, "How do you think an individual learns something?" His answer was, "To really learn something, I think someone has to be touched by it in a personal way."

One of the pieces of advice Joe would pass on to the next person in his position personified the way he looks at education, "If you have expertise in a certain area don't be afraid to let that color the way you teach, as long as you make clear that something you know is coloring the way you teach."

When I asked about the seminar class he had been attending Joe admitted to a mild frustration that the course couldn't have been offered before he started teaching in the fall semester. He found many things that were discussed and practiced to be valuable to him, but would have been more valuable earlier. He was happy to see that differing opinions were entertained freely in the class. Joe added, "I strongly hope that (the seminar in pedagogy) will be incorporated as part of the GTA orientation when we first get here." He said he'd like to add several ideas from the class to his teaching next year, particularly if he has a bit more autonomy.

In summary, at the start of the semester Joe had already expressed a strong interest in continuing to teach. His anxiety level, judging from his comments, appeared low. Joe

appeared to have realistic expectations about his classes concerning content, level of interest, and attendance.

It was apparent from his remarks that the experience he had teaching last semester helped Joe to ease into teaching this semester. He began early to use suggestions from the college teaching seminar, particularly the use of small groups for discussion. Joe stated he was very comfortable fielding questions from students, particularly when they led to deep discussion.

He had considerable autonomy in his teaching the previous semester which he did not have this semester. This was one reason he used alternative methods in his teaching. Though Joe applied some of the ideas learned from the college teaching seminar, he felt that its greatest value was the opportunity to discuss and share with others about happenings in classes they all were teaching.

Joe appeared to be maintaining a high rate of student attendance in his classes from what he stated and from my observations. I did not find my observations to be very valuable as each time I observed Joe he was discussing an exam they had taken.

Joe was the only GTA I studied who said he actually enjoyed grading. He also carried a rather insightful philosophy of learning when he stated, "To really learn something, I think someone has to be touched by it in a personal way."

#### Rick's Experience

I first met with Rick in his office that he shared with several other GTAs in Department C at this midwestern university. Rick was young--in his mid-twenties--yet he appeared quite self-assured. He is originally from this region. Rick was not married but



he was engaged to be married that summer and was looking forward to that. Rick was working on his master's degree in Department C and hoped to find a job afterward in a field not related to teaching. He was also coaching a hockey team in this city which he enjoyed very much.

This was another interview that had to be arranged shortly after classes had begun. My first question related to what he had strong convictions about to which he responded, "I have strong convictions about a good work ethic. I feel real strong about that. I guess the old cliché about a hard day's work and giving 100% of everything you do." He expected that of his students also.

Rick thought he could make a difference because he cared about his students. He did not see as much caring for the students here as in the university where he received his bachelor's degree. Rick was teaching one class five days each week that would normally be taught three days a week. This was for the students who had been having trouble with the subject in the past or have scored low on a pretest for the class.

Rick expressed his thoughts about education when he stated, "I think the goal of teachers is to teach their students. That should be their first goal, so that is what I think teachers are." Yet he feared that "there are some students that, no matter what, you just can't please them and they are always going to be battling you one way or the other."

Rick felt fortunate that in his department there was a good support system from supervisors, professors, and from other GTAs. He felt that this would help him very much through the semester. The course he taught was required by everyone so he knew there would be some difficult times, "Some subjects I took I wasn't always real enthused,

like speech class. I never liked that, but if the teacher is always enthusiastic about it it made you kind of want to be there and want to like it." Rick knew that he would make mistakes and he was not afraid of them. He credited the seminar he took for giving him some ideas early on to avoid mistakes. This was an interesting comment from him as he was one of the students who had expressed that many of the ideas in the seminar run contrary to his own beliefs.

Rick was very pleased with the students he had in his class to that point. He had expected some serious problems with them but they had all been willing to work hard at the class. Some of them were students who were repeating the course. There were 36 registered for the class and Rick said that almost all of them were coming to class. Early in the semester he took a class period once in a while to assign some questions and have the students work with them in groups of three while he rotated among the desks. This way he could determine which students may need extra help. He learned this technique from the seminar.

Rick made an insightful comment with, "I want my students to say that I really cared about them and cared how they did. I really think that it reflects on me when my students are getting D's and C's you know. Some teachers might say, 'Well, that is what they earned because they didn't do their homework.' I think it reflects on me as a teacher that I didn't do my best effort to push them a little bit." Rick did not believe in just "covering the material" but, rather, expected his students to learn what they needed to learn.

Rick was also aware that there would be times when he would have to pick out the most important parts of his subject and be sure his students were learning those as they formed the basis for many things that followed. He seemed to have a good grasp as to what could be left out of the instruction and what must be emphasized. Rick added, "The thing that delights me about teaching is seeing your students do well and enjoy the subject."

Rick was doing a lot of work in the classes he was taking and was finding that the homework was nearly overwhelming on some days, but he never felt overwhelmed by his teaching responsibilities.

I observed Rick's class two weeks after our first interview. He had, by then, been teaching for four weeks of that semester. Rick entered at 12:00 PM and began to hand back exam papers. I counted 29 students in class that day. The room was fairly small but open and well lit with no obstructions. Rick's room was on the northwest side of one of the newer buildings on campus and it had high, large windows. Desks were moveable and in six rows of six desks each.

Rick started fielding questions from the students about the questions on the exam. As he did so, he asked questions of the students. He did not wait very long before he gave an answer or procedure. All the students in my view were watching intently and taking notes.

When all questions were covered he announced, "We'll start chapter 2 then. By the way, I won't be here tomorrow, so no class. I know that tears you up, but..." The



students laughed at his announcement. The students appeared at ease with Rick and were clearly willing to participate in class discussion.

Rick presented his lesson using the chalkboard, asking students questions as he demonstrated the material. He frequently turned to the class and made eye contact as he asked questions. He received responses from the students in several parts of the room.

Rick picked a concrete practical example to emphasize a point and he immediately had all the students' attention, including one who had stopped taking notes for a while. He was very clear in his chalkboard writing and with his spoken voice. He moved around the front of the classroom as he presented his lesson and checked with students frequently to find out if they were understanding what he was laying out for them.

The style of teaching Rick used was lecture for the most part, but he stopped to ask a lot of questions. He used many diagrams and practical examples to assist him in making his points. When he was done and the questions were settled, he clearly wrote the assignment for the next time on the chalkboard.

At the end of February, and about three weeks after my first observation of Rick's class, I met with Rick once again in his office area for an interview. I asked him to explain in detail what he does as a GTA and he told me that he was responsible for six credit hours, so he taught the five hours of the class he had and then did one hour of placement testing.

I asked Rick how comfortable he was in what he did and he gave me this, "I'm getting more comfortable as time goes on, especially after one section. Going into it,

boy!, I was terrified. I am feeling more and more comfortable about teaching and how I am teaching it. The kids let me know if they aren't learning something and I'll change it, so that's been helpful."

Rick told me, "The hardest thing I do as a GTA is to balance my time in between my studies and helping the students with theirs. The most enjoyable is seeing my students do well and learn stuff." So I asked, "How can you tell if they are doing well?" to which he responded, "Oh, they will tell me!" When I asked Rick for a song title to describe what he does he gave me, "No Time But Loving It."

When I asked Rick to explain what background he brought into his teaching he answered, "I pay particular attention to how I've been taught. If I don't like how I am being taught, then I kind of find out why and try to adapt some way. So past teachers I'd say I learned good qualities from them that I have been able to learn from and also the other way around--the boring ones, the classes I kind of doze off in, I try not to do what happens in those." He went on to say, "I actually didn't expect the students to be as interested as they are. I try to stress that they are going to be using this information in whatever they do. This will make it easier. I think they take it to heart and try to learn."

I asked him what he wanted for his students. Rick's reply: "What I strive for is a comprehensive thing. I want them to learn the basics in this course and to have the resources to fall back on. I tell them to get ahold of me and I don't care if it is midnight, just give me a call if you need help some night and you guys are in trouble."

I had Rick finish the sentence, "For me teaching is like.." and I got, "To me teaching is like a little kid that has recess as part of my day, or the fun part of my day. I



have study hall and classes and then I get to go in and teach these other kids something I know. It is kind of like a break for the day, I guess. It is always good."

Rick determined if his students were learning by the weekly assignments. He did not correct all the homework, but he thought he saw enough to tell if his students were learning or not. Sometimes he would assign some questions and if some students got several of them wrong he would use that as a learning experience and assigned similar questions to help with understanding what they missed. He also used the tests as an indicator of learning. As he presented material from the front of the room he looked for body language that might indicate that students were not understanding what he was showing them. If he suspected a problem he would pause for a while and find a way to clarify what he was teaching.

I asked Rick what he planned to be doing in one year and he said that he would probably be doing the same thing he was doing then. When I asked him to predict his activities in five years he said, "Probably not teaching. I'll probably be working either in a lab or an office. I would prefer lab study, but my background kind of infers more of an office position."

In our discussion Rick brought up the fact that he coached a hockey team in this city. Further discussion resulted in Rick feeling that there is a good parallel between his coaching and the way he approached his teaching.

Rick thought about his class when he left the classroom for the day. He said he mulled over if what he went over was clear and if the students understood what he presented to them. He always reviewed the previous day's lesson, particularly if he



thought his students may still have been unclear about something. Rick said he did not "take work home" with him. The problems were either resolved in class or in his office.

If he had problems in his teaching Rick usually went to the other GTAs first then he would go to his supervisor or one of the professors. He had always been able to obtain resolution for problems up to this point: "You know, I'm pretty confident in my ability to deal with a situation and do it correctly."

When I asked Rick about the college teaching seminar, he gave me this: "Last week she asked us to fill out a survey, so I wrote back to her and said that a lot of the stuff doesn't apply to (this field). Everywhere it has always been done as a lecture." I found this to be a very interesting statement coming from someone who was already using some small group instruction and alternative ideas about the assignments. He did admit that he had been trying some of the ideas he has seen presented in the seminar. He had modified his lecture from techniques he had learned from the seminar, such as making more of an attempt to make the topic relevant to real-life situations. . . .

One month after the last interview I met with Rick in his classroom for the second observation. Rick arrived promptly at 12:00 and started class immediately by reviewing questions over the previous assignment. This discussion actually segued into the discussion for this period. He reminded his students of the take-home test which was due on Thursday.

Rick appeared well-prepared for class and did not digress often from the main topic. He moved about the room, used gestures appropriately, maintained eye contact

with students, talked clearly and appropriately, and communicated a sense of enthusiasm and excitement toward what he was presenting. His chalkboard writing was easy to read.

Rick seemed to have good rapport with his students because he seemed to respect them and understood their shortcomings and identified many of their feelings. However, I saw no evidence that he had learned the students names even though he responded to students as individuals.

I watched as Rick used many good illustrations in his presentation and his examples were relevant to the students, the course content, and to the "real world." He was very careful about explaining difficult concepts and he attempted to tie in related fields of study.

Rick answered student questions clearly and directly and when he asked questions in this session he gave students enough time to respond to them. He had gotten away from the habit of answering his own questions much of the time. He was beginning to present challenging questions to stimulate discussion.

The last interview took place near the end of the semester just a week before final exams began. Rick informed me that he thought he was meeting his students' needs because of the amount of time he was available for them. He had then added extra time for review before the final exam on each Tuesday evening. He thought that his students were doing much better than at the beginning of the semester.

I asked Rick, "What is the most important thing your students will remember from this term?" and he responded, "Probably that I've made this course fun, I guess." His

most memorable moment was the response to the Tuesday evening study group where he had over 20 students attending regularly.

Rick had been so concerned about students attending his classes that he regularly called them if they did not check in when they were absent. His biggest disappointment was when he had a test that was a bit longer than he had anticipated and two students didn't finish as a result. When he decided to adjust the scores, the two students weren't present and didn't return to find the results.

I asked, "What helped the most to accomplish your goals this term?" Rick answered, "Being real and relating at a level with the students. I want to gain their respect right off the bat, respect that I know my subject. From there they know when it's time to get down to business and work instead of fun."

I asked, "did you try anything new this semester?" and got his reply: "Oh yah. Tried lots. I tried a little more group stuff. We were talking about that in (the seminar instructor's) class. Because this course is something that is traditionally taught in lecture, chalkboard work or... I guess I just find this course a little harder to do any other way, but I'm trying new stuff. I found that once I gave them a little background on what we were to do, it worked out. I had them go to the board in small groups to work things out and they had a good time with that." Rick felt that they remembered better when students used some of the alternatives he was trying.

Due to some of his previous discussion with me, I was not quite ready for Rick's next comment: "I've always been willing to try new stuff. If I was a teacher for the next thirty years, I'd probably try something new in my thirtieth year." Rick thinks that if the



students see a purpose in what they are doing they will learn much better and remember it longer.

I wanted to know Rick's thoughts about his class after he left each day and he said, "I wonder if it was an interesting class. Whether they were interested in what I was doing. If I didn't think they were, I would figure out how to make it more interesting." When I asked how he thinks an individual learns, he responded, "probably by doing it. The best way to learn something is having to teach it. My thinking about the way students learn has changed since I've been teaching." Rick went on to add, "If you have fun with it, the students can see it. Students can tell if you enjoy something."

Rick had some thoughts about the seminar class he had just completed: "I thought it would be interesting to be in her class because I don't have a teaching background at all. I didn't go to school to be a teacher so going to that class was a welcome deal." Then he included: "She got me seeing things from the teacher's side of things. I didn't see myself as a teacher." Rick planned to use many of the suggestions he learned in the seminar class such as the short feed-back cards, alternative style teaching, and the short evaluation quizzes. He was thankful for the sharing of ideas and stories that occurred in the seminar. He thought he learned a lot from the technology lesson they had. He did, however, think that the seminar would be better taken in the fall just after everyone starts teaching.

In summary I was not able to obtain a first interview with Rick until he had begun teaching in the semester. Rick had, however, taught the same course the previous semester.

My first impression of Rick was that he was self-assured and had a strong belief in a "good work ethic." Not only did he want his students to give "100%", he was willing to give the same himself. Through his statements and from my observations it quickly became apparent that he cared very much that his students performed well in his class.

Rick admitted that he had originally thought that his subject should be taught by lecturing, and he stated this view in the college teaching seminar. Yet early in the semester he was applying small group experiences and admitting to having success with them.

Rick impressed me with his enthusiasm about his subject. He often compared his teaching to his coaching, which he did with young people during this semester.

The level of chatter in the room before class started was an indication to me that students were comfortable in this class. As the semester commenced I witnessed and learned of many ideas from the seminar that Rick was applying and finding successful such as small group activities, questioning techniques, allowing students to teach at the chalkboard, and after-class activities.

I was greatly impressed by Rick's plan to have a study/help session one evening a week which received more attendance than he had expected. His statement about attendance told a lot about Rick: "You get good attendance by making the students want to come."

Rick admitted that before he took the college teaching seminar he didn't see himself as a teacher. Now, he discovered, he was one.

Mike's Experience

Mike was one of the younger participants, in his early twenties. He was unmarried and originally from the northwest, which is where he wanted to return after he finished his master's degree at this university. He came here with one year of experience teaching in a laboratory setting. He worked in Department A. I was not able to catch up with Mike until classes had been meeting for two weeks. We met in his office on the third floor of the building in which he taught. He worked in two laboratory settings which took quite a bit of his time.

My first response card (Strong Conviction) elicited an interesting response: "I have strong convictions about the moral decline of society." Then I asked, "Is that reflected in your students then too?" He answered, "Yah, yes it is." So I asked, "Would you like to elaborate on that a little bit?" He continued: "I had a lot of problems last semester with dishonesty--academic dishonesty. I had to deal with it on three separate occasions and ended up just having to take the hard-nosed mode to take care of it." The situation came to a satisfactory resolution.

Mike mentioned that he was anxious about an oral progress report coming in May. He was required to meet with his committee once a year when he was evaluated on what he was doing in his department. He thought that his experiences the previous semester made him more of a "big meany, hard-nosed type."

Mike taught one freshman class and one sophomore class and he could notice differences between the two classes since the freshmen were required to take the class and the sophomores were there to move to upper level courses in the department.



He thought that the first day of a class was the scariest thing about teaching and also indicated he was scared when a question was asked that he could not answer. When he did encounter problems in his teaching, however, he was confident that he would have help from his supervisors and from the professors he worked with.

Mike believed that teachers should have high expectations of their students and that if you have low expectations you are being unfair to your students. He said that you can't have low expectations and "actually be interested in the subject."

Mike said that he cared about how his students were feeling, but that he did not feel comfortable trying to help a student deal with emotional issues. Mike then offered: "I expect that when I teach I will make them think. I usually try to, with the things that are presented in the material, I usually try to think of real world examples or maybe just another twist on it from the way it has been presented to me." He was delighted when he saw positive results, or when "the more questions that are asked, the more excited they get about the subject." He thought the students he worked with were very bright but that they were making a big transition.

I asked how he felt at the end of the day and he said, "I feel tired, and that would definitely depend on the day. Some days you get out of there and you just go home and don't even feel like eating. You just want to go to bed, and there are other days you get out of there and you wish you had a double shift."

My first observation with Mike was two weeks after the interview I had with him. I walked into a laboratory class while it was in progress and found Mike working with his students. I was told I may walk around at will and observe what was happening. Mike

and all the students were dressed very casually. I was aware that the class professor was not in the room. Students were working independently at workstations and there was very little noise. There were only seven students in this laboratory though, there were workstations for at least twice that many.

During the first 15 minutes I was in the classroom Mike spent all his time with one student who appeared to be having trouble with his project. After 20 minutes Mike had worked with only two students but then began to rotate among the students more often. This was a three-hour lab but I planned to spend only about one hour with them. It became apparent to me that the students were working at their own pace and were required to complete one step of their project successfully before they could advance to the next step. When they completed the whole project they were allowed to leave for the day. As they worked they kept notes in a journal or notebook.

About 40 minutes into the class I spotted two students working together. This was the first hint of any cooperative work in this class. I understood later that they could confer with one another, but their final results must be their own. Through all of this Mike appeared to be very comfortable with his responsibilities. Students frequently brought their journals to Mike to be checked for progress.

At the end of February, three weeks after my observation of Mike's laboratory class, we met for a second interview. We again met in his office.

My first question was, "What do you do as a GTA?" His one-word response was, "Run." But then I probed and got: "My basic responsibilities are in creating labs and helping other students understand the hands-on portion of the courses." He normally



worked with freshmen and sophomores but he would occasionally get juniors and seniors in his classes. He thought it was easier to work with freshmen because they don't know "the game" yet. When I asked if he was comfortable with what he did he said, "Pretty comfortable, I would say. I like what I do."

Mike told me that the hardest thing he did as a GTA was, "probably just balancing the time, knowing where to cut off between how much time I need to invest in my studies and how much I need to invest in teaching courses." The most enjoyable was, "Students that are actually interested. It is a field I am interested in so when somebody else is interested in it it just makes it that much easier to convey and build, like, tangents that are related, not necessarily people who are just having interest in good grades."

Mike thought that being a GTA made him a better student. But being a GTA also did not set him off from the others. He was convinced that he was well accepted by his students as both a student and a teacher. Mike was a bit unique in my group of participants in that he had been a teaching assistant as an undergraduate in his university out west. He thought, however, that he was more prepared to be a teaching assistant here "due to the way it was structured." He also admitted that he had learned a lot about teaching by using techniques he had watched used by his other teachers.

Mike didn't remember if he had any expectations about teaching except that he was worried about the first couple times he had students for whom to be responsible. He made some mistakes and corrected them, but he didn't expect so much "pre class preparation." If he encountered a question he was not prepared to answer both he and the students discovered the answer together. With the freshman group, Mike said that they



had to oversimplify sometimes. "There are words and processes that they have to omit because they aren't ready for it yet."

I asked Mike, "What do you want for your students?" and he answered, "I want them to have an appreciation of the underlying techniques that we gather. I want them to be able to discern whether somebody is feeding them a line."

In response to the phrase, "Teaching is like...", Mike said, "Teaching is like walking up a sandhill, sometimes you enjoy walking up and sometimes you enjoy walking down." Mike seemed to think that learning came down to what he called a "confidence thing" where his students would be "able to formulate the questions." He thought that sometimes his students just had to plug through this.

Mike thought it was important for teachers to get to know the students so that they could converse on a more personal level. Yet, I did not notice that he knew his students' names. He saw that students seemed to relax quite a bit after the start of the semester. They were more willing to approach him or the professor of the class' after a few weeks into the semester than at the beginning. Mike thought he was getting to "know the students more personally. I think I still carry a teacher/student relationship but I have eased off on the personal part of it."

When I asked Mike for a description of a typical day he ran through a schedule that is not unlike many students and certainly GTAs on this campus. I found his comments on his research interesting when he said, "I usually work on various projects. Every two weeks I have to write a paper for my boss to tell him what I have accomplished researchwise and whether that involves library work or beating my undergrad assistant

into submission to follow directions.” He said that sometimes he was so busy he would forget to eat a meal.

I asked Mike where he expected to be in one year and he answered that he would probably still be here doing what he was doing. When I asked the same question about five years he answered, “I don’t know if it is going to mean going into industry or going into teaching. Either way I would like to be back in the Northwest.”

I asked Mike about his philosophy of education and got this response: “It is not just knowledge but being wiser, and being able to apply that knowledge is a big thing. We all have met the person who is straight A, top of their field--excuse the expression--they can’t pour piss out of a boot if the directions were printed on the bottom. They should be able to use it, be able to have questions like, ‘how does this work, how does that work, why does this?’ Give them knowledge so they can point out the questions.”

Mike usually thought about class after the class period when he was grading or when he was writing quizzes. Even then he did not let it bother him for very long--”just a few minutes,” he said. He continued to receive help from the supervisors and professors if and when he needed it.

I asked Mike to state his feelings about the college teaching seminar class he was taking and he answered, “A lot of times I don’t agree with (the seminar instructor’s) philosophy. Basically that comes from that she is expert in her field and in my field the attitude is pretty different towards the way students should approach the subject matter. (In the other areas) they are used to talking to people, studying people, you know, dealing with a human element, whereas we are not concerned with the human element as much or



more into the concrete knowledge.” He seemed to think that there were three students in the seminar who think the same way. “I think being in the seminar changes my teaching style a little bit--a little bit more towards the human element.”

I did not see Mike for six weeks, until the middle of April, when I had another observation. This class started at 3:00 PM but I did not arrive until 4:00 PM this time. There were eight students in class this day. By 4:10 all students had finished their projects and had left except for four students. There was a single machine that each student must use for their project and they must wait in line. The process with the machine took 15 to 20 minutes each time it was used. Students could leave when they finished. Since the professor was in the lab, Mike could only assist.

I noted that Mike used a sense of humor that was positive and appropriate, used speech that was neither too formal nor too casual, and established and maintained eye contact with students. He talked to students and not to the board or windows.

Mike required student thought and participation, knew and used student names, responded to students as individuals, and recognized when students did not understand. In addition, Mike explicitly stated relationships among various topics and facts/theory. Mike answered student questions clearly and directly, responded to wrong answers constructively, and encouraged students to answer difficult questions by providing cues and encouragement.

In relation to lab classes particularly, Mike had readily available materials and equipment necessary to complete the activity, gave prompt attention to individual



problems, provided individuals constructive verbal feedback, provided careful safety supervision, and allowed sufficient time for completion.

The final interview took place the first part of May, about a week before finals. I found Mike in his office again.

When I asked Mike if he thought he was meeting his students' needs he said he was and that he had been making time available for them to work with him at times other than in the classes. He hoped that the most important thing students got from him was to use common sense and to follow the directions put in front of them.

I learned from Mike that after he earned his master's degree he was going right on to complete his Ph.D. I asked him about his greatest accomplishment this semester and he said, "My greatest accomplishment is being able to explain subject matter in more than one way. I learned it in one particular way and then we were shown that students see it in different ways." I suspected he may have learned this in the seminar. His biggest disappointment, he said, was the freshman lab final exams that he was still grading. Apparently they were pretty dismal and, though he did not make up the test, he felt pretty badly for the students.

Mike felt he accomplished his teaching goals for the semester and he credited the help he received from supervisors and professors for much of that. He tried a bit more group work, particularly with the freshmen, than he had done before. He would like to do away with the lab book they were using and use a lot more cooperative exercises. Some of the boost he received for this came from the seminar.

Mike had mixed results when it concerned attendance goals. He said that the sophomores were very good at attending class but the freshmen were not good at attending at all. He noticed a direct relationship between attendance and grades. Mike enjoyed teaching the sophomores because they asked so many valid questions, but the freshmen were hard to get to discuss things--he called it "disheartening."

Mike thought that one of the things he liked most about being a GTA was that, "when you teach you learn it better." He liked the grading and other paper work the least about being a GTA. When I used a response card, "important to me," he responded, "One of the most important things to me is my name and how people think about me when somebody says it. I guess I'm more of a results person. Most of the time I'm more interested in how to get it done than the pathway we take to get it done."

I then asked Mike about his feelings about the seminar class associated with this study. He responded this way: "They kind of vary from week to week. Some weeks we have excellent speakers. We had a fella from Information Technology who gave a seminar on how and when to use various aspects of technology in the classroom. That was really helpful. There are other times when I walk through the door when I think, I'm getting absolutely nothing done here." The seminar instructor had demonstrated using cooperative group instruction and Mike was very surprised at how well it worked out. He had tried this idea with his freshmen and had success with it, so he planned to use cooperative groups more in the future. He also received ideas from the other members of the class.



Mike would have liked to see some of the topics that were covered in the seminar presented in the weekly meetings they had in Department A. Up to that point those meetings had been concerned with department business and problems that had come up in the classes. These seminar topics could, perhaps, head off some of those problems.

In summary, my first interview with Mike was at the second week of the semester of the study. He had, however, assisted in laboratories last year and last semester and this was his responsibility this semester.

Mike started the semester with a very negative feeling about his students, apparently brought on by cheating and dishonesty that occurred last semester. I noticed that Mike was the only GTA in this study who was not alone with his students in the classroom. The regular professor was in the lab with Mike nearly all the time. Perhaps due to his experience from last semester, Mike expressed concern over having to possibly deal with students' emotional concerns and other issues not related to his field.

By the middle of the semester he was beginning to feel more at ease with his responsibilities and his students. Mike was beginning to see things more from the student's perspective.

At mid-term Mike was wanting his students to be able to use and apply what they were learning with a bit of skepticism so as to not always accept things at face value. He admitted that he had begun to be more "personal" with his students in that he was reaching out to them as persons and not as a vessel of knowledge.

Mike was also beginning to realize that there were various approaches to teaching different from what he had been accustomed. Yet, he freely stated that he was opposed to



most of them. Mike felt his field was not as concerned with the "human element" as other fields.

By the end of the semester Mike was designing "pre-labs" to help students in their laboratory work. He was also allowing more group work and devising different ways to present difficult processes. Mike was upset with the lack of higher order thinking activities in one of the groups and had a strong desire to change that.

Mike was developing a philosophy of learning when he stated that, "To really learn something you need to be interested in the subject and be able to show an application."

Mike seemed to show growth from not caring about the "human element" to wanting students to be interested in his field and be able to apply it.

#### Frank's Experience

My first interview with Frank was a week before classes were to start. We met at a coffee house on campus. Sometimes he got so excited, when talking about something he was enthusiastic about, he spoke so fast it was hard to pick out what he was saying.

Frank came the farthest from his original home of all the participants in this study. He was from a chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea. Frank was only in his mid twenties, but was one of the older participants included. He was married and had a young daughter who was seven years old. His wife was pregnant with their second child. Family life was very important to him and he worked very hard at being a GTA, attending classes, and working part-time at a pizza parlor. I was surprised to learn that he graduated from the

same high school where I taught before retirement about 80 miles from this university.

He received his bachelor's degree from a university near his high school.

Frank was working on his master's degree but he expected to continue on to earn his Ph.D. in department E, which was where he worked. When finished with his schooling he hoped to send money back to his homeland to help his family as they are very poor.

Frank had strong convictions about education, and expected his daughter to continue after high school to obtain a college education. He was pleased with the education he had been receiving, but he looked forward to returning to the working world since money "was an issue."

I asked him what his plans were and he answered, "I might actually stay in academia and teach. I enjoy teaching." As I talked with him it was apparent that he sincerely enjoyed teaching.

Frank offered, "I think I can make a difference in the world because I lead by example. I always try to be the best person I can be and, if I ever do give a little advice or opinion, it is usually genuine."

Frank thought the scariest thing about teaching was, "You are up there in front of a class of 200 and you think you have your stuff all together and you just blank out. I mean just for two seconds and you realize that nobody is going to help you and there is no way out of this. I went on to my next point and I didn't know what my next point was. I worked through it alright."

Frank expected his supervisors to offer him support, feedback, and autonomy.

"The professors I have stress that I need autonomy to shape the way that I teach. They don't come and check on me." he said.

Frank believed that humor was very important to being a good teacher. He told a story of a teacher who sang, without missing a beat in his lecture, into a student's recorder when she ran to the bathroom. Frank remembered that lecture because of the unusual situation. He thought it was the out of the ordinary things that become memorable.

Frank was a little concerned about the department he worked for because he saw them as not getting along very well. He saw people trying to "grab power," although he liked the diversity in the program and saw it as an opportunity to learn under very different people.

Frank checked with his students periodically to see if his lectures were important to them. He wanted to know if there was something they were not understanding, and he always tried to improve in his teaching and wanted each semester to be a learning experience. One of the things that delighted him was when he was asked questions. He also liked it when students came to his office to discuss things from the lecture. He felt that it challenged him and let him feel like he was doing his job.

Frank admitted that, "Before I teach I get very anxious. I don't know why it is and I rationalize about it that it is normal. I was really nervous. I would go in there and it's that long walk to that big auditorium, especially at the beginning. I am getting a little used to it but the first couple of times it was a very long walk to the auditorium and the



main professor is not there--it's just you and the class, my class. But I feel really good afterward."

My first observation of Frank was long after our first interview--at the end of February. His class was in the building next to the one in which his department had its offices. Seating for about 200 was fixed and in curved rows on risers like in a movie theater. At the front of the hall were a lectern, overhead projector, a video projector, a few chairs, and three assorted tables. On the wall behind the speaker were chalkboards and projection screen. There appeared to be a computer at the front and there was a projection booth at the very back of the room.

All students I saw were dressed very casually. Frank was dressed less casually than the students with a long sleeve shirt and slacks. I estimated that there were 71 students in class that day. Most of them were women. Frank had entered at 11:00 AM. He turned on the overhead projector and turned off the front lights. To that point he had said nothing.

As he started, Frank gave a quick description of the upcoming test. Frank used transparencies as he began the review. He slid a sheet of paper down the transparency as he lectured in detail on each point. He looked frequently at the overhead but he also made eye contact with students--generally center and near him. He used a great deal of hand and arm movement for emphasis. Shortly after he started two women quickly left.

Frank gave examples from experience as he lectured. At one point Frank asked, "Is there anything anyone else wants to talk about on this chapter? Let's move on to chapter six then." He continued running through the points on the overhead emphasizing

with examples. Frank was speaking quite rapidly, but generally clear enough to understand. It was 11:40 and I had not heard a single question or comment from the students.

At 11:46 a third woman left, and at 11:47 another woman left. A minute later two women left together. By this time I had not seen Frank make eye contact to his left and rarely to his right. At 11:52 another woman left. At this time Frank had accidentally shaded part of the screen and I could not see the bottom items from where I sat. A woman behind me asked me for the bottom items, but I could not see them either.

My second interview with Frank was just a little more than a week after the first observation. This time we met in his office area which is shared by several GTAs but we moved to an empty classroom.

I asked what he did as a GTA and he answered, "I do a couple of lectures each week, answer questions at my office, help proctor exams, and help with special events in Department E." He told me he was getting pretty comfortable with his duties as a GTA. He admitted that "there is still a little bit of uneasiness about the lecture part. I think the hardest thing that I do is standing in front of a bunch of people and try to teach them something." Frank said that the most enjoyable part was knowing that he was helping students.

Then I asked for the benefits of being a GTA and Frank told me, "The obvious benefits are the financial reasons. In addition, and every GTA won't admit it, but I like playing the role of professor. I guess it is like your 50 minutes of fame. You are like

playing a role, I suppose." Frank thought that the students were a little surprised that they didn't have a professor in the lecture hall, but he thought they were getting used to it.

I asked Frank what he expected teaching would be like so he said, "I don't know. I thought, it would go easier than it is now. I think I thought, wow!, I am just going to get in there and I am going to be me, because I know lots of stuff in my head. But it isn't as easy as I thought it was." When I asked him what he expected for his students he said he wanted them to know more than just the four tests and a final. Then he admitted, "I am new at this and I am just learning so I am very conventional right now. Teaching is like riding a bike. I fell screaming more than once. You have to have a thick skin so you have to get back up and ride the bike again."

I asked Frank how he could tell his students have learned. His answer: "I guess one way is the obvious--performance on the exams. Also I can tell they have learned something when there is good attendance. It makes me feel good when students come to my office and want to ask questions."

Frank mentioned that he did not feel that he lectured as much as he should, although he felt that he got better at lecturing as he did it over and over again. He admitted having trouble with the overhead projector at first, but he changed to using print on the transparencies and he found out how to organize them better. One of the things he regularly did was to attend the large lecture class taught by the professor with whom he worked.

When I asked Frank to look ahead to one year from then he told me he would probably be finishing his master's and moving toward his Ph.D. In five years he expected



to be teaching at a university and in ten years he hoped to be teaching at what he calls an "upper" university and maybe dabbling in a business venture.

He thought about his class when he left for the day in that he considered how it ran, what he could have done better, and where he "screwed up." I asked Frank for his feelings about the seminar he was taking associated with this study and he responded, "I like it. The class is really good and brings up some good points. Sometimes it is kind of unsettled, but we have been doing really good lately. We have been really talking." He said that he was getting ideas about alternatives in his presentation from the seminar.

When he needed help with something related to his teaching, Frank usually turned to his professor when he did not feel he could work it out himself. He rarely turned to the other GTAs as he felt they were not much help to him. The main help he got from the professor was the autonomy he was awarded.

My second observation of Frank was done six weeks after the last interview, at the middle of April. When Frank entered the room at 11:01 AM he talked for a while with students in the front of the seating. This was a review session to review for a test, as were most of his classes. Frank directed more of his comments to his right and center, but was now directing some to his left.

There were 69 students in class this day, mostly women, and nearly all the students were listening and taking notes. Frank began class on time and then reviewed the lecture content. As he clearly stated the objective for the period, he appeared well-prepared for class. Frank used visuals in his presentation and, today, I heard him clearly and he used gestures for effect. He had credibility and control and demonstrated content-

competence as he talked with confidence and authority. Frank explained difficult terms in more than one way and presented background of ideas and concepts. I did not, however, observe any interaction between Frank and his students during the lecture.

My third interview with Frank was done the first part of May, about a week before final exams. I found him in his office area and this time we stayed in the office area.

I asked if he thought he was meeting his students needs and he answered, "Yes. In my lectures, I go into the material they need to centralize on a concept in their reading. I try to help them out as much as I can."

I asked Frank for his most memorable moment and he said, "I suppose my own lectures. I guess I just say that because I have gotten much better. I'm kind of getting my own style whereas before I would get really nervous."

When I asked Frank if he tried anything new he told me, "Yah, actually the lecture you witnessed was my own lecture--everything, my own material." He felt that his students were more at ease with him than at the beginning of the semester. When I asked him what he would change about the semester he said, "I would have lectured more actually."

Frank mentioned that he went to the class professor for help with difficulties in his class and he would also go to the other GTAs. In the previous interview he had said that he did not feel that the advice from the other GTAs was valuable. If he sought help of a more general nature about his teaching he went to the seminar instructor or to members of that class.

I asked Frank what he liked most about being a GTA and he said, "To help others, to give knowledge and understanding." Then when I asked about what he least liked he stated, "The preparation time. The students don't know I have to study twice as hard as they so I know what is going on."

I asked him what his students should be able to do when they leave his class. He answered, "They should have an understanding of the aspects of (this subject) and definitely be able to convey that when I test for that. They should have an understanding of the meaning of (this subject)."

Then I asked Frank how he thinks an individual learns. He answered this way, "Personally, I learn something from taking an example or something that someone has said, puts it into their own understanding so that it's meaningful to them, or the logic may be, to not only understand how they feel about it but to understand what the person is trying to convey."

Frank seemed to agree that the seminar in educational issues was helpful to him, but I could find very little of what he mentioned that he had applied in his classes. He felt that there were several topics covered that he could find useful, particularly the session on using Power Point presentations. Frank thought the seminar should be offered to all GTAs and the six hours of training offered by the graduate school before fall semester should be cut.

In summary, my first interview with Frank was before the start of the semester. He had, however, taught a similar class the previous semester. Early in the interview



Frank expressed his enjoyment in teaching and was planning to continue his education toward a Ph. D. and would continue to teach.

Frank believed that he led by example and that his advice was genuine, yet Frank was the only GTA in this study who had difficulty keeping appointments with me. Frank observed from the previous semester that there was considerable strife in his department, though he felt that this helped him grow in his field.

Frank expressed a desire to teach well when he expressed, "I want to learn to teach well and be better at it," and when I observed Frank with his class of 71 students--mostly women--early in the semester, he was able to present his material clearly using an overhead projector and a sound system. Frank made reference several times to "real-life" situations. What I did not witness was any dialogue between teacher and students.

By mid-term Frank was feeling that he was "getting pretty comfortable" with his teaching responsibilities. He admitted to being a bit uneasy about lecturing yet. I did not see any uneasiness during the observation made previously, however. Frank spoke of his responsibility as "like playing a role." He liked "showing them the right answer." He admitted that "we really don't have as much interaction as I want to."

Frank, by this second interview, had begun to feel very confident of his lecturing and lecturing "style." He stated that he had made changes in his teaching, but only in his lecturing. He was determined that, "This semester I am going to cover the material."

When asked about the college teaching seminar I could only elicit responses of a very general nature from Frank. By mid-term I had no evidence that he was applying any of the information from the seminar.

My observation of Frank late in the semester found him doing much the same as the first observation which was still lacking in teacher/student interaction. I had no data to indicate he knew any of the students' names.

In contrast, in response to the question about meeting his students' needs, he responded, "Yes. In my lectures I go into the material they need to centralize on a concept on reading." Likewise, his most memorable moment was, "My own lectures."

I asked If he tried anything new. "The lecture you witnessed. It was new. I tried all my own resources--no help from the other professor."

Frank would, still, only give general statements about the seminar, though he offered, "I'm learning to better...to help others, to give knowledge and understanding," although he stated he was, "still dependent on conventional lecturing."

At the end of the final interview Frank gave a specific benefit of the seminar when he said, "We learned how to use Power Point effectively." He did not, however, apply that to his class. In the end he strongly endorsed the value of the seminar, though he never appeared to employ any of the seminar ideas.

### Summary

In Chapter III I gave a short description of the setting and a general description of the GTAs who were selected for the study. Each participant's experience for the semester is carefully summarized from the beginning to the end of the semester.

I gave a little background information about each participant at the beginning of each story. I also described the settings for interviews and observations as this

information sometimes has a bearing on the quality of the session and sometimes affects the findings.

I chose to follow each participant continuously throughout the semester so that if there were any changes that occurred they may be evident as you read each vignette. In Chapter IV the themes and final assertions will be discussed in detail.



## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will state the overriding assertion resulting from this study and define the sub-assertions attached to the general assertion. I will then explain how the various analysis methods were applied to arrive at the overriding assertion and how the sub-assertions were developed. Analysis of the data took several different turns from coding and grouping, to a visual search for patterns and a code count using Ethnograph v5.0 qualitative analysis software, and finally to developing a matrix (see pages 30-32) which reflects the progression of attitudes of the participants from the first of the semester to the end of the semester. This is an adaptation of the chronology matrix described by Miles and Huberman (1994).

#### The Assertions

One overriding assertion resulted from this study: All of the GTAs made changes in their attitudes about teaching over the course of the semester. Sub-assertion #1: Most of the GTAs developed a more positive view and attitude due to the pedagogical training, though, to varying degrees, the impact of the pedagogical training had less positive effect on some GTAs. Sub-assertion #2: A specific benefit of the pedagogical training was the implementation of various types of effective alternative teaching procedures. Sub-assertion #3: Desire to improve teaching effectiveness had an impact on most of the GTAs.

The overriding assertion seems consistent with Abbott, Wulff, and Szego's (1989) review of research where they found, "Of the thirteen studies identified, all reported significant effects on the basis of some aspects of the training provided for TAs." (p. 112).

#### Sub-assertion #1

Most of the GTAs developed a more positive view and attitude due to the pedagogical training, though, to varying degrees, the impact of the pedagogical training had less positive effect on some GTAs.

A glance at the matrix from left to right under the four column headings involving "attitudes about teaching" shows quickly that the positive remarks about attitudes toward teaching generally increased from the beginning to the end of the semester. The data also indicates a higher level of satisfaction with teaching.

The code count from Ethnograph v5.0 also pointed to a higher level of positive responses to teaching. Surprisingly, Barb and Gail, at mid-semester, increased in their positive responses to teaching but decreased in positive responses from mid-semester to the end of the semester. The net result was a small increase in positive responses, but not what I had expected. Joe and Rick decreased considerably in positive responses by mid-term but increased by semester's end to where they, too, had a net increase in positive responses to teaching. Mike followed a pattern similar to Barb and Gail in positive responses to teaching, and Frank had approximately the same level of positive responses to teaching each time he was interviewed. This data was gathered only from the interviews as the observations and journal notes did not indicate GTAs' attitudes and,

therefore, did not provide a good across the board representation of the data that could be accurately and fairly compared.

These findings were, by no means, indicative of great revelations that what I had sought had, indeed, been found. Strauss and Corbin (1990) caution against being too hasty in coming to conclusions regarding sequences of events along a time-line such as the one I used. Further investigation was necessary to come to convincing conclusions.

At the start of the semester Barb had only two general positive comments toward teaching. She stated that she may like to continue teaching but was not sure of that yet. She also expressed that she liked the students. In contrast, other comments Barb gave indicated she had high anxiety, that she was very anxious about teaching large groups, that she felt inadequate in what she was required to do, and that teaching was like a never-ending cycle.

Late in the semester Barb made effective use of examples in class for her students, she said she felt more confident in what she was doing, and she felt more comfortable working with large groups of students. In response to her concern about wanting to continue teaching, more than a year after the study Barb was still teaching--as an instructor and not a GTA.

Barb expressed many good comments about the college teaching seminar. She stated that she had learned many useful ideas from the class including help with grading policies, assistance on how to get feedback from the students, and help with ways to deal with disciplinary situations. She mentioned that the seminar presented good topics that she could use immediately or later, such as using Power Point. She said she received a



great deal of help with her teaching such as how to involve the students more in discussions and how to apply cooperative group activities which she had applied to her teaching. Barb said she would recommend the seminar to other GTAs. I could find no negative comments about the seminar from Barb.

Gail said at the beginning of the semester that she liked teaching college students. My first observation of her showed her to be comfortable teaching. She had a year of experience behind her and yet she expressed high anxiety about teaching her lecture class, and felt inadequate, insecure, and isolated.

By semester's end, Gail liked the lecture class more than at first and had relaxed in that class. She expressed a sincere desire to continue teaching at the college level. Gail still felt somewhat stressed and isolated, but those feelings were not nearly as intense as they had been at the beginning of the semester.

Gail liked the different views presented in the seminar as a result of the diverse make-up of the class. She said that they had many good and useful discussions about topics such as discipline situations, use of cooperative groups, and grading policies. Gail appreciated the speakers who spoke on lecturing and power point, though she said she was pretty familiar with most of what they talked about. Gail's one negative comment about the seminar was that she felt it was not as helpful as she had hoped.

Joe said at the start of the semester that he liked teaching and that he expected to have some impact on students. He expressed only a low level of anxiety at this time.

At the end of the semester Joe was expecting to remain in teaching, his students had maintained good attendance in his classes, and he even liked grading. The only

detractor he mentioned was that he had little control over what was presented in his classes.

Joe liked the format of the seminar, partly because some of his friends were in this seminar and they had similar views in some of the discussions. He said that he received some useful ideas from the seminar such as the use of small groups for study, and grading tips which he had applied to his work. He said he would recommend the seminar to other GTAs. The one negative comment Joe had was that he thought the seminar was, perhaps, offered too late in the year.

When the semester began Rick said he cared about students, that he enjoyed seeing students do well in his classes, and that he was pretty comfortable teaching, although he expressed a slight amount of anxiety and saw his class as being taught only by lecture methods. At the end of the semester Rick stated that he loved teaching, that he was very comfortable teaching, and that his students had a very high attendance rate. He had no negative comments at this time.

Rick said that the seminar gave him "plenty of ideas" which I had observed him applying in his classes. The study session he offered one night each week appeared to be very satisfying and useful to him. Rick admitted to me that, until he had been in the seminar, he hadn't thought of himself as a teacher. He said that the class was "laid out well" and that he would recommend it to other GTAs. He stated, as Joe did, that the class should be earlier in the year.

Mike stated at the start of the semester that he cared about his students and that he liked teaching. In contrast, other comments included a concern for the "moral decline in



students,” that he was uncomfortable with some student issues, that there was an unexpected amount of pre-class preparation, and that his field was “not concerned with the human element.” By the end of the semester, Mike was comfortable teaching and the only negative comment had to do with low attendance in some of his classes.

Mike thought the speakers that were brought into the seminar were “excellent” and that he had learned from them. He stated that the discussions were good. Mike made a point to mention that he learned about the non-traditional learner in this seminar. Mike’s application of cooperative group study later in the semester showed that he thought that part of the seminar was important to him.

Of all the participants, Mike had the most negative comments about the seminar. He said he didn’t agree with the seminar instructor’s philosophy of education in that she was, “pretty exposed in her field” which I took to mean she was very open and approachable to her students. Mike disagreed often with some of the others in the seminar for much the same reason when he said, “(the other seminar students) “are used to talking to people, studying people, dealing with a human element, whereas we are not concerned with the human element as much and we are more into the concrete knowledge.” Though he applied some of the ideas from the seminar to his teaching, Mike said that sometimes the seminar was a “waste of time.”

Frank enjoyed teaching at the start of the semester to the point of “having fun” and he also said that he taught by example. His only negative comment at this time was that he was not having much interaction with students. By the end of the semester Frank



stated that he was getting much better at lecturing and that he planned to continue teaching. He had no negative comments at the end of the semester.

In contrast to Mike, Frank had the most positive comments about the seminar. He stated that the "class is good," that they "discuss good points," and the class had "good discussions." He said that the seminar was "really interesting" and it "was his support" many times during the semester. He found it "helpful," that it contained "good information," and that he was "glad he was in" the seminar. Frank thought the seminar should be "required of all GTAs." Frank had no specific comments about the topics discussed in the seminar, but I took note of the fact that he was still using only lecture techniques in his teaching at the end of the semester.

We can see from these six accounts that the positive comments generally increased as the semester progressed and that the negative comments decreased during the progression of the semester. Williams (1991) reflected this same view as she stated, "According to these self-appraisals, both groups of TAs perceived that they improved in teaching effectiveness during the course of the study." (p. 594).

Williams (1991) also found results about anxiety consistent with one of my participants when Williams observed in her study, "limited gains in teaching experience and participation in formal training, without observations and peer mentoring, have little effect on the teaching anxiety of TAs. (p. 594).

Abbott, Wulff, and Szego (1989), likewise found that, "the effectiveness of a TA training program may depend on the interaction between TA's prior degrees or

educational backgrounds and how TAs are trained.” (p. 118). This was a good share of what this study had examined.

#### Sub-assertion #2

A specific benefit of the pedagogical training was the implementation of various types of effective alternative teaching procedures.

A code count was undertaken of the application of suggestions given in the college teaching seminar. Though certainly not conclusive, the number of these applications increased considerably for all the GTAs except for one of the male GTAs.

As we look at the two columns headed “Applications of alternative teaching” we see that, early in the semester, Barb employed effective examples in her teaching and used a short teacher evaluation that she had learned early in the seminar. By the end of the semester she was using the short teacher evaluation cards and had included more student participation in her classes. She also began to encourage feedback from the students, started a study laboratory before exams, and employed small group study and discussion. All of these ideas came from the seminar she attended.

Gail used good examples, such as relating a possible illegal activity to her field which may only be unethical, at the start of the semester but the bulk of her presentation was lecture. By the end of the semester she employed a great deal of one-on-one work in her laboratory class and allowed students to explore more on their own. In the lecture class she employed short quizzes with the video presentations and encouraged students to participate in discussions. Gail had learned the ideas for these changes from the seminar.



Joe was already using groups of four to five students to discuss items on tests that were handed back to the students early in the semester. By the end of the semester, he indicated that he was regularly using small groups for discussion, that he used after-class discussion, that he was now allowing rewrites on some papers from the students, and that he was using teacher evaluation cards that he had learned from the seminar.

Rick had once said that since his subject was (and had been) generally taught only by using a lecture method, he doubted that he could see himself changing much in his teaching style from using lecture. He, however, admitted to being a real advocate of trying new things. Early in the semester he began to use groups of three students for study/discussion which he had learned early in the seminar. He also began to see teaching as a form of coaching and was using more practical applications in class. By the end of the semester, Rick was running an evening study group weekly, was departing from the "only lecture" format in his teaching, was using more group work, and had begun to use students as "teachers" in his class during board activities. The impetus for all of these changes came from the seminar class.

At the start of the semester Mike allowed cooperative work in his laboratories which he had not done in the previous semester. By the end of the semester he used different ways to explain his material, much more group work, particularly in his freshman class, and he wrote pre-laboratories for his students to use before the actual laboratory work. These ideas came either directly or indirectly as a result of the seminar.

Frank was the exception to the positive results brought on by the seminar. The only item I could identify as being a teaching alternative was when he mentioned that he



saw teaching as "playing a role." I am not sure he learned that from the seminar. Even though he mentioned several times that the seminar was "interesting" and that he got "a lot of good ideas" from it, I could find no application of any of the alternative ideas presented in the seminar.

It is apparent from the analysis of the matrix that most of the GTAs were applying many more alternative techniques in their teaching later in the semester than they were earlier in the semester. Most of this was attributed, by the GTAs, to the seminar. Others have discovered this as well.

Johnson (1987), quoted in Abbott, Wulff, & Szego (1989), found that, "after training TAs in the use of the Cognitive Interaction Analysis System, the TAs increased their awareness of learners and made marked changes in their verbal behavior." (p. 117).

Black and Bonwell (1991) indicated that training should be in the first year: "Contrary to a popular belief that most teachers are born, not made, a systematic, comprehensive program will help graduate assistants improve their teaching skills substantially within the first year." (p. 442). Mandeville (1994) agreed: "(The graduate teaching assistants) felt that more training and meetings, particularly for new instructors would be beneficial and appreciated." (p. 9).

Travers (1989) found that, "Teaching assistants who were videotaped or observed improved their instruction in regard to verbal reinforcement, longer wait-time concerning student responses, and summaries at the end of lectures." (p. 148). Observation by the seminar instructor while teaching was one of the techniques offered to the GTAs in this study followed by a debriefing session with the seminar instructor.

The University of North Carolina (1996) suggested one of the key items emphasized in their seminar was, "that your TAs spend five minutes after each class session writing down the successful elements of their classroom performance and what they would do differently next time." (p. 7). The seminar instructor for this midwest university study suggested that the GTAs let students write comments about the above after a few of their class sessions.

Certainly, not all of the GTAs are going to be reached by the training offered to them as was evidenced by one of the GTAs in this study who did not learn much from the pedagogical training.

### Sub-assertion #3

Desire to improve teaching effectiveness had an impact on most of the GTAs.

By examining the matrix on page 30 we see the influence "desire to teach well" had on each of the GTAs. This desire may have come late to Mike, but it was as much a factor in his teaching attitude as the other GTAs in this study. It is apparent that this desire may be misdirected in the case of Frank.

According to the statements she made during the course of the semester, Barb had a high desire to do well in her teaching. She cared very much about her ability to teach and wanted her students to learn from her. As I interviewed Barb and spent time in her classes as she taught it was apparent that her desire to do well helped her to seek out ways to help her in what she was teaching.

Likewise, Gail repeated several times that she wanted very much for her students to do well in her classes. In my interviews with her she indicated that she wished she had



more time to spend preparing for her classes. She, at times, spoke about being anxious to find ways to improve the way she taught her classes.

Joe made statements to indicate that he wished to keep education exciting for the students. He sought good rapport with his students and wished for them to develop critical minds.

Rick indicated that he wanted his students to understand the subject and did not want to appear boring to the students. Rick said that he had a strong desire to make learning fun. Rick was willing to try new things to make teaching enjoyable. At one point he likened teaching to "recess" from the other responsibilities he had.

Mike indicated a desire to teach well, but it came late in the semester. His earlier feelings about teaching seemed to be clouded by his attitude about his field being "not so concerned with the human element."

Frank was adamant about his desire to teach well. Like Rick, he stated a desire to be interesting to his students and to get better at lecturing. He also had a desire to "cover the material" and knew he would need more experience lecturing. Yet, by closely examining the matrix we see that, of the six GTAs in this study, Frank applied new ideas in his teaching the least during the semester of the study.

Desire to teach well appeared to have a positive effect on five of the six GTAs in the study. Had this study gone longer, perhaps the sixth GTA may have shown some changes as well. In Smith and Kalivoda's (1998) study, one of the unifying elements found was that, "each held a strong commitment to teaching." (p. 89). Desire to teach



well was a factor in their study and the GTAs they studied "sought out opportunities for growth." (p. 92).

In summary, it is clear from the analysis of the data that all of the GTAs made changes in their attitudes about teaching over the course of the semester. This is not to say that all the GTAs acted on those attitudes and made changes in their teaching style. Most of the GTAs developed a more positive view and teaching style as seen from the analysis and the pedagogical training would appear to have assisted in this effect. Certainly, the implementation of different types of alternative teaching procedures was accomplished by most of the GTAs and they admitted to learning most of these from the seminar.

A desire to improve their teaching skills motivated most of the GTAs to make changes to help them in their work and to seek help from the seminar. All but one of the GTAs was positively influenced by the pedagogical training, as is evident from the analysis of the attitudes about the seminar.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,  
RECOMMENDATIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this chapter I will summarize the previous four chapters about this study and review the analysis which resulted in the overriding assertion and three sub-assertions connected to the main assertion. From this I will discuss my conclusions from the study and consider the limitations with which it was faced. I mention implications for the training of GTAs and make recommendations that might benefit future GTAs. Recommendations are also made regarding further research or study. Finally I have included my reflections on this study which includes a look back at how I may have done the work differently.

Summary

Since many college courses, particularly undergraduate courses, are taught by graduate teaching assistants, concerns have arisen in some colleges and universities about the quality of instruction performed by these GTAs. Many colleges offer some instruction to GTAs before and during their teaching term, but many do not offer adequate instruction.

Such is the case at the midwestern university where this study was performed. A few days of instruction was offered at the beginning of each school year and a few of the departments offered GTAs ongoing help in the form of seminars and mentoring during the first year of teaching. Most of the departments did not, however, offer continuous assistance once the GTA had begun teaching.

It was at this point that a study was initiated to describe the experiences of GTAs who participated in a pedagogical mentoring program at this midwestern university. The study sought to answer the questions: Are there differences in GTAs' perceptions of their teaching before they participated in a semester-long course on pedagogy and after they participated in such a course? Would additional training in the area of teaching methods and alternatives help GTAs to be more open to alternative approaches to teaching, more able to transfer knowledge to their students or help them to discover knowledge?

From late December, 1999 to May, 2000 six GTAs who had elected to participate in the study and take a semester-long seminar with weekly meetings and mentorship opportunities were studied through interviews, observations, and seminar discussions. These GTAs were selected, randomly, from a pool of nine potential participants enrolled in the college teaching seminar. They came from six different departments that had no ongoing training/mentorship program for GTAs.

I did not make an attempt to determine GTA effectiveness and determination of the quality of instruction was not solicited from the GTAs' students, supervisors, advisors, or peers. The GTAs were encouraged to tell their own stories and analysis of



the data and conclusions were determined from their own words and verified by observation.

During Spring Semester 2000, I conducted three personal interviews of each participant, two participant observations, and conferred with the seminar instructor about the happenings in the seminar and about other GTA considerations. During the course of the semester, the GTAs attended a weekly seminar of about an hour where they received training in pedagogical issues and discussed situations in their classes with peers and the seminar instructor.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed and then coded and analyzed. During the observations careful notes were written which were discussed with the participants a few days after the observation. These notes were also coded and analyzed.

After extensive reading and rereading of the data, 33 codes were determined which were then placed into 5 categories. The codes and categories were helpful in developing the results of code counts and what the codes were telling me as the data were examined from beginning to end of the semester.

It became apparent to me that I would need to develop each participant's story from the start of the semester to the end of the semester so as to relate what was occurring as the semester progressed which is what was then done in Chapter III. As each story unfolded, a chronological matrix was developed, written out and analyzed so that behavior patterns of the participants throughout the semester could be seen. What had been hinted at in the code counts was now seen more clearly in the matrix.

As a result the main theme and overriding assertion came about: All of the GTAs made changes in their attitudes about teaching over the course of the semester. Three sub-assertions also became apparent: Sub-assertion #1: Most of the GTAs developed a more positive view and attitude due to the pedagogical training, though, to varying degrees, the impact of the pedagogical training had less positive effect on some GTAs. Sub-assertion #2: A specific benefit of the pedagogical training was the implementation of various types of effective alternative teaching procedures. Sub-assertion #3: Desire to improve teaching effectiveness had an impact on most of the GTAs.

### Conclusions

Are there differences in the perceptions of their teaching of those graduate teaching assistants before they participate in a semester-long course on pedagogy and after they participate in such a course?

Before discussing the conclusions in detail I think it is important to mention that some of the data were skewed due to the fact that most of the GTAs had experience during the previous semester and one GTA had taught her class the Spring Semester of the previous year. These facts notwithstanding, it was still possible to reliably track the progress of each studied GTA through the course of the semester. I will discuss conclusions as they arose from each sub-assertion.

#### Sub-assertion #1

Most of the GTAs developed a more positive view and attitude due to the pedagogical training, though, to varying degrees, the impact of the pedagogical training



had less positive effect on some GTAs. The operative term here is "positive" where teaching was positively affected by the training they received.

The amount of experience the GTAs had ranged from virtually no previous experience to experience in college teaching the school year before this school year. Abbott, Wulff, & Szego (1989) had a definite opinion regarding the training and experience of GTAs when they stated, "the effectiveness of a TA training program may depend on the interaction between TAs' prior degrees or educational backgrounds and how TAs are trained." (p. 118). Gail had experience teaching in a K-12 system, though this experience did not seem to help her much in this instance. Four of the participants (the men) carried experience from last semester to the current semester. Of the four, only one, Mike, carried a negative feeling about teaching and students from the past semester. Frank said that he learned much from his first semester's experience.

From the start of the semester to the end of the semester, all six of the GTAs gained in positive attitude toward teaching and students. Barb, with the least experience, gained the most in her positive attitude, though Rick's positive attitude seemed to soar toward the end of the semester. Mike, with a negative attitude at the start of the semester, made positive gains and became more comfortable teaching. Frank started the semester with a positive attitude and seemed to gain additional ground in positive attitude, though this may not be so evident when we examine sub-assertion #2.

One might argue that much of what was identified as an increase in positive attitude may be due to experience. If this were a great contributing factor, Gail may have started with a positive attitude as would Mike. All GTAs stated that it was mainly due to



the seminar that they had gained in their positive attitude toward teaching and students. It was evident from the observations I made that some of the GTAs had positive experiences. Rick's student attendance remained very high, for instance, and Joe admitted that he liked grading. Mike indicated by example when he began to modify his classes and by his comments that the seminar had helped him. He was positively influenced by the seminar, yet he retained some negative feelings about it.

All of the GTAs had some level of anxiety at the start of the semester, but Barb and Gail were the most anxious, and Gail never lost much of that anxiety. This appears to be consistent with Williams (1991) who found, "that limited gains in teaching experience and participation in formal training, without observations and peer mentoring, have little effect on the teaching anxiety of TAs." (p. 594). Anxiety level, for most, seemed to diminish as comments about anxiety became fewer and comments about negative attitude also diminished. Gail's high level of anxiety was attributed mainly to her response to the actions of one individual student and to a class she was taking herself.

#### Sub-assertion #2

A specific benefit of the pedagogical training was the implementation of various types of effective alternative teaching procedures.

All but one of the GTAs took advantage of suggested effective alternative teaching procedures learned in the seminar. Barb and Joe began to use short teacher evaluation cards and student feedback methods suggested in the seminar. Barb, Joe, Rick, and Mike began using small groups of students for discussion and study, recommended by the seminar instructor. Gail and Rick began to use more practical

examples in their teaching, and, with Barb and Mike, began to apply methods learned in the seminar to encourage more students to participate in discussions. Barb and Mike used new methods to enhance their laboratory teaching such as study labs and pre-labs. Gail initiated a quiz with a video to help students learn from the video and Rick started a weekly evening study session to assist his students, which were both inspired by the seminar. Rick was so inspired by the seminar that he said he began to see himself as a teacher.

Frank was the only real disappointment. After all the accolades about the seminar, he was lecturing at the beginning of the semester and he was lecturing at the end of the semester, even though he had ample opportunity to apply some of the suggestions from the seminar.

### Sub-assertion #3

Desire to improve teaching effectiveness had an impact on most of the GTAs.

All but one of the GTAs had a strong desire to improve teaching skills at the beginning of the semester. Mike did not express a desire to improve his teaching skills until later in the semester, after he worked through his concern over his students' moral decline and lack of human concern. Joe, Rick, and Frank had desires to keep their teaching fresh and exciting. Barb and Gail wanted their students to learn and do well in applying what they would learn. All of the GTAs but Frank were willing to apply new ideas to their teaching to keep learning interesting.

Frank's desire to improve teaching skills seemed misplaced. He had a desire to be interesting to his students which seemed to be directed to himself and not to the act of



learning. Frank had a desire to improve his lecturing, to cover the material, and to obtain more experience lecturing. It seemed to me that Frank missed the point of the seminar.

In summary, we can see from the data that there are differences in these GTAs before and after taking the seminar. Those who experienced change attributed most of it to the experience of the seminar. Certainly the literature consistently supports these findings across the assertions.

#### Limitations

This study dealt with a microcosm of lives of GTAs in only one midwestern university. Though the selection of the six participants was random, a good cross-section of students even from this university cannot be guaranteed. This study was conducted for only one semester, and that was the second semester of the school year.

#### Implications

The results of this study would indicate that GTA experiences are, indeed, enhanced by the availability of a pedagogical training program. Of the six participants, four stated that a seminar of the type they attended should be recommended for other GTAs and, of those four, one stated that the course should be required of all new GTAs. It would seem that even a "born teacher" might benefit from a program such as the one provided for these GTAs.

#### Recommendations

This study has convinced me that I must make several recommendations regarding the employment of GTAs at our colleges and universities. For GTAs to be effective as teachers they must have more than just a few days of orientation at the beginning of the



school year. It would seem reasonable to offer new GTAs a weekly seminar at the beginning of the year and a mentor with whom to visit when problems or concerns about teaching arise. Included in a seminar should be opportunities to present ideas before a group of peers who can support these ideas and make suggestions for improvement.

Anxiety appears to be a problem for some GTAs, particularly at the start of their responsibilities. Methods should be employed that would reduce the anxiety such as role-playing and making use of faculty support groups in their own field.

GTAs who are having positive experiences teaching should be encouraged and supported. Ways should be found to avoid burn-out which can happen rapidly when a teacher does not feel supported. Most of the GTAs in the study group had support from supervisors and other professors which appeared to go a long way to encourage them.

GTAs experiencing negative feelings about teaching should be counseled to attempt to find the cause of negativity and support should be offered to help them work through their problems. It was encouraging to me to see the participant with the most negative comments at the beginning of the study end the semester with only one negative comment and that was a concern about low student attendance.

If our college and university GTAs are not going to be required to have pedagogical training before they assume teaching responsibilities, then, at the very least, they should be offered this type of training as they begin their teaching. It should continue for, at least, the first semester of their work.

### Recommendations for Further Research

This was a small, localized study. It would be important to examine training for GTAs using similar methods to those used in this study at several other universities in many parts of the United States. Not only would this give evidence to whether training benefits GTAs, it would give direction in how to approach such training.

In addition, I would like to see a broad quantitative study done at several universities throughout the U. S. that would examine statistical relationships between use of GTAs and student satisfaction with them and compare universities and departments that have training programs to those that do not have the programs. Following that, I would like to see a qualitative study at some of those same institutions and departments to help identify the factors that would improve the teaching experiences of the GTAs and the learning experiences of their students.

### Reflections

Looking back on what was accomplished during this study, many items came to mind that would enhance a study of this type. Two of the participants stated that they thought the seminar should have been earlier in the school year. Had the study been done during the first semester of the school year instead of the second semester, the problems of dealing with effects of experience could have been mostly avoided. I would like to think that a larger pool of potential participants could be gathered, though, at this university, I doubt that many more viable participants could be found. That the seminar was effective in changing attitudes of GTAs and convincing them to use effective

alternative teaching methods was very apparent to me as I poured over the data, read my journal notes, and thought back on what GTAs and I discussed in the interviews.

At the risk of raising the ire of some of my colleagues, I want to say that I think there are "born teachers" and I think I studied one of them, in Rick, during this research project. By the same token, I think this "born teacher" was aided in a very remarkable way by the proceedings of the seminar he attended. On the other hand, I also believe there are those who should, perhaps, not consider teaching as a profession. The irony of this is that the one I consider a "born teacher" had no intention of staying in teaching and the one I thought was questionable as a teacher planned to stay in teaching the rest of his professional life.



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

122  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE  
IN  
GRADUATE ASSISTANT TRAINING  
ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

Bruce H. Emmel, Principal Investigator

I, \_\_\_\_\_, who am a graduate teaching assistant at the University of \_\_\_\_\_ consent to participate in an interview and observation study conducted for the Department of \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. These interviews and observations will be included in a study which will be submitted to the University of \_\_\_\_\_ Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree.

Responses from three interviews per subject will be grouped and presented in categories. There will be two observations of subjects while each is performing his/her teaching responsibilities. There will be a total of twelve (12) subjects in this study. These interviews and observations will take place from 20 December 1999, through the end of Spring Semester, 2000. This is not to be for evaluation purposes, but merely to collect data from the observations. Benefits to respondents include opportunities to share perceptions and experiences as a graduate teaching assistant to a professional researcher willing to listen to them.

Every attempt will be made to keep this information confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in place of actual names. However, this does not completely guarantee total anonymity. Signed forms and data will be kept in my office at 1121 Third St. S., \_\_\_\_\_ which will be locked when I am not at home. These same items will be kept for three years after the completion of the study, at which time they will be destroyed.

You will have the right to review the material that is written that you have contributed, and you may withdraw from the process at any time without penalty, at which time the data you contributed will be destroyed. You have the right to edit any material that you have contributed. The principal investigator retains the right to terminate a subject's involvement in this study if it is determined that the data gained is not applicable, or the subject does not meet the study requirements as being a graduate teaching assistant who began his/her teaching duties during the school term 1999-2000 and is currently teaching in a classroom.

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Bruce H. Emmel, (218)



APPENDIX B  
DEPARTMENT CONSENT FORM

DEPARTMENT CONSENT TO  
ALLOW PRACTICING  
GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS  
TO PARTICIPATE IN  
GRADUATE ASSISTANT TRAINING  
ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of the Department of

\_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow graduate teaching assistants from my department to participate in an interview and observation study conducted for the Department of \_\_\_\_\_. These interviews and observations will be included in a study which will be submitted to the University Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree.

Responses from three interviews per subject will be grouped and presented in categories. There will be two observations of subjects while each is performing his/her teaching responsibilities. These interviews and observations will take place from 20 December 1999, through the end of Spring Semester, 2000. This is not to be for evaluation purposes, but merely to collect data from the observations. Benefits to the department include possible discovery of methods as to how best to prepare graduate teaching assistants to effectively perform their teaching duties. Benefits to respondents include opportunities to share perceptions and experiences as a graduate teaching assistant to a professional researcher willing to listen to them.

Every attempt will be made to keep this information confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in place of actual names. However, this does not completely guarantee total anonymity.

Respondents will have the right to review the material that is written which they have contributed, and they may withdraw from the process at any time, at which time the data they contributed will be destroyed. They will have the right to edit any material they have contributed.

Clearance from the \_\_\_\_\_ IRB has been obtained for this activity.

I very much appreciate that you will allow me this opportunity,

Sincerely,

Bruce H. Emmel, Principal Investigator (218)

**APPENDIX C**  
**FIRST INTERVIEW RESPONSE CARDS**



## APPENDIX C

## RESPONSE CARDS USED DURING THE FIRST INTERVIEW

What is most important to me is ...

I am torn between ...

I have strong convictions about ...

I want my students to say I ...

At the end of the day I feel ...

I expect that when I teach I will ...

My favorite teacher always ...

My least favorite teacher always ...

I am pleased about ...

The worst story I ever heard about teaching was ...

Other teachers are ...

I am really looking forward to ...

I am anxious about ...

I think I can make a difference because ...

The thing that delights me about teaching is ...

The scariest thing about teaching is ...

What I expect from supervisors is ...

But what I think will really happen is ...

The students I work with are ...

**APPENDIX D**  
**SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## APPENDIX D

## GUIDING QUESTIONS USED DURING THE SECOND INTERVIEW

## Questions about being a GTA:

1. What do you do as a GTA?
2. How comfortable are you with what you do as a GTA?
3. What is hardest?
4. What is most enjoyable?
5. What would be the song title for a song describing what you do?
6. What are the benefits of being a GTA?
7. Do the students appear surprised when they first see their teacher is a GTA and not a University professor?

## Questions about teaching:

1. What past experience prepared you for your teaching responsibilities?
2. What did you expect teaching would be like?
3. What do you want for your students?
4. Complete this, "for me teaching is like ..."
5. How can you tell if students have learned?
6. What, in your experience, makes you feel good about teaching?
7. Are your students responding to you differently than when you first started?  
In what way?
8. What has changed?
9. How have you changed since you began teaching?
10. What do you do differently?



Questions of a general professional nature:

1. Describe your typical day.
2. Describe a good/bad day.
3. How do you see yourself professionally in 1 year/5 years/10 years?
4. What is your ultimate goal?
5. How would you describe your philosophy of teaching/education?

Questions about thoughts, feelings, and responsibilities:

1. When you leave your class, do you think about it? and if so, what are your thoughts?
2. How do you feel when someone drops your class? Why would someone drop your class?
3. How are concerns about teaching situations being worked out?
4. (Only for members of the GTA seminar class.) How do you feel before/during/after your session with the instructor in the GTA seminar?

Questions regarding social relationships:

1. Who do you go to to talk about what you are doing in the classroom?
2. What kind of support are you getting from supervisors/peers?
3. Whom do you admire (role model)? Why is this?
4. Have you ever been invited to socialize with the faculty?

APPENDIX E

THIRD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## APPENDIX E

## GUIDING QUESTIONS USED DURING THE THIRD INTERVIEW

## Questions about being a GTA:

1. Do you think that you are meeting your students' needs? Explain.
2. What is the most important thing your students will remember from this term?
3. What was your most memorable moment from this semester?
4. What was your greatest accomplishment of this semester?
5. What was your biggest disappointment of this semester?
6. What were your goals for this semester?
7. Did you accomplish your goals?
8. What, do you think, helped you the most to accomplish your goals this term?
9. Did you try anything new this semester? Describe that please.
10. Are your students responding differently to you now than at the start of the semester? Explain.
11. Do you think that you have changed during the semester? How?

## Questions about thoughts, feelings, and responsibilities:

1. If you could change anything about this past semester, what would that be?
2. Were concerns about teaching worked out to your satisfaction? How?
3. Did your class attendance meet your expectations? Explain?
4. What were some of your thoughts about your class after you left each day?
5. Where did you go for help with teaching difficulties?
6. Where did you go for support concerning your teaching?
7. What do you like most about being a GTA? Why?
8. What do you like least about being a GTA? Why?



Questions of a general professional nature:

1. If you could do anything you want after you finish your current schooling, what would that be?
2. What should your students be able to do after they leave your class?
3. How do you think an individual learns something? Has this changed for you?
4. If you could give one piece of advice to the next person who is to be in your position, what would it be?

Questions for students in the GTA seminar:

1. Describe your feelings about being in the GTA class.
2. Describe the kind of teaching model the instructor has provided. (Adjectives on how she approaches a class.)
3. Describe any specific ways this course and/or instructor contributed to your growth as a writer, self-directed learner, researcher, and/or individual.
4. Do you plan to apply some of the techniques covered in the GTA seminar? Which ones? How will you plan to do this and in which classes?
5. Did you receive help and ideas from other members of the class? Explain.
6. Would you recommend this class to other GTAs? Why or why not?

APPENDIX F

THIRD INTERVIEW RESPONSE CARDS

APPENDIX F

RESPONSE CARDS USED IN SOME CASES DURING THE THIRD INTERVIEW

Moved or touched

Lost Something

Angry

Sad

Success

Important to me

Strong conviction

Anxious

Frustrated

Torn between



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