The Individual Graduate Teaching Assistant
Negotiating Current Preparation Models:
A Case Study of Four Composition Graduate Teaching Assistants

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
May 14, 2010

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Abstract

Graduate teaching assistants are common fixtures on college campuses, and their roles encompass a wide range of duties, including supervising labs, working alongside mentors, and teaching a variety of beginner courses to students. It is common practice in the field of composition and rhetoric, for example, to employ second year master's students as instructors of college writing courses. Because these GTAs are not assistants like the title implies but the teacher of record for their courses, university preparation programs serve as an important site for new teacher training. A large body of studies documents the common elements and techniques used to train GTAs in composition studies; however, only a small number of empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between these elements, practica, pedagogy courses, and apprenticeships, for example, and the GTA experience (Latterell, 1996; Liggett, 1999; Ebest, 2005). Moreover, existing studies rarely highlight the significance of genetic and environment interaction in understanding GTA life and training.

The following qualitative research project incorporates a combination of the case study method of Stake (1995) and the method of constant comparison outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to provide a systematic account of the lived experiences and preparation of graduate teachers of composition studies. The participants included four second year master's students working as GTAs in the English department of a large research university. Each participant was identified as "novice" with no prior teaching

experience, and each participated in the university's training program (including a mentor program, pedagogy courses, an orientation, and a practicum) the previous year. Using data gathered from interviews, journals, and questionnaires, the present study examines the field specific demands and struggles acknowledged by the participants and considers how well the institutional preparation provided was suited to meet those demands. The study takes as its lens the b/p/s model used by psychologists, and those in other medical fields, to emphasize the significance of the genetic and environment interaction in understanding the lived experiences and preparation of composition GTAs.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the English Department at Auburn University Montgomery. Several specific people there, including Dr. Susan Willis, Dr. Eric Sterling, Dr. Robert Evans, Dr. Joseph Crowley, and Dr. Nancy Anderson, introduced me to traditional academics and made me believe that I belonged in their company. It was their encouragement that made me continue my education.

I would also like to thank the EFLT faculty and staff at Auburn University for welcoming me into the department and for supporting my academic efforts over the last three years. They helped make the transition from the field of English to educational psychology easy for me.

I am also indebted to my committee members for working with me on this project and for all their comments and support. I would like to thank Dr. Roozen for introducing me to composition studies and to longitudinal research; his graduate course asking students to "re-imagine" writing instruction acted as the impetus for the present project. I would like to thank Dr. Henry for refining my knowledge of qualitative research and for helping me polish the work that readers see here. I also am grateful to him for letting me borrow countless books from his office and ideas from his dissertation. Finally, it is only with the support and friendship of Dr. Forbes (and Moe) that I am successfully completing this project and this degree. Dr. Forbes helped me make the connection between educational psychology and composition and made sure that I had funding to

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Introduction

This dissertation began as a way of better understanding the lived experiences of graduate teachers of composition, including their experiences with the institutional preparation they receive and the individual differences they invariably bring to the entire process. The experiences of interest in the present study are the field-specific demands and struggles acknowledged by novice graduate teachers of composition as they negotiate current preparation models.

Although the experiences of composition GTAs are often regarded as a type of "common knowledge" or "lore" that gets passed down from faculty member to graduate student or from experienced graduate student to new graduate student, systematic accounts of these experiences need to be published to aid composition faculty in making informed decisions concerning GTA preparation. By systematically identifying the struggles encountered by new teachers, researchers and faculty can begin to explore how the institutional preparation composition GTAs receive may or may not be suited to address these demands. The findings can then be used to make changes to the GTA preparation model that will ideally enhance the overall experience of graduate students, faculty, and students. Using the b/p/s model as a lens, an attention to the interaction of biological, psychological, and sociological needs of GTAs weaves an appreciation of the individual throughout the study. The study also acknowledges that because all programs face a limitation of resources, GTA training models can never address all the needs of individual teachers.

To a lesser degree, the project also asks readers to re-imagine writing instruction, but again, it becomes difficult to contemplate potential changes to pedagogy and practice without reflecting on the preparation and experiences of composition graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), the people who guide beginning writing instruction for most college students. While foundational changes are currently underway in many university writing programs,[1] it is appropriate to explore the scene composition GTAs now face and recognize to what extent the institutional preparation they receive addresses the demands they encounter. Most often trained in literature and expected to begin their academic careers as teachers of composition, these GTAs come to the teaching profession in the midst of departmental divides, with varying degrees of preparation and overwhelming duties. In the turmoil, many GTAs find themselves stretched in several directions, attempting to reconcile the multiplicity of their identities. They are students, teachers, researchers, and individuals who must carve out their own philosophies and epistemologies. They must enter the "academic rhizome[2]" that places them in the complex web of GTA life. As scholars and faculty re-imagine writing instruction, they must reconsider the experiences of the graduate teachers of composition and the training they receive.

My interest in this research comes from my own experiences as a GTA. Looking back, the path I took in academics, from literature to composition studies to educational psychology, appears as more of an inevitability than a conscious choice. The first composition course I taught was at a community college in Alabama. I had no teaching

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[1] Composition Studies is being moved out of English Departments across the country in favor of neutral sites on campuses that allow for interdisiplinarity. The university where the present study was conducted, for example, was in this process.
[2] Deleuzean concept.

experience; I had never made a syllabus, and I had not had any contact with writing studies since I had taken a composition class as an undergraduate student six years earlier. A year passed and I received a graduate teaching assistantship in the English department of a large research university. I was exposed to only one component of their GTA training program, a pedagogy course, since I entered the program with a master's degree. At this point, I was heavily invested in teaching composition and I wanted to shift my focus from literature. I also became involved in the mentor program at the university, but, to be honest, I am still not exactly sure how this took place. I think a faculty member "accidently" added my name to the list of teachers wanting to mentor first year master's students. I was taken by surprise one day sitting in the GTA lab when a young lady walked up to me and introduced herself as the student who would be working with me all semester.

In fact, I had somehow been volunteered to be a mentor or lead teacher. I was required to attend a one-day workshop that introduced lead teachers to the co-teacher they would be working with and clarify the details of the mentor program. At the orientation, I also discovered that I had been assigned two students to mentor during the same semester. As I observed the other students and mentors during the meeting, it appeared that I was not the only person who was unsure about what was going on. We were all involved and now responsible for the preparation of a cohort of graduate students. I began to think about how I had come to the teaching profession, and I began to wonder more about how other students become teachers.

My experiences mentoring led to interactions with the participants in the present study. In June of 2008 four young women who were members of the cohort I had

watched come to the program agreed to help with a small pilot study I wanted to conduct. The goal was to explore the GTA experience as it relates to composition studies, a field where the bulk of freshmen learn from graduate students and instructors rather than faculty. I knew that the participants, having gone through the university training program, were about to begin teaching for the first time. As I sent all four a questionnaire, I knew that they were in the midst of preparation for their first set of fall courses. I wanted to capture their thoughts and emotions as they planned and then follow all four for the semester.

Much of what the GTAs shared with me through interviews and journals was expected: fears about being young and inexperienced, concerns about balancing the workload that being both a teacher and a student requires, and anxiety about facing a classroom of students for the first time. However, I also found that the commonly acknowledged concerns of first-time teachers were each framed and dealt with differently by each individual participant. When asked in an interview about the common struggles of GTAs, such as classroom problems that stem from being inexperienced, one participant responded in the following manner:

> I would say that yes, there are common struggles that every GTA experiences, but I also think that we need to take the psychological/emotional perspective into account. Different teachers deal differently with such experiences; some dismiss it. I chose to take it as a sign of my own inadequacy. Teaching is a deeply emotional process and every teaching semester brings up different emotions that one needs to process.

The response, along with similar statements by the other GTAs, acted as the impetus for this research project. It served as a reminder that the interaction of biological, psychological, and socio-emotional makeup of each individual GTA accounted for her experiences with the institutional preparation provided and how challenges in the classroom and beyond would be handled. As a researcher, I could not simply conduct a study that focused on the extent one factor, like a participant's status as a foreign GTA, or as a female, or as someone unfamiliar with the field of composition, related to the experiences; they had to be framed as resulting from all three individual components of the b/p/s at once, showcasing an appreciation of genetic/environment interaction and the framed by the overall constraints placed on the process by limited resources available for GTA preparation.

Although the broad characterization of GTAs like those participating in this study, their duties, responsibilities, and general occupation is widely agreed upon as an identifiable construct (Diamond & Wilbur, 1990; Diamond & Gray, 1998; Wert, 1998; PFF, 2005), one GTA is not interchangeable with another. Surely, similarities and differences in GTA responsibilities make a conversation on what training elements are most conducive to effective graduate teaching in various disciplines possible, but limiting the conversation to such issues fails to address potentially enormous inter and intra-individual differences among GTAs. Faculty working with GTAs could benefit by being aware of the interaction of biological, cognitive, and emotional differences when structuring preparation models and training GTAs. All the participants in the study, for example, expressed concerns about connecting with their students and humanizing their classrooms, but each cited differing potential causes or correlates such as gender,

ethnicity, personality traits, and social hierarchies as limiting her ability to achieve this goal. Considered as one of the main objectives of teachers, the ability to reach and connect with students could only be addressed in preparation models by looking at GTAs as individuals and considering some of the complexities each subsumes.

Statement of the Problem

Graduate teaching assistants are common fixtures on college campuses, and their roles encompass a wide range of duties, including supervising labs, working alongside mentors, and teaching a variety of beginner courses to students.[3] Over the years, scholars and critics had become increasingly aware of the importance of preparing GTAs for their various duties (Careleton, Strand, & Decker, 1991; Diamond & Gray, 1998; Myers, 1998). A large body of studies documents the common elements and techniques used to train GTAs in composition studies. However, only a small number of empirical studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between these elements, practica, pedagogy courses, and apprenticeships, for example, and the GTA experience (Latterell, 1996; Liggett, 1999; Ebest, 2005). Moreover, what studies do exists fail to also consider how the individual differences of GTAs also affect their lived experiences, including their experiences working within current preparation models.

   GTA training in composition and rhetoric.

Demand for graduate student teachers in the field of composition and rhetoric is great due to the volume of undergraduate students who must enroll in college English courses. In fact, virtually every college student will need English Composition I and

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[3] Wert (1998): GTAs are the primary instructors for approximately 40% of undergraduate courses in large universities and are responsible for teaching approximately 60% of the classes taken by first and second year undergraduates.

English Composition II, commonly known as "Freshmen Composition," in order to complete her education. The high demand suggests that the responsibility of teaching the beginner courses falls primarily on graduate students, a trend common in many disciplines when it comes to universally required introductory courses. Additionally, the experiences of composition GTAs may also be complicated by an acknowledged split between the fields of composition and literature. Interestingly enough, empirical considerations regarding just how the lit-comp split affects the experiences and institutional preparation of composition GTAs (either positively, negatively, or not at all) are noticeably limited.

If GTAs in English departments are, in fact, experiencing splits or divides on multiple levels, including the lit-comp split, the question of exactly how it may ultimately shape the GTA experience becomes significant; the split could be affecting resources available for training or what GTAs decide to focus most of their time and energy on (research, course work, or teaching). The divides composition GTAs face, all housed under the broader umbrella of the lit-comp split, can be looked at in terms of divisions between the objectives of content areas, departmental tensions arising from the larger context of the lit-comp split, and divisions of GTA duties or roles as influenced by competing models of higher education. GTAs may be pursuing advanced degrees in multiple content areas, including composition, literature, or technical and professional communication and may have little or no prior experience working within the field of composition. All of these content areas have different objectives and different epistemologies that must converge when GTAs from the various areas become composition instructors. Many composition GTAs, for example receive their

undergraduate degrees in English and are trained in literature and hermeneutics – skills they may not be able to readily apply to teaching writing, especially when creative literature has been removed from most composition courses (Bizzell, 1986; Lindeman, 1993; Pezzulich, 2003). As with the addition of themed writing courses common in composition classes, the idea that writing skills, and the critical thinking skills that underpin writing, are skills that readily transfer from field to field or content area to content area suggests a domain general view of learning. A "generalized" view that writing scholars like David Russell (2005) are attempting to resist with activity theory.

In addition, composition GTAs may find it difficult to see connections between the fields of literature and writing with departmental divides being commonplace (Holdstein, 1995; Elbow, 2003). Although the "lit-comp split" has been discussed in numerous critical studies (Bizzell, 1986; Lindemann, 1995; Holdstein, 1995; Crowley, 1998; Elbow, 2003), scholars are now beginning to acknowledge the consequences this split has on graduate teacher subjectivity, including the impeding of their ability to balance and learn from the many and competing roles and responsibilities they face (Moghtader, 2003). Additional empirical studies exploring ways the lit-comp split impacts the overall GTA experience, with a specific focus on its affect on preparation models, could illuminate issues of subjectivity along with other noteworthy factors that impact the benefits of institutional training methods. Still, faculty place little focus on "hybridity" between the fields of composition and literature, and because this bridge has yet to be built, composition programs are now being removed from many English departments across the country. This movement suggests the lit-comp split is finally culminating in the separation of the disciplines; a step that may benefit both fields.

However, GTAs who find themselves caught up in these divides may become "split at the root"[4] when it comes to defining their academic selves. From a practical standpoint, GTAs may find they do not have the resources to be effective teachers in the classroom.

To prepare students with various educational backgrounds, some English departments orientate new GTAs to their composition programs by requiring them to co-teach with a mentor, enroll in composition pedagogy and philosophy courses, participate in a weekly practicum, and/or tutor in English Centers. However, a few universities do not offer such resources to GTAs as they begin teaching, and in many cases, the predominant approach is holding brief orientations or practica that cover the "ins and outs" of the program. In addition, components of training programs may vary in intensity and duration due to a limitation of resources, with some GTAs being supported throughout their graduate careers and others only having a week long orientation. Although many scholars acknowledge the need for adequate GTA preparation (Nyquist, 1991; Ebest, 2005), no single-subject designs currently exist that examine the outcomes (i.e. the performance of GTAs in the classroom) of widely used preparation components.

Standard social science models.

Although investigations into the preparation of composition GTAs have clearly noted issues with variability among training programs (Chism, 1987; Fulkerson, 1993; Latterell, 1996; Pytlik and Liggett, 2002), with some programs being deemed adequate and others being found inadequate, two common features of training models remain; they are designed to serve groups or large numbers of GTAs and they operate with limited

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[4] From the collection of poetry by Adrienne Rich where one of the major themes is competing identities.

resources. This type of group education is consistent with social science models of education.

Interestingly, when GTAs do express dissatisfaction with or struggles in existing models, either with their work with mentors or in the classes they eventually teach, their issues are typically attributed to cultural identifiers and not the interaction of cultural and inherited, biological markers. Popular cultural identifiers in educational research include SES (socioeconomic status), education levels of parents, and other identifiers such as race, gender, and ethnicity. As scholars try to better understand GTA acculturation through empirical studies, there is a temptation to rely largely on cultural explanations as a way to account for variations in the GTA experience. For example, a significant number of sources examine differences among the experiences of native and foreign teachers at American universities (Medgyes, 2000; Liu, 2005; Matsikidze, 1991; Ouzts, 1991). The empirical study conducted by Ouzts (1991) looked at differences in the course ratings of native English speaking GTAs and non-native English speaking GTAs. Ouzts identifies four student trait-variables which potentially bias the ratings of non-native English speaking GTAs: sex (males gave lower ratings), academic major (majors gave lower ratings), foreign language study (students never having studied a foreign language gave lower ratings), and expected grade in the course (students expecting lower grades gave lower ratings). The conclusion primarily rests upon the idea that cultural identifiers influence student ratings when the differences in the overall GTA experience (and students' experiences learning from these GTAs) result from a number of interrelated factors beyond cultural markers.

Because of the focus on cultural markers, the impact of limited resources on GTA training, the need to serve the "average" or broadest range of GTAs, and for GTAs to conform to existing training models although models need not bend to serve individual GTAs, the preparation of composition GTAs may be looked at as occurring in what Tooby and Cosmides (1992) term the Standard Social Science Model (SSSM). Briefly stated the SSSM is carried out under the assumption that the human mind is largely, if not entirely, a social construction (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992), reflecting what Janicki and Krebs (1998) and Cronk, Chagnon, and Irons (2000) refer to as species chauvinism—a belief that among all members of the animal kingdom *Homo sapiens* alone have the power to elude their biological predispositions.

With the focus largely on serving the "average" or broadest range of students, what ensue are conversations about educational practices that consider the ways culture influences the individual but not how the individual influences his culture or environment. When GTAs enter preparation programs that cannot be designed specifically for each student, many of the individual characteristics of GTAs (such as being shy, foreign, or a student returning to academics) will inevitably be overlooked. Most educators are starkly aware of the limitations of training models and most educators intuitively know that students are not things, yet these practices continue to be commonplace and are often cited as ineffective. When environmental elements are considered in absence of human nature, GTAs are reified as broad constructs (batteries, assembly-line products) instead of complex individuals. SSSMs deny the topic of human nature and the inherited psychological mechanisms of the mind a place in academic conversations, and, without these, discussions regarding the GTA experience are, frankly,

shortchanged. The missing or marginalized element in the SSSM is our own affective, cognitive, and physical makeup and how these elements interact with the environment.

Just what the individual brings to the GTA experience is unknown. But, research in such fields as the cognitive sciences, evolutionary psychology, sociobiology, and the like (e.g., Barkow, Cosmides et al. 1992; Pinker 1994; Buss 2003; Geary 2005) demonstrate that multiple elements interact to effect human nature. The heuristic used to guide this discussion is one that considers the biological (physiology), psychological (cognitive), and sociological (intra and interpersonal) elements of the human experience. The heuristic can be abbreviated simply as the b/p/s model and is used by psychologists and others in medical fields. It remains important that it is an iterative heuristic, so parceling out an aspect of human development, for instance, into the category of "biological development," is only useful in the sense that it allows for a functional conversation of concepts. Using the b/p/s models insists on the interaction of the system. The bio/psycho/social model produces an appreciation of genetic and environment interaction throughout the ensuing discussion on the experiences of novice GTAs.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines cultural and individual factors that inform the GTA experience as it relates specifically to composition GTAs. The objectives are to look at the field-specific demands and concerns composition GTAs encounter during their first year of college teaching and how current trends in GTA preparation may be suited to address these demands. Looking to the participants' experiences and individual narratives, the goals are to acknowledge the highly individualized nature of these experiences and to avoid codifying the term "GTA" as a thing that can ultimately be

described discretely and studied. The investigation of each research question automatically assumes a consideration of the b/p/s heuristic. Detailed purposes include:

1. Extending the conversation regarding GTA preparation through a qualitative investigation of English GTAs teaching in the field of Composition and Rhetoric.

2. Understanding the field-specific demands placed on English GTAs by exploring their experiences during their first year teaching composition and by describing their struggles and concerns.

3. Looking specifically at the degree to which these field-specific demands and struggles can potentially be addressed by the institutional preparation the GTAs experience.

4. Looking specifically at the degree to which the literature-composition subject split may impact GTA preparation and influence the overall GTA experience.

5. Noting of the sense of multiplicity GTAs in composition face to better understand their struggles to reconcile teacher and individual identity.

Instruments

Data were acquired and triangulated through the use of three key data collection techniques. Data for the study include: individual, face-to-face interviews and follow-up interviews with each participant; the collecting of electronic data from participants, including journals kept over the course of the participants' first year teaching and the intermittent use of several prompts or questionnaires that required short, essay-format answers. Data were triangulated when the data from composition GTAs were compared to those of GTAs working in other academic departments, specifically the pharmacy

school and the psychology department of a large research university. The researcher used Atlas.ti to sort and code qualitative data.

Research Questions

1. What are the concerns, struggles, and shortcomings of novice composition GTAs when they begin their first year of college teaching?

2. How are the lived experiences of novice composition GTAs shaped by the institutional preparation they receive?

3. How does the lit-comp split affect the lived experiences of novice composition GTAs and the institutional preparation they receive?

Significance of the Study

This case study was conducted in order to better understand how individual GTAs negotiate current preparation models by merging philosophies of psychology and composition studies. The joining of the fields simultaneously highlights how the interaction of human nature and human cultural shape the experiences of new teachers entering college academics. In addition, by acknowledging the nature/nurture debate as a false dichotomy, scholars working in the sciences and social sciences can push for interdisciplinary approaches. The social sciences could then use the advances in the field of science, such as neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and human ecology, to inform educational practices, including the role of social and individual phenomena in the instruction of GTAs.

Though experimental and conventional group studies are the overwhelming choice of scholars conducting educational research, qualitative research and single-case design research can yield educators additional information regarding how individual

GTAs experience preparation models and what components of GTA preparation models are shaping the practices of teachers in the classroom. Filling in these missing gaps in the overall GTA model means that educators will have a line of research to consult when group findings do not generalize to the individual GTA.

Along with a basic sense of the collective struggles that GTAs in various fields face, the description of individual participants have the potential to illuminate field-specific problems with teacher preparation and the epistemological and pedagogical transition necessary for literature students to become composition GTAs. The significance of this research ultimately lies in its practicality; that is, how practicing faculty and GTAs can use the research to modify their current programs and more successfully navigate their academic lives as teachers and students.

Population Sample

Data were gathered from one cohort of GTAs working in the English Department at a southern university over a period of a year and a half. Cohorts of students seeking master's degrees in English enter in the fall semester and typically consist of eight members. The sampling method was purposeful in that the researcher included participants working in a specific field and a particular point in their graduate studies. The sampling method is also consistent with snowball sampling methods since the researcher was introduced to several potential participants through GTAs who were already participating in the study. Participants included four female GTAs all of whom were second year master's students having previously gone through a year-long preparation program, including attending a weekly, semester-long practicum, two required pedagogy courses, and a year-long mentor program where each worked with two

different instructors. None of the participants in the present study had prior experience teaching at any level, so the institutional preparation each received served as the primary source of training for the GTAs. The participant pool also consisted of both native and non-native GTAs (non-native GTAs being identified as those not born in the United States and those whose first language is not English). There are several reasons for the selection of the participants:

1. GTAs working in the English department were necessary because the study specifically focuses on the field specific demands and concerns of composition instructors and to what extent these are addressed by the institutional preparation available.

2. Second-year master's students were necessary for the study because this group of GTAs will have already experienced the institutional preparation during their first year of graduate school. These experiences will allow them to reflect on their training as they begin teaching and to comment on how any preparation received may be impacting classroom practices.

3. Novice GTAs were needed for the study. Many GTAs are now returning students who may have had previous experience teaching at the college or K-12 level. These GTAs would bring additional preparation to the study that would inevitably alter the resources available to them in the classroom. Only GTAs with no prior teaching experience and who were relying heavily on the institutional preparation they received were participants in the study.

4. The fact that all participants were female or that the study includes both native and non-native participants is not a necessary component of the study. No participants were sought out because of their gender or ethnicity.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of terms useful to this study are consistent with academic discourse regarding the training of GTAs, educational psychology, and composition studies. Terms are described below:

GTA (also noted as TA) – A graduate teaching assistant is a graduate student who is employed by a university to do a variety of duties. Some of these duties include; teaching, researching, supervising labs, and grading papers. GTAs teaching composition courses are responsible for the full transmission of the course during their second year of graduate school.

Freshmen English – The term in composition studies used to refer to two beginner-level writing courses that are universal requirements. The first course (ENGL 1100), which students can opt out of with a high ACT score, typically exposes students to writing strategies. The second course (ENGL 1200) often focuses on conducting research at the college level.

WAC Programs – Writing across the curriculum programs provide composition students with the ability to choose a writing class based on their area of study or an area of interest. Writing courses are grounded in a specific discipline, such as engineering, history, liberal arts, and other disciplines.

LC – Learning Communities classes are composition courses that include students from a cohort who live together on campus and who all take their core course work together. Learning community classes are also used for subjects other than composition.

GWSI - In contrast to WAC composition courses, general writing skills instruction classes do not include a focus on any one content area and are not themed. Instead, students are taught generalized writing skills not specific to any one content area.

B/P/S Model – Biological, psychological, sociological model is an iterative heuristic used by scientists. The model identifies the human organism as a complex, integrated system influenced by all three components. The terms physical, cognitive, and affective or socio-emotional may also be used when discussing the model.

Organization of the Study

The first chapter describes the author's interest in the topic and concerns regarding the preparation of composition GTAs. The introduction also includes an opening vignette consistent with case work studies. The opening narrative sets the scene for the research and exposes the complexity of the GTA experience. The statement of the problem, purpose of the research, population sample, and significance of the study are also outlined. The first chapter ends with definition of the terms useful for reading this study.

Chapter II presents an integrative literature review that has been broken down into several distinct sections. The literature review begins with a look at the role of cultural determinism in education in general and the training of GTAs specifically. The sections then move from a general look at literature concerning GTA training in various disciplines to sources dedicated primarily to training graduate teachers in the field of

composition studies. These sections focus on the rising historical concerns with GTA preparation in the field and an overview of the common techniques applied in most training programs. Also included is a section concerning the relevance of the lit-comp split to GTA preparation and the overall experience composition GTAs have as new instructors. The literature review ends with a discussion of sources that provide narrative and/or qualitative accounts of the lived experiences of composition GTAs.

Chapter III is the methods chapter and it begins with a broad overview of the characteristics of qualitative research, pointing out key differences with the quantitative tradition. The chapter discusses the treatment of reliability and validity and how the case study method was chosen for the present study. Also included are details of the population sample, detailed accounts of data sources, including how data were coded and unitized. The chapter ends with a discussion of the pilot study.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the research. The chapter begins with a brief look at the case or participants' characteristics and provides demographic and necessary background information. A section is also included to highlight the use of the lens in interpreting the findings. The findings are organized into two broad categories: first the theoretical conclusions established from *a priori* data are presented and then the emergent conclusions are presented. Each theoretical conclusion is followed by supporting data in the form of direct quotes pulled from interviews, questionnaires, and journal entries. Charts are provided to quickly orientate readers to the participant characteristics and codes.

Chapter V discusses the implications of the findings and gives suggestions for changes to preparation models. The chapter begins by providing a detailed description of

the training components provided to the participants in the present stud as well as an examination of each component. The discussion then moves to a look at the concerns with the training components using the b/p/s model as a lens.

Review of the Literature

Cultural Determinism

Broadly stated, proponents of "cultural determinism" assume that social phenomena overwhelmingly, if not solely, reflect environmental influences, e.g., "cultural phenomena . . . are in no respect hereditary but are characteristically and without exception acquired" (Murdock, 1932 as cited in Tooby & Comides, 1992, pg. 26). Understanding cultural phenomena in this way suggests that the human mind, not implicated in the shaping of culture, is socially constructed. For this reason, cultural determinism is most commonly represented in popular culture and education by the "blank slate" metaphor. The term blank slate or *tabula rasa* implies that the human mind is initially empty or blank until experiences begin to shape it. The brain understood as a blank slate takes its shape from the surrounding culture and not from any biological predispositions.

At the turn of the last century anthropologists, historians, educators, and social scientists in general understood that schooling within the terms of the standard social science model (SSSM) was a matter of passing on culture from one generation to the next. Progressives understood culture as a group of infinitely plastic, codified, and enduring practices acquired by experience, widely distributed, and shared across specifiable populations. To the anthropologist in particular and the social scientist in general this socially determined system of culture was possessed by and defined by the group of which it was constituted (Malinowski, 1930). Culture's boundaries set the limits

of what could be thought, discursively said, and empirically done; in the same manner, culture defined what was socially possible and impossible (Kluckhohn, 1949). Culture was a bounded social system made up of various ideologies, institutions, practices, and "life words" (folk, scientific, religious, economic, and so on) (Lowie, 1917). Education, then, in any of its informal or formal structures functions was a cultural institution dedicated to the differential passing of a group's cultural "transmit" from one generation to the next (Dewey, 1926). The SSSM emphasized nurture and dismissed human nature from serious consideration. It helped engrain the blank slate metaphor or cultural determinism in educational philosophies and practices.

Cultural determinism enjoys a long history and has been informed by the work of many, including Aquinas, Locke, and Durkheim. Emile Durkheim (1895/1962), father of sociology, suggested that social behavior cannot be informed by the study of individuals but only by consideration of group or cultural processes. John Watson (1930) famously declared that he could take any twelve kids on an island and make them whatever he wanted. Half of a century later, and despite advances in fields such as evolutionary biology, neurosciences, and cognitive psychology, Geertz (1973) proclaimed, "Our ideas, our values, our acts, even our emotions, like our nervous system itself, are cultural products—products manufactured, indeed, out of tendencies, capacities and dispositions with which we were born, but manufactured nonetheless" (pg. 50).

The possibility of cultural determinism as the sole explanation for human behavior rests on the assumption that environment somehow operates beyond the influence of genetics (and the reverse). Janicki and Krebs (1998) and Cronk, Chagnon, and Irons (2000) refer to such stances as species chauvinism—a belief that among all

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members of the animal kingdom *Homo sapiens* alone have the power to elude their

biological predispositions. The problem lies with the assumption that each individual is

completely biologically plastic, a blank slate, or a functional effect co-determined by

experience and culture alone. The problem is that the brain itself is something more than

unformatted design space. Boyer and Barrett (2005) note,

> Recent research has begun to suggest that human expertise about the natural and
>
> social environment, including that what is often called semantic knowledge, is
>
> best construed as consisting of different domains of competence. Each of these
>
> corresponds to recurrent evolutionary problems, is organized along specific
>
> principles, is the outcome of a specific developmental pathway, and is based on
>
> specific neural structures. (p. 96)

So, both genetics and environment are implicated in human development. But that is not

to suggest that the two are simply additive and the necessity of untangling the

relationship between experience and gene driven constraints is unwarranted (Freedman,

1979; Geary & Huffman, 2002; Geary, 2004; Scarr, 1992). That is, human interpretation

of the physical environment is a matter of the interaction between genetic and

environmental stimuli. Heritability and environmentality estimates are not reified

qualities of a trait; they are estimates of the variance of trait-linked genes and

environments in a specific population at a fixed moment in time (Plomin & Rende, 1991;

Scarr, 1992). Of course, though genetics provide structure, it is devoid of content without

the environmental context from which content is constituted. Experience is structured

and made possible by the frames and rubrics of brain (Barkow, Cosmides et al. 1992;

Pinker 2002). It is for this reason that this long understanding "chicken and egg" dispute is a straw argument (Lickliter 1996).

As social science disciplines as formal areas of academic study were established and grew during the 20th century, cultural determinism continued to shape study of social behavior and inform various aspects of modern intellectual life (Pinker, 2002). The focus on the primacy of the group mind over the mind of the individual person, as Pinker points out, led to a "doctrine of the superorganism" (pg.26) that underlies the personification of society, drives identity politics, and fuels some of the great political debates of the twentieth century. The blank slate also appeals to educators and educational systems in a few noteworthy ways. From a political standpoint, the blank slate suggests that all members of society have the same access to education and the same biological potential (since we all begin as blank slates) to engage in formal education.

As Pinker (2002) also points out, many people fear acknowledging that individuals have different levels of biological potential will lead to discrimination, especially in academic settings. Ironically, the idea that students differ in their biological ability is rejected in some areas and accepted in others. For example, few people would argue that all children are born with the same potential to become athletes. Not all people can become professional football players if they try; it is a male-dominated sport that requires individuals to be larger, stronger, and more agile than the average person. However, this same reasoning does not apply when it comes to academic instruction in content areas such as language arts or the sciences. When students are not as successful in these areas as their peers, their shortcomings are typically attributed to environmental influences, e.g., females are less prominent in the hard sciences when compared with

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males because their environments are less likely to facilitate that specific knowledge base.

Since education is now readily accessible for many people, the blank slate finds additional fuel in everyday educational practices. From a practical standpoint, modern educational systems have limited recourses and large numbers of students to educate. Things such as large, overcrowded classrooms and new policies regarding inclusion and No Child Left Behind mean that a variety of students will be instructed in the same manner. These educational trends mean that teachers teach to the "average" in order to reach greater numbers of students and outliers are often ignored. However, educators know that students get left behind on a regular basis, with common examples being increasing dropout and teenage pregnancy rates. Evolutionary psychologists Tooby and Cosmides (1992) suggest such examples demonstrate that cultural determinism remains a defining element of modern social science.

Preparing GTAs in standard social science models.

As scholars try to better understand GTA acculturation (both of native and non-native students in various fields) through qualitative studies, the temptation to rely solely on cultural explanations as a way to account for variations in the GTA experience appear too great to avoid. Standard Social Science Models or SSSMs (Tooby & Cosmides, 2005) tend to retain culturally deterministic mentalities that lack an appreciation of the genetic and environment interaction impacting the human organism. What ensue are conversations about educational practices that consider the ways culture influences the individual but not how the individual influences his culture or environment.

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It is not surprising that educators "default to" cultural determinism since most face an overwhelming limitation of resources. Some common ways resources become limited commodities include variations in departmental funding, time constraints, and staffing shortages. Funding effectively impacts every potential service or support extended to GTAs; it determines how much GTAs will be paid, how many faulty can be employed, and how many resources can be dedicated to preparation. When departments have high student to teacher ratios, for example, college faculty are often left unable to meet with and mentor all the graduate students who in the program. Similarly, when departments encounter staffing and funding shortages, preparing GTAs becomes day workshops with little or no follow up, and as a participant for this study pointed out, plenty of binders.

The convenience of cultural determinism lies in its ability to allow educators to instruct GTAs in mass when resources are strained. The English department where this study was conducted, for example, had fifty-three graduate teaching assistants at the start of the 2009-2010 year and only two faculty members who specialized in composition studies. In addition, all of these fifty-three students went through the department's GTA training program in groups of twenty or twenty-five as they matriculated into the program. The program, like many others, faced constraints of time and money that would not allow a training model to be developed for each new GTA; instead, the program needed to accommodate *all* entering GTAs who were about to begin teaching. Whether new students were in doctoral or master's programs, whether they had experience or had no experience, whether they were foreign or native, whether they were composition or literature specialists, they participated in the same training components.

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GTA preparation models simply cannot be designed for one person; they must be structured to serve many entering GTAs over the course of several years.

Most often teachers find themselves demonstrating culturally deterministic patterns when resources are limited and educational traditions are safe and comfortable ways to deal with seemingly impossible duties. Faculty may hand out binders, conduct workshops, hold a weekly practicum for entering students, and use co-teaching programs, but these have limitations and do not guarantee GTAs will be successful. Cultural determinism creeps into educational practices and the instructing of GTAs because "preparation programs" are codified systems designed to accommodate groups. Missing from studies on the GTA experience is an appreciation of individual difference that educational psychology may be well suited to provide. The current study aims to recognize how its inclusion can be useful to college faculty and graduate students.

Although there are few studies that discuss both the influences of biology and culture on the training of GTAs, there are numerous examples of culturally deterministic literature relating to the preparation of graduate students. For example, one of the most widely consulted and cited collections of research on GTA preparation and training, *Preparing the Professoriate of Tomorrow* (Nyquist, 1991), includes conclusions regarding GTA preparation that represent a culturally deterministic mentality. Consider the following quote from Puccio (1991):

> In our case, the Writing Program's Diversity Workshops rejected the bandaid
> solution to the campus problems. Admitting that racism, sexism, ethnocentrism,
> and heterosexism are ingrained in all of us, we concluded that it is only through
> an understanding of ourselves that we will come to an understanding of others.

We learned that we could not blame students for what they have been socialized

into becoming – especially when we considered that most of us had been

socialized in the same culture. (p.107)

The above quote comes from a section dedicated to cultural issues relevant to the training

of GTAs. However, it represents the larger issue at work in SSSMs and that is the idea

that who we are (people, GTAs, teachers) results from the surrounding culture and not

from an interaction of culture and biology. Looked at as only a cultural issue, GTA

training becomes a reification of the idea that students are essentially blank slates who are

spoiled by culture. The preparation, then, becomes teaching GTAs to "overcome" their

previous experiences.

The GTAs participating in the study also made comments in interviews, journals,

and questionnaires that suggested culturally deterministic mentalities. For example, when

asked specifically about their beliefs regarding how students learn, all four of the

participants mentioned environmental factors that shape learning; however, no one also

mentioned how human nature might relate to a student's ability to learn. One GTA

described her epistemology by saying, "Students are not blank slates, and they have a

range of experiences and opinions that need to be expressed during class discussions." In

fact, the GTAs' comments look similar to most of the literature on GTA training because

in most cases neither the participants nor the literature make overt claims that nature

plays no role in how students learn, for instance, or in how GTAs negotiate training

models. It is the omission of references to varying levels of biological potential and to the

influence of inheritance that becomes problematic.

Another participant described her views on learning in the following way:

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Writing also works well in an environment that is like a safe zone for students, but I think challenging your students is important. Making them question how they write, why they write, the language they use at school compared to home, are all significant for students to realize about themselves in the writing process.

The focus in each of these examples is the ways in which the environment affects a student's ability to write and learn to write. Not once, in over twenty-two pages of single spaced, typed data and twelve and a half hours of interview recordings, did the participants address the inverse situation – how students various potentials or cognitive strengths shape their writing. One reason for this exclusion may be that it is not often discussed in the literature they read pertaining to composition studies or in the classes they take for their degree programs.

Not all sources pertaining to composition studies can be described as culturally deterministic or as omitting the significance of the genetic/environment interaction. The 1970s, for example, marked an attention to cognitive psychology in composition and rhetoric. Editions such as *Cross-Talk in comp Theory: A Reader* (2003) included contributions by Linda Flower and John Hayes and Mike Rose that discuss ways cognitive development affects a student's ability to write and engage with writing assignments. More recently the work of Sally Barr Ebest (2005) shows an awareness of both cognitive development and educational psychology in preparing GTAs. However, the cognitive movement of the 1970s appears to be just that –a movement that was later replaced by a focus on process and then the cultural influences shaping student writers. What results are discrete discussions parceling out the biological elements and cultural elements and they are rarely brought together. This research aims to unite the discussion.

An appreciation of educational psychology includes both biological predisposition and cultural in the conversation by using the b/p/s model as its orienting heuristic. The b/p/s acts as the primary models used by psychologists (and those in medical fields) in the understanding of human development, thought, and action. Some readers may initially believe that this model simply replaces cultural determinism with existentialism, with neither extreme being preferable or terribly useful. However, an interest in educational psychology and the b/p/s model does not, and some may assume, preclude an interest in cultural influences. Specifically, the b/p/s model explores how biological, psychological, and sociological interactions influence the human organism. It remains important that it is an iterative heuristic, so parceling out an aspect of human development, for instance, into the category of "biological development," is only useful in the sense that it allows for a functional conversation of concepts. Using the b/p/s model insists on the interaction of the system. The bio/psycho/social model weaves an appreciation of genetic and environment interaction throughout the ensuing discussion on the experiences of novice GTAs. It can also unite the seemingly separate conversations in the field of composition and rhetoric.

Competing Models of Graduate Education

One of the most significant factors influencing the way graduate students are prepared stems from different beliefs regarding the purpose of graduate education. According to Boyer (1990), part of the explanation for the inadequate treatment and poor quality of GTA experiences is the result of a long-standing conflict between two distinct models of higher education. On the one hand, the colonial college tradition emphasized students and teaching; on the other, the Germanic university tradition emphasized the

scholarly development of professors and research, including publication. With the Germanic tradition prevalent at many universities, it was uncommon for GTAs to receive much attention in terms of initial training in teaching, often because the professors themselves tended not to concentrate on their own teaching praxis. In the end, most large universities continue to focus on preparing graduate students to be researchers rather than teachers.

Scholars in multiple disciplines have noted the affect of this dichotomy and how it relates to graduate students' preparation and their subsequent professionalization, which may lead to jobs within or beyond the university setting. In the field of psychology, for example, scholars continue to debate how to best train graduate students within a model that has the competing interests of research and practice. On the one hand, scholars such as Malott (1992) take a decidedly practical approach and argue that graduate preparation should focus solely on what positions students plan to take after graduation. If a graduate student plans on taking an administrative position as a practitioner, then she should be prepared accordingly; this would include eliminating the focus on research. Malott makes the following argument about the training of graduate students:

> Traditionally, we train even our applied graduate students to be research scientist rather than the staff managers and program administrators that many, if not most, will become. We train them to value research highly and to value those who produce it. Then the new graduates get jobs as practitioners or as managers and administrators and find themselves poorly trained to do the job they were not taught to value. In other words, most of the people paying the pipers are calling

for one set of tunes, but the graduate schools are teaching their students to play

and value a different set. (p. 85)

The argument, in part, continues to deal with the aim of advanced degrees, including the

Ph.D. Many academics believe that advance degrees should continue to focus on training

scholars and not practitioners.

Other scholars in the field of psychology argue that all graduate students,

regardless of their intent after completion of their degree, should become scientist

practitioners (Hayes, Barlow, & Nelson-Gray, 1999; Reid, 1992). A scientist practitioner

is someone who can act as consumer of relevant literature, be evaluators of interventions

and programs, and also conduct their own in-house research. The view becomes less

pragmatic as training programs are intended to be everything for every student. Still, Reid

(1992) and others argue that with quality instruction at all three levels the debate would

be unnecessary.

Composition GTAs also confront these three potential job duties; researcher,

teacher and administrator. However, the focus on preparing GTAs to become

administrators is most often left out of conversations regarding the preparation of

composition GTAs, unless one assumes it is lumped in with practice. Sources typically

coming from writing program administration journals contend that current models for

GTA preparation miss another key element when educating by having narrow definitions

of professionalization. Long, Holberg and Taylor (1996) note that training models may

focus on preparing GTAs to be both researchers and teachers but pay virtually no

attention to the responsibilities they will have outside of the classroom. In this way,

GTAs have little exposure to professionalization that could help prepare them to take

administrative positions either within or outside the university setting. GTAs may also be less likely to find themselves in administrative position that could allow them to shape educational policies and practices. This ability, particularly, remains significant for composition GTAs working in English departments.

Depending on the training program and the interest of the advisor the graduate student works with, GTAs may find themselves with only one skill that may or may not match what they actually do after graduation. Graduate students may also find that spreading their skills thinly between research, practice, and administration leaves them without a mastery of one particular area. Higher education institutions, specifically the individual programs available to graduate students, rarely specialize in all three skills simultaneously and are therefore not prepared to offer instruction in each area as Reid (1992) envisions. In addition, the lack of an interdisciplinary approach common in English departments means that students will be less likely to find themselves taking courses in other departments to make up for any inexperience in one area.

The notion of competing models of higher education is important to the discussion of composition GTA preparation because the competing responsibilities of researching, teaching, and understanding administrative duties serves as significant part of the demands composition GTAs face. It is related to their preparation because GTAs usually experience pressure from faculty to spend more time and energy in areas other than teaching; however, they do not want to "shortchange" students so they plan to treat each duty equally. This in turn contributes to the acknowledged academic exhaustion voiced by participants in the present study because the GTAs try to be "English super

heroes" and excel in each role. When they discover that they cannot perform at their best in every area, they experience what they describe as a personal sense of failure.

The Rise of the GTA Position in Academics

The current status and experiences of graduate students who are also graduate teaching assistants working in US universities presents engaging potential research opportunities. The heavy reliance on GTAs at many such universities, especially for lower division courses, is well-documented and has persisted for decades (Ebest, 2005; Nyquist, 1991; Ouzts, 1991). This trend has been especially prevalent at research-oriented schools due to such factors as inadequate funding for research assistantships, the pressures on faculty to conduct research and to publish, and the need to cover staffing shortfalls (Nyquist, 1991; Ouzts, 1991).

The 1960's and 1970's has been described (Nyquist, 1991) as a "boom period" for major colleges and universities. These significant increases in the numbers of college students led to increased demand for staffing undergraduate courses and a concurrent need for help managing labs and classroom discussions. These forces drove widespread acceptance of the trend of allowing teaching assistants to adopt professor duties, eventually including the transmission of total responsibility for a course. By 1991, it was reported that GTAs taught 25-38% of undergraduate instruction at many institutions (Nyquist, 1991). Seven years later, a study by Wert (1998) found that around 40% of the undergraduate courses in large universities were taught by GTAs and that GTAs are responsible for approximately 60% of instruction in introductory or beginner courses taken by first and second year undergraduates. Ironically, in a study conducted by Diamond and Gray (1998), it was found that 66% of GTAs did not have any institutional

preparation before they began their teaching duties. In addition, 20% of GTAs reported that they did not have adequate support for their teaching assignments. The fractures in the administration of GTA programs were also becoming apparent, including poor training and lack of support. Such factors, unsurprisingly, were discouraging for many GTAs, causing them to re-think aspirations of becoming teachers. Many of those who sought professorships needed remedial guidance to compensate for the gaps in their experiences as GTAs (Nyquist, 1991).

One study looked specifically at large universities and their preparation programs for teaching assistants in all disciplines. Diamond and Wilbur (1990) conducted case studies of the GTA training programs at four large universities after being prompted by a 1986 survey which indicated that less than 20% of institutions reported using formal courses in pedagogy designed as support for teaching assistants. The study lists four characteristics that successful GTA training programs should have, including making the training a requirement for all GTAs, having continuous training for GTAs throughout their educations, beginning training before GTAs receive their teaching assignments, and combining elements of both institutional and departmental activities and responsibilities. However, not all programs employed all or any of these methods when preparing their GTAs.

With the rise in prominence of GTAs across multiple academic disciplines, the impact of their influence grew as well. It is by no means a stretch to suggest that early attitudes of many college students toward their major field of study are shaped by GTAs due to the importance role they play in the initial stages of so many academic programs (Ouzts, 1991). With GTAs, then, as an important "gateway" to further educational

success, undergraduate frustration toward both native and non-native GTAs, fueled by struggles with early course work, was an outcome. The rise in numbers of non-native GTAs matched a reported trend in the 1980's and 1990's of growing "student consumerism," in which rising tuition costs created in some students and their parents a view of college education as similar to an exchange of goods and services (Ouzts, 1991). In the context of this change in perception, college students and parents gained a heightened sense of empowerment to voice demands that the universities deliver the product for which they had paid with as few inconveniences as possible, and GTAs became one instance in which students and parents often felt shortchanged. According to Ouzts (1991), with the onset of student consumerism, "GTA delivered instruction has become an issue of much criticism…" (pp.3-4). These problems can create a palpable tension in the classroom experienced by both teacher and students.

A widespread lack of agreement on how to approach teacher preparation for GTAs continued to be noted in the literature, warranting some of the concerns of students, parents, and scholars. Many GTA training programs have been described as nothing more than "infrequent workshops with limited or no follow-up" (Nyquist, Abbott, Wulff, & Sprague, 1991, p. *xi*), and scholars have identified multiple contributing factors to explain the oversight, including professors' exclusive focus on research activities, related incentives that favor research over teaching, and the belief that disciplinary knowledge automatically makes qualified teachers. The absence of research concerning effective GTA training has also been pointed out (see also Ebest, 2005) along with the problem that few models of teacher mentoring exist that professors can draw on

for guiding GTAs (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1991; Nyquist, Abbott, Wulff, & Sprague, 1991).

Additional problems relate to the allocation of research and teaching assistantships at universities. The literature has identified the practice of "skimming," in which faculty and program administrators select whom they determine as the top graduate students in a program for fellowships and research assistantships, leaving the GTA role to students judged by them as "less gifted" (Sullivan, 1991, p.18). On the student side, the limited number of research assistantships can have the unintended effect of forcing graduate students uninterested in teaching into teaching positions (Nyquist, Abbott, Wulff, & Sprague, 1991), an undesirable condition for them as well as for the undergraduate students they instruct. These trends affecting the management of assistantship programs sometimes have the simultaneous effect of further de-emphasizing GTA training and in the mentoring of their teaching roles. In addition, the trend reinforces the mentality that research, not teaching, is the work of accomplished graduate students.

Composition GTAs face the general demands often placed on both graduate students and graduate student teachers in other fields along with an additional host of responsibilities unique to their content area. Though other fields may employ second year students without 18 hours in their major field to teach, it is not the predominant approach; however, it remains the norm for composition programs. Characterizing the overall experience of GTAs from various fields helps highlight the broader system in which composition GTAs work, including the preparation model in which they participate.

Beginning with a broad look at graduate students' responsibilities also helps establish the demands composition GTAs encounter.

Rising Concerns with Composition GTA Preparation: An Overview

Because of the growing number of students seeking college educations and the reliance on GTAs to teach universal, beginner courses, the mid and late 1980s marked a noticeable growth in the interest in composition GTA training and preparation. The growing interest and concern regarding GTA preparation may have also been sparked by the publication of *The Current State of Teaching Apprentice Activities in Language and Literature* by Joseph Gibaldi and James Mirollo (1981). The two authors surveyed how M.A. and Ph.D. programs across the country prepared their composition GTAs. What they found was little consistency among university preparation and that many first year teachers were simply thrust into teaching with no preparation. As Charles Bridges (1986) points out,

> [Gibaldi and Mirollo] find that teacher training is still something that departments often undertake grudgingly and only out of necessity. They find that preparation programs vary dramatically because few faculty members involved with training actually have written about their methods, discoveries, or theories. Certainly, the dearth of articles in major composition journals about teacher preparation bears this out. (viii)

Concerns regarding the lack of composition GTA preparation were mounting.

Responding to these concerns, the first TA National Conference dedicated to the preparation and continued support of graduate student teachers in the field of composition convened in 1986 and served as an outlet for voicing fears regarding training and better

defining the GTA position. The conference was held in Columbus, Ohio and had three specific foci: discussing institutional efforts directed at TAs; disseminating information on program models and research; and sharing training materials and resources. Chism and Warner (1987) compiled a volume of papers entitled *Employment and Education of Teaching Assistants* addressing the critical issues that arose from the conference. These included papers discussing the role of GTAs, stipends and funding, program models, and screening and preparing international teaching assistants. The conference and the subsequent volume indicate a pervasive acknowledgment of the significance of the GTA position in American universities.

Three years later, in 1989, CCCC formed a committee, headed by Andrea Lunsford, to assess the state of preparation for composition GTAs. The goals of the committee were to compile as much information as possible about preparation practices and to then form some set guidelines that would establish a more uniformed system. The committee, with the help of committee chair Richard Larson, generated an annotated list of relevant sources (Fulkerson, 1993). The sources include 117 articles and conference papers and twenty-three books all dedicated to providing students, faculty, and administrators with information addressing composition GTA preparation.

Although the conversation regarding composition GTA preparation thinned out after the mid 1980s, scholars and critics are again facing questions about training. Recently published literature is taking note of problems with the common techniques used to orientate new GTAs to teaching composition. During the 1990s two popular methods were used to prepare GTAs in various disciplines, and these included the Preparing Future Faculty Program (PFF, 2005) and other training programs employed by

specific schools. One of the major concerns cited with training at the time was the

variability among programs. Traditionally relied upon techniques such as pre-service

workshops and practica, that varied in duration and focus, and the giving out of training

handbooks was one of the few methods coming under increasing scrutiny. At first

glance, variability does not appear to be a problem; however, the variability among

programs does not result from addressing the individual needs of GTAs or tailoring a

program to suit a specific institution. On the contrary, variability comes from a lack of

resources, in most cases, or from a lack of clarity on what the training components should

be providing to GTAs.

 For example, Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett's *Preparing College Teachers of*

Writing (2002) discusses how the commonly used practices for preparing composition

GTAs have evolved into what they call the "pervasiveness of three key practices in

current TA preparation: "mentoring," "reflection," and "portfolios"' (xiii). Overall, Pytlik

and Liggett's collection of essays sings the praises of advancement in GTA preparation,

but as one contributor, Kathleen Blake Yancey (2002), points out,

> To make such a claim – that TA development programs suffer from some neglect
>
> – isn't to say that there aren't good models of TA development; this collection
>
> makes the opposing argument eloquently. But in their diversity, the models offer
>
> very little general guidance about how to develop a program or sense even of what
>
> feature these programs might share. (p.63)

 Some studies, then, report that GTA training is more than adequate though others cite the

routinely weak or nonexistent nature of GTA preparation (Back et al., 1995; Ebest, 2005;

Liu, 1995). Ironically, whether a university's preparation program is deemed sufficient or

inadequate, the expectations of typical English departments is that teaching composition accounts substantial part of composition GTAs' duties. One English professor, who also noted the difficulty in teaching such courses, made the following observation: "We had always realized the incongruity in asking the most inexperienced people on our staff to teach perhaps the most important and difficult class we offered: introductory composition. Although the situation was logically incongruous, we knew that it would not change" (Back et al., 1995, p.198).

Teaching composition classes becomes both intellectually demanding and time consuming for GTAs who may have as many as fifty students each writing six essays per semester. The sheer volume of work to be graded is overwhelming, and coupled with the individual attention teaching a subject like writing requires, including individual student conferences often needed for each essay assignment and looking over multiple student drafts, composition GTAs can easily become bogged down, stressed, and dismayed. Although these responsibilities are similar to the ones they will also encounter as faculty members, GTAs must balance their teaching loads with all the responsibilities of graduate school and with little experience. For instance, Golde and Walker (2006) assert that the crucible in which English GTAs are placed by virtue of high teaching loads for undergraduate classes – especially composition classes – and shrinking departmental funds has continued to thrive under current conditions in academia. This may be due in part to the fact that departments can employ the least experienced teachers for composition courses. The idea is, then, that GTAs have to "work their way up" or earn respect in the department by surviving the crucible. In addition, the high demands for staffing beginner-level writing courses may also lead to a more lax selection process for

GTAs, and this in turn leads to rationalizing the work loads and overall status of the composition GTA position. This is not to say that the concept of seniority should be dead in academics, but it may be that understanding the GTA position as one of little value does not lead to effective preparation practices. GTAs who acknowledge successfully navigating the first challenging years of graduate school lean on faculty mentors, if available, other students in the program, peers, spouses, and parents as sources of academic and personal support. Ideally, GTAs find themselves in a community of scholars who are all working toward academic goals and who they can share their individual struggles with.

Common Techniques Employed to Prepare Composition GTAs

Sources concerning composition GTA preparation, from Fulkerson (1993) to Latterell (1996), identify pre-service workshops, graduate seminars, mentor programs, and classroom observations as common activities used in the preparing of composition GTAs. Catherine Latterell's "Training the workforce; An overview of GTA education curricula" specifically outlines the common techniques used to prepare composition GTAs. One common practice most programs engage in is a pre-service workshop or orientation. These are also commonly referred to as proseminars, colloquium, or staff meetings (Latterell, 1996). In most cases, they are called practica, and as Latterell points out, these are a source of pedagogical instruction for GTAs. The rationale behind using a practicum is to provide support for first-term students that will allow them to deal with immediate questions and concerns about teaching and GTA life. Since all students in the practicum are new teachers they can trade stories as well as a share problems and plans for teachings. In a practicum GTAs may practice creating their own writing assignments,

grading and responding to student papers, and they may learn about the teaching process.

A practicum may also require that GTAs have their classrooms observed by a peer or a

faculty member. In addition, they may be required to prepare a teaching portfolio,

including a statement of teaching philosophy.

Some notable issues exist with practica use, and the most important may be the

varying length of time different programs allot for their practicum and the content each

addresses. A practicum can last anywhere from one day, to one week, or an entire

semester. Another point of contention is the content of practica, and in recent literature

just how much content varies is clear, with some being relevant to GTAs and others not

being relevant at all. Again, the variation does not come from pre-assessments that

determine how much experience entering GTAs have or interviews with faculty to

uncover strong and weak areas – programs differ mainly because resources vary.

Participants in the present study, for example, called the practicum they were exposed to

"useless" and not relevant in informing their teaching practices.

Sarah Liggett's "After the Practica" (1999) is one study that specifically looks at

the effectiveness of practica through surveys. Liggett explored ways in which a GTA's

teaching changed in the semesters after completion of a practicum. She found that two-

thirds of the GTAs revised their syllabi and that over half of the GTAs reported changes

to their pedagogy, including conferencing with students more often, assigning journals,

and having students lead class discussions. She also conducted a t-test to compare

students' evaluations of GTAs from the semester before and after the practicum. She

found that ratings increased significantly from 3.03 to 3.32 on a four-point scale that

ranked teaching skills such as being prepared for class, presentation of material, and grading (p.69). In this particular case, the practicum functioned as intended.

Accompanying the practica, most programs typically have at least one graduate seminar required for all composition GTAs. These usually have titles like, "Theory and Practice in Composition Instruction," and students look at various teaching approaches, seminal publications, new trends in composition, and theory. The rationales for having a required course as part of the preparation program include the need to immerse GTAs in the language and methods of writing pedagogy, expose GTAs to texts and teaching strategies, encourage research in composition, and survey the history of the field and goals of instruction. These courses are also significant places where GTAs learn about teaching. Latterell (1996) surveyed 36 doctoral programs in English studies and found that 23 of these located GTA preparation in a single, required course like the one described above. Seven of these had a combination of required courses and four had no formal courses on pedagogy. As with the practica, programs varied on use of a mandatory seminar for GTAs; in addition, not all GTAs are required to go to practica or take courses on pedagogy. Some GTAs, myself included, come to their program with 18 hours in their field of study (literature) and are not required to participate in the practicum.

Another less common component of GTA programs are apprenticeships or mentor programs. The rationale for pairing GTAs with a mentor is to give new GTAs support from a person who has experience teaching and knowledge of the university system. These also offer GTAs who have never taught a course some practical teaching experience and may ease the transition into teaching and university life. Some mentor programs last a semester and others span the course of an entire year. Some allow GTAs

to work with only one faculty member while the year long programs typically pair GTAs with two different faculty members.

Although mentor programs are often used to train GTAs, some practical concerns arise when they do not function as intended. For example, many mentor programs are volunteer based and rarely compensate mentors for their work with new GTAs. Often programs do not have enough teachers available to volunteer. Other concerns may arise when the faculty and GTAs who act as mentors often are not exactly sure what the process entails, and this leads to a lot of variability in how much the GTAs are allowed to participate. Some mentors will allow GTAs to help create assignments, grade papers, lead discussions on a regular basis, and even teach and design an entire unit for a class. Other GTAs will find that they are simply observers who have no input in the class. Some GTAs are not even introduced to the class they work with. One of the GTA participants for this study, for instance, said her job was to fill the "floating desk." She explained that she sat in a desk that stuck out just a little further out than the rest and that was all she did. She was thankful to a least be able to observe someone teaching but otherwise the experience was not pleasant.

In addition, since mentors and GTAs are typically assigned randomly, the pair may find that they have little in common when it comes to teaching styles and approaches. This could be a negative experience for GTAs.

Although there have been some changes in the way composition programs prepare their GTAs, the basics practices of training programs, like those of many educational systems, remain similar to those used over a hundred years ago. Historically, GTA training only included workshops that varied in length and pedagogy courses. These

were the only teacher preparation in many English departments during the first 50 years of this century (Latterell, 1996). Now, GTAs experience the addition of mentor programs along with practica and seminars.

The Impact of the Lit/Comp Split on GTA Preparation

Composition GTAs working in English departments may also find that their overall experiences and the preparation components offered to them are shaped by a long acknowledged split between the fields of composition and literature. In fact, many scholars working in the field of composition believe that a persistent hierarchy exists in English departments that elevates the study of literature and places the study of composition squarely at the bottom of the rung. Numerous comp scholars have noted the existence of this distinct positioning including Peter Elbow, Patricia Bizzell, James Berlin, and Sharon Crowley. In Bizzell's "On the Possibility of a Unified Theory of Composition and Literature" she says that composition studies "often appear[s] to be the "wife" whose labor goes unrecognized and unrewarded" (1986, pp. 175). Peter Elbow (2003) describes composition as "the weak spouse, the new kid, the cash cow, the oppressed majority" (pp. 149). Descriptions like these, characterizing the field as feminized and grossly under appreciated, surface frequently in the literature. They also shape how new GTAs come to know the field of composition and its relationship with literature studies.

The position of composition studies in relation to their literature counterparts is a leftover remnant telling the story of how the field was formed. Several, thorough histories of composition studies have been composed, including John C. Brereton's *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College* (1995), David Russell's *Writing in the*

Academic Discipline: A Curricular History (1991), and Robert J. Connors's *History, Reflection, and Narrative: The Professionalization of Composition, 1963-1983* (1999). There is also a four-volume series edited by Kathleen Blake Yancey and Brian Huot, titled *Perspectives on Writing: Theory, Research, Practice* (1997) which includes a volume on the professionalization of the field of composition. In talking about the history of the field of composition, all of these sources also inevitably address the origins of the lit-comp split.

Started at Harvard in 1872 writing classes were a means of separating skilled writers who could write about literature from those who needed remediation. A tradition started where students had to take entrance exams that deemed them proficient in their own language. Composition helped those deemed not proficient and therefore not yet ready to appreciate the nuances of canonical literature and secured its place as a service course. This service course had no research of its own, employed GTAs, adjuncts, part-time instructors, and faculty without tenure as its teachers who were compensated less for their work than their literature counterparts. This course focused on grammar and "correct" style. This new field, its traditions and ideologies, was not as "scholarly" as literature studies and a divide between the worlds of comp and lit became apparent. Today, this divide is typically referred to simply as the "lit-comp split."

Although the competing agendas of the research and practice model of higher education have greatly influenced the lit-comp split, an equally important factor that shapes composition studies and fuels the great divide is the humanist tradition in education and literature studies, especially. Though literature studies has retained much of its humanist traditions, including elitism, privileging reading over writing and product

(text) over process, composition studies has pushed against these by having a democratic agenda and by focusing on writing, especially writing with process approaches. Today, much of the teaching preparation GTAs receive focuses on process approaches to writing and expands notions of the text to include videos, advertisements, and blogs. The pragmatic turn also led to WAC programs, themed courses, and learning communities since it focused on usefulness and context and process approaches (Crowley, 1998).

David Russell points out that the split between preparing professional generalist who were well read and cultured and preparing writing specialists who could write for specific disciplines and even vocations may be at the heart of the lit-comp split. Russell (1991) explains the tension in the following manner:

> Though the great-books approach to general education developed primarily out of the new English departments, which had also taken responsibility for teaching general-composition courses, English departments have seen these two responsibilities as deeply contradictory instead of as complementary, so much so that writing instruction has never been a central concern of literature teaching or of the great-books approach to general education; and its advocates have been suspicious of general-composition courses and, indeed, of all systematic wiring instruction beyond elementary training. Composition teaching conflicted with the professional humanists' goals and values. Writing instruction was viewed as an unwelcome intrusion on their professional lives and a distraction from a much higher professional calling. Moreover, composition threatened the disciplinary integrity of the humanities insofar as it implied that English should teach the discourse of other disciplines in this "service course." (p. 177)

The idea of composition instruction as a service course ultimately suggested that the service it provided would not only be those condoned by most English departments. Composition would teach writing strategies for various fields, including writing for vocations and the necessary tasks of everyday life; the course was also devaluing the text in many cases by focusing on the writing process instead of the final product. More importantly, what composition courses taught simultaneously reflected different political values about not only the purposes of writing and what constituted "good" writing but also the different political values regarding the goals of education and the type of student suited to pursue a college education. Russell (1991) summarizes the political tensions between literature and composition in the following way;

> At bottom, composition instruction represented the values of equity and inclusion, of vocation and pragmatism, over and against standards of taste and culture, which professional generalists in the humanities defended. What most disturbed the abolitionist was not the hypocrisy of wiring instruction; it was the influx of students who came to the university not to absorb liberal culture but to prepare for mundane professional careers. The required composition course represented an intrusion into the English department of people who did not share its values. (pp. 179)

Russell's sentiment appears to be at the heart of the lit-comp split that continues to exist in most English departments housing both literature and composition. Composition GTAs may also experience this tension when assigned to teach writing courses in WAC programs. The university where the present study was conducted, for example, was in the process of changing its program from GWSI to WAC. The move, as Russell points out,

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takes a more pragmatic approach toward instruction that allowed students to learn writing in the context of various disciplines, jobs, and interests. The GTAs participating in the study were asked to teach courses for different areas; for example, one taught a course on sustainability, one on business writing, and another on technology. They also had to undergo some brief training on how to approach the courses. Still the participants appeared to value the elitism the composition/literature connection provided. One participant laments on how the university is becoming overwhelmingly vocational and said in an interview:

> I have noticed that academe is being turned into a gigantic vocational program. Oh, it's not an engineering class, so it's not useful. So what if an engineer taught it? I don't think that's appropriate. Writing is part of the humanities, and I think by pulling it out of the liberal arts and just making it this generalized thing – I think it demeans what writing is.

The participants generally favor the universal requirement and believe in general writing instruction by those specializing in composition.

Still, composition studies may not resist its humanist heritage through its practices. The goal of studying "the classic" literary masterpieces was to contour the tastes, minds, and social standards of students, and the fact remains that in many ways composition classes push for a similar outcome. The goal of some composition classes today still is, as Sharon Crowley (1998) notes, to shape student subjectivity – that is to make students speakers and thinkers in the academic discourse community. This means not only taking on the language of the academy but also the ideas and values. An "educated person" becomes a definable construct that rejects others and outsiders. The

language of the academic community and of educated people is Standard English, and all who come to the university are expected to conform. As Crowley (1998) points out, "the required course still serves American universities as a border checkpoint" and its instructors are the "gatekeepers" (pp. 260-261). Even the most forward thinking composition teachers still judge products that are mostly traditional academic essays requiring the use of Standard English.

     Removing creative texts from composition classrooms.

     There are numerous other sources that discuss the lit-comp split and the effects it has had on the field of composition, but, interestingly, there was a re-emergence of discussions and debates addressing the relationship between literature and composition in the mid 1990s. Much of the discussion focused on the removal of creative texts from the composition classroom. The March 1995 issue of *College English* includes a section entitled "Symposium: Literature in the Composition Classroom" that includes essays by Erwin R. Steinberg, Michael Gamer, Erika Lindemann, Gary Tate, and Jane Peterson discussing "the lit/comp split," within many English departments. The debate taken up in the issue is whether or not creative literature should be used as a teaching tool in composition classrooms. Steinberg and Lindemann oppose using imaginative texts when teaching writing while Tate and Gamer are supporters. For example, Steinberg's essay "Imaginative Literature in Composition Classrooms?" calls literature "seducingly distracting" (1995, p. 278) and chronicles its disappearance and sporadic re-emergence as a topic of discussion in books, journals, and at the conferences, including the CCCC. Steinberg attributes the gradual disappearance of literature from composition to the growing interest in rhetoric, language, and writing techniques. However, the removal of

creative texts from composition classrooms acted as a way for composition to further distance itself and its goals from those of literature.

Today, many composition departments across the country are again separating themselves further (and physically) from literature, taking their programs out of English departments in favor of neutral sites on campus. Curricula are changing to accommodate WAC programs, learning communities, and themed courses. The universal nature of the course and of writing itself has been called into question. As David Russell and others have argued, GWSI should be replaced by writing for a specific activity (activity theory) or context. Ultimately, the long discussed split between the fields of literature and composition may result in positive outcomes for both areas. Importantly, GTAs teaching composition for writing programs still housed in English departments may find that their experiences and training continue to be contoured by the split.

Understanding the Experiences of Graduate Students in the Field of Composition

Though extensive literature is available regarding the preparation of composition GTAs, there are only a few places to find systematic investigations addressing the lived experiences of composition GTAs. More often the experiences of GTAs are passed down as stories from faculty and from veteran to novice graduate teachers. Those in the field of composition share these stories with new GTAs over coffee, at local pubs, and in crowded GTA work rooms. Some of these experiences, however, have been written down for others to read. Some useful sources that chronicle the day-to-day demands and struggles inherent in GTA life are *Comp Tales*, the *WAC Sourcebook,* and the GTA message boards on *The Chronicle of Higher Education* website. *Comp Tales* and the *WAC Sourcebook* are collections of stories from GTAs and composition faculty that paint

a realistic picture of life working as a composition instructor. There are also several dissertations and theses that take qualitative approaches to presenting the unique scene composition GTAs face. Some that I have found helpful are Monica Munoz's *The GTA Voice and Experience* (2007)*,* Amiee York's *Negotiating the Borders of Practice and Theory* (2007), and Mary Lou Odom's *Before the classroom: Teachers theorizing first-year composition pedagogy* (2004). None of these sources look at the degree to which the field specific demands and concerns of composition GTAs are met in institutional training.

A couple of sources offer systematic looks at GTA life. For example, Elizabeth Rankin's (1994) *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program* serves as one of the most thorough qualitative investigations into the lives of composition GTAs. Rankin's observations come from her work with five graduate students as she teaches an introductory course to new composition GTAs. As a part of the class assignment, the GTAs are asked to keep informal journals detailing their classroom experiences, and these stories, along with their conversations, become the foundation of the book. Overall, it provides a detailed description of GTA life and reveals some of the struggles new teachers face in the classroom.

Sally Barr Ebest's (2005) *Changing the Way We Teach Writing and the Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants* is another book that includes case-study research; the book is also the only source consulted for the present study that specifically pairs the field of educational psychology and composition studies. The connection Ebest makes among the fields is the shared focus on active learning and engagement in student-

centered classrooms. The (inter)active learning approach to graduate student training includes five specific elements: critical dialogue, integrative learning, mentoring, cooperative peer learning, and out-of-class activities (p. 54-55). Ebest concludes that "if TAs are going to meet the needs of their nontraditional and multicultural students, they will need to know how and why to develop active learning activities" (p. 54), but she does not include that an understanding of the factors that complicate how information is learned, an understanding that educational psychology is well suited to provide, is equally necessary. Although Ebest does not mention the b/p/s model or focus on biological factors impacting learning, she does devote a section to cognitive differences, and she also addresses Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences along with Sternberg's triarchic theory (p. 44-46).

The present study essentially picks up where Ebest's work ends since the significance of the genetic/environment interaction is there but understated. The addition of the b/p/s model to understanding GTA preparation brings genetic/environment interaction to the forefront and unites work from composition scholars interested in cognitive psychology, like Rose, Flower and Hayes, and Ebest, with the now popular cultural studies approaches by appreciating the individual as a complex system always being influenced by the biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional traits she brings to the table. The present study also turns the "stories" of GTA life into a systematic exploration of individuals in preparation models.

The following table succinctly describes specific ways that the b/p/s framework can be used to inform GTA preparation models.

Table 1

B/P/S Model	GTA Preparation
Focuses on the individual	Presents "GTAs" as a broad construct
Model to be used with methods that emphasize the individual; methods might include single-subject designs, mixed methods, and qualitative designs	The majority of studies concerning GTA preparation use group designs
Model takes into account cultural markers but does not make them the focus	Literature concerning GTA preparation often focuses on cultural markers as explanations of experiences, including experiences with training/GTA life
Highlights limitations of resources, including the physical, cognitive, and emotional limitation of individuals	Focuses more on limitation of resources in terms of departmental funding
Focus on genetic and environment interaction	Focus typically on environment
Model creates a holistic picture	Studies not using the b/p/s model often focus on only one aspect; for example, cognitive approaches or cultural studies approaches
Provides a practical look at what GTAs can expect from their lives as students and the university preparation they receive	Often incorporates politically acceptable rhetoric that does not paint a realistic picture of GTA life or training; for example, all GTAs can succeed; possibilities of university training
Resist blank slate mentalities and practices	Because of the focus on and need to serve groups, practices are often blank slate

Method

Introduction

The present study uses techniques based in the tradition of qualitative research as a means of gathering and interpreting data collected. Miles and Huberman (1994) include a list that unites some of the common features consistent with the tradition of qualitative or "naturalistic" research. Creswell (2009) also points out several lists of characteristics exist, including; (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Eisner, 1991; Hatch, 2002; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). These lists include a definition of the setting as naturalistic, sampling as small in size and purposeful, the identification of the researcher as the main instrument, the presenting of data in the form of words that are understandable and clear, the use of multiple data sources, inductive data analysis, emergent designs, and holistic accounts. These features can be discussed in contrast to those associated with traditional quantitative methods.

Though quantitative research is typically thought of being removed from participants, conducted in laboratories or in offices and stripped of context in the hope of heightened objectivity, qualitative research incorporates natural settings and prolonged time in the field as a way of understanding the everyday experiences of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations. The focus on "local groundedness" (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a way of understanding how individuals or groups make sense of their lives and situations suggest the significance of context to qualitative research. In

addition, the researcher's familiarity with the individual or group being studied helps him create more accurate and vivid accounts.

As qualitative researchers enter a naturalistic setting to begin collecting data, they typically have very few *a priori* assumptions about what they will find, and these may come from literature consulted about the subject prior to going in the field. In qualitative research the data guides the researcher and "emerges" to shape the study. In this way, researchers see another variation from quantitative traditions since most quantitative studies formulate hypotheses prior to data collection.

Ideally, qualitative researchers also work with small, purposeful samples, which are studied in-depth and in their local context. When considering samples, qualitative researchers look for both exemplar instances and outliers or "disconfirming data" as a way of reaching saturation. If any outliers are found, qualitative research embraces them by including them when reporting findings. The treatment of samples stands in contrast to quantitative research, which traditionally uses random samples and disregards outliers as abnormalities when presenting findings (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative researchers are also interested in establishing an acceptable level of significance (typically .01 or .05) and they typically disregard findings that only occur 1/100 or 5/100 times (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006). With qualitative research, one finding or instance may be deemed significant.

Although, data collection in quantitative research is often associated with the use of surveys and questionnaires (Creswell, 2009), qualitative research, on the other hand, embraces the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection. As the main measurement device, the researcher should be familiar with the individuals or situations

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he studies and he should also be reliable and trustworthy. These qualities are necessary for qualitative researcher because he is trusted to interact with people, hear their personal stories, collect a variety of possibly sensitive data, and report all findings in a way that describes the participants in great detail. As the main measurement instrument, validity and reliability rely heavily on the researcher's craftsmanship and integrity.

Another way qualitative research differs from quantitative research is that it appears in the form of words and not numbers. Qualitative researchers strive for thick, rich descriptions to create a vivid and holistic picture of their research (Geertz, 1973). The words qualitative researchers use are based on observations, interviews with participants, and on documents collected. The goal of using thick, rich descriptions should not be pedantic in nature; the writing used in qualitative research should be understandable, logical, and accessible to a variety of readers.

Researchers working in various fields, including education, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and writing studies have acknowledged the merits of qualitative methods as scientific inquiry. As Bogdan and Biklen (1992) point out "part of the scientific attitude, as we see it, is to be open-minded about method and evidence. Scientific research involves rigorous and systematic empirical inquiry that is data-based. Qualitative research meets these requirements . . ." (pp. 43).

As a researcher, I enter this project with my own epistemology, personal beliefs, and biases. My epistemology is consistent with the pragmatic worldview described by Creswell (2009) and the traveler metaphor used by Eisner (1991) to explain one view of knowledge construction in qualitative research. The most influential element of these views on my epistemology is the concept of how knowledge or "truth" is constructed. I

see knowledge as being constructed through interactions with others in specific contexts. In this way, truth is constantly in flux. I also embrace the pragmatic worldview because it posits that researchers need not commit "to any one system of philosophy and reality" and leaves researchers open to pull from different methods (Creswell, 2009, p.10). This allows researchers to let the study guide the method instead of having a fixed worldview that can often shoehorn studies.

Reliability and Validity

Both quantitative and qualitative researchers often discuss the importance of validity, but there remains much debate about how scientific knowledge is made in both traditions. Kvale (1996) refers to generalizability, reliability, and validity as the "scientific holy trinity." In quantitative studies, internal validity refers to whether the independent variable acting alone is responsible for the change in the dependent variable and whether findings are replicable, and external validity refers to the generality of the finding and setting. A quantitative study demonstrating internal validity is presented in a way that minimizes threats to the researcher's confidence in the independent variable, such as history and maturation, testing, and diffusion of treatment. External validity results from the selection of random sample that reflects the normal distribution of the population (m) and can therefore be "generalized." It is the researcher who establishes the generality of his findings through statistical procedures (Kvale, 1996).

Qualitative researchers do not define internal and external validity in the same manner. Kvale (1996) points out that qualitative researchers, like Lincoln and Guba (1985), have started using ordinary language to discuss validity and reliability; terms such as trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Creswell (2009)

says that qualitative validity means that the researcher checks the findings by employing

certain procedures, while qualitative reliability means the researcher's approach is

consistent across different researchers and different studies. When it comes to

establishing external validity, the burden falls on the reader of a qualitative study to

decide if the stories and experiences being presented can inform his life and experiences

in any pertinent way. The context and situations found in qualitative research need not be

exact matches for readers to make meaningful connections with their own situations.

Stake (1995) refers to this concept as "analytical generalization" and says researchers

allow readers to judge how the findings might guide another situation.

Since the researcher acts as the main instrument in qualitative studies, validity and

reliability depend largely on his skill. Kvale (1996) discusses validity as "quality of

craftsmanship" and says that this quality of craftsmanship means continually checking,

questioning, and theoretically interpreting findings. The qualitative researcher should be

familiar with the phenomenon being studied through extended time in the field and

immersion, and he should also have a strong conceptual interest vested in the study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also point out that the qualitative researcher benefits from

investigative skills and a multidisciplinary approach. Essentially, being a bricoleur, as

Kincheloe (2001) points out, increases the researcher's "tool kit" profoundly and expands

his interpretive faculty. Internal validity can also be "tested" in a manner consistent with

quantitative approaches. Researchers can use inter-rater reliability to check coding. The

qualitative researcher can train a colleague to code data and transcripts and these can be

compared to see where they differ and agree. Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that a

trained coder should eventually reach both intra and inter-coder agreement of around 80 percent.

Kvale (1996) says that continued attempts to validate studies can actually lead to inconsistencies and invalidation and the validity question should ultimately become irrelevant when quality of craftsmanship exists at all stages. Lather (2006) says that the preferred way of understanding validity is for researchers to be aware of the discourses regarding the validity debate, and doctoral students need to have an understanding of validity as more than just a "technical issue" that can be resolved by using correct procedures.

There are two main approaches for establishing reliability in the present study. The first is to provide detailed descriptions of the choices that were made in the coding process. The coding process follows the method of constant comparison as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and summarized by Dick (2000) for grounded theory research. All coding choices covered will be accompanied by examples attached in appendix I.

The second is to use inter-rater reliability when unitizing and coding data. The approach for establishing inter-rater reliability is comparable to techniques used in qualitative research. For example, researchers in the field of applied behavior analysis typically calculate IOA with a few different indexes and concur that an agreement of 80% or greater is sufficient (Page & Iwata, 2005). Figures of IOA will be included in appendix G.

In addition, attention to quality of craftsmanship (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) has been implemented at every stage of the research process. This will hopefully render questions of validity and reliability unnecessary.

Pilot Study

  A pilot study was conducted with composition GTAs to expose the researcher to qualitative methods and to validate the need for a larger study. The pilot study had the same design and method as the present study but improvements have been made. The pilot specifically looked at the differences in the experiences of novice composition GTAs in light of their status as either native or non-native teachers of English. Data collection for the project began in October of 2008 for the pilot and is being included in the present study. The presence of a secondary investigator with access to the initial data helped the present study in several significant ways. The secondary investigator was present during the first four interviews with each participant and was also taking notes during all interviews. Both researchers were then able to compare notes and combine efforts when pointing out significant elements of the data. These were used to establish inter-rater reliability, which is important in the data collection process (Creswell, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a novice qualitative researcher, working with a colleague helped clarify the process. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out, it is a good idea when working on a research team to discuss theoretical notions with colleagues. "Teammates can help bring out points missed, add points they have run across in their own coding and data collection, and crosscheck his points" (pp.107-108).

  Several other lessons were learned from the pilot study. Interview questions and protocols have been progressively refined over the data collection process. There was an increased focus on the triangulation of data since the pilot only included data from composition GTAs. The present study now includes data from GTAs working in other

departments. Finally, the pilot also did not take advantage of any qualitative software; I am now using Atlas.ti to manage large amounts of data.

Case Study

The present study began with the desire to understand a specific group of people working in a particular location. The group identified was a single cohort of second year master's students working in an English department as GTAs and teaching composition for the first time. Because the group shared a similar set of circumstances that I was interested in observing (they were all composition GTAs and they all went through the same training program), they were identified as a "case." According to Stake (1995), the case study method is most suitable when there is a clearly identifiable case that occurs from purposeful sampling. The researcher should begin by asking himself "What is this a case of?" I answered this question by acknowledging that this was a case concerning the lived experiences of novice composition GTAs. I was especially interested in their experiences with the institutional preparation they receive.

Once the case was identified and clearly bounded, the general approach of grounded theory as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and summarized by Dick (2000) was used for data collection. The main component of the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) is the method of constant comparison. With constant comparison, propositions or hypotheses begin to emerge as the researcher collects data. At this point the researcher also begins to keep memos that help him work through the connections between data and ultimately lead to the formation of categories. The following is an example of a memo I created in Atlas.ti as I began the coding process:

Is there a reason to couple youth and lack of experience together as a code

category? I keep asking myself if I have made that connection or if the GTAs

made the connection for me. I wonder how an older GTA (30, 40, etc) would

change my conclusions about this group. (September 1, 2009)

The categories can then be compared with each other and therefore greater

"specification" occurs. In the present study, the method of constant comparison was

especially useful in specifying categories in the data that seemed to overlap. The

grounded theory approach to coding described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was also

found to be the most useful for the purposes of this study because although it favors

emerging categories, it allows for "borrowed" categories.

In working with the data from the cases, I sought to determine data sufficiency

both in terms of collection (e.g., follow-up questions, emerging items of curiosity) and

analysis (e.g., coding, categorizing), and treated this effort as an iterative process. As

Glaser and Strauss (1967) note, data sufficiency or saturation is achieved by looking for

outliers or "disconfirming cases." The following two quotes from participants were noted

as instances of disconfirming data. Although much of the data pointed to the negative

affects of competing requirements and youth, there were instances where the GTAs could

see these as positive.

One participant discussed how multiple requirements were actually benefitting

her in the classroom:

At the same time I was teaching this class, I was taking a grad class that talked

about writing as literate activity. While doing some research for the class, I found

books that talked about how to teach research and one in particular stressed the

importance of expanding students notion of research and teaching them how to

not only put their voices in conversation with what they have read but to also be

critical of the information found. This sounds sort of obvious, but it changed the

way I thought about teaching.

Another GTA reflected on how her youth made connecting with and

understanding her students easier:

My age hasn't negatively impacted the class (from as far as I can tell); in some

sense, I think the students feel more comfortable talking to me or showing me

their work because we are closer to the same age.

Sampling Method

Data were gathered from one cohort of GTAs working in the English Department

at a southern land grant university over a period of a year and a half. Cohorts of students

seeking master's degrees in English enter in the fall semester and typically consist of

eight members. The sampling method was purposeful in that the researcher included

participants working in a specific field and a particular point in their graduate studies.

The sampling method is also consistent snowball sampling methods since the researcher

was introduced to several potential participants by GTAs who were already participating

in the study. Participants included six female GTAs all of whom were second year

master's students having previously gone through a year-long preparation program,

including attending a weekly, semester-long practicum; two required pedagogy courses,

and a year-long mentor program where each worked with two different instructors. None

of the participants in the present study had prior experience teaching at any level, so the

institutional preparation each received served as the primary source of experience for the

GTAs (the participants may experiences outside of the university that supported their teaching efforts; however, these were not considered in the present study). The participant pool also consisted of both native and non-native GTAs (non-native GTAs being identified as those not born in the United States and those whose first language is not English). There are several reasons for the selection of the participants:

1. GTAs working in the English department were necessary because the study specifically focuses on the field specific demands and concerns of composition instructors and to what extent these are addressed by the institutional preparation available.

2. Second-year master's students were necessary for the study because this group of GTAs will have already experienced the institutional preparation during their first year of graduate school. These experiences will allow them to reflect on their training as they begin teaching and to comment on how any preparation received may be impacting classroom practices.

3. Novice GTAs were needed for the study. Many GTAs are now returning students who may have had previous experience teaching at the college or K-12 level. These GTAs would bring additional preparation to the study that would inevitably alter the resources available to them in the classroom. Only GTAs with no prior teaching experience and who were relying heavily on the institutional preparation they received were participants in the study.

4. The fact that all participants were female or that the study includes both native and non-native participants is not a necessary component of the study. No participants were sought out because of their gender or ethnicity.

Data Source

Data were acquired and triangulated through the use of three key data collection techniques. Data for the study include: individual, face-to-face interviews and follow-up interviews with each participant; the collecting of electronic data from participants, including journals kept over the course of the participants' first year teaching and the intermittent use of several prompts or questionnaires that required short, essay-format answers. Data were triangulated when the data from composition GTAs were compared to those of GTAs working in other academic departments, specifically the pharmacy school and the psychology department.

Interviews.

The face-to-face interviews with participants serve as the main source of data. All interviews with participants were conducted at the university in the conference room used by the education department or in the GTA office where the researcher worked. Participants were contacted by email prior to the first interview to explain in detail the purpose of the study and how any information they provided would be used. The participants also complete the first email questionnaire at this time. Information from the questionnaire was used to guide the interview questions and to provide background information. Kvale (1996) says that participants should be briefed and debriefed during the course of the interview situation. When the researcher met with participants for the initial interview, each participant was presented with an informed consent sheet to sign and the researcher again explained the purpose of the study. Participants were asked at this point to keep electronic journals and to respond to additional questionnaires sent via email.

Semi-structured interview questions, sketched out prior to the interviews, were used to allow for both organization and spontaneity (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interview questions evolved over the course of the study as the researcher gained experience with question writing and learned about what types of questions solicited more meaningful responses from participants. Leading questions were used periodically to enhance the reliability of the interviewee's answers as well as to verify the interviewer's interpretations (Kvale, 1996, pp. 158). For example, in a follow-up interview with a participant, I asked, "Can you describe what you remember about your orientation?" The participant responded by talking about some problems with the additional training they were given since the curriculum for English 1120 was changing. I was unaware of this training and needed to clarify the response, so I added the leading question, "So you think that adding the new curriculum complicated your training and the model?"

All interviews were tape-recorded so that they could be listened to multiple times during the coding process. The first individual interview was transcribed verbatim to give the researcher experience with the transcription process. In all subsequent original interviews, extensive notes were taken and timecodes were marked from the audio-recordings upon hearing particularly noteworthy statements of the participants so that the precise wording could be reviewed and discussed. Interview notes were repeatedly checked against the recordings for accuracy, and key sections of the interviews were transcribed to aid in the process of coding from the notes. Original interviews with participants lasted approximately one hour and twenty minutes per interview. Examples of interview questions and responses are included in appendix A.

In addition, one follow-up interview was conducted with each participant. The follow-up interview took the same format as the previous interview, including the use of semi-structured questions used to clarify and extend participants responses to particular questions. These interviews were also tape-recorded and detailed notes were taken as participants talked. The first follow-up interview was transcribed verbatim to allow the researcher additional experience with the transcription process while the subsequent interviews relied on researcher notes and timecodes to mark significant statements or sections of the interview. Follow-up interviews were shorter, lasting around forty five to fifty minutes with each participant.

Journals.

Participants were also asked to keep a journal during their first semester as teachers and as participants in the study. Participants were asked to write in their journals as often as they could, preferably two or three times a week, and to date all of their entries. No participants were given prompts of any kind to discuss in the journals, so participants had complete freedom when selecting the topics they would discuss in their entries. Participants were instructed by the researcher to discuss any topic relating to their teaching experience and some participants also included personal experiences occurring outside of the university setting and discussed how these inevitably affected their teaching. The email providing journal instructions is included in appendix B. I also provided participants with a spiral-bound notebook so that they could journal and free write about their experiences.

There were noteworthy variations in participant journals; some of the participants' journals were lengthy, thorough, and included headings and dates, while others journals

included only sporadic, undated entries and that did not contribute much for the data analysis. I also received some of the journals in electronic format through email submissions and others were handwritten in the notebook provided. The handwritten journals were coded by hand for this project, and the electronic journals were coded using Atlas.ti. An example journal entry is provided in appendix B.

Questionnaires.

Participants were also asked to complete a two questionnaires pertaining to the study. These questionnaires were in electronic format and were sent periodically to participants by email. The first questionnaire, for example, was emailed to all participants directly before the interview process and their teaching assignments began (the questionnaire is included in appendix C). Another subsequent questionnaire was sent to participants approximately a year after the study began. The questionnaire provided information regarding how the participants' teaching experiences had progressed over two semesters. The questionnaires acted as a way to get background information and demographic information from participants and address any additional questions that might have needed follow-up. They also allowed the researcher to stay in contact with participants and maintain a running dialogue. The two questionnaires are attached in appendix C.

Data Analysis

Unitizing.

Data from the interviews, journals, and questionnaires were placed in units that were subsequently coded in Atlas.ti based on their significance in addressing the research questions. The basic unit of analysis in the present study was the Graduate Teacher

Information Unit (GTIU). The GTIU represents a single idea that can stand on its on and provide information about the experiences of composition teachers (Henry, 2003). A unit coming from the data could be a single word, a short phrase, a sentence, or an entire paragraph of data. The criterion for judging each unit was determining "the mind of the speaker" or what the participant intended in the GTIU. For example, a single word repeated by either one participant or several of the participants may be noted in the findings. Two single words coded in the present study, for example, are "overwhelmed" and "disrespectful." Both were repeated several times by the participants in the data and were noted as significant. In addition to single words, short phrases can also act as GTIUs. An example of phrases noted as constituting units of data include: "Evil Comp Teacher" and "people pleaser."

GTIUs can also be complete sentences or entire sections of data that may be one or more paragraphs. The following three GTIUs are examples of complete sentences:

"My second semester was characterized by fear and a dogged sense of failure."

"I remember feeling very apprehensive about the students thinking I was so young."

"If I was myself, who is usually bubbly and sociable, then the students thought I was being their friend more than their teacher."

The following is an example of entire section deemed necessary to include as whole unit.

So yes, I think in many ways we are different from other "teaching assistants." We carry the same responsibilities as do other instructors in our department and almost the same course load sometimes. We have no higher authority to appeal to

in the classroom and we are solely responsible for teaching and training our

students. When something goes terribly wrong, we get blamed.

In addition, some of the longer units, such as sentences and paragraphs of data, were

assigned more than one code. One example can be seen in the following GTIU, which

has been assigned the codes "conflicting requirements" and "academic exhaustion":

> I was writing my thesis that semester and I was always very tired: I was going to
>
> bed at midnight and waking up at 5 AM from January until March. Added to this,
>
> I was also taking a grad class, tutoring at the International Student Writing Center
>
> and waiting on responses from various PhD programs. The emotional and
>
> physical pressures were great indeed.

The codes were not separated here since the participant connects her exhaustion, at least

in part, to the multiple requirements she faces. This helps keep the "mind of the speaker"

intact.

Coding.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) researchers enter the qualitative

paradigm with one of two basic epistemological approaches. Researchers can approach

the process as either miners or travelers. As a miner, the researcher searches through data

in order to uncover bits of essential meaning or facts. These bits are waiting in the

subjects' interior to be uncovered, and the miner's job is to uncover them without

contaminating them in any way. As a traveler, the researcher is a wanderer who

constructs meaning as he enters into conversations with others. The metaphors represent

two different concepts regarding knowledge formation. In the miner metaphor, data are

approached in a manner consistent with social science models where knowledge exists *a*

priori or is "a given" and therefore must simply be uncovered by researchers. Knowledge in the traveler metaphor, on the other hand, does not exist *a priori* and must be made or constructed through conversations.

How the researcher believes knowledge is constructed informs the coding process. There are three different ways coding can be approached when conducting qualitative studies. Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate creating a "start list" of codes prior to data collection. The list comes from the conceptual framework, list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, or key variables that the researcher may bring to the study. Another approach is the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss (1987) where categories and properties are allowed to emerge from the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that selecting data to fit an already established or "borrowed" category may hinder the generation of new categories and may feel "forced" lead to problems with "fit" (pp. 37). On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin (1990) use an inductive coding technique that occurs only after data have been collected.

The present study uses a combination of the first two approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), since some codes were identified *a priori* in the relevant literature and others emerged in the data collected. The approach of Dick (2000) to coding was also used as data collection, note-taking, coding and memoing occur simultaneously from the beginning to the end of the project. One rationale for combining the two approaches is that a large body of literature exists regarding GTA preparation and commonly encountered problems of GTAs in various fields. The borrowed categories will suggest to what extent composition GTAs also encounter these documented experiences (examples categories would be "authority issues" and

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"disrespectful students"). The categories which emerge throughout the data collection

process will ultimately speak to the research questions by providing information

regarding the extent to which the experiences of composition GTAs vary from other

accounts. Following Kline's (2008) advice on approaching rigor in qualitative inquiry,

this section presents the coding strategy in sufficient detail for the reader to understand all

the key elements in the process of approaching and working with the data.

The practice of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Dick, 2000) was

chosen as an appropriate strategy for approaching the various pieces of the data

collectively. Glaser and Strauss (1967) say that "whether the theoretical elements are

emergent or already exist . . . the strategies of comparative analysis . . . apply" (pp. 46).

According to this practice, the researcher approaches his first selection of data with a set

of basic questions which are intended to allow the emergence of relevant themes: "What

is going on here? What is the situation? How is the person managing that situation?"

(Dick, 2000, p.6). Early themes, or categories, are identified, and these categories along

with any theoretical ideas can be noted on cards or some other recording system, after

which the researcher codes the second set of data with the first set and its categories

firmly in mind. As the comparisons continue, eventually the researcher begins to

compare data sets to the theory emerging in the data. At this point in the process, it also

becomes important to attach memos to codes. Glaser and Strauss (1967) say that after

coding for a coding for a category several times there may be some conflict over the

code's properties. When this conflict arises, the researcher records a memo to clarify his

thoughts and the code category. Example memos are included in appendix H.

From the initial categories which emerge, the researcher compiles a list of categories which evolves in the course of constant comparison. Based on the recording system chosen for recording these categories and relevant theoretical ideas, it becomes necessary to decide on a sorting plan. Codes in this study were sorted using the qualitative software Atlas.ti and the technique of Miles and Huberman (1994) where code categories are assigned number, 3 for example, and subcategories are assigned 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 respectively.

As the researchers explore the relationships among the emerging categories, one or more "core categories" surfaces, typically due to their higher frequency of occurrence and their connections to multiple related categories. Once these core categories have been identified, the researchers stop coding any text that fails to relate to them. Coding takes on a more focused character as the researcher narrows their analysis to the core categories, other related categories, and the properties behind the core and connected categories. In the course of coding, saturation occurs when analysis of the data reveals nothing new or significant regarding a particular category or its connection to a core category, and the researchers stop coding for that category (Dick, 2000). Glaser and Strauss (1967) also note that as researchers see similar instances repeat they can be confident that a category is saturated. This also includes looking for disconfirming cases so that saturation is based on the widest possible range of data on the category (pp. 61).

Coding process.

All data from the participants' interviews, questionnaires, journals, and from the literature, were combined into a single Word document and then imported into Atlas.ti. I labeled this file my "master data" file. The large document was organized into section

where I could see what type of data I was working with (interview, journal, questionnaire) and which of the participants it came from. The data were labeled with the participants" pseudonyms from the pilot study. From the literature review, I next compiled a start list of codes that I wanted to look for in the data. There were a total of nine *a priori* codes I identified as significant to the present study, and these included eight issues identified in the literature as concerns GTAs in various academic fields encounter and one code unique to composition GTAs. These were numbered according to Miles and Huberman (1994) and all instances were coded in the data. The start list included: experiencing competing models of higher education and competing responsibilities as students and teachers, a sense of double insecurity, heavy workloads compounded by a lack of institutional preparation, problems with training programs, and the lit-comp split.

As I was coding the start list data, I also began to notice emerging or recurring themes not on the start list or in the relevant literature; I began coding these emerging codes as well. The emergent data were at first scattered and too numerous to manage. It took me approximately six months of progressively refining the coding categories using the technique of constant comparison to arrive at the emergent code list. A total of 11 emergent codes were labeled according to Miles and Huberman (1994).

The following table provides a list of coding categories for the data.

Table 2

List of Coding Categories for A Priori and Emergent Data
_____

Category	Number	Code Category
Emergent	1.0	What is composition studies?
	2.0	Common problems in the classroom
	2.1	Authority issues
	2.2	Youth/lack of experience
	2.3	Disrespectful students
	3.0	Connecting with students
	3.1	Connection too close
	3.2	Not enough connection
	4.0	Humanizing the classroom
	5.0	Fears
	5.1	Personal sense of failure
A Priori		
	6.0	Competing models of higher education
	6.1	Competing responsibilities
	7.0	Heavy workloads
	8.0	Double insecurity
	9.0	Lack of institutional preparation
	9.1	Problems with training program components
	9.2	Compensating with co-teaching
	9.3	Additional complications
	10.0	Lit-comp split

Peer Debriefing and Inter-Rater Reliability

The present study incorporates one peer who participated in initial data collection during the pilot study and was trained for subsequent coding. The peer accompanied the primary researcher to interviews with each of the participants, listened to tape recordings with the primary researcher, and went through numerous data with the primary researcher. After approximately six months of contact with data and the participants, which occurred during the pilot study, the peer was familiar with the subject matter and considered a trained observer.

The approach to inter-rater reliability used in the present study is a method used by applied behavior analysts called exact agreement (Page & Iwata, 2005). Researchers calculate agreement for no less than 25% of the data collected and aim to space those calculations out so that calculations occur at the onset, middle, and toward the conclusion of the study. The techniques have been modified for the present study since I am calculating inter-rater agreement for unitizing and codes instead of an observed behavior. A sample sheet is included in appendix G.

Epistemological Distance

I approached this study, the data collection, the choice of method, and the interpretations of the findings as a former GTA in both the field of composition and education. Although some researchers may argue that a personal distance from the research situation leads to better studies, I see the affect of this close proximity to my research as overwhelmingly positive and as a defining characteristic of qualitative research. Quality of craftsmanship and the use of inter-rater agreement helps retain reliability and validity for qualitative researchers immersed in their research.

Presenting Findings

Introduction

The findings for this research are offered in a manner consistent with qualitative research and with organization and clarity in mind. A brief overview of the participants' characteristics is provided and includes demographic and other information deemed significant to better describe the GTAs or "case" in the study. The findings are reported in the aggregate so the direct quotes from individual participants are not linked to any specific GTA. The choice to report findings in the aggregate allowed for an overall characterization of a small group of the cohort members without creating lengthy narratives for each GTA. Not only were narratives describing each participant not practical for this project, they also distracted from the findings more than they contributed to the understanding of GTA life, including experiences with preparation. In addition, reporting in the aggregate protected the privacy of the participants.

Because the coding method combined both the start list advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994) and the emergent approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967), the findings presented separately to include theoretical conclusions from the start list of codes and then the theoretical conclusions stemming from the emergent data. The findings from the start list of *a priori* codes appear first and follow the same progression as the literature review found in chapter two. The conclusions drawn from the emergent data are

presented last and in an order of what I see as a logical progression (i.e. from the participants' first learning of the field to complex themes such as fear and failure).

All of the data supporting the *a priori* and emergent conclusions are direct quotes from the participants' interviews, journals, and questionnaires. Anywhere from 2 to 15 supporting quotes are offered as evidence or illustrations for the conclusions. Directly before and following section of quotations, I orientate readers to the data by providing an introduction and explanation of quoted material. This includes a reference back to the relevant literature, if necessary, and a discussion of how the data address the research questions. For greater clarity and to include more supporting information, the quoted data is being presented in "blocks" of quotes instead of being interwoven throughout the text (Henry, 2003). In some cases mistakes in typing have been corrected, or with interview data, unnecessary discourse markers, such as "um" and "uh," have been edited.

A brief overview of participant characteristics.

Four graduate students participated in the present study. All four participants received GTA appointments to work for the English department at a land grant university from August 2007 until May 2009 (the appointments did not cover the summer semester). Their two-year appointments included participation in the university's training program and the teaching of a two to one load of composition courses during their second year of graduate studies. Each of the participants was scheduled to teach two classes of ENGL 1100 in the fall and one course of ENGL 1200 in the spring.

I have included a table to provide a convenient breakdown of the participant characteristics.

Table 3

Participant Characteristics

Category	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Age	23	24	26	26
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Not Caucasian
Level of education	BA	BA	BA	MA
Major/ Minor	English/ History	English/ History	Spanish/English History	Psychology/ Literature/Writing
Area of Interest	Composition/ Discourse	ESL	Composition/ Technology	Literature
Prior knowledge of field	None	Limited	Took one course	None
Prior teaching experience	None	None	None	None
Self-reported personality traits	Outgoing bubbly scattered messy people-pleaser	Shy/quiet reserved quirky	Shy/quiet reserved awkward	Reserved seeks approval need to be liked

Age and ethnicity of participants.

All of the participants were females ranging in age from 23 to 26 years of age. Specifically, one of the GTAs was 23, one was 24, and two of the participants were 26 years old. Three of the GTAs were Caucasian and had grown up in the south eastern region of the United States; the remaining participant was not Caucasian and her second language was English. All of the participants were single (not married) and had no dependents.

Experience with composition and areas of interest.

All of the participants were pursuing master's degrees in English; however, one of the GTAs was working toward her second master's degree. The participants came to the program with various educational backgrounds: one had a bachelor's degree in English with a focus on literature; one had an undergraduate degree in Psychology, Literature, and Communicative English and a master's in Writing and Literature; one majored in English and double minored in Spanish and history. Another participant returned to academics after receiving her undergraduate degree in English and a minor in history approximately one year earlier.

Overall, the participants had little contact with composition studies as undergraduates. Of the four participants, two had never heard of the field of composition studies until beginning their graduate degrees. One had heard of composition but had never taken any courses as an undergraduate, and only one of the GTAs had taken an advanced composition course as an undergraduate. This participant said that the course "sparked her interest in teaching composition."

Although all of the participants mentioned that they were "excited" that their GTA appointments would allow them to teach, none of the participants had any experience teaching at any level. Two of the participants did discuss having family members who were teachers and how this influenced their choice in profession. One of the GTAs recalled being exposed to a school environment and to the craft of teaching since she was a little girl because her mother was a teacher. She says that she had "memories of going to school with [her] mother and watching her prepare for class." Another participant said that she came from "a long line of teachers" and she shared a story about her grandfather who was a music teacher. She said her grandfather "told her stories of school happenings" and shared his love for students and for the teaching profession with her.

The other two participants did not have family members who were teachers, but each did give reasons why she had decided to pursue an advanced degree in English and teach composition. One participant had hopes of becoming a writer but joked in a journal entry that she also wanted to "eat." The last participant had been working in the corporate world for a year and was looking forward to a job that was more engaging and rewarding. She hoped working with students would provide her with that experience.

From a practical standpoint, all of the participants were relying on the appointments to finance their educations and to provide them with a little money to live on during their two years in the program. The participants received a stipend of $1,310.00 per month for their teaching appointments. The need for financial support throughout their graduate educations acted as a deciding factor in their accepting the GTA appointments.

Individual descriptions of personality.

Throughout the study, participants related their experiences to their individual personalities. One of the GTAs described herself as "bubbly and outgoing," "overly friendly", and "a people pleaser," and she worried that this would translate into students disrespecting her authority in the classroom.

The other three participants reported having the different personality traits and different concerns. A participant said that she was "shy and soft-spoken" and often felt "awkward" in front of people and in social situations. She was concerned that being so "reserved" might lead to students taking advantage of her in class or simply not being able to hear her in large rooms. Another participant also described herself as reserved and in a questionnaire she said, "I'm a shy person, so being able to project my voice and to face 75 strangers is a little daunting!" One GTA made numerous references to what she called her "overt need to be liked by everyone, including her students." She explained that this made it difficult for her to assign low grades and sometimes made her more lenient in class.

The two participants co-teaching together described themselves as having similar personalities and as being one of the main reasons why they enjoyed working together. One of the co-teachers explained how their personalities were shaping the classroom: "Thing is, we are really relaxed, and our humor can be a little bit irreverent. Neither one of us is good at being stern and grim at all times. It just doesn't come naturally." Both thought their lack of sternness contributed to students being more disrespectful in their classes.

Noticeably, the individual personality traits of the participants were related to their experiences with students and with the training provided by the university. Their individual traits also shaped how each characterized their understanding and interaction with the *a priori* and emergent codes.

Reflection on the b/p/s.

The findings of the present study are intended to be viewed through the lens of the b/p/s model. Here it may be useful to work through some additional examples to illustrate how the model informs the findings. One thing I wanted to avoid was codifying terms or creating sweeping categories which suggested a finding was "thing" readers could view discretely. For example, codes such as "issues with authority" or "connecting with students" tend to become generalized issues relating to GTA training. The b/p/s reminds researchers that each individual defines and understands these terms differently. For example, authority to one GTA may be a teacher-centered classroom where she stands at a podium and presents information; in other words, there is a physical separation from her students. Some teachers prefer to stand several feet away from students when they talk or to sit across a desk from students when they interact.

Authority may come from knowledge in the classroom, and the teacher may need to exert advanced knowledge to gain the respect of her students (as one participant illustrated in this study). Authority issues and power dynamics are simultaneously present in relationships; some teachers like to steer conversations as they see fit when others allow students to lead. GTAs may also relate authority to emotional stability in the classroom, with some wanting to always look calm and collected and others preferring heated debate.

Other teachers approach authority in a completely different manner: they circle desks together to create equal footing in the classroom and close physical proximity between themselves and students, they emphasize the knowledge students bring with them to the classroom, and they have relaxed interactions with students and share emotions. Importantly, each GTA's b/p/s shapes her teaching, her interaction with students, and with training.

Theoretical Conclusions from *A Priori* Data

From the data provided by participants in interviews, questionnaires, and journals, and from the literature, I came to a number of theoretical conclusions regarding the lived experiences of GTAs teaching composition. Several of the theoretical conclusions about the lives and experiences of novice GTAs working in the English department and teaching composition began as *a priori* codes established by the relevant literature (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Once the list was compiled, a total of nine *a priori* codes were identified as significant to the present study. The list includes eight issues identified in the literature as concerns GTAs in various academic fields encounter, and these include experiencing competing models of higher education and competing responsibilities as students and teachers, a sense of double insecurity, heavy workloads compounded by a lack of institutional preparation, and problems with training programs. The discussion here is expanded to include how these theoretical conclusions specifically shape the lives of composition GTAs when compared to those working in other fields.

One additional *a priori* code was identified as exclusive to the composition GTA experience, and this code accounted for the impact of the lit-comp split in the lived experiences of novice GTAs.

The following figure provides a graphic display of the coding categories for the *a priori* data and illustrates their relationship with one another.

Figure 1
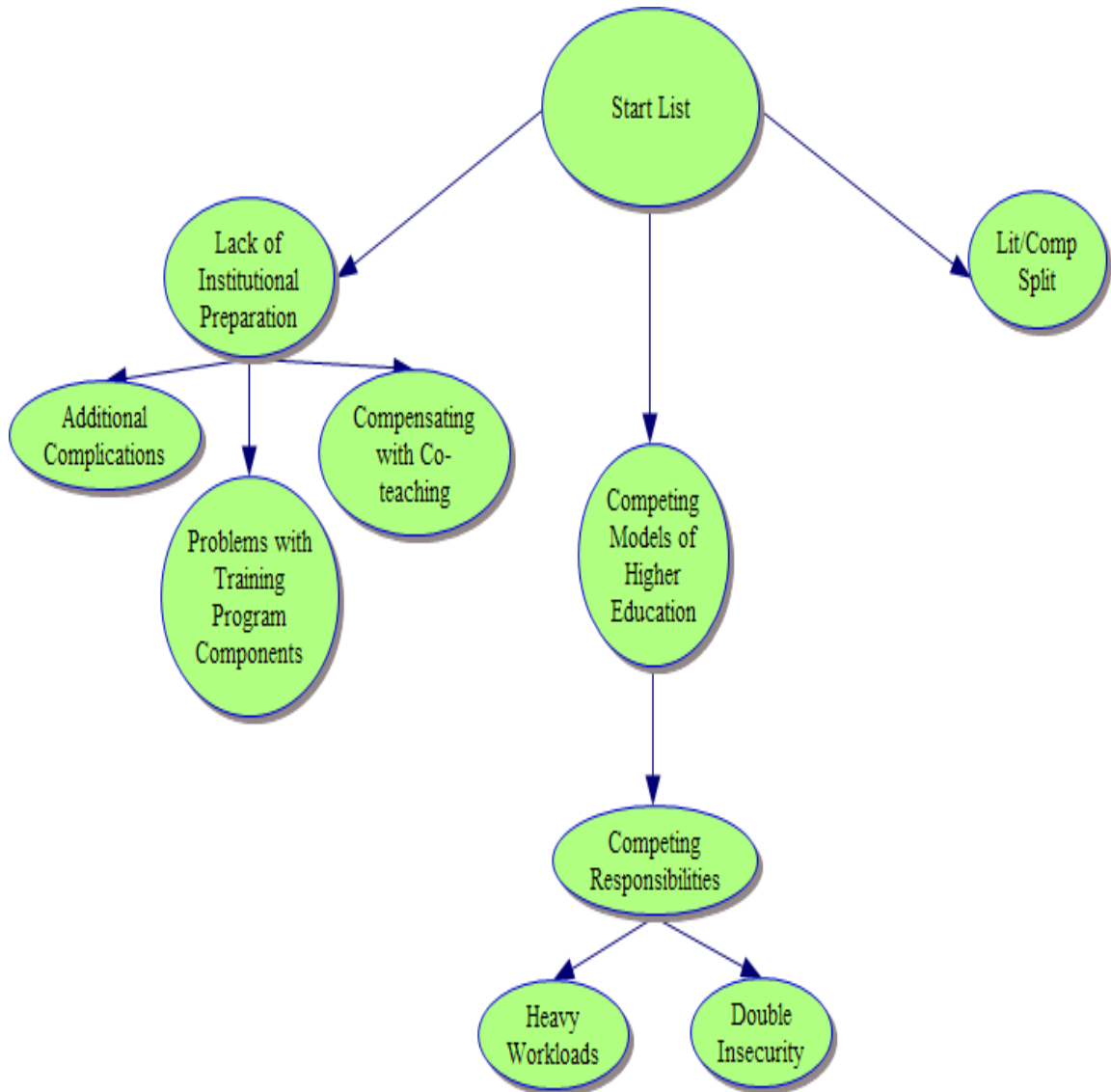
Competing models and competing responsibilities.

One conclusion from the study is that graduate students teaching in the field of composition experience the pressures and demands of competing models of higher education. That is, the four participants all voiced concerns that they faced competing responsibilities as graduate students to conduct research and publish and to teach. The tension between competing models of higher education and the need for graduate students to act as both researchers and teachers has been noted in the literature by Boyer (1990) and Malott (1992). Graduate students in various fields experienced the effects of a model that privileges research over teaching, and GTAs are often told by advising professors that their research responsibilities are to be placed before and valued above their teaching responsibilities. This setup may impact the preparation of GTAs who teach, leaving fewer resources for teacher training and creating less interest in the teaching profession. The participants voiced their concerns with competing responsibilities in the following manner:

Balancing the roles is difficult. I feel like I slack on being a teacher more that being a student because they tell you in grad school it is about being a student more than a teacher. But that seems unfair to the students and their parents who pay to take that class. Plus, I love teaching more than I could ever love writing research papers and even reading books. It gives you a chance to relate in a way that writing research does not.

I would love to give more to teaching than I do to my studies. But in grad school, it usually works out the other way. I hope this year I can be more balanced and not be stressed about papers as much so I can concentrate on the students.

The biggest problem I have had is being a good time manager. Our graduate classes demand a lot of our time, but I do not want to give the students I teach poor writing instruction. I can 't be an English major superhero in all of them, and it is difficult to know what to focus on.

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I think it can be a tough balance, juggling exams, classes, papers, then planning/teaching/grading for composition. It's really time consuming. I don't want to shortchange myself academically, but I also feel an incredibly strong obligation to not shortchange my students. They have a right to a good teacher who is caring and involved, and so even when I'm overwhelmed, I struggle to give that to them.

I've heard so many people say that it's important to put class work first and comps first and all of that, but it's a harder juggle than I thought it would be.

Can I just vent here and tell you how stressed out I am? This is where the whole grad school student/teacher situation is challenging. So, today is Monday, and on Wednesday, I have a paper in my African-American literature class that is a presentation paper worth 30% of my grade due. I also am supposed to conference with all 51 students on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of this week. How am I going to do both? I cancelled an extra day of class, but oh well, they tell you in grad school – student first, teacher second.

Being so preoccupied with my own classes and thesis, I found very little time/energy to talk to my students and conference with them.

To be totally honest, I am mad at the Department for doing this to me and my classes of freshmen. There is no way to be an effective teacher under this stress, and they say "Be a student first" as a grad student.

As researchers, the participants are expected to be graduate students who attend classes and compose papers that have the potential to turn into publishable material. They also experience pressure to attend conferences and apply to PhD programs if they want to be taken seriously as scholars. As teachers, the graduate students experience heavy grading loads, preparation for lectures and activities for their classes, and individual paper conferences with students, among many other responsibilities. The GTAs in this study, for example, also faced large class sizes with 25 students in each writing class; a number, as one participant pointed out, that "exceeded the recommended amount by 15 students." Still, the GTAs reported pressure to put their other work before the work needed for the classes they taught, and this led to uncertainty and stress for the participants. One GTA said in an interview, "I have to be a teacher second and a grad student first. I would like

to see this change." In fact, all of the participants voiced struggles with placing their responsibilities as graduate students before their tasks as teachers.

The concern of balancing the roles of student and teacher appears especially significant for composition GTAs since they *are* teachers already. Unique for composition GTAs working under the broader umbrella of these competing models is that the group has a greater teaching load than most other GTAs working on university campuses. Composition GTAs teach a two to one load and are the teacher of record for their courses. Many other GTAs typically work with an advising professor and they may be responsible for giving lectures periodically, grading papers, and assisting with general course duties, but they are not solely responsible for their courses until much later in their studies (and even then only when they are interested in teaching). For example, two GTAs working in departments other than English were interviewed for this project. One was a doctoral student in the psychology department and the other was a doctoral student in the school of pharmacy. The GTAs had been in graduate school for several years and had been working as GTAs. Both women, although considerably older and more experienced than the participants in the present study, were still working alongside a major professor. They were not responsible for teaching their own courses. They did periodically lecture in their major professor's classroom and they helped with grading. In addition, their work, especially grading, was divided among as many as four other GTAs who were also studying with the same professor. The two GTAs still faced considerable pressure to research and publish, but it was clear to them that their teaching responsibilities were of less importance. They had roles that were easier to define and

could focus more on their own needs as students rather than also feeling equally obligated to their students.

On the other hand, teaching college courses accounts for the major chunk of the overall function or role of the composition GTA. When asked about their role as teaching "assistants" the four participants talked about how they perceived the term "GTA" in relation to the job they actually performed on a weekly basis. The participants pointed out that, unlike graduate students working in other departments, they assumed the teaching load of many instructors and that they did not work under any professors. One GTA said,

> I think the term "GTA" by itself is highly misleading (at least for us). We are the instructors of record. For three hours every week, we are in charge of the literate lives our students and that is a great responsibility for someone with almost no training. So yes, I think in many ways we are different from other "teaching assistants." We carry the same responsibilities as do other instructors in our department and almost the same course load sometimes. We have no higher authority to appeal to in the classroom and we are solely responsible for teaching and training our students. When something goes terribly wrong, we get blamed.

Another GTA reflected on how already being the instructor of record for her classes made her experience different from those working in other departments by saying, "I definitely think composition GTAs have a different experience in many ways because we are teaching by ourselves compared to a lot of department GTAs who work for a professor."

The GTAs' experience was shaped largely by their role as teachers and they placed a great deal of significance on their responsibilities to students; however, they

struggled to balance these roles, especially when the GTAs experienced pressure to place their work before the courses they taught. When asked specifically about how their worked compared to that of GTAs working in other departments, the participants admitted they "really did not know what GTAs in other departments did." I concluded after interviewing a GTA in the psychology department and in the pharmacy department and from my work as a GTA in the education department, that the teaching responsibilities of composition GTAs is greater than most other teaching assistants.

Workloads and exhaustion.

Because composition GTAs act as course instructors as second year graduate students, their workloads are decidedly heavier than many other teaching assistants working in other content areas. The literature describes the working life of virtually all graduate students as one with lots of work and with little pay, and for the most part, that is an accurate portrayal of what graduate students can expect regardless of the field of study (Golde, 2006). Graduate students work long, undesirable hours, and they have to juggle their own coursework, research, and their personal lives in addition to whatever GTA responsibilities they assume. As the youngest and least experienced, composition GTAs enter their second year needing to apply for PhD programs if they want to continue their educations and facing substantial hours of their own coursework (and often a thesis still needed before graduation). All of these competing needs produce physical and mental exhaustion for the participants and the exhaustion plays a large role in the quality of their teaching and in their overall experience in graduate school. The participants in the present study all noted significant academic exhaustion that lead to many tearful

nights and doubts about whether they could endure the experience. Provided below are a few quotes from the GTAs describing their exhaustion:

> *Overall my impressions of last semester are very hazy because I found it hard to focus on everything all at once. This could just be a direct result of academic exhaustion: I had not had a single break since school started in August 2008 and I think all of the emotional and physical stresses finally took their toll. I offer this explanation not as an excuse, but as a simple statement of fact.*
>
> *As a teacher, I was mostly "absent." I don't mean to say that I was gone physically, but that I was rather preoccupied and was unable to connect with my students much. I was writing my thesis that semester and I was always very tired: I was going to bed at midnight and waking up at 5 AM from January until March. Added to this, I was also taking a grad class, tutoring at the International Student Writing Center and waiting on responses from various PhD programs. The emotional and physical pressures were great indeed.*
>
> *X and I teach five days a week (eight o'clock every morning and until 10:45 on Tuesday/Thursday). My eyes are tired, my brain numb, and it is only the first week.*
>
> *I am not sleeping well, not eating well (total loss of appetite), and my body is exhausted from the stress. My students have noticed my change in mood. I snap at them easier, I joke less.*
>
> *Having 70-odd kids all vying for my attention is a little bit of an adventure. They always send email, they always need something, they always have a question. The classes are mentally exhausting.*
>
> *With comps in two weeks, teaching two classes, taking two classes, being EGA secretary, and applying to PhD's, I have been totally insane.*

The participants also notice how their overextension and exhaustion impact their performance in the classroom and with regard to their other responsibilities. It was clear from their interviews and journal entries that they all were physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. In fact, the participants reported extreme fatigue, weight loss, emotional outbursts such as crying and anger, and feelings of isolation and depression.

The short quotes provided below create a sense of the recurring accounts of tiredness; the longer quote reveals how exhaustion affected one of the participant's classes:

I was tired, worn-out and incredibly sweaty by the time I got to my 11am class.

I was worn-out myself and I was not as enthusiastic as I was with my first class.

I was worn out before 5pm even started.

When they asked about their second paper grade, I almost did cry. I have not even started grading them.

Comps are a week away. I have cried everyday for the past two weeks. The stress is too much.

Grad school has made me cynical, less social, less fun.

I just never thought of myself as the kind of teacher who'd have to occasionally yell at her students. It just made me feel like a bad instructor and a complete failure. I was running low on energy, I hadn't eaten much that day and I had a book review due in my graduate seminar the next day. All this and comps. Needless to say, the incident was deeply upsetting and I ended up crying all the way home.

The impact of the participants' exhaustion is not simply a matter of being less prepared for class or less able to do their own coursework; it touches every area of their lives. Looked at through the lens of the b/p/s model, the GTAs are drained in every way. Their bodies experience stress from a lack of sleep and poor diets, their minds are unable to process the masses of information they need to teach and complete their own course work, and they are less stable emotionally and some of their relationships are strained. From a practical standpoint, their responsibilities are impossible to accomplish with much degree of accuracy. One GTA simply said, "I am miserable" when asked about how she was feeling during the middle of her first semester of teaching.

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Double insecurity.

In the face of competing duties and academic exhaustion, the participants also encounter a sense of isolation or inbetweenness, because the roles GTAs encounter place them somewhere between the world of "professor" and "student." They answer to multiple classrooms of students who demand attention and time, and they answer to their own professors who are simultaneously demanding papers, presentations, and research. As both teachers and students, GTAs experience a sense of double insecurity because they occupy an unusual space between the world of college professor and graduate student (Graff, 2006). As neither faculty nor traditional students, the GTAs often comment that they are rejected by professors and by their students. That is, they do not see themselves as fitting nicely with either group, and the experience can be alienating. This space becomes more problematic and confusing for composition GTAs because they are already teaching their own courses and carry the responsibilities of typical professors – they are also ordinary students. The participants discussed their positioning between student and teacher in the following way:

> *I think we occupy the lowest rung in the departmental hierarchy and that is rather unfair, but we are already the professionals we are training to be and we are already participating in the profession that we aspire to.*
>
> *I think, as a young GTA, I was always trying to prove that I could do this job and when something wasn't going well, I blamed myself a lot.*
>
> *I suppose I also find it odd to think of myself as a "teacher." This feels even more surreal in a classroom when my students are only a few years younger.*

It is a matter of abruptly changing personalities and snapping into "teacher mode." One moment I am a stressed out grad student who is answerable to a horde of professors; the next I am an instructor who is responsible for a class full of freshmen.

Not having a clear sense of where to focus the majority of their time and energy, the GTAs feel stretched in multiple directions and uneasy in both the worlds of teaching and research and of student and teacher. No part of the preparation model specifically addressed these concerns for the GTAs.

Experiences with training.

GTAs often face all of these competing responsibilities with insufficient and/or inconsistent institutional preparation. One of the major problems discussed in the literature with teacher preparation was a lack of consistency among schools and fields (Gibaldo and Mirollo, 1981; Yancey, 2002). This suggests that some programs will have lengthy, involved training programs in place for GTAs and others may have only a two-day workshop. The GTAs in the present study were required to participate in an institutional training program that is fairly rigorous and has all of the common components identified in the literature (Fulkerson, 1993; Latterell, 1996). Still, with these components available to them, the participants voiced concerns with the training program accessible to them, and there were substantial accounts of their struggles in the classroom.

Concerns with the co-teaching program.

For example, one of the participants voiced concerns about the mentor program:

> The first experience I had was bad. The co-teacher I was working with had the
> idea that students should respect the teacher at all times, and if they didn't, the

best way to "rein them in" was through intimidation—yelling at them, slamming

doors as we walked in, and keeping very strict policies about homework and

attendance.   I felt out of place because I had never taught before and thought I

was always under the microscope. For the most part, I sat in a desk beside the

students and didn't do much (in the way of planning or teaching) until my unit.

The participant goes on to characterize her first teaching experience as the day she started

teaching her unit in her mentor's classroom. She had never been introduced to the class

and had never been given the opportunity to participate in any aspects of the classroom

environment. When her unit started, she was a stranger to the students and her role in the

classroom was unclear. She describes her first day:

I was first introduced to the class on the day I had to start teaching my unit. It was

the most I had ever talked in front of a class and the lesson did not go well. Before

that my only role was to sit in the floating desk. My lead told me it did not go

well, but one student I knew from conferences told me it was a good class trying

to make me feel better. It was a bumpy four weeks.

The participant and I discussed the experience, which she described as her worst

experience in the classroom ever, in an interview, and she was visibly shaken and

emotional. From my viewpoint as a researcher, I concluded that the particular co-teaching

experience not only did not help her teaching skills in any way, it also impaired her

ability to teach. It served as a reminder that GTA preparation should not be used simply

because it is better than having nothing in place. When training components are not well

designed or sometimes despite the best efforts of educators, students can be negatively

impacted.

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Another participant had a less dramatic experience but still had some concerns about the co-teacher program. She said in interviews that she did not feel like a part of the classroom and did not get to participate as much as she would have liked. In the following quote, she discusses how her role in her mentor's classroom was not what she expected:

> I had to sit in the back of the class when I wasn't teaching, and it really made me not feel like a part of classroom dynamics. I felt like a student sitting there and it was awkward. So, by the end of second semester, I had gotten to know my lead better and really liked him, but did not enjoy that part of the co-teacher experience.

Some of the participants' problems with the co-teacher program stemmed from their mentors or lead teacher's approach to apprenticeship; one of the GTAs was heavily involved in many aspects of her mentor's class and even taught the class alone several times before her unit, one other did nothing in the class until her unit (she was never even introduced to the class), and the two other participants fell somewhere on the continuum between these extremes.

Issues with the practicum and orientation.

There were also negative comments about the practicum and orientation required for institutional preparation. The practicum that the participants enrolled in included one meeting a week for 16 weeks (one day a week for the entire semester). The practicum met on Wednesday afternoons and lasted for approximately two hours. The orientation, on the other hand, was a one-day workshop that lasted for about two hours; one participant said that it was scheduled during "orientation week and lasted a couple of

hours one day." The new GTAs were also provided with a binder and listened to the "ins-and-outs" of the program during the orientation, and one GTA was particularly critical of the binder as a source of training material. She sarcastically explained in an interview that the orientation was "a waste of time" and that "it's like here's a binder." She found the orientation had little valuable content beyond the binder that was simply passed out to new GTAs. Strangely, the orientation also acts as the introduction place for mentors and graduate students and is multifunctional.

Although the practicum served as a multifunctional space as well, each of the participants characterized both the practicum and orientation as "useless" and "a waste of time" in interviews. In the following quote, a participant expresses some disdain for the practicum and orientation:

> I know at orientation we had you know just the basics. They read the student handbook to us and explained to us what the curriculum was supposed to be. Then we met with our lead teachers and they told us what to expect from our lead teachers. Generally the contract. That was about it. Then, oh well, we had practicum [sarcasm in tone]. That was not useful at all.

Several of the GTAs articulated concerns about the binder provided during orientation and mentioned that the assignments seemed "vague" and they were unsure exactly how to implement many of them in the classroom. One GTA said, "Also I didn't like it because their assignment that they give in the binder is so vague so neither the teacher or the students know what the assignment is actually supposed to accomplish or what a good result would be of that writing prompt." The GTAs were frustrated with both the meetings and with the information provided in the binders. Most of the participants ended

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up designing their own assignments when they had time, which was not often. When they did turn to the provided assignments, they found them difficult to explain to students.

Compensating with co-teaching.

There were other clues that the GTAs were unprepared and struggling a great deal in their first year of teaching. One significant development was co-teaching in the participant group. Two of the participants decided to ask for special permission to co-teach their classes together, and a third participant went to another GTA in the middle of the semester when the struggles with one of her composition classes became overwhelming. The institutional preparation program does not offer GTAs the option to co-teach with a fellow GTA during their second year, but these participants had an overwhelming desire to bring another instructor into their classrooms. After listening to the new GTAs explain why they decided to "band together" instead of teaching their classes alone, I concluded that their need to co-teach was allowing them to compensate for a lack of preparation. In fact, only one of the four participants did not turn to co-teaching during the first year and expressed that she was ready to teach courses on her own.

I was curious about their reasoning for co-teaching and added questions to the interview protocols to address the issue. I asked specifically about the benefits or reasoning behind choosing to co-teach, and the participants had the following to say:

> *I am excited about co-teaching this year—the classes don't seem to be as scary.*
>
> *The more X and I can pool our insights and ideas, the better, I think. We can use each other as a resource. I guess the only drawback would be that we're not going to be able to team teach forever. One of these days, we'll have to fly solo.*
>
> *Co-teaching offers many resources when we are unsure.*

Co-teaching gives us an ally in the classroom.

Admittedly, having X there really helped. I had someone to talk to and bounce ideas off, and we created a good balance for our students. And we're both reserved individuals, so I think it gave some added strength as we adapted to the classroom.

The GTAs viewed co-teaching or "team teaching" as an additional resource in the classroom. Since they characterized themselves as "unsure" and in need of an "ally" in the classroom, co-teaching surfaced as their method to deal with the uncertainty of teaching for the first time.

The other participant who did not initially plan on co-teaching decided she needed help with one of her classes during the middle of the semester and went to a friend who was in a similar situation. In interviews, the participant characterized the class as "unbearable," and I got the impression she could simply not face the class alone. She described her situation in the following way: "The 5:00pm class tends to get me down. The students don't respond. I eventually decided to join forces with another GTA who had a class that was making her miserable as well." In interviews with this participant and in her journal entries, it became clear that this class was more than a difficult situation that she needed help with – it was to the point were she was ready to stop teaching the class. Co-teaching with a friend was her last resort and the only way that she was going to make it through the semester.

Additional complications.

The preparation experiences of this group of GTAs were complicated by an additional factor. The composition program was in transition from a GWSI program to a WAC program while the study was being conducted, and participants experienced additional problems and inconsistencies with their preparation. The cohort had entered

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the program and attended their mentors' classes when composition courses were taught

without themes. Then, for their first ENGL 1120 courses they were assigned themes and

expected to design writing courses accommodating those themes. This addition placed

another wrench in the novice GTAs' plans and complicated their teaching. The

participants express their confusion:

> *I was also a bit confused about the 1120 curriculum in general. I found the themes to be distracting and the ultimate goal of the course was lost on me. I was assigned a section of "Science and Technology" but I was unsure what I was supposed to focus on: Was I supposed to teach my students to write and argue about current developments in Science or was I supposed to teach them about the rhetoric of Science and Technology? Was I supposed to hand them topics or were they supposed to come up with research ideas/questions on their own? There were no guides or readers to help me out and I also made the mistake of not ordering a reader that explained argumentative writing, so I mostly found all of the readings on my own and photocopied them for my students.*
>
> *When you're teaching by yourself for the first time its like we have taken off the water wings, go swim. When they do that and then they thrown you a rock [laughter and sarcasm]. You know how to swim, you're ready. But at the same time you have this weird thing you don't know how to deal with.*
>
> *Then we had with the new curriculum for 1120 we had that training. Basically they could have just handed us the binder. It was a waste of time.*

The themed classes meant that the GTAs needed assignments to address certain topics

such as sustainability, technology, or business. They were given a second orientation to

the new material and provided with an additional binder with example assignments.

However, the GTAs were only assigned themes they had experience with or an interest in

when possible, and many, like the participant assigned the section on "science and

technology," had little knowledge of the content area. This made new GTAs who were

already unsure of their teaching abilities even more uncertain. They said that they felt

awkward in front of students trying to explain the assignments. As one participant

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pointed out the new curriculum became this "weird thing" that they all had to deal with, and for the most part, they felt burdened and sinking without help.

Guidance and the basics for new GTAs.

Other concerns voiced in the interviews, journals, and questionnaires suggested that the GTAs were not prepared to do their jobs. For example, there are numerous references from the participants about to not being sure how to grade students' papers, how to teach students to be good writers, and how to deal with classroom management issues. These seemingly basic responsibilities act as the crux of the GTAs' job duties, but as novices, they are struggling and overwhelmed with their classes. The participants attributed some of these shortcomings with a lack of guidance during their first year of teaching. One GTA mentioned feeling more confident teaching the 1100 course but that she "had very little guidance with 1120 and I frankly enjoyed teaching 1100 more." Another participant said that "Overall, I think I could have done better had I been offered more guidance as a teacher." There also appears to be a persistent mentality that the only way to become an effective or successful teacher is to be in the classroom, learning through the experience. One of the GTAs said, "We learn the rules as we go on and cannot always depend on training." In many instances, the participants did not believe that their institutional training prepared them for the "real" classrooms and everyday problems they encountered. The following short quotes are examples of a few of the everyday issues that the GTAs struggled with:

I was really uncertain as to how to tell someone to be a good writer.

I wasn't sure what to do when class got out of hand or how to deal with certain situations (for example, a student who was excessively tardy/absent; students who didn't turn in their work; students who tried to dominate class.

It is hard to give advice on a form that you as a teacher are not all that familiar with and don't really see how that will be useful for them down the road.

Besides we still get a bit nervous because we are not quite sure how to help them meet the objectives of our first unit since we have never really taught by ourselves before.

It was difficult to just be in a class full of not-so-eager freshmen. I knew I was competent and could teach writing. I knew this intellectually, but it took me a while to learn the ropes.

I've never had to look very closely at the nuts and bolts of putting together a quality essay before.

As a teacher, I am not sure what use the narrative will be for students as they prepare to write in college. It seems to make a decent bridge from high school writing—in that they weren't too afraid of writing this paper—but it seems like that transition could have happened another way.

We have also had trouble with Blackboard. We could not add each other to our Comp class roster. I emailed a couple of people in the Department, and Kitty tried playing around with it. Finally a guy from IMG helped us get it set up— even then we still had trouble locating and using Blackboard.

Today was peer review day for the first time in my classes. I am being honest when I say it went terribly. I did not put them into peer review groups in a coherent manner and they all got confused.

From these quotes, I concluded that there were a variety of basic classroom responsibilities that the GTAs struggled to handle. For example, questions regarding how to place students into groups, common ways to manage a classroom of 25 students, and how to deal with disrespectful students, were not answered for the GTAs. Because a variety of questions new teachers need answers to went overlooked, these participants learned from trial, error, and struggle.

The impact of the lit/comp split on preparation.

Another goal of this study was to look at ways in which the GTA experience, including the experience with institutional preparation programs, might be impacted by the well documented lit-comp split (Lindeman, 1993; Russell, 1991; Brereton, 1995, Crowley, 1998). When asked directly what role, if any, the split had on their experiences in graduate school and with teaching, the participants could find few connections that they saw as affecting them and their teaching directly. One participant voiced her experience in the following manner:

> I didn't really experience the divide too much. I took lit classes and comp classes and the results were the same in both essentially. No one penalized me for being a rhet/comp person, and I was not penalized, you know I was a rhet comp person in rhet/comp classes. So that worked out too. It's more politicking behind the scenes, like, you know, with the job search. When a lit person would rip a rhet/comp person apart in their job talk.

Without realizing it, this participant acknowledged a significant implication of the split impacting the preparation of composition GTAs. The English department where the GTAs worked was (and had been) looking to hire additional rhetoric and composition professors. When the study was conducted, there were only two composition specialists in the department with the remainder of the faculty being literature specialists. The hiring of more composition specialists would mean that the GTAs had more faculty mentors to go to for advice and guidance, the very things they mention as lacking. Similarly, the practicum that the participants characterize as useless and boring was instructed by a literature specialist and not a composition specialist. It is not a huge stretch to imagine

that a literature professor who had not taught a composition course in years was not well

suited to address the battery of experiences and concerns this new cohort of GTAs

brought with them to the practicum. The lit/comp split was indirectly affecting the

resources available to GTAs teaching composition classes.

Another participant had the following to say when explaining some of the

difficulties she was having with a particular composition class: "The desks are just far

away. We think a six foot gulf is turning into a barrier. So we might ask them to circle

their desks or to move into desk pods – anything more conducive to feeling the warm

fuzzies in comp." This statement, which was blatantly sarcastic, suggested that the GTAs

were not only aware of but were taking in some of the characterizations of the field of

composition as being more feminized and perhaps more lax than their more serious

literature counterparts. With less data specifically related to the split's affect on teaching

assistants, I concluded that the split was impacting the participants in subtle ways and

more research was needed to draw any solid conclusions.

Emergent Conclusions

Though some theoretical conclusions were based on *a priori* codes, others resulted

from codes that emerged throughout the data collection process. A total of 11 emergent

conclusions were drawn from the participants' data in the present study. The codes

supporting these conclusions were labeled according to Miles and Huberman (1994). The

emergent codes include: 1.0 what is composition studies; 2.0 common problems in the

classroom, 2.1 lack of authority, 2.2 youth and lack of experience, 2.3 disrespect by

students; 3.0 connecting with students, 3.1 connections too close, 3.2 not enough

connection with students; 4.0 humanizing the classroom; 5.0 fears, 5.1 personal sense of failure.

The following figure provides a graphic display of the emergent coding categories and shows their relationship to one another.

Figure 2
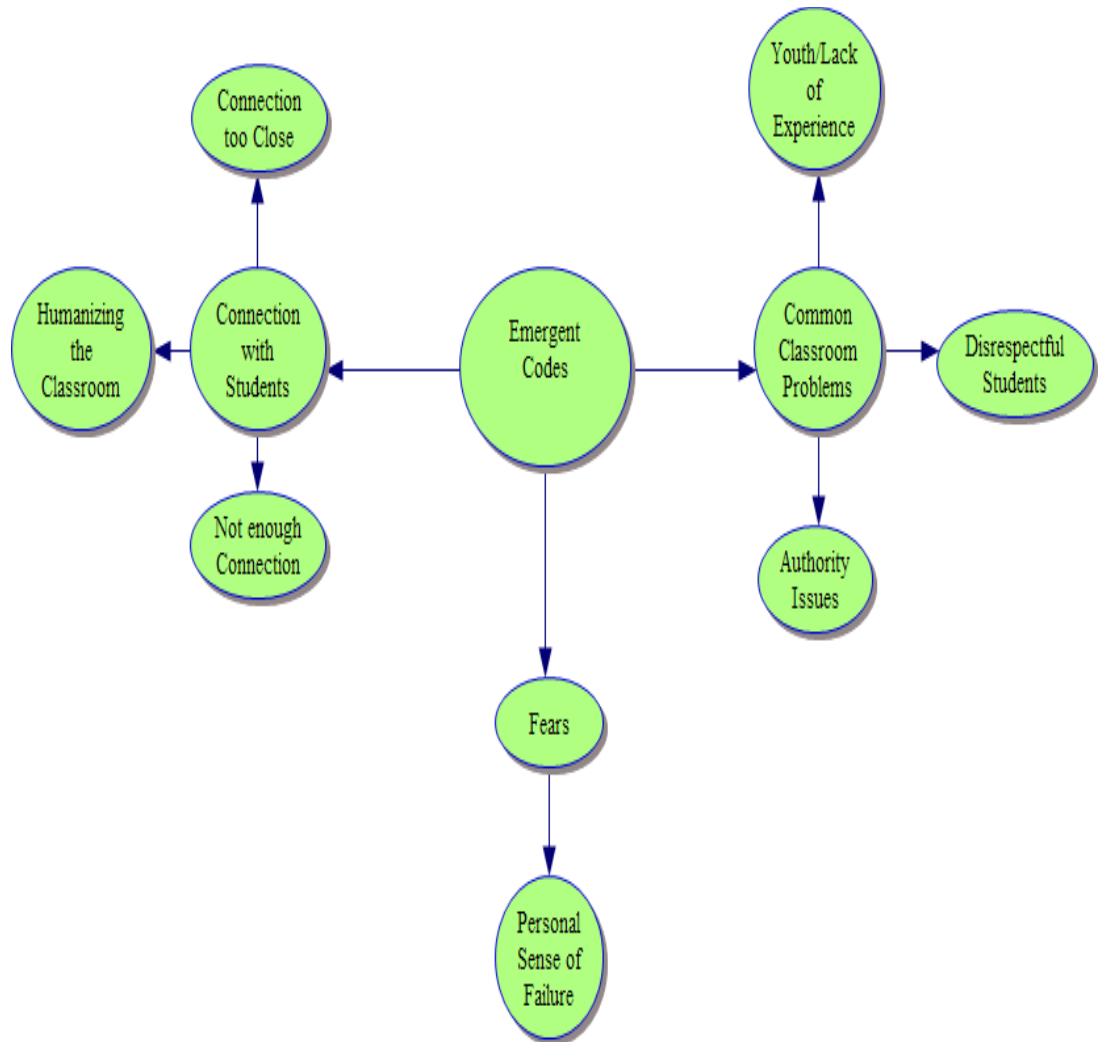
Learning of composition studies.

One noteworthy conclusion coming from this study is that the majority of new composition instructors have a significantly limited concept of what "composition studies" is until they enter their graduate program. For example, of the four participants, only two had heard of composition studies or had a vague idea of what composition was as a field when they were undergraduates. Other than the required courses in freshmen composition, only one of the participants had taken an additional course in composition and rhetoric as an undergraduate. The other two participants had never heard of composition studies before and had never taken a class in composition and rhetoric before arriving on campus and enrolling in the preparation program. The participants came to their graduate program wanting to specialize in literature, and their upper level undergraduate course work dealt almost exclusively with various genres of literature. The GTAs each explain how they came to know about composition studies:

> *All through my undergrad, I was only trained in literature. I never took one composition class, and did not even know that Rhet Comp as a program existed! I remember my friends took Dr. ***** for Rhetoric and loved it, but I had already taken Linguistics (because you either take that or Rhetoric or a MTPC class for core stuff) so I did not take it. I was all into literature-especially African American, 20th Century Lit, and Post Colonial. Never thought I would be in Rhet Comp like I am now!*

> *I really think the transition was difficult because I had no classes in comp except for 1100 and 1120 that I took as a freshman. The most difficult part for me was first semester of last year when it was my first time co teaching and the class was working on the essay where they analyze an argument. It was difficult to not bring in as much literature stuff—like diction, imagery, etc.*

> *As an undergraduate, I majored in English and double minored in history and Spanish. I took all literature courses though we did have one course in Advanced Composition—which I wish I would have taken. Going in to college, I had wanted to teach literature in either high schools or college so I first declared an English Education major.*

I'd have to say that while I took a couple grammar courses (including advanced grammar), History of the English Language, and one Advanced Composition class, most of my undergraduate work was in literature—especially medieval studies.

Studying literature had always been my passion. Although I hadn't heard of comp studies, I knew I wanted to teach writing at the college level. I was excited that my GTA would let me do that.

Only a year later, the GTAs take on the responsibility for instructing multiple composition classrooms. They have been in graduate school one year and have been exposed to composition studies through the preparation program. Still, many of the courses the GTAs enroll in are literature courses and not courses in composition and rhetoric. When the GTAs begin teaching their own sections of composition classes to freshmen, they have had approximately three classes in the content area. This suggests that the new GTAs rely heavily on the preparation provided by their graduate institution. This also suggests that composition GTAs begin teaching with little expertise in their content area, which potentially leaves them more vulnerable to struggle in the classroom than other GTAs. One participant referred to knowledge as her "weapon" in the classroom and said that she found she had to "always project an image of knowledge and authority." Without feeling confident with regard to subject knowledge, GTAs are more apt to experience problems in their classrooms.

Three key issues: authority, youth, and disrespectful students.

Although this project is about illuminating the individual differences that GTAs bring to the teaching experience, the data pointed to several problems that novice composition GTAs share. Rankin (1994) discusses several of the common experiences new GTAs face such as how young teachers find themselves humiliated when they

cannot get some piece of technology to work in class (like a VCR, DVD player, etc.). As one of the participants in the present study put it, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that the copy machine will break down on the first day of the semester." The data in the present study provides overwhelming evidence that all the participants were struggling with three key issues: establishing and maintaining authority in their classrooms, accommodating for their youth and lack of experience, and dealing with disrespectful students. There were multiple and pervasive references to these issues in journals and in the interviews, and I believe the three struggles played a major role in shaping their first year experience. However, the manner in which each GTA defined these issues and addressed them was unique to the individual and indicative of their biological, psychological, and sociological makeup.

Establishing authority.

The first issue that all of the participants struggled with during their first year of teaching was establishing authority in their classrooms. They each had to define what type or amount of authority they wanted to carry in their classrooms; would they be more strict or lenient or would they look for an ideal balance. In many ways establishing authority was a matter of presenting themselves in a manner that would help them achieve the teacher persona they desire. One participant writes: "I have also learned that teaching is more about showmanship than knowledge (well not always). It's been a real challenge learning to "present" myself." The GTAs also wanted their teaching styles to match with their personalities, and they did not want to become someone else just because they were teaching. All formulated a clear plan about how they wanted to present themselves as teachers, especially on the first day so that students would respect them

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and take them seriously. In the following passages, the participants explain how they

prepared for the first class and how authority issues affected their classes:

I know what I'm doing the first day and I know how I'm going to act—I look young and come across really peppy and nice to people and I don't want to seem that nice the first day. I want to be really hard about attendance and cell phones, so they realize how important these are in a classroom. But really, I'm just excited!! This might sound corny, but my dream has been to teach college. To be able to do that at 23, even though I don't have a PhD yet or anything, is amazing to me.

I am nervous because last year many of the guys did not respect my authority— and that was with another teacher in the room! How will they be with me by myself? So, today I was super hard core about absences and my syllabus and schedule – talked about it the whole time. I also told them that if I saw a cell phone in class, it would be an automatic unexcused absence. They were scared, and it worked to my advantage. I hate to say that, but I need to be really authoritative at first – they need to be nervous in order for this to be a function classroom where they respect my authority.

In many ways, I think authority is a matter of confidence; I could tell that if I ever let my guard down and showed my students that I was feeling vulnerable or doubtful about my abilities, that would be the end of my authority in the classroom. It was a matter of acting as if I knew more and more importantly, that I knew what I was doing. I have learned that it's okay to treat them like adults and to maintain an open dialogue. Some will always see this as "weakness" from a younger, female teacher, this being open and conversant and all, but I know I cannot be an autocrat. Not that I don't get drunk with power. As always, it's the continuing battle to find the right balance.

I think I might have a few authority issues in this class. Already I can see the smoke of rebellion issuing out of my students' nostrils.

My 5pm class was a bit of a disaster, I am having serious authority issues in there. They don't seem to be taking me seriously at all.

Ironically, gaining the respect of students and becoming an authority figure also means

that the GTAs must forgo some aspects of the personality and give up some aspects of

their vision of an ideal classroom. They often mentioned that they cannot be too friendly

with students or too talkative. One GTA summarized her concerns in the following way:

I feel like that is what I will struggle with the most – establishing authority. If you

can't already tell, I'm nervous about it. But, I think it can be done. I'm pretty laid

back and that also makes me nervous, like I feel like I can't be my whole self with

teaching right now, if that makes any sense. I have to be this stricter form of me.

She, like the other participants, was struggling to balance her individual and teacher

personalities. At this point in the experience, the GTAs see themselves as two distinct

people and they have a desire to merge their personas.

Youth and lack of experience.

One reason for this delicate balance is that the GTAs are only a few years older

than the students they are instructing. The average freshmen enrolled in a composition

course is 18 or 19 years old and the average age of the participants in this study is

approximately 25 years old (24.75). The students respond differently to instructors who

are so close in age, and the GTAs worried that it would be problematic to be both open

and friendly and retain any amount of authority. The main obstacles keeping the

participants from having the relationship they wanted with students, then, were their

youth and lack of experience. They found that being too informal with students made

them vulnerable in the classroom; for example, students would take advantage of class

time by getting off topic or students would abuse the absence policy and expect the GTAs

to understand. The GTAs' youth and lack of experience became one of the major

concerns brought up throughout the data:

> *As for how I had zero teaching experience before I started, it was very difficult at*
> *the beginning. I was nervous! I had just graduated in 2007 from ***** as an*
> *undergrad, and now I was teaching a class?! It felt really surreal. I just did not*
> *feel mature/responsible enough to do it. But then, I got used to it and realized*
> *teaching was fun, not scary. And as I started to realize that, I warmed up. I think*

one of my biggest problems is how young I look. People always think I just graduated from high school, not college. And I worry that the freshmen will take advantage of that. So I try to be authoritative at the beginning, and then I can relax more as the semester goes on.

Some students are wary of young, female teachers who don't have PhDs (or even MAs) and potentially see us as being unqualified and/or incompetent.

I realized we had basically been taken for a ride with like the attendance policy and everything else the prior semester. So we kinda put the lid on that. It's like "no you guys are not going to take advantage of our good natures." We are still going to be nice. But we are not going to let it go to like 7 absences. Yeah. (laughter)

I was always more personable during conferences though. I find it easy to talk to my students when I am alone, but in the classroom I always projected an image of knowledge and authority.

All of the participants also believed that being female compounded their issues with authority and contributed to students focusing on their youth and lack of teaching experience. As young female GTAs, the participants were challenged more in the classroom.

Disrespectful students.

Because the participants struggled with establishing authority and recognized that their students were starkly aware of their youth and lack of experience teaching, they acknowledge an overt amount of disrespect by students. The disrespect ranged from students talking in class to refusing to participate in class activities. One GTA explained, "I think [students] feel they can openly mock me and get away with it." Some of the issues with disrespectful students were attributed to the fact that the GTAs were young and female.

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The participants make the following comments regarding disrespect in their classrooms:

I saw a recurrence of the same issues I talked about earlier: the tendency among some students to not take a relatively young teacher seriously. I found that, in my interactions with some students, I sounded more stern than I intended. I did have a few students in my class who overtly disrespectful and I generally had to respond to such behavior in class. I was never rude or hurtful, but I decided that it was important to quell disrespectful behavior as and when it happened.

I will say that being a female is still a challenge in the classroom. Many of the male freshmen in my classes at Auburn felt like they could say whatever they wanted to me and be disrespectful. I think I got to the point of becoming more authoritarian because I had no other choice. If I was myself, who is usually bubbly and sociable, then the students thought I was being their friend more than their teacher. With my type personality, I want to please people.

I think since it's a class full of boys some of them seem to think I don't know what I am talking about. I guess the perception is that since I am a much younger woman they don't have to respect me, because I obviously don't know what I am saying. There is this one kid in particular who gets on my nerves every single time he turns in a paper because he clearly does not follow the requirements of the assignment because he thinks the assignment is stupid. Every single time he has written me a sarcastic note and he has signed it, "Love James." I used to think it was funny but now he is being outright disrespectful.

On our Comp surveys, one student is gunning for us—he said that he liked "confident teachers" and doesn't like "lame jokes." So next week, we are determined to make class last the whole time.

We realized, that TR8 was mocking us openly—which was infuriating and completely mortifying. I can't fathom why college students would be so rude. It's not like Roxanne and I are up there trying to be mean or arrogant or vindictive towards them. We're just not that way—maybe it's construed as a sign of weakness? Perhaps. But I can't be something I'm not, and neither can Roxanne. Other students in that class were vocal in saying they didn't *need* to take our class, and that it was beneath them. Roxanne and I pow-wowed about it—we were both determined that the disrespect needed to stop. There's no way at all that we could progress with that kind of behavior taking place. So, like we do every day, we sat down together, and we outlined exactly what we needed to tell our students. That their homework was not well-done, that they need to put forth effort, that they need to focus, etc etc. That WE CAN HEAR THEM when they're snarking in the back. We also decided to have them freewrite about their grades, accountability, and course expectations.

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We had conferences last week, and during the one I have with him, he essentially tells me I am wrong about his paper. I just look at him like "What the hell?"

I tried to do the same activities in my 5pm class, but I was constantly distracted by a couple of guys who kept making fun of everything I asked them to do.

Of all the issues the GTAs experienced in their classrooms, the problems with disrespectful students were the most pervasive.

Connecting with students.

As might be expected of aspiring teachers, all of the GTAs voiced a desire to connect with their students and to have what they saw as an ideal and fruitful teacher/student relationship. However, because they were concerned with maintaining their authority and because they were young and lacked experienced, they constantly struggled to maintain the delicate balance that would yield them the desired teacher/student relationship. When the GTAs became familiar to students and were too open or lenient, students took advantage of the relationship, and if the GTAs became colder and more strict, their students were distant and more difficult to reach. One participant pointed out in an interview that her students were often confused by her being friendly in the class and then asking the students to seriously engage in their work. She said,

> They see moments of levity as being all fun and games, and when I change them to something more serious, then its like "oh now she is being moody." The changes in my moods, they don't understand it is because of their behavior. If I am cranky…I don't know I would hope with more experience behind my belt I would be able to maintain that a little better in the future.

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She also believed that a more experienced teacher would not have the same problem with getting her students to work after open, friendly moments in class. This hindered how well the participants connected with their students.

Of course, other things influenced the GTAs' ability to connect with students, including their busy schedules, lack of student interest, and individual personality/temperament traits. As one GTA pointed out, "I did connect with a few of them, but most of my students were uninterested in the course, despite all my efforts. I also think they found some of the assignments to be confusing and I found it hard to explain it to them." In this particular case, the GTA attributes a lack of connection to uninterested students and to assignments that she found difficult to explain. However, at other times, the GTAs see the lack of connection as entirely their fault. In the following quote, one participant reflects on her lack of ability to connect with students over the course of her first year teaching:

I would say it is my struggle to be liked by my students. I often hear other GTAs talk about the extraordinary connection they have made with their students and how they interact with them almost as friends. I have seen my colleagues discuss their students' personal lives with them and I have often wondered if something about me prevents my students from reaching out in this manner. I suppose I didn't have the time or energy to do anything of this kind, but I wonder if I will ever manage to form a connection with any of my students or if I will always see them as beings who turn in papers when they are required to do so.

This participant struggled more with connecting with students than the other three, but all the GTAs voiced a need for students to "like them." They did not want to look out at

grim groups of students every day who were unwilling to participate and who hated their class. The GTAs believed at least part of the battle in the classroom would be won by getting students to like them as individuals.

Humanizing the classroom.

The participants' desire for students to like them as individual people expressed itself in the data as a need to humanize the classroom. Humanizing the classroom took on different meanings for each of the GTAs, but they essentially wanted students to like their style or method of teaching and to enjoy the class. The GTAs explain the need for humanizing the classroom in the following way:

> *I believe our freshmen are so apathetic mainly because we impose the role of "student" upon them. I think this is a deeply alienating process. It alienates them from themselves and us. I think the only way we can knock this apathy out of them is by making them care about their education as people and then as students. I guess I want to humanize my classroom and my relation ships with my students. However, this might never actually happen.*
>
> *I am not sure why I can't separate my personal life from my pedagogical life. I feel like my personality as a teacher and a human being cannot be different. I have a perverse need to be liked by everyone, including my students. So I try to be their friend and in this case, this attitude has been detrimental.*
>
> *I know it doesn't matter if my students like me or dislike me, but I would like to connect to them as human beings, not just as students.*
>
> *I think it's important that the students see the human and not just the authority figure in the classroom. It's a complicated balance, but I think they need to trust me as a person. If they feel like I'm out to get them, then they're going to be too scared to ask questions and seek advice.*

One of the ways the GTAs accomplished the goal of humanizing their classes was by conferencing with students because paper conferences acted as the only source of one-on-one time for student and teacher. They also liked the informality of the conferences.

One of the participants said that conferencing was her favorite aspect of teaching because "they help the students see the teacher has this other human aspect to her."

There are a couple of reasons why composition GTAs may experience the desire to humanize their classrooms more than those working in other fields. One is that composition classrooms are small in size, typically enrolling 15 to 25 students depending on the university's resources. Smaller class sizes contribute to more intimate classroom environments. One GTA characterized the intimate nature of writing classrooms by saying, "We actually have to talk to our students. Ain't no scantron tests here! We have to read their thoughts and work with them one-on-one to develop their writing skills. This isn't a lecture hall of 300. It's just 25 of the little darlings. It creates a different dynamic." In addition to small class sizes, a different dynamic results from the personal nature of the assigned writing tasks, especially in the first course (ENGL 1100). Students are asked to write autobiographies, educational autobiographies, and literacy narratives that include intimate details of the personal lives. For example, recently I had a student describe an experience he had as a child in a foster home. He was African-American and his foster parents were Caucasian, and for his narrative assignment, he recounted the pain of being forced to drink out of a "marked" cup so no one else in the home would have to drink after him. One of the GTAs in the present study had a student write her narrative about being bi-sexual, and she worried about having the student participate in peer review. These types of personal stories are common parts of composition teachers' lives; they alter classroom dynamics.

Too close to students.

Consequently, the problem was not always a lack of personal connection between the GTA and her students. In one particular case, a participant described how her connection with students was sometimes too close and no clear boundaries were established. She was the youngest of the participants and the most concerned with authority:

> *My second semester teaching at Auburn I had a student who opened up to me, but almost too much. He was telling me about his problems with girlfriends, etc. I did not know how to handle it at the time, but this summer the student contacted me not about school, but just about how his life was going. In the email, he was again telling me information about his personal life. I decided to not respond to the email because I thought this was not the teacher-student relationship I envision.*
>
> *I had another conference with a student who I think might of hit on me. I could be wrong though. We finished talking about his paper, and then he said randomly "What are you doing this weekend?" I said I was going out of town. Then he said, "I bet you are a funny drunk." Out of nowhere. Completely inappropriate. I just laughed because I did not know what to say. Mad at myself for doing that. Should have been authoritative.*
>
> *In front of the class today, a student (female) in my 1 o'clock asked me if I had a boyfriend. I told her it was none of the class' business. She seemed unfazed by her obtrusive question. She said, "We can find out on Facebook anyway."*
>
> *Students want me to be a friend, more like an Auburn advisor. These experiences with students who see me as a friend have led me to be more strict or authoritative.*

The youngest of the participants encountered several issues with students being to open with her. She had a male student speak to her inappropriately in a conference, and she also had female students talk out of turn in front of the entire class. These incidents made the GTA uncomfortable, and she did not know how to handle the inappropriate students because they were so unexpected and because it was not discussed in training.

Fears and personal accounts of failure.

The participants also shared some of their fears during the course of the study. They were afraid that students would hate them and that they would not learn anything from their classes. The GTAs also worried that their busy schedules and heavy workloads would mean that their students would not get enough attention. All the participants also had fears that something would go wrong in class; for example, they might say something completely inappropriate, look unprofessional, or inadvertently embarrass a student. In the following section, the GTAs share some of the fears in their own words:

> *I did have fears though: I was afraid that my students were not learning anything and that this was always my fault and I expressed this view to some of the other GTAs. They said that they had the same fears and many confirmed my view that it was because the 1120 course was so confusing and they found it hard to figure out what they were supposed to be teaching in the first place.*
>
> *As a grad student, I tend to get lost in my own work and the needs of my students might get sidelined. I just hope they don't end up hating me at the end of the semester.*
>
> *This one girl wrote about being bisexual for her personal essay. That is totally cool with me, but I am not her peer reviewer! I was having nightmares that I would pair her with some fundamentalist who judged and rejected her.*
>
> *I had a tragic computer lab experience where the technology didn't work. I felt unprofessional. I am nervous about using technology.*
>
> *I get scared that I am too busy—that my students are not learning a thing. hopefully, they are.*
>
> *I can't imagine myself as the "teacher of record." The idea scares me.*
>
> *I worry that students are not learning, but I have done the best I can.*

There are also times when the participants experienced a personal sense of failure as teachers. One of the GTAs felt that she did a much better job teaching the first semester when compared to the second semester; some of this stemmed from the introduction of

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new curriculum and from the fact that she did not enjoy the research class as much as the introductory writing course. She said of her first year teaching, "While my first semester was characterized by doubt and uncertainty and jubilation (towards the end), my second semester was characterized by fear and a dogged sense of failure." She was also the participant who brought in a co-teacher during the middle of the semester because of her struggles in one class. Some of her personal sense of failure in the second semester she acknowledged as an individual personality trait. She that she has "a tendency to feel like a failure and seek approval (from everyone including my students) and when I felt that my students didn't like or approve of me, it affected my confidence in the classroom a little."

As students and teachers the GTAs experienced numerous failures over the course of the second year of graduate school, and these failures essentially stemmed from an assault on the b/p/s. Because the GTAs have so many, often competing, responsibilities, their physical bodies cannot keep up. They are tired and not alert, and this inability to perform consistently led to a sense of failure.

The participants also encountered a sense of cognitive failure when they could not explain assignments to students properly or come up with impromptu examples in class. This made the GTAs feel unprepared and like they were failing their students since their main objective was for students to learn as much as possible. The failure was compounded by additional shortcomings in the graduate classes the GTAs were enrolled in; they often found themselves unengaged in class discussions and unable to complete assignments on strict deadlines.

All of these stressors affected the GTAs relationships with students and their emotional wellbeing. They experienced problems connecting with students and managing productive relationships inside and beyond the classroom. They were unable to spend as much time with family and friends and often found themselves having emotional outbursts, which were not typical for any of the participants. Numerous accounts of crying and atypical aggressive behaviors were reported by GTAs in the data. One of the participants was described as having "an emotional breakdown" at the end of the second semester. In addition, relationships between cohort members became strained over the course of the second semester. The GTAs participating in the study were close friends; however, one of the friendships in the participant group ended.

Conclusions

GTAs in various academic fields are experiences the pressure of competing models of higher education that most often value research and diminish the craft of teaching. In this model, many GTAs who teach their own courses report a sense of conflict due to their competing responsibilities as researchers, continuing students, and teachers. Because some GTAs do not want to "shortchange" their students or themselves, their workloads become heavy and at times unmanageable. However, where GTAs working in other fields, including psychology and pharmacy, may experience a more defined distinction between their objectives as graduate students (and a clearer preference for research), composition GTAs find the model somewhat inverted. This break from the larger system in which they work, including the broadly defined university and literature faculty, makes composition GTAs struggle more with balancing their lives as graduate students and teachers.

Interestingly, many GTAs come to their new lives at the university with little knowledge or experience with the content area they will be asked to teach, and this arguably leaves them more vulnerable to struggle in the classroom. Some of the problems voiced by participants in the present study were issues with authority, youth and lack of teaching experience, and students being disrespectful in the classroom. GTAs found that these specific issues impacted their student/teacher relationships, especially the extent to which they could connect with students (professionally and personally) in the classroom.

As new teachers, the participants also entered their classrooms for the first time with fears and encountered what each considered "failure" over the course of the study. These accounts of fear and failure illuminated the distinctive nature of the GTA experience. The b/p/s model helps remind readers and scholars that all the issues GTAs face are defined and negotiated by individual graduate students, and just how they view their classrooms, their training, and the larger university in which they work is unique.

Discussion

Introduction

 The objectives of this study are to look at the experiences of second year master's students teaching composition courses for the first time and to recognize how the institutional training they receive may prepare them for their duties. The body of literature regarding the training of composition GTAs cites four main elements of typical institutional preparation programs. The preparation program that the GTAs in the present study participated in included those four elements: an orientation, required courses in composition and rhetoric, a weekly practicum, and a mentor program (Chism, 1987; Fulkerson, 1993; Latterell, 2006). The GTAs also had the opportunity to work in the university's writing center as English tutors. In the writing center, they could gain valuable experience grading student papers and giving feedback to students regarding their writing. In addition, the GTAs had some basic information regarding rubrics, example syllabi and assignments, and the objectives of the composition program provided via the English Department's website. Each of the GTAs in the present study participated in all the training components above and was aware of the additional information available online. Three of the participants also mention going to the two composition specialist faculty members periodically for help and suggestions for their classes. Without any prior experience teaching or with the field of composition studies these training components were the only source of institutional preparation the students received.

The training components.

The participants described the orientation as a one-time meeting that lasted approximately two hours. During the meeting the GTAs discussed the master's program requirements and the expectations of new GTAs. They were given binders detailing program rules and requirements; the binder contained some sample syllabi and assignments. The meeting included all incoming masters and doctoral students in the English department and was facilitated by the Director of Composition Studies. A second orientation was also provided for this cohort of GTAs because of the significant changes being made to the composition program The participants described the second orientation to the new WAC program as following the same format and including the same materials and information. An example of the binder materials that GTAs receive is attached in appendices D, E and F.

The literature on GTA training points to the inclusion of required courses in Composition and Rhetoric for new GTAs. As with other training components these courses vary from institution to institution and may include one or two courses that cover anything from theory to pedagogy to the history of writing. The participants in the present study each took two courses in composition during their first year of graduate work. These courses were instructed by the composition faculty and dealt mainly with pedagogy and theory. The course assignments allowed students to construct teaching philosophies and portfolios of assignments they could later use in their own classes. Other than the one participant who mentioned she had taken an advanced composition course as an undergraduate, these were the only courses specifically dedicated to composition studies the GTAs had before beginning their teaching assignments. The

majority of courses taken by the participants to fulfill degree requirements were literature courses. This is due in large part to a lack of resources, specifically composition faculty who could offer additional advanced composition courses for GTAs. An example of the syllabi for the required preparation courses is attached in appendix D.

The participants were also required to attend a weekly practicum during their first semester of graduate school. The practicum met every Wednesday afternoon from 1:00 pm until 2:30 pm. Around 20 students from the three programs housed in the English department attended and these included both masters and doctoral students. The practicum met for 16 weeks and 12 of the sessions were led by a faculty member who specialized in literature and four of the sessions were led by a faculty member specializing in composition. In theory, the practicum is designed as an open forum where GTAs can meet and discuss their concerns and questions regarding graduate student life. The practicum required the participants to attend English Department events and to do some observations of composition classrooms. The practicum schedule is attached in appendix E.

All GTAs also participate in the university's year long mentor program, and this is the primary place where new GTAs get the opportunity to begin teaching. In the fall semester of their first year of graduate school, GTAs are paired with a more experienced teacher and they attend the first composition class in the series of two (ENGL 1100) with the mentor all semester. The extent of the GTAs involvement in the class varies based on the mentor's preferences. The GTA can attend the class and act as an observer only, or the GTA may be actively involved in many aspects of the classroom. One mandatory aspect of the mentor program requires the GTA to teach one unit of the class, constituting

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approximately four weeks worth of teaching. Depending on the mentor, the GTA may have anywhere from complete freedom when it comes to assignments and class activities during the four weeks, or she may have to teach exactly as the mentor plans. In the spring semester, the GTA is paired with a different mentor and repeats the process, attending the second class in the series (ENGL 1120) and teaching one unit. The mentor program provides GTAs with one two semesters of experience with the classes they will be teaching.

Considering Fit and Resources to Better Prepare GTAs

The participants had access to all of these training resources, but from the data, I concluded that many of the elements of the preparation program were not functioning as intended. When looking at some of the possible reasons why the GTAs did not get the intended help from their training, the b/p/s model may be suited to offer some explanations. Two elements are needed to make the preparation program more effective and these include accounting for fit in apprenticeships and insuring necessary resources for GTAs. There needs to be a personality/temperament fit and an intellectual fit between mentor and GTA. To pair mentors and GTAs based on fit means assessing both prospective mentors and incoming GTAs to determine key areas of interest (such as research or teaching and epistemology) and personality traits (reserved, shy, bubbly, outgoing, etc). GTAs might also benefit from establishing fit when it comes to relationship dynamics (will they work best with a mentor who is direct, gives lots of verbal praise, etc).

There also needs to be enough resources available to serve individual GTAs effectively. Programs need money for funding and plans for identifying qualified teachers

to act as mentors. For example, faculty need time to work with GTAs and there have to be an adequate number of faculty or experienced graduate students available to support the new GTAs. However, mentor programs typically rely on volunteers and do not compensate faculty or experienced graduate students for their work with mentees. This potentially means less quality control and fewer teachers willing to serve as mentors.

Changing the mentor program.

As the cornerstone of the preparation model, the mentor program stands out as a place where changes need to be made to increase effectiveness for individual GTAs. One serious concern with the mentor program is that mentors and GTAs have virtually no intellectual history or cognitive information about each other when the apprenticeship begins. No pre-tests are given to entering GTAs to find out what they know about composition or what experience they have teaching. GTAs and mentors are not paired based on knowledge base or even on their areas of interest. The only information I had about the two GTA I was mentoring, for example, were their names and contact information after I left the orientation. After about a month of working with the two GTAs, I realized one was interested in technologically advanced and paperless classroom and one wanted to work with ESL students. I had no experience in either area and had little to offer them with regard to those specific areas of interest. The lack of fit also meant that the GTAs would not be observing and working in a classroom similar to the ones they plan on teaching in the future. A quick questionnaire prior to pairing mentors and GTAs would be suited to address commonalities in areas of interest at the very least.

Mentors and incoming GTAs could also be paired based on other traits such as temperament, personality, and communication and learning styles. Many GTAs with no

experience teaching enter the classroom for the first time unsure and nervous. One participant said in an interview, "As for how I had zero teaching experience before I started, it was very difficult at the beginning. I was nervous!" This uncertainty can be compounded when GTAs find themselves paired with mentors who have vastly different personalities and views on how students learn. The problem with overlooking this aspect of the apprenticeship relationship was demonstrated in this study when the shyest and most soft-spoken of the participants was paired with a mentor she described as "loud and intimidating." She describes her first experience with the mentor program in the following way:

> The first experience I had was bad. The co-teacher I was working with had the
> idea that students should respect the teacher at all times, and if they didn't, the
> best way to "rein them in" was through intimidation—yelling at them, slamming
> doors as we walked in, and keeping very strict policies about homework and
> attendance. I felt out of place because I had never taught before and thought I
> was always under the microscope. For the most part, I sat in a desk beside the
> students and didn't do much (in the way of planning or teaching) until my unit.

Having a mentor who shared some similar personality and temperament traits likely would have made the experience more pleasant and more fruitful. In addition, obtaining some prior knowledge about the socio-emotional traits of mentors and mentees would provide information about what types of relationships each finds rewarding and what social values each embraces.

This is not to suggest that adding a few assessments prior to pairing mentors and GTAs will solve every issue with the mentor program, because it will not, but arbitrarily

coupling GTAs and mentors makes the blank-slate assumption that students and teachers are "things" and that the concept of apprenticeship functions regardless of the student and teacher involved. In contrast, most teachers who work with graduate students will assert that the mentor/mentee relationship is complex, and like other relationships, it requires a certain degree of intimacy and connection to function well. Importantly, this relationship will be left to chance if the biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional needs of students and mentors are not taken into account.

Resources.

The mentor program will also not function without several keys resources, including volunteers or compensated faculty and experienced graduate students willing to work with new GTAs. The variety is needed to address issues of fit since individual GTAs will come to the program with a range of academic interests, cognitive ability, and experience levels. Departments could consider allowing experienced doctoral students mentor new GTAs and funding them for their work with the co-teaching program.

Matching GTAs and mentors based on compatibility of bio/psych/social elements will also mean spending time and effort obtaining and studying each individual's information. In addition, departments will need to decide what type of assessment tools they will be using.

If the mentor program could form a plan to place more emphasis on pairing mentors and GTAs based on intellectual and personality fit, then the mentor and mentee might benefit from working together for an entire year instead of having GTAs switch mentors after a semester. As it stands, GTAs will not have time to cultivate an in-depth relationship with their mentor in a semester, but a year-long apprenticeship with a well

matched pair stands to enhance the experience. However, in the face of strained resources, as was the case of the program where the present study was conducted, the mentor program could be cut down to only one semester. GTAs will have been paired with mentors based on compatibility and fit and these relationships will hopefully be productive over the course of one semester. The GTAs, in turn, would still have someone to contact with questions and concerns.

One of the main conclusions of this study was the significance of the impact of competing models of higher education and therefore competing responsibilities on composition GTAs. Pairing GTAs with a mentor based on intellectual fit may help resolve some of this strain. GTAs interested in teaching, for example, could be paired with a mentor who shares that value. On the other hand, GTAs focused on research and publication could work with faculty who turn out larger amounts of research. Mentors then help guide the graduate students they work with toward the types of careers they desire.

In addition, three of the four participants in the present study wanted to continue co-teaching with another GTA after the mentor program had ended. Preparation programs might consider allowing new GTAs the option of teaching in pairs during their second year of graduate school instead of assuming all GTAs are ready and prefer to teach alone. These decisions could be made by the composition program director on an individual basis. GTAs would be responsible for using their own resources to find compatible peers to pair with. If GTAs are willing to attend additional classes, this change does not appear to cause the program or department any additional funding or resource issues. Students also stand to benefit from having two GTAs in their classrooms instead of one.

Practica and orientations.

There are two reasonable options for practica and orientations that are not functioning as intended; the components could be cut from preparation programs all together or they could be suggested as optional training facilitated by the graduate students. The practicum and orientation attend by the participants in the present study acted as a type of "catch all": these were places where GTAs covered program requirements, looked through example assignments and syllabi in binders, met mentors, and discussed their classes and teaching concerns. However, if the mentor program serves GTAs as proposed, then GTAs would learn the content included in orientation and practica from their mentors; including information about their programs along with sharing assignments, syllabi, and teaching experiences. Essentially, a solid mentor program would render a practicum and orientation unnecessary.

For the participants in this case, the practicum attended became a time consuming source of frustration; however, GTAs may find that an informal, student led practicum or weekly (or bi-weekly) meeting might be more valuable. Graduate students could meet when and where they decided as a group and talk freely about subjects that matter to them. Not requiring attendance for GTAs would free up much needed time in the GTAs' schedules and leave them with the accountability of insuring the meetings were useful. The practicum could simply turn into informal conversations among graduate students where they hashed out their own issues and concerns with one another.

Cognates for Composition GTAs

This particular cohort of GTAs also found that their training was complicated by major changes to the composition program that affected the courses they were teaching.

The composition program made a change from a GWSI program to a WAC program, and the GTAs then needed new assignments and syllabi to address the needs of their themed courses. The change also meant that the classes GTAs attended with their mentors were noticeably different from the courses they were teaching, so they were less able to draw on those experiences in their classes. There were also problems with assigning themes to GTAs who were unfamiliar with that particular subject area. For example, one participant mentions that she had been assigned a themed course in "Science and Technology" and she was confused about how to approach the class. She list the following questions about her class in one of the questionnaires,

> Was I supposed to teach my students to write and argue about current developments in Science or was I supposed to teach them about the rhetoric of Science and Technology? Was I supposed to hand them topics or were they supposed to come up with research ideas/questions on their own?

She goes on to reveal that her confusion about the assignments led to students being confused and less interested in the course. She ended up compensating by being more lenient on grades. She also felt that additional stress was placed on her authority in the classroom and on her ability to connect with students.

The shoehorning of GTAs into themed classes makes several problematic assumptions: one being treating writing or critical thinking or argumentation as a domain general skill that transfers across disciplines. In this way writing skills become a type of homunculus. The approach is also consistent with blank slate mentalities; that is, one graduate student is the same as another and can teach themes despite their cognitive strengths, areas of interest, and intellectual experiences. In addition, this positions

composition classes as service course that can be taught by anyone. Teachers need not be an expert in science and technology or in sustainability to teach students how to write for those specific content areas.

Although many writing programs address the issue of cognates by having composition teachers from different departments teach writing for their specific areas, this may not be in the case in many institutions. In these cases, cognates may be appropriate. Cognates help programs avoid domain general approaches by avoiding placing GTAs in themed courses they have no experience with. Cognates could also be useful for graduate students not interested in literature and would allow those interested in specializing in composition to take classes in another field of interest instead of taking courses in literature simply because they are in the English department. GTAs could continue pursuing their undergraduate minors or branch off into another area they have experience with. A cognate would allow graduate students to experience what writing and research looks like in other fields and better share that information with their students. Composition specialists could also take courses in qualitative research methods to help them with future research.

The B/P/S Model and Training

There are other ways that the b/p/s model may help educators understand problems with current GTA preparation models. From a biological standpoint there is simply not enough time for the brain to learn the information needed for GTAs to be successful students, teachers, and researchers. The GTAs juggle multiple tasks on a weekly and even daily basis and make many transitions. They have as many as 50 students in one semester and may be taking three or four courses of their own. It is no

surprise that there are substantial accounts of physical and mental exhaustion. It is also no surprise that this exhaustion affects performance at every level of the b/p/s. GTAs are physically and mentally "cashed out" and their relationships in and beyond school suffer. With so many competing responsibilities, each requiring different physical and cognitive skills, GTAs retain little information and are less able to complete any of their tasks. In the end, the graduate school experience as a whole diminishes.

Although the participants were exposed to a preparation program that is rigorous when compared to other programs across the nation, they were overwhelmed by their duties as GTAs. Other than the GTAs accounts of their struggles in journal entries, interviews, and questionnaires, additional occurrences point to their lack of preparation. Specifically, three out of four of the participants decided to bring in a co-teacher and to "join forces" during their first year of teaching. Because the participants wanted to teach together instead of alone, it meant doubling their time allocated for teaching. Both the semesters the participants worked as GTAs they were responsible for three courses instead of the typically two to one load, and they were teaching five classes per week for two semesters. The desire to co-teach with other GTAs suggests they were not ready to be responsible for their own courses. Two of the GTAs sought special permission before they began teaching from the Director of Composition Studies and were granted permission. The other GTA went to a friend approximately one month after classes began for help. They adopted a similar set-up and began teaching their classes together.

When the four participants were contacted after their GTA appointments had ended, only two had decided to continue their graduate educations. These two participants received GTA appointments, but of the two participants who continued to

Ph.D programs, only one was going to pursue composition studies. The other GTA was interested in teaching literature only. One participant did not get an offer of admission to any schools she preferred, and she decided to instead continue her work with ESL students. The final participant received six acceptance letters from prestigious programs in composition and rhetoric across the country, and discouraged with her initial experiences, she declined all offers. If the success of the program is partially related to how many GTAs go on to teach and pursue Ph.Ds, the rate of success was 50 percent in this case.

The literature base discussing the struggles of GTAs also does not offer much help to new teachers. The discussion is most often about the "common" problems that new GTAs are likely to encounter in their classrooms. These issues are presented as problems that may be confronted by most novice teachers, regardless of field or grade level. This study, for example, talks about three issues that the participants refer to multiple times in the data; authority issues, connecting with students, and disrespectful students. The catch with talking about these issues is that they are defined differently by each individual GTA. For example, one participant envisioned the ideal student/teacher relationship as one where she could talk openly with her students about their personal lives. Another GTA, on the other hand, wanted a bit more distance in her ideal relationship; one she characterized as a friendly relationship but one that did not delve into any personal conversations. In this way, authority, connection with students, and disrespect all meld together and become different things to each of the participants.

How each GTA defines these reflect her complex biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional makeup; they include everything from how close she stands when

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talking with students to the relationships she forms over the semester. As one participant pointed out, "I think the "common struggles" themselves are unique because we choose to deal with these situations in a unique way."

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The present study presented several specific limitations that occurred due to the study's scope and to constraints of time, organization, and presentation. The limitations discussed are 1) the focus on only institutional training provided to GTAs 2) the role of gender in the study 3) the secondary research question 4) suggested improvements to the mentor program.

The study does not take into account or consider any activities the GTAs engaged in outside the university that may also be contributing to their training and preparation. The objective of the study was to create a systematic account of the lived experiences of GTAs, but from a practical standpoint, all of these varied experiences could not be addressed. The focus turned to the participants' experiences with a training model similar to those in other large universities. However, even the category of "preparation" needed to be narrowed and only training provided by the university program in which the GTAs worked was considered. In the future, studies will be needed to determine what other activities GTAs engage in that may also be acting as sources of training received outside the university setting. Studies focusing those auxiliary sources of preparation stand to add to the present study by creating a more holistic picture of GTA training. These studies could also point GTAs to additional sources of training they may not have considered.

The present research did not address how gender was related to the general experiences of the participants or their specific experiences with regard to institutional

training. The issue was omitted for a couple of reasons; the first being its incompatibility with the lens being used for the study. To create sweeping assumptions that women learn a certain way or that male GTAs will engage with preparation in a specific way goes against the premise of the b/p/s model; it also becomes redundant in conjunction with the model. The b/p/s model offers a method of looking at the needs of individuals and does not make comparisons among groups or dichotomies such as male/female, native/non-native, or Caucasian and black. The b/p/s model automatically takes individual traits or markers like sex and ethnicity into account as a way to understand an individual; it does not, however, reify terms like "Caucasian" or "black" as constants or things. Ultimately, the terms researchers and educators use to characterized groups mean something different for every individual. For example, asking the question "what are the lived experiences of female GTAs in composition programs?" detracts from the individual and makes the category "female" look like a thing that can be discretely studied. Composition faculty might then design a preparation program intended primarily for females; however, the program could still be overlooking the individual and making problematic assumptions.

The study also faced a limitation of being able to adequately address the secondary research question regarding the impact of the lit-comp split on the lived experiences and preparation of composition GTAs. From a practical standpoint, the question became more than the study could tackle and eventually felt more like an "add on" than an essential part of the project. Individual researchers must consider how useful this question is to GTAs at universities with WAC programs that are no longer associated with or housed in English departments. However, the question was pertinent for the university where the present study was conducted and may be for other similar

institutions. In future studies, the question needs to be addressed in a separate project that will dedicate its primary attention to the split's affect on GTA lives and training. Researchers can make decisions on an individual basis concerning the relevance of the split.

The proposed changes to the mentor program do not come without limitations. Practically, it may be difficult to match GTAs with mentors based on compatible elements of the b/p/s due to a lack of faculty or experienced doctoral students who can (or are willing to) be involved in the program. When programs do establish a group of teachers to act as mentors, it is unlikely that each GTA can find a mentor that matches on every component of the b/p/s. It is more likely that they will be paired up based on one or two defining elements of compatibility, such as epistemology or a broader area of interest.

The present study presents engaging research opportunities for the future. One clear place to begin extending this study is to look at ways the theoretical framework (the b/p/s model) can contribute to the field of composition studies. This includes identifying what aspects of the model have been addressed (cognitive and cultural approaches to writing studies) and unifying those conversations. The model stands to create a holistic picture of the individual GTAs the field prepares and the individual students in writing classrooms. Specifically, topics such as activity theory and contact zones (Bizzell, 1994; Lu, 1994) appear well-matched with educational psychology and the b/p/s model and may be enhanced a by the pairing.

For future studies, additional significant findings could result from approaching the data with a different method and by presenting the data in a different way. For

instance, the case study method could be presented by sectioning off the data into individual cases instead of being organized by coding categories. Readers would see "participant 1" and then all the codes that surfaced for that particular GTA. This presentation would include an individualized presentation of data instead of reporting in the aggregate. On the other hand, instead of using case study, researchers might consider a narrative study in which one GTA is described individually and in-depth in terms of the b/p/s model. The findings could point to ways in which the b/p/s of the GTA relates to their teaching experiences and interaction with the training components provided by the university.

Future studies could also utilize mixed-methods approaches and single-subject designs to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the experiences and training of composition GTAs. For example, one finding of this study is that novice composition GTAs are experiencing problems with disrespectful students in their classrooms and they have difficulty managing the issue. If other qualitative studies support this finding, researchers may also be interested in "how many" composition GTAs are experiencing disrespectful students; a mixed-method study is well suited to address this question. In addition, single-subject designs may aid researchers in deciding which elements of institutional training are benefiting individual GTAs in the classroom. For instance, the university where the present study was conducted has decided to implement a new mentor program in the coming year. It will involve pairing new GTAs with a small group of "master teachers" hand selected by the coordinator of composition studies. However, the mentor program has several components, such as weekly meetings with mentor/mentee and classroom observations (among other things). But, which of these

elements is directly benefiting GTAs as they begin teaching? Single-subject designs can parcel out which elements are informing classroom practice and inform how individual GTAs are trained. The studies are in keeping with the b/p/s model because they continue to focus on the individual instead of groups.

At the end of the day, all of these "fixes" will not ensure that a GTA will succeed as a teacher or as a graduate student. Ultimately, the manner in which a GTA interacts with her classes of students, the preparation model offered to her, and the overall way she characterizes her experiences teaching – in keeping with the b/p/s – is specific to the individual and depends on an interaction of her genetic makeup and her environmental experiences.

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Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions and Responses

Questions from the initial interview protocol

1. Describe your experience teaching so far.

2. You are standing in front of your classroom: what is that like for you?

3. Tell me about the relationship you have with your students.

4.   What has been your best experience with teaching so far?

5. What has been your worst experience with teaching so far?

6. When you are at home preparing for class, what most troubles or worries you?

7. How do you believe your personal background and personality impact your

    teaching?

8. How well prepared were you for teaching? What would you change about how

    GTAs are prepared if given the opportunity?

9. What advice would you give to next year's MAs?

10. Describe yourself as completely as possible. How do you see yourself? What

    defines you?

11. What image that comes to your mind when you think about yourself?

12. Where or when are you most "you" or most complete as an individual?

13. How do you think your students perceive you?

Sample of follow-up interview questions and responses:

Interview Transcript/verbatim

7/22/2009

5:30pm

Mandy: How have your experiences as a comp GTA changed since we last talked?

Strictly speaking on the teaching front, I think what changed between the first semester and the second semester with what I did teaching was I was a little more, I wouldn't say harsh with the students, but I was more matter of fact and less flexible on deadlines, and just things like that. Classroom orderliness.

As X and I realized, we had basically been taken for a ride with like the attendance policy and everything else the prior semester. So we kinda put the lid on that. It's like "no you guys are not going to take advantage of our good natures." We are still going to be nice. But we are not going to let it go to like 7 absences. Yeah. Laughter.

Mandy: Yeah, that is pretty lenient. Laughter.

So we decided just to be a littler more stringent on things like that.

Mandy: What about like some of the things I remember last time we talked about that people thought that were common struggles GTAs face. What do you think about issues of you being female, young, inexperienced. Do you feel that those things changed from 1st to 2nd semester? Or do you think you still struggle? Did you not struggle at all?

I think it is always a struggle. The student, well, X and I had a 50% turnover, so 50% of fall students ended up being our spring students as well. And for the most part those kids are pretty down with the system and liked us and respected us anyway. But,

some just because they see you as not being the male professor with the pipe and the tweed jacket with the elbow patches, they think that if you are severe with them you are just being a bitch with them for no reason. You know. "She is cranky and she is bringing her personal problems into the classroom." It's like NO. They don't see my behavior as being related to their behavior in a way I think they would with a male professor. I don't think they would have tried a male professor in some of the same ways. It wouldn't have gotten to the point of me having to scold them at the final exam. If they had taken me more seriously all along.

Mandy: Do you think that would change in say tens year? You think it would be different?

I think it would change as I got more experienced and learned to keep a consistent tone throughout the entire semester. You know. They see moments of levity as being fun and games and when I change them to something more serious then it's like oh now she is being moody. The changes in my moods, they don't understand it is because of their behavior. If I am cranky…I don't know I would hope with more experience behind my belt I would be able to maintain that a little better in the future.

Appendix B: Example Journal Materials

Directions for the journals emailed out to participants:

I am going to be leaving a notebook in each of your boxes. What I would like

you all to do is keep a journal over the course of the semester. Nothing fancy or intensive,

just a means of recording your experiences as you teach.

What I need you all to do is:

1) Date every entry

2) Try to write in the journal at least once a week (you may certainly write more if

   you want to or have time)

3) The journal entries can be any format and any length

4) You have the freedom to talk about whatever you want

5) Please don't lose them

6) Please contact me if you want to keep the journal electronically

Thanks! Hope you all are enjoying the break!

Mandy

Example electronic journal entry from a participant:

September 11, 2008

So I've been swamped—teaching is such a firestorm! One thing after another.
Roxanne and I have been working so hard to keep on track and to lesson plan and to set a
pleasant classroom vibe, that it's hard to get any other work done. I've heard so many
people say that it's important to put classwork first and comps first and all of that, but it's
a harder juggle than I thought it would be. Having 70-odd kids all vying for my attention
is a little bit of an adventure.

They always send email, they always need something, they always have a
question—in a sense, this is really wonderful. I'm delighted they feel like they can ask us
questions. At the same time, however, I just wish they'd show up and listen in class!!! X
and I are always talking about what we can do, what we need to tell them, what we need
to post next on Blackboard. It's a continuous conversation about how each class is doing
and what adjustments need to be made for our students.

TR 8am, those are the students who are problematic. X and I had to read them the
riot act after they returned from Labor Day weekend. Thing is, we are really relaxed, and
our humor can be a little bit irreverent. Neither one of us is good at being stern and grim
at all times. It just doesn't come naturally. But we also ask our students, insanely
enough, to be quiet when we're going over material.

I mean, we noticed fairly quickly that TR8 did badly on the rhetoric quiz, even
though we lectured on the material for ten minutes before we handed out the quiz. Our
other two classes did better, as a general rule. Then, we realized, that TR8 was mocking

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us openly—which was infuriating and completely mortifying. I can't fathom why college students would be so rude. It's not like X and I are up there trying to be mean or arrogant or vindictive towards them. We're just not that way—maybe it's construed as a sign of weakness? Perhaps. But I can't be something I'm not, and neither can Roxanne. Other students in that class were vocal in saying they didn't *need* to take our class, and that it was beneath them. Well, well, well. They learned.

X and I pow-wowed about it—we were both determined that the disrespect needed to stop. There's no way at all that we could progress with that kind of behavior taking place. So, like we do every day, we sat down together, and we outlined exactly what we needed to tell our students. That their homework was not well-done, that they need to put forth effort, that they need to focus, etc etc. That WE CAN HEAR THEM when they're snarking in the back. We also decided to have them freewrite about their grades, accountability, and course expectations.

I think it was good that we planned ahead—because it was nerve-wracking at first going in there, knowing that we were going to school them but good. But with the outline that X had written down, we were able to forge ahead, give our stern faces/voices some practice, and let them know we're not going to smile through their insolence. And frankly, I think we scared them. We haven't had any problems since then. They hopefully realized that they don't have to love us, but they do have to be polite. It's a revolutionary thought, really. I'm so glad they got on board with it!

Appendix C: Example Questionnaires

The first questionnaire emailed to participants:

1. Tell me a little bit about your educational background. What field was your undergraduate degree in (specifically, were you trained in literature or composition studies)? What did you think you would do with this degree?

2. Was your transition from your previous educational experience to teaching composition as a part of your assistantship difficult? Please elaborate.

3. Could you explain how you feel about being both a teacher and a student? Is balancing the roles difficult for you?

4. Without being specific (like who you worked with, etc) how do you feel about the mentor/co-teaching program at Auburn. Was it a good experience for you?

5. With the experiences from your co-teaching in mind, how are you preparing, mentally, as you become the teacher or record for the first time? What feelings, anxiety, and excitement do you have before teaching your first class?

6. Could you identify your current approach(es) to teaching composition (i.e. your epistemology). That is, how do you think writing is best taught? How do students learn to write, etc. Do you embrace a specific pedagogy – like cultural, feminist, Marxist?

7. For those co-teaching: What do you think are the potential benefits and limitations of co-teaching? Why are you choosing to co-teach?

Second Questionnaire emailed out to participants:

1. Since we last talked during our interviews, how would you say your experiences with teaching Comp have progressed?

2. From the interviews, I gathered that you were all experiencing some "common" struggles (like being young, inexperienced, female, having little authority, etc.). How would you characterize your experiences as a GTA now? Have there been changes? New issues to confront?

3. GTAs certainly share many common struggles, like the ones discussed above, what struggles do you see as being "unique" to you (if any)?

4. Do you see the roles/responsibilities of Comp GTAs as different from those of GTAs in other departments?

5. What do you plan on doing in the future? Are you going to continue teaching comp?

Appendix D: Sample Training Materials

Guidelines for the Co-Teaching Program in English Composition

First-year masters students will co-teach a section of English Composition I (ENGL 1100) in the fall semester and English Composition II (ENGL 1120) in the spring semester with an experienced faculty member or advanced PhD-level GTA who has recently taught composition. The experienced teacher (the lead teacher) will be the teacher of record; the co-teacher will assist the lead teacher. Co-teachers should be assigned a different lead teacher for the fall and spring semesters to give them experience with different teaching styles. Masters level GTAs should not serve as lead teachers.

Any problems arising within the co-teaching relationship or with the co-teaching program should be brought to the attention of Dr. / or Dr.

Time Commitment

The first-year GTA (the co-teacher) will be expected to work 10 hours on the course each week (160 hours for the semester). The weekly time commitment will be distributed in approximately the following way:

Class time	3
Office hours	2
Weekly planning meeting with lead teacher	1
Other co-teaching responsibilities	3-4

Co-teaching responsibilities include participating in preparations for classes, conferences with students, class activities, grading, and other responsibilities designated by the lead teacher in the teaching agreement. As part of that commitment, the co-teacher will attend all class meetings, be available for office hours and student conferences, and help with grading assignments. Since the co-teacher will be enrolled in three graduate courses at the same time, it is important that both the lead teacher and the co-teacher limit the time commitment to 10 hours per week, beginning with the first day of classes and ending with the last day of finals. There may need to be flexibility in time spent each week.

Co-Teaching Agreement

Once a co-teacher is paired with a lead teacher, the lead teacher will give the co-teacher a copy of the syllabus for the course. Together the two teachers will work out an

agreement about the co-teacher's responsibilities for the course. This agreement needs to be in writing; a copy of the agreement must be given to Dr. by the end of the first week of classes.

The number of class sessions for which the co-teacher will have *primary* responsibility is hard to estimate, but should be specified in the Co-Teaching Agreement. The number may vary from 5-9 class sessions on a MWF schedule or from 3-6 class sessions on a TR schedule.

Both the lead teacher and the co-teacher will write a brief self-assessment of the course and the co-teaching relationship at the end of the semester. The Coordinator of Composition will review the self-assessments and, if necessary, suggest changes to the co-teaching program for the Graduate Studies Committee and Composition Committee to consider.

Lead Teacher Responsibilities

- Throughout the semester, the lead teacher should provide and make use of opportunities for faculty development and active mentoring with the co-teacher, including discussions about teaching composition.

- The lead teacher will attend a 2-hour workshop before the start of the fall and spring semesters on mentoring practices and lead teacher responsibilities.

- *The lead teacher as teacher of record is responsible for all final grades.* Before returning essays or exams, the lead teacher should review grading for consistency, and retain the option of adjusting grades in consultation with the co-teacher.

- The Teaching Effectiveness Survey will be conducted for the class as taught by the lead teacher, the teacher of record.

Co-Teacher Responsibilities

- The co-teacher and lead teacher will meet weekly to discuss course plans and related pedagogical and practical questions. (1 hour per week).

- The co-teacher will attend all class sessions and share responsibility for monitoring and assisting with all in-class small group discussions or group work. As the semester unfolds, the co-teacher will take on progressively greater teaching responsibilities, up to and including responsibility for a whole unit of instruction. (3 hours per week).

- The co-teacher will maintain 2 office hours each week to meet with students to discuss paper topics and drafts, group presentations, and class materials. (2 hours per week).

- The co-teacher will share responsibility for grading, conferencing, and other activities associated with the class. (3-4 hours per week).

    The co-teacher will share responsibility for grading all quizzes, responses, drafts, essays, and final examinations. Though other divisions of labor may be preferable, the lead teacher and the co-teacher could, for example, each grade half the class, making sure that each student receives a balance of grades from each teacher. In any case, before returning essays or exams, the lead teacher should review grading for consistency, and retain the option of adjusting grades in consultation with the co-teacher.

    The co-teacher will also share responsibilities for any conferences with students.

Pedagogy Course Syllabus

ENGL 7040 English Composition: Approaches and Issues

Instructor: Semester: Fall 2007
Day and Time**:** T 3:30-6:10 p.m.   Mailbox:
Classroom: HC 3220   Office:
Email: Office phone:
Office hours: MWF 9:00-11:00 and by appointment

Texts

Corbett, Edward, Nancy Myers, and Gary Tate. <u>The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook</u>. 4th ed.
	Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN: 0195123778

Harris, Joseph. *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice
	Hall, 1997. ISBN: 0135158001

Lindemann, Erica. <u>A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers</u>. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press,
	2001. ISBN: 0195130456

Reynolds, Nedra, Patricia Bizzell, and Bruce Herzberg. *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of
	Writing.* 6th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2003. ISBN: 0312405014

Tate, Gary, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick. A Guide to Composition Pedagogies. Oxford: Oxford
	University Press, 2000. ISBN: 0195125363

[Villanueva, Victor. Cross Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader. 2nd ed. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2003.](#)
	ISBN: 0814109764

Other Texts and Tools
Various online readings (TBA)
At least one blank CD to save and share files
Knowledge of, and access to, your Auburn email account

Purpose
	ENGL 7040 introduces students to the central concerns of contemporary Composition
Studies and the teaching of writing (especially freshman composition) at the university level.
Because Composition Studies is a field that intersects several others (rhetoric, literary studies,
education, etc.), the course will introduce philosophical and theoretical perspectives from many
fields, centering around the teaching of writing. Emphasis will be divided between approaching
Composition Studies as a discipline and preparing students for teaching composition, though, in
reality, the two are interconnected and complementary. Built upon the notion that writing
instruction benefits from 1) the close study of writing and language use and instruction and 2) a
familiarity with the basic kinds of theory and research that animate the field, the course will
prepare students to do advanced research in Composition Studies and to plan, prepare, and teach
their own freshman writing class. The course is required of new Graduate Teaching Assistants in
the Department of English who have not taken a similar course elsewhere, though it is also open
to graduate students from other departments.

Objectives

To support this purpose, the course has six main objectives:

- Students will learn the main terms and concepts often employed in composition studies to describe composition pedagogy and the process of writing.

- Students will apply various theories of writing and composition to the activities they encounter daily in their own composition courses.

- Students will learn the basic history of composition studies, both its roots in classical rhetoric and its development within American colleges and universities.

- Students will learn about the many facets of composition studies, including its connection to other academic fields (literacy studies, education, psychology, literature, critical studies, rhetoric, and so on) and its involvement with other areas of writing within English Departments (developmental writing, writing centers, ESL, literature, and others).

- Students will complete a series of reading and writing activities designed both to reflect on the concepts about writing and teaching discussed in class and to introduce them to scholarly writing in the field of composition studies.

- Students will complete the course with a strong background in composition studies which will inform their own composition pedagogy and writing practices.

Projects

ENGL 7040 will require four distinct projects plus strong participation. The course grade will be assigned according to the following formula:

Project #	Topic	Genre	Guidelines	Grade Weight
1	Approaches to composition	Observation Essay	Observe one class and describe the pedagogical approach	20%
2	Varies according to course schedule	Presentation and Handout	Conduct one class (focusing on daily readings) and supply a summative handout (*Group project*)	10%
3	Varies according to student interest	Research Review	Conduct outside research on a topic within composition studies and complete a short literature review	20%
4	Instructional Materials***	Teaching Portfolio	Compile Statement of Teaching Philosophy, ENGL 1100 syllabus, and other materials	30%
5	Attendance and Participation			20%

*** Students in MPTC who are not GTAs may produce a different portfolio of work. These students should meet with me in the first few weeks of the semester to discuss alternatives.

Participation and Readings

ENGL 7040 is a graduate-level course, a class you (a developing English scholar and/or composition teacher) will need in order to teach English composition. Therefore, your avid participation is both *assumed and required*. To that end, some classes may include lecture components, but most will be discussion-oriented. Each student is expected to contribute each week to the discussion; your participation grade (20% of your overall grade) will be determined by the amount you participate. Cell phones should be turned off before class begins.

Plan to keep up with readings and contribute to the conversation each week. The readings in this course are about teaching or the process of writing, making them very practical for your future as a scholar and teacher of English. As you read materials from week to week, try to think of examples or applications from your own classroom experience (either as a teacher or as a student) to which you can apply the ideas discussed. In-class writing about the assigned readings will be a regular part of class activity.

Attendance and Tardiness

As graduate students, I trust that you want to be in class; otherwise, you wouldn't be in graduate school. Furthermore, graduate courses are one facet of your professional development. Therefore, I will treat you as a colleague and peer-in-training, with all the respect and responsibility that entails. Attendance and participation, in other words, are expected. If you miss more than one class for unexcused reasons, you will receive and FA in the class.

Tardiness disrupts class, so it is imperative that you arrive on time. Extensive tardiness (more than twice) will result in an unexcused absence and will lower your Participation grade by 20%.

Format for Projects and Assignments

Each individual project will require a different format; these will be explained in detail throughout the course and within each project. At minimum, all print assignments should be word processed (preferably in MS Word) with 1" margins and include a header on the first page as well as headings with page numbers on each subsequent page.

Grading Scale

A =95	B+ = 88	C+ = 78	D+ = 68
A- =92	B = 85	C = 75	D = 62
	B- = 82	C- = 72	F=Failing

Withdrawal from the Course

Following University guidelines, students who wish to withdraw from a course with a grade of "W" can do so, without penalty, before mid-term. After mid-term, students cannot drop a course unless exceptional circumstances exist, with the approval of the Dean and a signature from the instructor indicating whether the student was passing ("WP") or failing ("WF") the course.

Office Conferences

Think of my office as an extension of the classroom, and use my office hours and/or email to discuss any aspect of the course: problems, questions, projects you're working on, ideas you wish

to develop, strategies you'd like to try, and so on. Although there will be no required conferences in this course, I expect you to confer with me about any problems, questions, writing concerns, or topic ideas on a regular basis.

Plagiarism
As do all other Auburn courses, this course assumes that you are following the "Student Academic Honesty Code" as described in The Tiger Cub. If you have not done so already, please read this description and make sure that you understand it.

Students with Disabilities
Students who need accommodations should arrange a meeting with me during office hours (or by appointment) during the first week of classes (or as soon as possible), especially if accommodations are needed immediately. At this meeting, please bring a copy of your Accommodation Memo and an Instructor Verification Form. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center (phone: 844-2096 [V/TT]).

SCHEDULE
ENGL 7040
Fall 2007

***Schedule is subject to change according to student and instructor needs
(CTC) signifies readings in *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*
(RWT) signifies readings in *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*
(GCP) signifies readings in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*
(WTS) signifies readings in *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*
(ATS) signifies readings in *A Teaching Subject*
(TBA) signifies To Be Announced

DATE	READINGS DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
AUG. 21 (2ⁿᵈ half combined)	Buy books. Read handout titled "What Does it Mean to Be a Writing Teacher?"	Introduction to syllabus and composition studies
AUG. 28	Theme: The writing process RWT 3-34; CTC 3-15; 717-737; GCP 1-18; ATS 53-75)	Overview of writing process
SEPT. 4 (combined)	Theme: Approaches to Composition-rhetorical pedagogies and classical rhetoric (CTC 255-270; WTS 3-8; RWT 37-59; GCP 36-53; handout titled "Research in Rhetoric")	Overview of rhetorical strategies
SEPT. 11	Theme: Approaches to Composition-cognitive and linguistic pedagogies (RWT 60-108; CTC 273-297; 547-569)	*Group Presentation #1*
SEPT. 18 (combined)	Theme: Approaches to Composition-expressivist and feminist pedagogies (CTC 571-586; GCP 19-35; 113-131; WTS 87-93; 231-242)	*Group Presentation #2*
SEPT. 25	Theme: Approaches to Composition-critical pedagogies [social-epistemic and cultural studies] (CTC 697-714; GCP 92-112; Readings TBA)	*Group Presentation #3* Complete class observation for Composition Approaches essay
OCT. 2 (combined)	Theme: Approaches to Composition-critical pedagogies [liberatory and multicultural pedagogies] (CTC 479-503; 677-696; GPC 92-112; WTS 113-122) Workshop for Composition Approaches essay	*Group Presentation #4* Bring draft of Composition Approaches essay
OCT. 9	Theme: Invention (pre-writing) and audience strategies (RWT 109-145; 213-221, WTS 320-352; ATS 97-124)	**Composition Approaches Review Essay Due**

OCT. 16	Theme: Arrangement (organization) and collaborative strategies (RWT 146-162; CTC 415-436; WTS 123-128; 216-230)	*Group Presentation #5*
OCT. 23 (combined)	Theme: Revision, style and grammar strategies (RWT 163-188; RWT 189-210; CTC 205-233; WTS 258-272; 374-383; ATS 76-96)	*Group Presentation #6* Bring draft of Research Review essay
OCT. 30	Theme: Connections to Literacy Studies/Writing Studies Brandt "Sponsors of Literacy" Heath "Protean Shapes in Literacy Events" Downs and Wardle "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies' Workshop for Research Review essay	Complete Outside Research for Research Review
NOV. 6	Theme: Writing centers and conferencing (CTC 165-182; WTS 139-151; 66-71; Online readings)	**Research Review Due**
NOV. 13 (combined)	Theme: Developmental writing and English-as-a-second-language (CTC 773-796; GCP 183-202; WTS 153-162 WTS 139-151; 193-215)	*Group Presentation #7*
NOV. 20	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	
NOV. 27	Theme: New Media and Technology (RWT 280-304; CTC 797-828; GCP 203-223; TBA)	
DEC. 4	Theme: Where has Composition Studies been and where is it going? (RWT 306-314; "Writing at the Postsecondary Level"; TBA) Teaching Effectiveness Surveys Course Wrap-Up Teaching Portfolio Workshop	Bring draft of Teaching Portfolio
Date to be announced	Final Exam Period	**Teaching Portfolio Due**

First-Year Masters Students Time Commitment and Responsibilities

Your schedule will require the following time commitments—with adjustments for week-to-week differences in class projects, teaching demands, and practicum experiences.

You are paid 37.5% of full-time ($13,005).

Responsibilities	Hours per Week
Teaching	
Class time	3
Office Hours	2
Co-teaching responsibilities	3
Weekly planning meeting lead teacher	1
Wednesday Practicum (12 weeks)	3
English Center (4 hours – includes 1 hour English Center Practicum). The English Center experience begins the second week and ends the last week of classes (15 weeks).	4
TOTAL	16

Co-Teaching Agreement

ENGL 1100-044

Co-teaching responsibilities will include:

- Attending all scheduled ENGL 1100 class meetings (arriving on time and prepared for class);

- Participating in class discussions and group work;

- Participating in required student/teacher conferences as determined by the syllabus (and being available at student's request for further conferencing);

- Maintaining two office hours per week in addition to three hours in the English Center;

- Attending weekly meetings with lead teacher to evaluate previous classes and prepare for upcoming classes;

- Taking responsibility for several class periods (including a two-week block of instructions for one of the four course papers);

- Responding to anywhere from one-third to one-half of journals and freewrite responses;

- Responding to and evaluating essays and other paper-related assignments—

  o Paper 1: Read through draft essays and discuss my reactions and ideas for evaluation with the lead teacher.

  o Paper 2: Responsible for response/evaluation of one-third of the essays.

  o Mid-term: Assisting with evaluation of mid-term portfolios and participating in mid-term conferences.

  o Paper 3: Responsible for response/evaluation of one-half of the essays.

- o   Paper 4: Responsible for—

        ▪   organizing the entire unit in consultation with the lead teacher

        ▪   teaching the entire unit

        ▪   responding to all journals and freewrite responses

        ▪   conferencing with all students on draft revisions

        ▪   discussing all student essays in consultation with the lead teacher

    - o   Final Portfolios: Responsible for evaluating one-third of final course portfolios and for arriving at final course grades in consultation with the lead teacher.

- Sitting in on two other Freshman Composition classes;

- Developing an ENGL 1100 syllabus for use next year.

As a GTA. I expect to achieve the following goals:

- To prepare each member of the class for ENGL 1120 by helping them become solid writers through the course layout and through my feedback;

- To familiarize myself with the inner workings of the portfolio system;

- To encourage and promote active class participation in order to foster learning;

- To strengthen and fine tune my confidence and professionalism in the classroom;

- To remain open to suggestions and ideas given by the lead teacher, the students, and other GTAs in regards to teaching.

As the lead teacher, I see these as my responsibilities:

- To provide opportunities for the co-teacher to experience the various "ups and downs" of classroom teaching;

- To provide guidance as the co-teacher develops his own lessons and assignments for essay four;

- To familiarize the co-teacher with the use of a rubric and assist him in achieving consistency in his grading;

- To serve as a resource for questions regarding classroom teaching, student/teacher interaction, and other issues involved in being a teacher and student in a graduate program;

- To provide the co-teacher with opportunities to discuss, during our weekly sessions, reasons why I do what I do, strategies to develop his own classroom *persona*, etc.;

- To give the co-teacher feedback on his own activities in the classroom, during conferences, and in grading/evaluating student writing.

As the lead teacher, I plan to achieve the following goals:

- To provide a quality learning experience for both the co-teacher and the students in ENGL 1100;

- To examine with the co-teacher various issues of composition instruction as they come up in the classroom;

- To demonstrate that classroom teaching requires a measure of planning but also a measure of flexibility;

- To improve my own ability to relate to students by using the observations of the co-teacher.

_____ (GTA)
_____ (Instructor)

_____   _____
date   date

Graduate Practicum / 2006-07/ Wednesdays 1-2:30 / Fall 2006

	Aug. 16	HC 3104	Introduction to the Practicum Panel Discussion: "Things you wish someone had told you"
	Aug. 23	201 Tichenor	Composition: Planning your ENGL 1100 unit
	Aug. 30	201 Tichenor	Composition: Assignment Writing
	Sept. 6	201 Tichenor	Composition: Grading/Conferences
	Sept. 13	EGO Session	*Meetings with librarian [applying to PhD programs]
	Sept. 20	TBA	Library
	Sept. 27	TBA	Library
	Oct. 4	Haley 3104	Graduate faculty discuss upcoming course offerings
	Oct. 11	EGO session	*Meeting with Graduate Coordinator professionalization
0	Oct. 18	201 Tichenor	Preparing ENGL 1100 Syllabus & Policies
1	Oct. 25	Haley 3104	"Best Practices": Teaching strategies you have seen at work at Auburn
2	Nov. 1	Haley 3104	Panel Discussion: Seminar projects
3	Nov. 8		
4	Nov. 15		
	Nov. 22	**No Classes**	**Thanksgiving Break**

Graduate Practicum
2006-07
Wednesdays 1-2:30
Spring 2007

	Jan. 10	Haley 3104	Discussion session: "Now that you know what you know…"
	Jan. 17	201 Tichenor	Composition: IT
	Jan. 24	201 Tichenor	Composition: Planning your ENGL 1120 unit
	Jan. 31	201 Tichenor	Composition: Grading/plagiarism
	Feb. 7	TBA	Panel Discussion: Exams/Thesis Panel Discussion: MTPC Portfolio
	Feb. 14	EGO Session	*Meeting with Non-academic workforce
	Feb. 21	EGO Session	*Meeting with Coordinator of MA/MTPC program Publishing articles
	Feb. 28	HC 3104	Graduate faculty discuss upcoming course offerings
	March 7	201 Tichenor	Student presentations (Teaching related)
0	March 14	201 Tichenor	Student Presentations (Teaching related)
1	March 21	201 Tichenor	ENGL 1120 Syllabus/Portfolio
2	**March 28**		**SPRING BREAK**
3	April 4	Haley 3104	Looking back, looking ahead
4			
5			
6			

Practicum Information Sheet

The practicum is one of the requirements of your Graduate Teaching Assistantship. The mission of the Practicum is two-fold: to support you in your graduate work and to work in conjunction with ENGL 7040 and the English Center to prepare you for the range of teaching responsibilities you will encounter here at Auburn and beyond. The time involved is roughly 3 hours per week for 12 weeks out of each semester.

Practicum Sessions
Practicum sessions will be 1.5 hours per week, with twelve sessions per semester (see the attached practicum calendar for dates, times, and places for each meeting). We will spend approximately the first 15-20 minutes or so of our time with announcements, questions, and/or any concerns you may have. We will then have over an hour for activities related to teaching or graduate study.

In addition to the time you will spend in practicum, you will have 1.5 hours per week of unassigned time which you will spend preparing for practicum and/or going to departmental/university events (you must attend no fewer than 3 such events per semester).

Preparing for Practicum
In the course of the two semesters of practicum, we will have several sessions devoted to student presentations (see assignment sheet) on various topics. The point of these presentations is for you to share strategies for successful teaching and graduate study. You will also be expected to complete 4 classroom observations to discuss during practicum: two ENGL 1100 classroom observations for the Fall, and two ENGL 1120 observations for the Spring. You will discuss your two ENGL 1100 observations in the Fall in ENGL 7040, but you will be expected to coordinate your spring observations through the practicum.

Departmental/University Events
Auburn University is a research institution that has a great many speakers and activities going on throughout the year related to a number of different topics. As part of your practicum experience we are asking you to engage with the opportunities that are available to you here at Auburn. Below you will find a selected list of resources to keep in mind (remember that AU Daily, which is an e-mail bulletin, will carry announcements for many of these activities; also keep your eye on the *English Channel*, the online weekly Department newsletter). When you have attended an event simply send the CGS and a brief paragraph giving a general description of the talk and your assessment of it. **You must attend at least three events per semester**.

Department: English Hour
                World Literature Speaker Series
                English Symposium Series and Benson Lecture
                MTPC Portfolio defense (open to the public)
                Job candidate talks (Spring semester)
                University: Littleton-Franklin Lectures
                Biggio Center activities
                Theater Department productions Women's Studies Speakers
                Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts events
                Center for Arts & Humanities (Pebble Hill)

Faculty Guidelines 1
Instructor's Supplement
for
ENGL 1100: English Composition I
and
ENGL 1120: English Composition II
2006-2007

Introduction

The English Department is fortunate to have so many experienced and talented people teaching in the Composition Program, but our good fortune does present one challenge: finding the balance between a prescriptiveness too distasteful for most professionals in higher education and an anything-goes approach that could end up being counterproductive to the mission of the English Department. The challenge is heightened by some other factors: more than 4000 students will register for over 250 sections of ENGL 1100 and 1120 in the coming year, and responsible pedagogical practice requires a minimal degree of commonality among all sections of a course to insure as much equity for our students as possible.

The *Instructor's Supplement* you have here attempts to locate that balance. It describes the university and department policies that govern the Composition Program as well as other policies where teachers have more flexibility, it provides an overview of the process pedagogy used in the classroom, and it sets down the philosophy, objectives, and requirements of the two composition courses. Though some policies are, by necessity, prescriptive--the language of the text will indicate these--most of what this document contains are descriptions of common practices in the teaching of composition and recommendations for the most effective teaching methods. In writing the *Instructor's Supplement*, then, we have been guided by the following statement as drafted by the Composition Committee:

Each section of English Composition is a single course of instruction, and teachers, depending on their experience, are given considerable autonomy in determining how to teach their sections. But ENGL 1100 and 1120 are multisection courses, which means that there should be commonality in requirements, workload, general policies, and objectives. This is necessary as a matter of professional ethics and fairness to our students and, where unavoidable, university policy.

These conflicting features of multi-section courses have some important implications: Complaints arise if students perceive that the workload, the nature of the assignments,

attendance policies, and so on in sections other than their own are significantly different, which to some students may also mean easier. Such complaints are difficult to resolve because the burden falls on the English Department to demonstrate that the student's claims are unfounded, and it is not always the case that they are. When it turns out that the student is right--as happens when there are fewer required essays in some sections than in others or when some instructors require final exams but others do not--it is nearly impossible to negotiate a just solution when so many are affected. Typically, grievances follow.

We must operate as well within the constraints of the university. For example, a final exam in English Composition is a university requirement. In addition, English Department policy states that the exam be held at the designated time and that it be proctored by the teacher of record. Neither the Composition Committee nor individual teachers can afford to be unaware of these and other policies, for if the policies are not met inequities are instantly created, making teachers and the English Department vulnerable to embarrassment or administrative action.

At the same time, we are sensitive to the wide range of experience in the people who teach in the Composition Program. Beginning teachers typically need more guidance in their first year of teaching, as well as systematic instruction into the professional and pedagogical aspects of teaching composition. For first-year GTAs in the MA and MTPC programs, this is accomplished through the practicum and co-teaching program. (GTAs with fewer than 18 semester hours of graduate course work do not teach their own classes.) For advanced GTAs, it is accomplished through additional professional development provided by the Composition Program and the English Department. Experienced teachers are welcome to craft their own teaching methods or to adopt those they have successfully used in the past, so long as these do not violate the requirement for commonality to such an extent that inequities across sections result.
The *Student Guidelines*, which is available on the web via the English Department web site, and supporting materials such as this document reflect all of these realities. Course objectives and writing assignments adhere to the constraints of a multi-section course and are accordingly presented as requirements in the Composition Program; we ask all teachers to observe them. In other aspects, however, latitude exists so that experienced teachers may use the teaching methods they believe will best achieve the course objectives.

What you will find in the *Instructor's Supplement* are the following:
Part 1: General Policies describes those policies that are administrative in nature. The first four (registration and enrollment, dropping a class, plagiarism, and accommodations for students with disabilities) are mandated by the university. The remaining policies are less prescriptive, in part because the university leaves their definition and implementation up to the department or teacher; nevertheless, we recommend specific policies in light of the equity concerns expressed above.

Part 2 (beginning on page 10): Composition At the University: Philosophy, Objectives, and Pedagogy focuses on the courses. Besides a general statement of

philosophy and course objectives, in this part we review the course requirements for your students and describe the general features of the process pedagogy.

On behalf of the English Department and the Composition Program, I want to extend my thanks for your willingness to take on an important part of the English Department's teaching mission. If there is anything I can do to help you in your teaching, please don't hesitate to talk with me.
Coordinator of Composition

Part 1: General Policies
Registration and Enrollment
Admitting a Student to Class
Students must be properly enrolled in your class to receive credit for the course. In most cases, students who attend your first class meeting will be enrolled and will thus have their names on your roster. However, some students may have added the class after you obtained your roster; please ask these students to show proof (a schedule will do) that they have enrolled in your class. In a few instances, the Coordinator of Composition will have added a student; this student should present you with a schedule with the Coordinator of Composition's signature and a note saying, "OK to admit." If a student is not enrolled in your class, don't allow that student to remain in the expectation that he/she might be added later. In short, all students not officially enrolled should be referred to the Coordinator of Composition, who alone has the authority to add students to classes.

In general, no students will be added to a section of English Composition after the second class meeting. On those occasions when a student is added, it is usually for one of two reasons: a) the student's schedule was canceled due to an administrative error; or, b) the student is a sophomore or above and has been unable to get into a class, despite efforts to do so. Whenever possible, a student will be added to a section with fewer than 25 students in it.

Prerequisites for English Composition
Students enrolled in ENGL 1120, English Composition II, must have completed Composition I with a grade of C or higher, or must have tested
out of Composition I with a qualifying score on an entrance exam. (The tests and scores that are accepted are given in the *Student Guidelines*.) If you are teaching ENGL 1120, inform your students on the first day of class of these prerequisites. Remind them specifically that they must have earned a grade of C or higher if they took Composition I.

Dropping ENGL 1100 or ENGL 1120
Students may drop a class at any time up to mid-semester without penalty and without approval from the University or Department. Students may not drop a class after midsemester unless they petition the Dean of their school. Advise students to consult the *2004-2005 Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin* for an explanation of the policy governing withdrawal from a class after mid-semester. If a student presents

you with a drop or resignation form at any time during the semester, complete the parts you're required to and return the form to the student.

By mid-semester students should have received enough graded work back from you to determine for themselves whether to stay in the class. If the student asks for your recommendation about staying in the class, we suggest that you refrain from telling the student yes or no: the student may interpret a "yes" as an indication that they're guaranteed a C and a "no" as an indication that you've already decided to fail them. You can, however, give your assessment of the student's standing in the class at that moment, and you should advise the student on what he or she must do to improve the grade, but the decision to drop the class must be made by the student. If the student requests such advice from you after mid-semester, recommend that he or she consult with an advisor or the Dean's office.

Plagiarism
The Tiger Cub, under its "Academic Honesty Policy," describes the procedures by which cases of suspected academic dishonesty are to be handled, and you should initiate the procedure as soon as you read a paper or other student work that you think might be the product of dishonesty. Do not impose sanctions of your own, even if you're convinced that an assignment was plagiarized. If you're unsure about a student's work, please see the Coordinator of Composition.

Please keep in mind that students sometimes plagiarize without knowing it, and often this is because they do not understand how to incorporate research material into their work or how to cite and document it correctly. Although these matters are covered in class, especially ENGL 1120, errors in research and documentation do occur. If a student appears to be having trouble understanding the concepts, confer with this student while the paper is in progress to explain the nature and seriousness of the problem and to encourage revision. The grade on the paper may be lowered if, in your estimation, the student has failed to apply appropriately and correctly the required format but has not deliberately attempted to commit academic dishonesty or plagiarism.

Accommodations for Students with Special Needs
A student who has registered with the Auburn University Program for Students with Disabilities will present you with a confidential memo from that office outlining the special accommodations the student needs for your class. Regardless of when the student presents the memo, you are required by law to meet these needs from that time until the end of the semester.
The following statement, or one similar to it, must appear in your supplemental syllabus: "Students with documentation of special needs should arrange to see me as soon as possible."You are not required to extend accommodations to any student who does not present a memo from the Program for Students with Disabilities. Should you have questions about the appropriateness of accommodations, see the Coordinator of Composition or call the Program.

Class Attendance

The *Tiger Cub* states that "Specific policies regarding class attendance are the prerogative of individual faculty [and should be stated] in writing at the beginning of the course." The English Department strongly recommends that you adopt its policy regarding unexcused absences, which is as follows: In Tuesday-Thursday sections, students will receive a grade of FA (failure due to absences) upon their third unexcused absence. In Monday-Wednesday-Friday sections, the FA is given upon the fourth unexcused absence. Whatever policy you adopt, be sure your students know what it is and understand how it works.

It is also University and Department policy that students not be penalized for excused absences, regardless of the number. However, if the student has made arrangements with you to make up missed work but has failed to fulfill the terms of these arrangements, you can refuse to accept the late work or impose other appropriate sanctions. You should state these terms in your supplemental syllabus and apply them uniformly for all of your students.

You have the authority to verify that an absence was legitimate. Ask the student to provide some form of official, and verifiable, documentation, if you think you need this to confirm the status of the absence. (We recommend that you do this as a matter of course for all legitimate absences.) Students who have been ill should provide a note from their health-care provider on their first day back in class. It may be difficult to get documentation for a family emergency, and you may feel awkward about asking a student for a note after attending the funeral of a close relative. Use your judgment; perhaps your best approach is to make it clear to students from the start that all legitimate absences must be documented.

In the case of a student who anticipates missing class for an extended period of time (three or more consecutive class meetings) for a legitimate reason, work out a schedule with the student ahead of time for completing missed work after he or she returns. Obviously, there are some caveats. Students who miss a great many classes, several weeks, say, may need to be considered for an Incomplete (especially if the absences come near the end of the semester), or may need to consult with their advisor or Dean about withdrawing from the class. Explain in your supplemental syllabus how you'll handle cases of extended but legitimate absences. Also remind students to see you before the beginning of an extended absence known about in advance.

Students are expected to arrive in the classroom on time, preferably a few minutes before class is scheduled to begin. You may impose sanctions for tardiness; most teachers, in fact, will count two or three tardies as equivalent to one absence. Be sure your students know your policy on tardiness. If a student tells you that he or she might be late because the instructor in a class before yours keeps students late, contact the Coordinator of Composition. Sometimes a simple phone call can resolve the issue. We also encourage you to be in the classroom at least five minutes before class is scheduled to begin. Keep accurate records of your students' attendance. This may seem like obvious advice, but occasionally students will bring grade appeals on the basis of what they believed to

be the instructor's inaccurate or erroneous absence records. In cases where the records were incomplete or unclear, the student and instructor often wound up in a memory tug of-war, and whatever the eventual outcome, the process was messy and uncomfortable. And sometimes a student will present documentation months after the fact, which means you have to factor in the memory–or inventiveness–of a third party you don't even know.

Assigned Work
From the *Tiger Cub*: "The student shall be expected to carry out all assigned work and to take examinations at the class period designated by the instructor. Failure to carry out these assignments or to take examinations at the designated times may result in an appropriate reduction in grade."

Your students will write more than the assigned out-of-class essays. If they are to do well in the course, you'll assign them other kinds of writing designed to introduce them to the rhetorical issues crucial to the successful completion of the essays. Such writing might include journal entries, drafts, responses to readings, and so on. Be sure to inform your students of the standards you expect them to meet in these assignments and of the consequences if they do not. Most teachers will lower the grade of a formal essay if the student has not completed most or all of the other writing associated with it. However, it is generally not a good idea to fail a student on an essay if he or she failed to complete just one or two pre-writing assignments.

Regarding late work: Most teachers reduce the grade of an essay by one letter for each class day it is late. They will also deduct points or impose some other sanction for other work, including informal writing assignments and readings, not completed on time. Some teachers will not accept an assignment at all if it is late. Just be aware that a student who misses a due date because of an excused absence must be given time to finish the assignment without penalty, which means that you should grant an extension of the due date. However, your students should be aware that even in the case of excused absences they have the responsibility of keeping you informed of their status and making a good faith effort to make up missed or late work. You should therefore grant extensions only under the condition that the student inform you, in a timely manner and in an appropriate fashion (such as a doctor's note), that he or she will be or has been legitimately absent. Most teachers will not allow students to make up work missed due to unexcused tardiness or absence.

You may penalize a student who fails to submit work of acceptable quality or fails to submit such work on time. (Acceptable quality can include format requirements, such as those listed in the *Student Guidelines*.) Penalties can take the form of a reduction in grade, or a refusal to grade the paper at all. However, you are required to explain in writing at the beginning of the semester how a student's performance in these matters will affect his or her grade on an assignment or his or her final grade.

Textbooks
Your supplemental syllabus will list the textbooks students are required to buy. Instructors with one or more year of experience teaching composition at Auburn may

select their own texts, provided that these include a handbook, an anthology of nonfiction readings (commonly called a reader), and a text that provides instruction in the writing process (a rhetoric). A single text that combines two or more of these functions can also be used. Instructors teaching composition for the first time at Auburn are required to select their text books from the following list:

ENGL 1100
Handbook:
Hult, Christine A. and Thomas N. Huckin. *The New Century Handbook*. Custom ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005. (Includes some rhetoric.)

Reader and/or Rhetoric. NOTE: Some of the texts below include rhetorical and handbook parts. Instructors may want to review these books, since some of them could be used in place of *The New Century Handbook* or other texts listed below.

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. *Reading Critically, Writing Well.* 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

Cooley, Thomas. *The Norton Sampler: Short Essays for Composition*. 6th ed. New York: Norton, 1997.

Mauk, John and John Metz. *The Composition of Everyday Life: A Guide to Writing*. 2nd ed. Boston: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2007.

Silverman, Jonathan and Dean Rader. *The World is a Text*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006.

ENGL 1120
Handbook:
Hult, Christine A. and Thomas N. Huckin. *The New Century Handbook*. Custom ed. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005. (Includes some rhetoric.)

Reader and/or Rhetoric. NOTE: Some of the texts below include rhetorical and handbook parts. Instructors may want to review these books, since some of them could be used in place of *The New Century Handbook* or other texts listed below.

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. *Reading Critically, Writing Well.* 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

Mauk, John and John Metz. *The Composition of Everyday Life: A Guide to Writing*. Boston: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004.

Rottenberg, Annette T. *Elements of Argument.* 8th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002.

We ask you to use the required texts, for the sake of program integrity and consistency, and in fairness to all students taking our courses. The required texts fit the goals and objectives of our courses, the process pedagogy we use, and the kinds of writing we ask our students to do.

We do invite all teachers of composition to recommend textbooks to the Composition Committee for possible adoption in the future. Over the course of a year, members of the Committee will receive examination copies of new textbooks from the publishers, and you are welcome to look through the copies at your leisure. In the spring semester the Committee will review the textbooks currently in use and as many of the new textbooks as possible, and the Committee relies heavily on the opinions and recommendations of teachers in making its decision.

Only on rare occasions will the Coordinator of Composition approve an alternate textbook as a replacement for a text in the syllabus, and usually only for teachers in their second or subsequent year of teaching composition at Auburn. If you would like to use an alternate text, please follow this procedure:

Choose a textbook that substantially matches the content and organization of the text being replaced and that is compatible with the pedagogy and objectives of the course.

Fill out the Textbook Request Form (available the departmental staff person who handles textbooks or the Coordinator of Composition and submit it to the Coordinator of Composition before the middle of the semester *preceding* the semester when you plan to use the text.

The request form is important. We will not send your book order to the bookstore if it does not have the signature of the Coordinator of Composition.

Supplemental Syllabus
Provide your students with a supplemental syllabus that outlines policies specific to your class (although these should not contradict stated policies of the University or English Department). At a minimum it should provide essential information about yourself (name, office number and hours, etc.) and the course and explain such matters as your attendance policies, requirements for assigned work, how you will determine the final grade, and so on. Some teachers will give their students a schedule of class activities for the semester. Please give a copy of your supplemental syllabus to the Coordinator of Composition by the end of the first week of classes.

Office Hours
Please schedule and keep at least five office hours a week.

Part 2: Composition At the University: Philosophy, Objectives, and Pedagogy
Composition Philosophy
Learning to write and read well are complementary activities and thus parallel learning

objectives. The governing assumption of a writing course is that improvement in both is possible. Thus, exposure to the rhetorical nature of writing and reading plays a significant part in a student's development as a writer. Successful learning therefore

requires that students be given ample opportunities to write in an environment that is challenging but also supportive.

Writing and reading are kinds of thinking: improvement in one is connected with improvement in the other. Students therefore need to develop strong writing and reading skills, including exposure to writing and reading processes, if they are to become thoughtful writers and perceptive readers. Responsible composition pedagogy should help students learn these processes.

In a freshman writing course, the reading and writing processes students learn should prepare them for the reading and writing they can expect in other college courses. Instruction should be tailored accordingly: specifically, reading non-fiction prose and writing non-fiction essays.

Instruction in writing is also an important part of students' intellectual development and helps prepare them for participation in society beyond college. It is an essential part of students' introduction to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy. As such, writing can be construed as a private and social act. As a private act, it helps students know themselves better as writers and thinkers and become more confident in expressing themselves. As a social act, it helps students establish their presence in the world, acknowledge the presence of others, and make their thoughts known in responsible and ethical ways.

Course Objectives
ENGL 1100
• To become adept at using writing processes that will help students achieve the general objectives of English Composition. Processes include various kinds of prewriting and discovery, drafting and reviewing drafts, editing and revising, and submitting polished essays on time and in the appropriate format.
• To develop and articulate a claim that answers to the requirements of the assignment and that represents a thoughtful understanding of the issues the student is writing about.
• To support the claim with evidence that answers to the requirements of the assignment and that demonstrates the student's ability to make appropriate rhetorical and logical choices.
• To become proficient in the conventions of standard written English appropriate for an academic audience or educated readers and to apply these conventions to meet the requirements of the assignment.
• To become proficient in writing with some stylistic fluency and to begin to attain a mature understanding of prose style.
• To identify and assess the rhetorical effectiveness and appropriateness of various kinds of texts and to make critical judgments about these texts.

ENGL 1120
• To continue to develop the student's proficiency at using writing processes, with more attention on the research process. This would include locating sources in a variety of media; evaluating sources for validity, reliability, and applicability; and making intelligent choices of sources that are appropriate for the requirements of the assignment and the rhetorical objectives of the essay.
• To use the research process to develop and support claims. In particular, to quote, paraphrase, and summarize sources accurately, to incorporate sources smoothly into the essay, and to use sources to support an argument of the student's own making.
• To learn to apply correctly the mechanics of documentation and citation according to the Modern Language Association (preferred) or some other established organization.
• To further develop the student's critical reading skills, as evidenced in various written exercises, with attention given to the text's argumentative validity and its appropriate use of rhetoric and logic to advance its case.

Instruction in Writing
Students should receive instruction in how to write each assigned essay, and instruction should cover the whole writing process, including invention and prewriting; drafting, developing, and supporting arguments; review and response; editing; and revision and presentation to the teacher. The emphasis in ENGL 1100 is on writing expository essays that do not require research. In ENGL 1120, students will write argumentative essays that do require library research. The amount of graded writing in each course should come to approximately 3500-4500 words.

Writing Assignments in ENGL 1100
Students will write four essays:
• An essay that explores the significance of an experience in the student's life. The student should strive to make a claim or reach a conclusion about the meaning of the experience and that goes beyond the statement of a simple moral or lesson learned. The essay can be exploratory, in that the student confronts a question or problem he or she has been unable to resolve. Instructors should set boundaries as to how personal or confessional the essay can be.
• An essay that describes, in some detail, what the student has observed and that attempts to make some sense of the meaning of these observations. The assignment may ask the student to argue for an interpretation, though an argumentative thesis is not required. The essay should, however, present an organized response to the student's observations and, like the personal experience essay, be more than an itemized description followed by a moral or lesson.
• A critical reading of a non-fiction text, chosen by the instructor or by the student in consultation with the instructor. Critical reading should include an assessment of the rhetorical features of the text. The requirement that this essay be confined to a nonfiction text is based on two considerations: program objectives, which emphasize improving students' proficiency in reading non-fiction, and university assessments, which have indicated weaknesses in Auburn University students' reading skills.
• An expository essay of a type and on a topic chosen by the instructor or by the instructor and students. The genre, topic, and subject matter are at the instructor's

discretion, but the assignment should address the objectives of ENGL 1100 and help students improve their ability to meet these objectives.

Writing Assignments in ENGL 1120
Students will write three essays:
• An essay that evaluates sources according to criteria developed by the instructor and that build on the critical reading skills developed in ENGL 1100. The assignment may begin by asking students to write an annotation or précis of each source, but the final document should be an essay that evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the sources and assesses their value in the student's research for the course. Instructors should be clear on the number of sources required for this assignment and should also use this assignment to teach their students proper documentation format.
At least one of these next two essays requires the use of sources and their proper citation and documentation.
• An essay that argues for a claim or thesis, or that develops and argues for the validity of an idea or for the student's understanding of an idea. Students should be reminded that this is not an opinion paper only. The essay is to be grounded in a sound knowledge of the subject matter and of the writings of others on the subject. The paper should go beyond persuasion and should be addressed to readers who are familiar enough with the subject to make an intelligent assessment of the essay's credibility.
• An essay that identifies and demonstrates the existence of a problem, evaluates proposed solutions, and argues on behalf of a solution or a combination of solutions.

Instruction in Grammar and Usage
University-level instruction in composition presumes that students possess a basic proficiency in the conventions of edited American English and that it is their responsibility to gain this proficiency if they do not already have it. Thus, we do not expect you to teach grammar and mechanics on a regular basis. However, on occasion it may be necessary that you address specific grammatical problems that seem to be common in your students' writing. If so, you can address these problems in mini-lessons that fit into the larger context of the day's work.
Individual students with particular problems in grammar and usage may be referred to the English Center for additional tutoring. This tutoring should, of course, supplement any instruction you give to the student.
Occasionally, you may get students, especially in ENGL 1100, who demonstrate such severe weakness in the conventions of written English as to make it very unlikely that they will pass the course. If you have such a student in your class, please see the Coordinator of Composition.

Instruction in Reading
You should assign your students enough reading to support the objectives of the course. In general, this means that your students should read all sections of *The New Century Handbook* relevant to the writing they'll do. In ENGL 1100, encourage your students to read as much of the reader as they can, but schedule regular assignments and follow these

up with discussions or other classroom activities that assist your students in the writing of their essays. In ENGL 1120, in addition to *The New Century Handbook*, you should also use a reader that provides examples of writing based on research as well as some topic ideas. Make frequent use of it.

Although you'll grade your students on how well they write, their reading will figure in to the successful completion of their writing assignments. Thus, both courses give considerable weight to reading strategies and the application of these strategies to the reading of assigned essays. You may choose not to discuss some assigned readings in class. However, discussion, when it does occur, should emphasize the relevance of assigned readings to the writing instruction of the assigned essays, though discussion of issues raised in the readings can be a part of this emphasis.

To encourage prompt and careful reading of assigned material, you might wish to assign frequent reading journal entries, quizzes, or both.

A recent survey of Composition teachers in the department indicated some interest in having students read, and write about, literary works in Composition. If you are interested in doing so, please do so sparingly. The emphasis in Composition is on the reading and understanding of non-fiction writing and on evaluating and using non-fiction for the research projects. Also, students will take two semesters of World Literature as part of the University Core.

Library Orientation
ENGL 1120 classes will each attend two library orientation sessions. Because the logistics of scheduling more than 100 sections is so complicated, planning is handled by the Assistant Coordinator of Composition. She will get a memo with details to all teachers early in the semester. If you have any questions, feel free to stop by her office in Haley Center, 8080.

Conferences
We recommend that you meet regularly with your students and that you have a statement in your supplemental syllabus that explains your conference policy. You may cancel classes if you plan to set aside several days for conferences, but try not to cancel more than two (TH) or three (MWF) classes in a row. Some teachers will count a missed conference as an unexcused absence. Make sure you note this in your supplemental syllabus.

Final Examination
The final examination must be administered under your supervision at the time and day assigned by the University exam schedule. You cannot change the day or time. A student may request to take the exam at a different time, but only for a legitimate reason (such as a schedule conflict with another exam) and only with the approval of his or her Dean. The Composition Committee, after consultation with the Department Head and the composition faculty, has developed these general principles for the final exams in ENGL 1100 and 1120:

The exam should test your students' understanding and mastery of the objectives of the course. These will be tested in an essay of about 500-750 words (2-3 pages) to be written during the exam period. You may include other test formats (short answer, identification, etc.), but your students should spend a majority of the exam time writing an essay. The exam should allow the student to demonstrate his or her ability in using the writing process to produce an original essay. Preparation for the exam takes place during the last two or three class meetings of the semester. Two models of preparation are given in the Instructor's Teaching Aids.

Course Grade
80% of the student's course grade is based on the grades he or she receives on the major essays. The other 20% is divided as follows: 10% for the final exam, and 10% for other assigned writings, quizzes, class participation, and so on. Of this last group, students should successfully complete at least 60% of the work; you may deduct from the student's course grade if he or she does not meet this requirement.

Evaluation of Student Writing
Typically, the process for each of the major essays goes as follows. Students will write a full draft of the essay. This draft will then be reviewed, by you and/or by other students, and returned to the author with suggestions for revision and editing. Students will then revise and submit a final version for a grade.

You can handle the review and response in one of several ways: 1) collect the drafts, take them home, write response comments, and return them to your students; 2) conduct the reviews during a conference with the student; 3) conduct in-class peer reviews.
The first method described above gives you maximum involvement in (and control over) revision and rewriting, but it is also the most labor-intensive and the one least likely to promote the student's involvement in his or her writing process, since often the student will defer to your comments and seek to do exactly what you say, but no more.

The second method can be unwieldy, since you'll need to review the drafts before you confer with the student, and the method can become as time consuming as the first. One way to make conferences more efficient, however, is to put more responsibility on the student to set the agenda and come to the conference prepared to explain and defend the revisions he or she plans. You'll still have to read the student's draft and be ready to discuss its strengths and weaknesses with the student, but you won't need to spend an inordinate amount of time writing comments and laying out the revision strategy yourself.

The third method subordinates teacher involvement and control to student empowerment and authority, though it still demands considerable management on your part to ensure that the reviews are pedagogically effective. As above, you'll need to know the status of your students' drafts, and you may need to intervene with individual students and in the peer review process itself.

In general, we recommend that you use all of the above methods, in various degrees and combinations, as the needs of individual students and the class as a whole dictate. You will probably find that, as the semester progresses, students should come to depend less on your direct involvement in the writing process and more on their own resources, both as authors of their own work and as readers of each other's work.

You should return rough drafts within one calendar week after you're collected them, and you should leave your students sufficient time to revise their drafts before turning them in for a grade. Likewise, final copies of the essay, with the grade, should be returned within one week after you've collected them. Be sure that you have graded and returned one major essay and several short assignments before mid semester. By all means, avoid stacking up assignments at the end of the semester.

Grade Distribution
It is important that we maintain fair and reasonable grading standards in ENGL 1100 and 1120; the long-term effectiveness of the Composition Program depends on this. Accordingly, we try to develop, as much as possible, a shared sense of what those grading standards are. We therefore include a statement on grading and Grading Criteria for both courses in the *Student Guidelines*. In addition, we schedule workshops on evaluating and grading during the pre-semester workshops for new GTAs, and we can schedule additional workshops as needed at other times during the year for all faculty. Please don't think that your grade distribution should match some theoretically "perfect" distribution. Our in-service workshops and grading criteria are not designed toward this end. However, as you probably know, grade inflation is a serious problem, and it is the kind of problem that can be addressed only through the conscientious efforts of all who teach composition to know and apply the standards developed by the Composition Committee. This will help insure that the grades are fair and that they are accurate reflections of your students' writing proficiency. Thus, as you grade individual essays and assign course grades for your students, we ask that you take into consideration the following:

The course grade should reflect the student's writing proficiency as maintained during a substantial part of the semester. Thus, if a student has shown a general proficiency at the C level, but gets an A or B on the final essay, it is not automatically certain that the student has attained an A or B level writing proficiency. Moreover, while other factors, such as journal entries and quizzes, have a place in determining a student's final grade, we expect that this final grade will be based primarily on the student's out-of-class essays.

The Composition Program defines the grade of C as indicating that the paper has met the minimum standards for an essay written by a freshman in a university writing course. Auburn University students, of course, beg to differ: to most of them, the C is unacceptable, no better than a D or F. More than one student will tell you that he or she needs an A or B to gain entrance into an academic program or professional school or to maintain a high GPA. Just as we encourage you to make every effort to grade fairly, we also encourage you to give your students' observations a fair and serious hearing. But you do a student no favor if you give him or her a higher grade when you're quite certain

that he or she has earned a lower grade. While we expect a small percentage of students to earn A's and a slightly larger percentage to earn B's, we also expect these percentages (particularly for the grade of A) to remain small because many students who can write at these levels enroll in the Honors Writing Seminar or are exempt from taking ENGL 1100 on the basis of entrance exam scores. As a result, we generally expect that a majority of students who complete ENGL 1100 and 1120 will perform at the C level. Since Auburn students have until mid-semester to drop a class without penalty, we also expect that the percentage of students earning D's or F's will be relatively small.

Appendix G: Inter-rater Agreement Calculations

	Primary Researcher	Secondary Researcher
Lack of preparation	6	5
Lack of experience	1	1
Personality	3	3
Academic exhaustion	1	1
Additional burden	3	3
Lit/comp split	1	1
Too close	2	2
Total: 94%		

Inter-rater agreement was figured by taking random chunks of the data from journals, interviews, and questionnaires and then copying the selected data for both the primary and secondary researcher. Both researchers were given a list of the code categories provided in the table above and were instructed to code every instance of that category in their data packet. For example, I coded six instances of "lack of preparation" in the data, but my colleague coded the category only five times. In the other categories, we agreed 100% of the time.

I calculated inter-rater agreement by dividing the number of potential agreements (17) by the number of agreements (16) and reached an agreement rate of 94%.

Appendix H: Example Memos

July 15, 2008

I just found out that two of the GTAs are going to be co-teaching their classes together instead of teaching alone. Why do they want to co-teach? What is this adding to their experience? Is it a crutch or a way for them to deal with feeling unprepared? I have to add questions to the interview protocol to flush this out. Maybe this will turn into a code.

November 28, 2009

I have been noting a lot of what I am calling "battle imagery" in the data, especially from on participant who appears to be struggling more than the others with her teaching. Going to teach is like preparing for a battle. What can I do with this?

December 10, 2009

The participants' issues with authority always seem conflated with explanations of personality. I am not sure why yet. It is like they all see their personalities or tendencies as teachers as handicapping them in some ways. Maybe this is one reason the two things (individual personality/teacher personality) cannot be separated for the GTAs.

Appendix I: Coding Guide, Participant Descriptions, and IRB Materials

Emergent Codes

Code 1.0 What is composition studies?

This code included units where the GTAs describe their educational background prior to entering graduate school and the training program. Instances where the participants express their previous contact with the field of composition and any other experiences that relate to their knowledge of writing instruction are included.

I really think the transition was difficult because I had no classes in comp except for 1100 and 1120 that I took as a freshman. The most difficult part for me was first semester of last year when it was my first time co teaching and the class was working on the essay where they analyze an argument. It was difficult to not bring in as much literature stuff— like diction, imagery, etc.

Code 2.0 Common problems in the classroom

Any issues or concerns that the GTAs repeatedly encountered in their classrooms were coded as 2.0. Some of these common problems were also coded as "lack of institutional preparation." Examples include: problems with using technology in the classroom, trouble using peer review or group work effectively, being unprepared for class, and being unable to explain assignments. Three key issues were identified as "common" or pervasive, including issues with authority, youth and lack of experience, and disrespectful students.

I am such a people pleaser that I wanted to have all the students like me.

I think I also struggle with giving grades because I know for undergraduate how important they can be so that one can get into graduate school or professional school later on. Giving grades is hard for a people pleaser too, but I am getting better at it!

Code 2.1 Authority issues

Specifically, any direct mention of the word "authority" (including establishing authority or maintaining authority in the classroom) was included in this code. Examples where GTAs also discuss being more strict to keep the respect of their students are also coded.

I eventually came to realize that by being the teacher, I had a lot of authority—I just had to feel comfortable being in front of a lot of people.

Code 2.2 Youth/lack of experience

Any reference to youth and amount of teaching experience are coded. This includes when the participants discuss their age (sometimes in comparison with their students) and their youthful physical appearance.

When I talked to you before, I remember feeling very apprehensive about the students thinking I was so young.

The one thing that seems to stand out more than the rest is being inexperienced.

Code 2.3 Disrespectful students

This code includes any direct mention of the term "disrespect" when discussing students' behavior in or outside of class. The GTAs also talk about not being "taken seriously" and students treating them like "they did not know what they were talking about." This code also encompasses references to students "mocking" the GTAs in class, being "rude," refusing to participate, and challenging them in class or in conference settings.

We had conferences—14 of which did not show up. I am not sure why. It may be that they do not take the class seriously or that they are just being new college students. Either way, we spent a lot of time in the office waiting for students to come. The office has become quiet stuffy—there are always people moving around and the room is so drab. Kitty named the color of paint asylum beige. I really don't want to spend any more time in there.

We realized, that TR8 was mocking us openly—which was infuriating and completely mortifying. I can't fathom why college students would be so rude.

They hopefully realized that they don't have to love us, but they do have to be polite. It's a revolutionary thought, really.

Code 3.0 Connecting with students

This code is used to identify instances where the GTAs discuss their personal ideas of functional and dysfunctional student/teacher relationships.

Time was one thing we didn't have. We couldn't spend the time we needed with students.

After this one particularly humiliating conference, I realized this was not the student/teacher relationship I had envisioned.

Code 3.1 Connection too close

This code is used to identify any instances where the participants discuss students crossing the boundaries of what they see as an ideal student/teacher relationship and instead becoming too personal and not respecting their role as the teacher.

My students tend to see me more like a friend or an Auburn advisor.

The first day I walked into class, this one girl said, "Hey girl, you in this class?" I said, "Yes!" I am the teacher.

My second semester teaching at Auburn I had a student who opened up to me, but almost too much. He was telling me about his problems with girlfriends, etc. I did not know how to handle it at the time, but this summer the student contacted me not about school, but just about how his life was going. In the email, he was again telling me information about his personal life. I decided to not respond to the email because I thought this was not the teacher-student relationship I envision.

Code 3.2 Not enough connection

This code is used to identify any instances where the participants discuss problems with forming connections or bonds with their students.

Being so preoccupied with my own classes and thesis, I found very little time/energy to talk to my students and conference with them. I did connect with a few of them, but most of my students were uninterested in the course, despite all my efforts.

Code 4.0 Humanizing the classroom

This code identifies any references to wanting students to see the GTAs not just as teachers but as individual people. This includes the participants' desire to have students like them as people and come to them with questions and concerns. The GTAs often said that they wanted students to "see that they have this other human aspect." The participants wanted students to see them as more than mechanical teachers just doing a job; they wanted to be people their students could trust and connect with.

I think it's important that the students see the human and not just the authority figure in the classroom. It's a complicated balance, but I think they need to trust me as a person. If they feel like I'm out to get them, then they're going to be too scared to ask questions and seek advice.

Code 5.0 Fears

This code identifies any direct mention of the participants fears. These included references to weaknesses and shortcomings.

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I'd never taught before, and going in with no experience in front of a class would have been mortifying.

I know the exhaustion and apathy that prevails at that hour (my fall Comp 1 students were NOT a happy bunch), so I'm nervous to face a bunch of resistant zombies… and I'm trying to think of ways to make 8am Comp 1 as painless as possible.

Code 5.1 Personal sense of failure

This code identifies any of the participants' personal accounts of failure during the first year of teaching.

I have a tendency to feel like a failure and seek approval (from everyone including my students) and when I felt that my students didn't like or approve of me, it affected my confidence in the classroom a little.

Start list or *A Priori* Codes

Code 6.0 Competing models of higher education

The code is used to identify units that specifically deal with references by GTAs to both implicit and explicit pressures to put their own work and interests as graduate students ahead of their work as teachers. Included here were discussions of needing to "balance" and "manage" their work as students and teachers.

I think it can be a tough balance, juggling exams, classes, papers, then planning/teaching/grading for composition. It's really time consuming. I don't want to shortchange myself academically, but I also feel an incredibly strong obligation to not shortchange my students. They have a right to a good teacher who is caring and involved, and so even when I'm overwhelmed, I struggle to give that to them.

Code 6.1 Competing responsibilities

Code 6.0 also subsumes as one of its subcategories any references to what the GTAs viewed as competing responsibilities. This code category included data from participants that juxtaposed their teaching duties and their duties as students. For example, teaching duties might include: conferences with students, grading papers, and preparing assignments for class. Graduate school duties would include preparing for and taking comprehensive examinations, papers and presentations required as a part of their course work, and the application process for Ph.D programs. When GTAs noted these as in conflict, they were coded 6.1.

I was going to bed at midnight and waking up at 5 AM from January until March. Added to this, I was also taking a grad class, tutoring at the International Student Writing Center and waiting on responses from various PhD programs.

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Code 7.0 Heavy workloads

The code category is supported by numerous references to "academic exhaustion" by the participants were noted in the data. Included in the code are references to physical, mental, and social exhaustion; the GTAs used terms like "worn out," "insane," and "stress," to describe the exhaustion brought on their workloads. Specifically, comments from the GTAs about sleeplessness, appetite loss, depression, and mental instability, such as crying and angry outbursts, were included.

Overall my impressions of last semester are very hazy because I found it hard to focus on everything all at once. This could just be a direct result of academic exhaustion: I had not had a single break since school started in August 2008 and I think all of the emotional and physical stresses finally took their toll.

Code 8.0 Double insecurity

Double insecurity is a term used to code participant descriptions of being inbetween the worlds of professor and teacher. Any references to "not fitting in" with students or faculty or being unsure about their position in academics.

I kind of feel like a student all of the time.

Seeing my name as teacher of record gave me a bit of a surprise—I thought "is that really me—who put me in charge of a class?!"

Code 9.0 Lack of institutional preparation

This code included any references from the GTAs about wanting more "guidance" as teachers and being "unsure" of how to handle situations in the classroom. The codes often started with GTAs saying "they were uncertain" and "they were unsure" when it came to basic responsibilities such as explaining paper assignments, grading, classroom management, how to use group work, and how to write quality essays. Units dealing with problems with technology use were also included.

I also felt as if I knew more or less how to write a good literature paper, but I didn't have a clue as to how to teach someone the basics of writing.

I was not sure I was in a position to *judge* someone's writing. I wasn't sure what I could tell someone about how to write.

Sometimes there just wasn't enough time or I didn't know enough about a topic to give good comments.

Code 9.1 Problems with training program components

      This code functioned as a broad category that encompassed all the participants' references to concerns and negative experiences they had in the training provided to them by the university. Any concerns voiced by the GTAs regarding the mentor or co-teaching program were included along with issues with the orientation and practicum.

The first experience I had was bad. The co-teacher I was working with had the idea that students should respect the teacher at all times, and if they didn't, the best way to "rein them in" was through intimidation—yelling at them, slamming doors as we walked in, and keeping very strict policies about homework and attendance.   I felt out of place because I had never taught before and thought I was always under the microscope. For the most part, I sat in a desk beside the students and didn't do much (in the way of planning or teaching) until my unit.

Code 9.2 Compensating with co-teaching

      One significant development in the study was co-teaching in the participant group. When the GTAs discussed their rationale for choosing to co-teaching with a peer instead of teaching their classes alone, these were coded as 9.2. The GTAs said that co-teaching gave them an "ally" in the classroom and gave them a much needed "resource."

I think that we, together, can handle most things that should arise in a comp class. I think part of the benefits are having someone to bounce ideas off of and being able to get feedback before unleashing an assignment on students. It also helps in providing good feedback to the students on their writing—sometimes there just wasn't enough time or I didn't know enough about a topic to give good comments. Team-teaching gives us a lot of teaching experience and lets us work with a broader range of students. In one of our classes, team teaching seemed to help keep the class on-task and interested in the subject matter.

Code 9.3 Additional complications

      There are points in the data where participants specifically discuss how the transition from a GWSI program to a WAC program with themed courses impacted their training. Any negative comments regarding the training provided for the new curriculum are also coded.
      Any time the GTAs mention being confused by the 1120 curriculum or being unsure of how to teach assignments in their themed courses, the units are coded 9.3.

Then we had with the new curriculum for 1120 we had that training. Basically they could have just handed us the binder. It was a waste of time.

I think the themes are a good idea in a sense but can also be extraordinarily limiting. I was teaching sustainability. They did not love it. And I tried. I had them doing readings. But I mean first of all the student body here not interested in the environment.

<u>Code 10.0 Lit/comp split</u>

This code identifies any implicit or explicit mentions of the lit/comp split, including evidence that the participants are taking in characterizations of the fields (such as seeing composition as less important as literature).

It's more politicking behind the scenes, like you know with the job search. When a lit person would rip a rhet comp person apart in their job talk.

Additional Participant Descriptions

The following section includes my descriptions of the participants followed by a compilation of direct quotes from the GTAs describing their experiences and thoughts during their first semester of teaching.

Participant 1:

The youngest of the participants, she describes her biggest teaching obstacle as maintaining authority in her classes. Some of this she attributed to her physical appearance, which she described as "youthful." She also thought that her open and bubbly personality might lead students to see her more as a friend and take advantage of that relationship. So, the first day of class she planned to be "super hard core about absences and the syllabus and schedule" and she also told students that if she "saw a cell phone in class it would be an automatic unexcused absence." She started this way to set the tone for the class and to balance what she perceived as her weaknesses. She believes that students need to be a little nervous to create a functional classroom where they respect her authority. She did find that establishing authority would not be as simple as setting strict policies on the first day of class, and there were several instances in class and during student conferences where students challenged her. For example, one of her male students told her that he "bet she was a funny drunk," a student asked her in class about "who she was dating," and another group of three female students simply "refused to participate in class discussions."

This participant is the daughter of a teacher and was exposed at an early age to school environments. She explained that she remembers watching her mother prepare for

class and that she still goes to her for advice and support today. She was born and raised

in the local area where the present study was conducted and moved away to pursue her

Ph.D in composition and rhetoric.

I guess this is a good place to describe myself – I'm 23, an MA student, 5'2, red-headed with freckles, so people always think I am younger than I am. I feel like that is what I will struggle with the most – establishing authority. If you can't tell, I'm nervous about it. But, I think it can be done. I'm pretty laid back and that also make me nervous, like I feel like I can't be my whole self with teaching right now if that makes any sense. I have to be this stricter form of me…I had no classes in comp except for 1100 and 1120 that I took as a freshmen…Why am I having this problem? Because I am 23? Because I am a woman? I think it is both. Plus, I am naturally friendly/laid back. I have to be more authoritarian.

I loved the mentor/co-teaching program the first semester of grad school. I think I would have totally had a panic attack if I had to get in front of a class of freshmen and teach when I had no idea how to. My lead teacher was awesome! She slowly got me involved, but also pushed me to do more. She would even leave some days and I would teach the whole time which made me comfortable in a classroom by myself. I felt like she had the reigns, but I was also a major part of the students' classroom experience.

Participant 2:

Describes herself as coming from a "long line of teachers." Her grandfather was

a music teacher who told her stories of "school happenings" and shared his love for

students and for the teaching profession. She said her grandfather "could remember his

students' names for years" and that the image of him as a teacher has always "stayed in

her mind." Surprisingly, she feared she lacked traits typical of successful teachers

because of her soft-spoken nature. She said teachers had always "told her to be more

vocal" and that this was clearly "an obstacle" for her. However, rather than giving up on

becoming a teacher, she instead focused on what she could offer students. She feels she

can listen to students better and that this helps her identify with students and get a "sense

of who they are." Her perceived weakness ultimately became the most valuable aspect of

her teacher identity.

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This participant was from the southeastern region of the United States and is now

working to establish an ESL center at a university.

> I am a very quiet person and teachers have told me to be more vocal…this was an obstacle but I also feel I can listen to students better…this helps me identify with students and get a sense of who they are… I began to realize I could shape a classroom and each teacher has her own style…
>
> After taking Orientation to Education, visiting several high school classes, and taking history courses, I decided to become just an English major. I did get experience copy editing for the school's yearbook and creative arts journal. When it came time to graduate (I graduated in December), I hoped to find a writing job somewhere since I wouldn't hear back from graduate schools for a few months.
>
> In some sense, the transition was difficult. I had been working in an insurance place for seven months, and the company demanded that you learn a lot of skills on your own time. As a TA, I had to keep telling myself to slow down and to try to explain things more. In a lot of ways, my experience as a TA helped me understand why my freshman comp. teacher taught us the way she did—this may seem like an unimportant point, but I started to understand that helping students build and master skills slowly is an important part in learning how to write, especially since a lot of people expect Freshman Comp to give them the tools necessary to be successful in college writing and beyond. Another difficulty I had was "getting over being an English Major." I had become used to writing several papers for upper level history and English classes very quickly. I think this experience helped me learn how to generate ideas quickly and supply them with needed support "to get the grade." My students had a lot of trouble filling up two or three pages as I tried to remember the same struggles I went through as a beginning writer.
>
> This summer, I also taught an ESL writing class that met five days a week for two hours. This class pushed me to come up with activities that would teach the students skills without losing the content. The class had to be more multimodal so that I could better engage them (also this seemed to be natural since they were all quite skilled with using technology and a range of other tools; not opening up the classroom would have seriously limited what we did/ could talk about)—this made me realize how barren "regular" comp classes can be.   The next time I teach Comp I, I will try to make my assignments more like the ones I wrote for the ESL class.

Participant 3:

This participant, although still young, was the only returning student, and this led

her to question her ability to connect with her students. She said that she seemed to

"confuse students at first" and she felt they didn't understand her after she had been in the

corporate world. This break from academics led her to feel "out of touch" and she made

several comments about needing to "break the ice" in her classrooms. She also worried

that students would not respond well to a non-traditional professor type who was a bit

"off-beat" and "quirky." One way she overcame her perceived weakness was by using

humor. She said she "likes joking to break the ice and make a friendly atmosphere."

Importantly, she used the jokes to gage classroom understanding, and joking about her

stint in the corporate world also became a type of instructional tool. Over the course of

the study she began to see that students were "responding well to her instruction," and

she felt more comfortable as a teacher. She said, "I can share a skill and I realize I have

something to offer, unlike in the corporate world. I see the value of my work when I see

my students understanding."

> Some students are wary of young, female teachers who don't have PhDs (or even MAs) and potentially see us as being unqualified and/or incompetent. I feel this is unfortunate, but there's nothing I can do about that. I won't change my relaxed classroom atmosphere – I won't wield that authoritarian axe. It's too heavy...Humor is a good way to gage classroom understanding…

> My Advanced Composition class was the most satisfying class I took, so that is what propelled my interest in composition at the graduate level. As far as what I thought I'd do with this degree… well, I didn't think I'd be a teacher. In fact, I resented when people assumed that was all I could do. I wanted to be a professional writer/editor and maybe work in publishing. I ended up being a technical writer / instructional designer for about three years after I finished my BA.

> I think what has been valuable in being both a teacher and a student is that I am learning alongside my students. I know I make mistakes, so I am more forgiving when they make mistakes. In speaking with them, I always try to emphasize the shared experience of being students. I know what they're going through. I know how they feel. I know they're young and stressed/scared of being in a big university for the first time.

Participant 4:

This participant was pursuing a second master's degree and was the only GTA in

the participant group not born in the United States. As she shared her experiences with

me, I noticed that her interviews and journal entries were littered with battle imagery,

which set the classroom as a scene where struggle was constantly taking place and where

knowledge was her weapon. After much struggle, she informally enlisted the help of

another GTA and friend, and the two agreed on their own to work together as co-teachers.

Sometimes I feel if I am talking in a thick Russian accent. I feel as if no one is understanding me, as if what I am saying is incomprehensible. . . I take all these things onto myself . . . I have more baggage to carry. I have to try twice as hard to assert myself, that I am a foreigner not born in this country. I don't look like I am from this country. I think they are saying, "what is she doing teaching us" because I am so conscious of being judged as different.   I have to be so conscious of how I speak. I don't have illusions that I am not being judged. It's a problem. Most of these kids come from Alabama, and some have these false cultural perceptions. Being confronted with a non-native, it's a bit of a handicap . . . It's more of a cultural barrier than a language barrier… Already I can see the smoke of rebellion ensuing out of my students' nostrils…I fear this is going to be an uphill battle

I convinced myself that other teachers were better than me…It's just that I have found that I could not handle the class on my own so I ended up recruiting a friend's help. She happens to have a 6:30 class…and her class is making her so miserable as well. So we decided to combine forces…I just keep expectations low...All of them made good grades because I don't grade very hard on the first paper. It just keeps the morale up...I don't keep them there for one hour and fifteen minutes because I think that's unethical.

I found that I needed to establish authority by true knowledge. It is something that I have had to do consistently to let them know that I know more than them. That in some ways I am better than them in terms of knowledge. They were challenging me on that because the attitude was that I do not know what I am talking about…My entire class is based on the idea of the appropriation of symbols. I am trying to get them to talk about how they can cultural artifacts and transform them and use them for themselves for something other than it was originally meant for…we talked about Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* in that regard…Essentially, the idea is to think about how we take something that doesn't belong to us and remake it.

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INFORMED CONSENT
for a Research Study entitled
"Individual GTAs Negotiating Current Preparation Models:
A Case Study"

You are invited to participate in a research study to examine the lived experience of graduate student teachers working in the English department. The study is being conducted by Amanda F. Myers, a PhD candidate, under the direction of Dr. Sean A. Forbes in the Auburn University Department of EFLT. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a current GTA and are age 19 or older.

What will be involved if you participate? If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in interviews. There is a potential of one to two follow-up interviews after the initial interview. Your total time commitment will be approximately 2 hours.

_____ By checking here, you give your permission for the interview to be tape recorded. The tape will be destroyed after the interview is transcribed.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The risks associated with participating in this study are a possible breach of confidentiality and coercion. To minimize these risks, we will use pseudonyms, minimize all other identifiers, and provide reassurance of the voluntary nature of the study.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? If you participate in this study, you can expect to benefit from the examination of your experiences, the opportunity to discuss them, and personal reflection. It is our hope that the study will contribute to an awareness of the additional challenges faced by non-native GTAs. We cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.
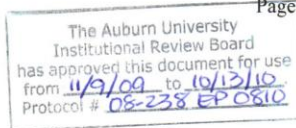
Will you receive compensation for participating? This is no compensation provided, but I greatly appreciate your time and effort.

Are there any costs? If you decide to participate, you will only be asked for your time and thoughts.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of English.

Participant's initials _____

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The Auburn University
Institutional Review Board
has approved this document for use
from 11/9/09 to 10/13/10
Protocol # 08-238 EP 0810

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Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, presented at a professional meeting or for a dissertation.

If you have questions about this study, *please ask them now or* contact Mandy Myers at mcaliaf@auburn.edu. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

_____   _____
Participant's signature   Date   Investigator obtaining consent   Date

_____   _____
Printed Name   Printed Name

                                       _____
                                       Co-Investigator   Date

                                       _____
The Auburn University   Printed Name
Institutional Review Board
has approved this document for use
from 11/9/09 to 10/13/10.
Protocol # 08-238 EP 0810

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4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

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Rev.6/07

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD for RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

R E Q U E S T f o r P R O T O C O L R E N E W A L

For Information or help completing this form, contact: **THE OFFICE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH**, 307 Samford Hall
Phone: 334-844-5966   **e-mail:** hsubjec@auburn.edu   **Web Address:** http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/index.htm

Complete this form using Adobe Acrobat Writer (versions 5.0 and greater). Hand written forms will not be accepted.

1. **Protocol Number:** 08-238 EP 0810

2. **Original IRB Approval Dates:** From: 10/14/2008 To: 10/13/2009

3. **Requested ONE YEAR MAXIMUM Renewal Period:** From: 10/13/2009 To: 10/13/2010

4. **PROJECT TITLE:** "Teaching what is Not Your Own: How a Non-Native GTA Survives Teaching College English"

5.
Mandy F. Myers	PhD Student	EFLT	844-3086	mcaliaf@auburn.edu
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	**TITLE**	**DEPT**	**PHONE**	**AU E-MAIL**

Mandy Myers
PI SIGNATURE   1412 Southwick Ln. Opelika, AL 36801
     MAILING ADDRESS   **ALTERNATE E-MAIL**

Sean A. Forbes		EFLT	844-3083	forbesa@auburn.edu
FACULTY ADVISOR	**SIGNATURE**	**DEPT**	**PHONE**	**AU E-MAIL**

Name of Current Department Head: Sherida Downer   AU E-MAIL: downesh@aubur

6. **Current External Funding Agency:** none

7. List any contractors, sub-contractors, or other entities or IRBs associated with this project:

8. Briefly list *(numbered or bulleted)* the activities that occurred over the past year, particularly those that involved participants.

1. Conducted one interview with each participant.
2. Audio taped and transcribed interview with participants.
3. Conducted one follow-up interview with each participant.
4. Audio taped and transcribed each follow-up interview.
5. Data was used to produce an article that I presented at an academic conference.

RECEIVED JUL 2009 Office of Human Subjects Research IRB

9. Explain why you are requesting additional time to complete this research project.

The project was approached as a pilot study for my dissertation. I would like to collect additional data to use in my dissertation and to reach qualitative "saturation."

The Auburn University
Institutional Review Board
has approved this document for use
from 11/9/09 to 10/13/09
Protocol # 08-238 EP 0810

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10. Do you plan to make any changes in your protocol if the renewal request is approved?
   (e.g., research design, methodology, participant characteristics, authorized number of participants, etc.)

   ☐ NO   ☑ YES (If "yes", please complete and attach the "REQUEST for PROTOCOL
                            MODIFICATION" form. The IRB will review both requests at the same time.)

11. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

   a. How many individuals have actually participated in this research? 4
      If retrospective, how many files or records were accessed? 4

   b. Were there any adverse events, unexpected difficulties or unexpected benefits with the approved procedures?

      ☑ NO   ☐ YES (If YES, please explain)

   d. How many participants have withdrawn from the study? _____   ☑ None or Not Applicable.
      NOTE: If any participants withdrew from the study, please explain.

   e. How many new participants do you plan to recruit during the renewal period? _____ ☑ None / NA

   f. During the renewal period, will you re-contact any individual that has already participated in your research project?
                                                                                            ☐ None / NA
      ☑ NO   ☐ YES   If "YES", please explain reasons for re-contacting participants.
      (If "YES" and the procedure to re-contact has not been previously approved, please complete and attach a
      "REQUEST for PROTOCOL MODIFICATION" form. The IRB will review both requests at the same time.)

12. PROTECTION OF DATA

    a. Is the data being collected, stored and protected as previously approved by the IRB?

        ☐ NO (If "NO", explain)   ☑ YES

    b. Are there any changes in the "key research personnel" that have access to participants or data?
        Attach CITI proof of completion for all new key personnel.

        ☐ NO   ☑ YES (If "YES", identify each individual and explain the reason(s) for each change.)

1. My faculty advisor is changing. Dr. Margaret Ross no longer has access to participants or to data. She will no longer be involved in this study. My chair, Dr. Sean A. Forbes, is now acting as my faculty advisor for this study. I have included an updated IRB signature page to reflect these changes.
2. The secondary investigator, Daniel Connelly, will no longer be involved in this project. He no longer has access to data or to participants. This research is now being used for dissertation, publication, and presentation purposes for an individual author (the primary investigator, Mandy F. Myers).

    c. What is the latest date (month and year) you now expect all identifiable data to be destroyed?
        (Identifiable data includes videotapes, photographs, code lists, etc.)

        DATE: _____   ☑ Not Applicable – no identifiable data has been or will be colleted.

11. Attach a copy of all "stamped" IRB-approved documents used during the previous year.
    (Information letters, Informed Consents, Parental Permissions, etc.).

12. If you plan to recruit participants, or collect human subject data during the renewal period, attach a new copy of the consent document or information letter you will use during the extension.

    (Be sure to review the OHSR website for current consent document guidelines and updated contact information: http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/sample.htm .)

    PLEASE NOTE: If you do not plan to collect additional data and/or you do not have access to any identifiable data (including code lists, etc.) you may be able to file a "FINAL REPORT" for this project. Contact the Office of Human Subjects Research for more information.

When complete, submit hard copy with signatures to the Office of Human Subjects Research, 307 Samford Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849

APPROVED

AUBURN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD for RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
RESEARCH PROTOCOL REVIEW FORM

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Phone: 334-844-5966   e-mail: hsubjec@auburn.edu   **Web Address:** http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/ohs/index.htm

Complete this form using Adobe Acrobat Writer (versions 5.0 and greater).

1. PROPOSED DATES OF STUDY: FROM: _09/17/2008_ TO: _09/17/2009_

   REVIEW TYPE (Check one): ☐ FULL BOARD ☑ EXPEDITED ☐ EXEMPT

2. PROJECT TITLE: _"Teaching What is Not Your Own: How a Non-Native GTA Survives Teaching College English"_

3.

Mandy F. Myers	Ph.D. Student	EFLT	844- 3066	mcaliaf@auburn.edu
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	TITLE	DEPT	PHONE	E-MAIL

   EFLT 4036 Haley Center, Auburn University, AL 36849
   ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE   FAX

4. SOURCE OF FUNDING SUPPORT: ☑ Not Applicable ☐ Internal ☐ External (External Agency): _____

5. STATUS OF FUNDING SUPPORT: ☑ Not Applicable ☐ Approved ☐ Pending ☐ Received

6. GENERAL RESEARCH PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

A. Research Content Area	B. Research Methodology
Please check all descriptors that best apply to this proposed research project.	Please check all descriptors that best apply to the research methodology.
☐ Anthropology ☐ Anthropometry	Data collection will be: ☑ Prospective ☐ Retrospective ☐ Both
☐ Biological Sciences ☐ Behavioral Sciences	Data will be recorded so that participants can be directly or indirectly identified: ☑ Yes ☐ No
☑ Education ☑ English	Data collection will involve the use of:
☐ History ☐ Journalism	☐ Educational Tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement)
☐ Medical ☐ Physiology	☐ Surveys / Questionnaires
☐ Other (Please list:)_____	☑ Private Records / Files
Please list 3 or 4 keywords to identify this research project: _____	☑ Interview / Observation
Graduate Teaching Assistants	☑ Audiotaping and / or Videotaping
	☐ Physical / Physiologic Measurements or Specimens

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C. Participant Information	D. Risks to Participants
Please check all descriptors that apply to the participant population.	Please identify all risks that may reasonably be expected as a result of participating in this research.
☐ Males ☑ Females	☑ Breach of Confidentiality ☑ Coercion
Vulnerable Populations	☐ Deception ☐ Physical
☐ Pregnant Women ☐ Children	☐ Psychological ☐ Social
☐ Prisoners ☐ Adolescents	☐ None ☐ Other (please list):
☐ Elderly ☐ Physically Challenged	
☐ Economically Challenged ☐ Mentally Challenged	
Do you plan to recruit Auburn University Students? ☑ Yes ☐ No	
Do you plan to compensate your participants? ☐ Yes ☑ No	

For OHSR Office Use Only	
DATE RECEIVED IN OHSR: 10/8/08 by RKH	PROTOCOL # 08-238 EP 0810
DATE OF OHSR CONTENT REVIEW: _____ by _____	DATE ASSIGNED IRB REVIEW: _____ by _____
DATE OF IRB REVIEW: 10/14/08 by TS	DATE IRB APPROVAL: 10/14/08 by IRB procedure
INTERVAL FOR CONTINUING REVIEW: 1 yr.	45 CFR 46.110 (#7)

7. PROJECT ASSURANCES

PROJECT TITLE: "Teaching What is Not Your Own: How a Non-Native GTA
Survives Teaching College English"

A. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR'S ASSSURANCE

1. I certify that all information provided in this application is complete and correct.
2. I understand that, as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of this study, the ethical performance this project, the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects, and strict adherence to any stipulations imposed by the Auburn University IRB.
3. I certify that all individuals involved with the conduct of this project are qualified to carry out their specified roles and responsibilities and are in compliance with Auburn University policies regarding the collection and analysis of the research data.
4. I agree to comply with all Auburn policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects, including, but not limited to the following:
   a. Conducting the project by qualified personnel according to the approved protocol
   b. Implementing no changes in the approved protocol or consent form without prior approval from the Office of Human Subjects Research (except in an emergency, if necessary to safeguard the well-being of human subjects)
   c. Obtaining the legally effective informed consent from each participant or their legally responsible representative prior to their participation in this project using only the currently approved, stamped consent form
   d. Promptly reporting significant adverse events and/or effects to the Office of Human Subjects Research in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.
5. If I will be unavailable to direct this research personally, I will arrange for a co-investigator to assume direct responsibility in my absence. This person has been named as co-investigator in this application, or I will advise OHSR, by letter, in advance of such arrangements.
6. I agree to conduct this study only during the period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
7. I will prepare and submit a renewal request and supply all supporting documents to the Office of Human Subjects Research before the approval period has expired if it is necessary to continue the research project beyond the time period approved by the Auburn University IRB.
8. I will prepare and submit a final report upon completion of this research project.

Mandy F. Myers	*Mandy Myers*	09/17/2008
Principal Investigator (Please Print)	**Principal Investigator's Signature**	**Date**

B. FACULTY SPONSOR'S ASSSURANCE

1. By my signature as sponsor on this research application, I certify that the student or guest investigator is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol.
2. I certify that the project will be performed by qualified personnel according to the approved protocol using conventional or experimental methodology.
3. I agree to meet with the investigator on a regular basis to monitor study progress.
4. Should problems arise during the course of the study, I agree to be available, personally, to supervise the investigator in solving them.
5. I assure that the investigator will promptly report significant adverse events and/or effects to the OHSR in writing within 5 working days of the occurrence.
6. If I will be unavailable, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence, and I will advise the OHSR by letter of such arrangements.
7. I have read the protocol submitted for this project for content, clarity, and methodology.

Dr. Margaret Ross	*Margaret E. Ross*	09/17/2008
Faculty Sponsor (Please Print)	**Faculty Sponsor's Signature**	**Date**

C. DEPARTMENT HEAD'S ASSSURANCE

By my signature as department head, I certify that every member of my department involved with the conduct of this research project will abide by all Auburn University policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection and ethical treatment of human participants.

Dr. Jose Llanes	*Llanes*	09/17/2008
Department Head (Please Print)	**Department Head's Signature**	**Date**

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